“The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common.” (Acts 4:32)

In many parts of the world, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity will be celebrated from January 18-25. In the past, Chiara took the passage of Scripture chosen for the Week of Prayer for her monthly commentary. This year the Biblical phrase is: “They were faithful to the teaching of the apostles, the common life of sharing, the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42). In the same spirit, we offer what Chiara wrote in 1994 as a commentary on Acts 4:32.

“The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common.” (Acts 4:32)

With these words, the author of the Acts of the Apostles offers us a sketch of the first Christian community of Jerusalem (see also 2:42; 5:12-16). That community was characterized by remarkable freshness and spiritual dynamism, by prayer and example — above all, by a great unity, which Jesus wanted to be the unmistakable sign and source of fruitfulness for his Church.

The Holy Spirit, given in baptism to all those who welcome the words of Jesus, is the spirit of love and unity. He therefore made all the believers one with the risen Lord and with one another, overcoming differences in race, culture and social class.

“The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common.”

Let's take a closer look at what this unity was like. Above all, in the dynamics of mutual exchange, the Holy Spirit united the believers in heart and mind by helping them to overcome those attitudes that make this difficult.

In fact, the greatest obstacle to unity is our individualism, the attachment to our own ideas and to our personal viewpoints and tastes. Our selfishness builds barriers that isolate and exclude us from those who are different.

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As a result, the unity brought about by the Holy Spirit was reflected in the life of the believers. Unity of mind and heart was lived out and expressed concretely by sharing goods with those in

need. Precisely because their unity was genuine, it did not tolerate having some in the community lacking in their basic needs while others were living in abundance.

“The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common.”

How can we live this month’s word? It emphasizes the communion and unity so strongly advocated by Jesus, who gave us the gift of His Spirit to accomplish it.

For this reason then, we will seek to grow in this communion on all levels by listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit — above all, on the spiritual level by overcoming the seeds of division that we have within us. It would be a contradiction to want to be united to Jesus and at the same time to be divided among ourselves, behaving in an individualistic way, each one walking alone, judging one another and perhaps excluding one another. We need to make a renewed conversion to God, who wants us to be united.

Furthermore, this month’s Scripture passage will help us to understand more clearly the evident contradiction between Christian faith and the selfish use of material goods. It will help us to achieve an authentic solidarity with those who are in need, within the limits of our possibilities.

Since this is also the month in which we celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, these words urge us to pray and to strengthen our bonds of unity, loving and sharing with our brothers and sisters of different churches, with whom we have in common, through baptism, the one faith and one spirit of Christ.

Chiara Lubich

Each month a Scripture sentence is offered as a guide and inspiration for daily living. This commentary, translated into 96 different languages and dialects, reaches several million people worldwide through print, radio, TV and the Internet. Every month since the Focolare beginnings, founder Chiara Lubich (1943-2008) wrote her commentaries. This one was originally published in January 1994.

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