

January

Christ, the Church's one foundation (1 Cor 3:11).

In AD 50 Paul arrived in Corinth. It was a large Greek city, well known as an important commercial port and lively because of its many currents of thought. He spent eighteen months there proclaiming the Gospel and laid the basis for a flourishing Christian community. Others came after him and continued the work of evangelization. The new Christians they had evangelized, however, tended to become attached to whoever had brought Christ's message to them, rather than to Christ himself. Factions arose: 'I belong to Paul,' some would say. Others, referring to their own favourite apostle, would say, 'I belong to Apollos' or 'I belong to Peter.'

Faced with these divisions, Paul vigorously intervened, emphasized that the Church, just like a building, can have many builders. But it has only one foundation, the living stone: Jesus Christ.

In this month in particular, during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Christian Churches and communities remember together that Christ is their one foundation and that it is only by following him and living his one Gospel that they will reach full and visible unity among themselves.

Christ, the Church's one foundation

To base our lives on Christ means to be one with him, to think as he thinks, to desire what he desires, to live as he lived.

But how can we be grounded, rooted in him? How can we be perfectly one with him?

By putting the Gospel into practice.

Jesus is the Word, that is, the Word of God who became incarnate. And if He is the Word who took on human nature, we will be true Christians if we are men and women who inform their entire lives with the Word of God.

If we live his words, or better, if his words 'live us' to the point of making us 'living Words', then we will be one with him, bonded to him: it will be no longer I or we who live, but the Word in us. It's possible to imagine that living like this we'll contribute to making unity among Christians a reality.

As the body breathes in order to live, so the soul lives by living the Word of God.

One of the first fruits is the birth of Jesus in us and among us. This causes a change in mentality. It injects into the hearts of all, whether European, Asian, Australian, American or African, the same sentiments that Christ had in the face of circumstances, individuals and society.

The Word lived sets us free from human conditioning. It gives joy, peace, simplicity, fullness of life, light. It makes us adhere to Christ, transforming us bit by bit into 'other Christs'.

Christ, the Church's one foundation

But there is one Word that summarizes all the others. It is love: to love God and our neighbour. In these two commandments Jesus sums up 'all the law and the prophets' (Mt 22:40).

The fact is that each Word, although expressed in human terms and in different ways, is the Word of God. Yet since God is Love, every Word is love.

How should we live this month? How can we bind ourselves to Christ 'the Church's one foundation'?

Augustine of Hippo once said, 'Love, and do what you will.' In effect he was summing up the law of Gospel life, because if you love you will not go wrong, you will do God's will to the full.

Chiara Lubich

Every year the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is held in many parts of the world from 18th to 25th January. Elsewhere it is celebrated at Pentecost.

The theme for the Week of Prayer in 2014, based on 1 Cor. 1:13, is: 'Is Christ divided?'

In the past, Chiara Lubich used to offer a commentary on the biblical verse behind the Week's theme for that year. To keep up the tradition and explore this year's theme, we offer the commentary from January 2005 on 'For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ' (1 Cor. 3:11).