

“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling.” (Eph 4:4)

During the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity,¹ we are invited to focus our attention on a particular theme found in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians. In what is called to be his “prison letters,” he urges his readers to give credible witness to their faith by being united with one another. Their unity is based on having one faith, one spirit and one hope, and only with this unity can they bear witness to Christ as “a body.”

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Paul calls us to hope. What is hope and why are we invited to live it? It is a seed, a gift, and a task that we have the duty to protect, cultivate, and bring to fruition for the good of all. “Christian hope assigns us to that very narrow ridge, that frontier where our vocation requires us to choose, every day and every hour, to be faithful to God’s faithfulness to us.”²

The Christian vocation is not only a relationship between the individual and God. A Christian is called to love everyone who is a neighbor in the present moment. Christ prayed in the garden just before he was crucified, “I pray for them...so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me...” (Jn 17:21) In Chiara Lubich’s talks and writings, we often find explicit references to unity, the primary aspect of her spirituality. Unity is the fruit of the presence of Jesus among us - and his presence is a source of profound happiness.

“If unity is so important for Christians, then it follows that nothing is more opposed to our vocation than failing to live unity. We sin against unity every time we yield to the temptation, which continually resurfaces, to be individualistic, to do things on our own, or to be guided only by our own judgment, personal interests, or desire for esteem. We sin against unity when we ignore or even disregard others and their needs and rights.”³

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1. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity takes place throughout the northern hemisphere from January 18 to 25 and in the southern hemisphere during the week after Pentecost. This year’s prayer texts were prepared by an ecumenical group coordinated by the Armenian Apostolic Church.
 2. Madeleine Delbr  l, French Catholic author, poet, and mystic, considered by many to be one of the most significant spiritual figures of the 20th century.
 3. Chiara Lubich, Founder of the Focolare Movement, Commentary to the Word of Life of July 1985.

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In Guatemala, there is a very active dialogue among members of different Christian Churches. Ramiro writes: “We prepared the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity with a group of people from various Churches. The program included an arts festival organized together with the youth, as well as several celebrations held in different churches. The Catholic Bishops’ Conference asked our group to continue working together to plan a moment of sharing during a meeting of Catholic bishops and leaders of different Churches, who were coming to Guatemala from many other countries to celebrate the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea. Through these activities, we experienced a very strong unity among all of us and the fruits that it brings: fraternity, joy and peace.” The more united Christians become, the greater the possibility for all humanity to fulfill, in a more complete way, the prayer for unity that Christ prayed in the garden.

Prepared by Patrizia Mazzola
and the Word of Life team

Each month the Focolare chooses a Scripture passage as a guide and inspiration for daily living. The commentary on it was originally written by founder, Chiara Lubich (1920–2008). Today this Word of Life, written by an international commission and translated into 96 different languages, reaches several million people worldwide. For audio and videos resources about the WoL, visit focolaremedia.com



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