

(English translation)

Vienna, 5 November 2001¹

Prayer of the first focolarine on the feast of Christ the King

...

You know the episode of those early days during the war, when we first focolarine found ourselves in a cellar where we had taken refuge from the bombs, and we opened the Gospel; everything was dark and in the candlelight we read Jesus' last will and testament. We opened the Gospel and by chance we read Jesus' last will and testament from beginning to end. It was a difficult text for us because we were young and educated only up to a certain point; but we had the impression that those words had been illuminated, one by one. Now we understand that it was the effect of the charism that had come, which brings a new light in the soul of the person who receives it, to the advantage, however, of all those who come in contact with it.

What we understood, above all, was that Jesus had prayed for unity: "May they be one, Father, as you and I are one." May they be one. And we understood very clearly that that page of the Gospel, Jesus' Testament, was the *magna charta* of the Movement that was coming to life. Naturally, we immediately realized that it would not be easy to bring about unity; we didn't know how we could do this.

One day we gathered around an altar – there were seven or eight of us first focolarine – and I remember that it was the feast day of Christ the King – and we were struck by what was written in our missal for that feast day – now the liturgy has changed a little. We had said to Jesus: "We feel called to fulfil what you prayed for: unity, but we don't know how to bring it about. If you want, make us instruments of unity." And then, knowing that it was the feast day of Christ the King, we remembered what was written in the liturgy of the Mass on that day: "Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession" (Ps 2:8).

I remember that we girls, full of faith, believing that God could do anything, asked to be able to serve him to the very ends of the earth. Now after 58 years of life, we see that he answered our prayer, because as you know our Movement is Catholic and ecumenical, and we are in contact with the faithful of 350 Churches and with numerous Church leaders. Before I mentioned to His Excellency that I met the Patriarchs Athenagoras, then Demetrios and then also Bartholomew. I told the Anglican lady that I know Dr. Carey very well, but I also met Dr. Runcie, as well as Dr. Coggan and the first I met was Archbishop Ramsey; just to say that we have been in contact with the dignitaries and not only with the people, but above all with the people.

Now we see that the Lord answered the prayer of us girls, leading us to develop this Movement among the Churches, also among other religions, even among people who do not have any religious affiliation, to the very ends of the earth; practically speaking in every nation of the world. ...

Chiara Lubich

¹ Excerpt from an address Chiara gave to some dignitaries in the ecumenical field: