

along in an unthinking sort of way with our departmentalized way of life: this section for mass, that one for private prayer, another for the sacraments, still others for the duties of state, for organized charity, for recreation, etc. And all the while it should be only one great manifestation of the Christ-life: 'Whatever you do in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him' (Col. 3. 17).

Letter to a Young Girl

MARGARETE ZIMMERER

A Catholic is writing to a girl who was a Calvinist and has now become a member of the Church of England.

Dear Susanne,

You wrote to me of your overwhelming joy, and asked me to give you my thoughts about it.

First of all I want to thank you for letting me share in it. My last letter, which crossed with yours, has already given you my essential answer: The Holy Ghost is guiding us, and is acting according to his loving wisdom in each soul that is humbly seeking truth. How could I not rejoice with you over this great new encounter with our Lord within the Communion that you have chosen? We have not yet reached Easter in the cycle of the Christian year, but for you the joy of the Resurrection has already come, and therefore I send you this happy Easter card (The risen Lord with Mary Magdalen in the garden).

Yet it cannot be otherwise that, even amidst the cry of joy, there mingle the deeper tones of sorrow, for we have not yet attained to the visible unity of the faith. It cannot be otherwise . . .

Christ has left behind him as his will that 'all may be one' (John 17). At this particular moment of our history we are called, I think, in a special way to keep this testament of our redeemer before our eyes and in our praying heart. But for each one of us this means, to begin with,

nothing less than living out our vocation, in purity and in love, within our own Communion. Each individual vocation is personal, different, the mystery of each single soul before God, which he himself so deeply respects. Supernatural love opens our souls so widely in response to God's call that in confidence we can leave all to him. Do we, however, humbly approve that the Spirit of God is acting in divine liberty? He alone guides our prayers:

The Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness; when we do not know what prayer to offer, to pray as we ought, the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans beyond all utterance.

And God, who can read our hearts, knows well what the Spirit's intent is; for indeed it is according to the mind of God that he makes intercession for the saints (Rom. 26-27).

And the Holy Spirit enables us to make our own our Lord's prayer for unity. Here and here alone is the spiritual level 'that of obedience to Christ and fidelity to his prayer (where) we must take our stand'.¹

At this point it becomes clear that the prayer for unity in the faith has to be made in the selfless and humble attitude which the Abbé Couturier and Prior Schutz (of Taizé) expressed in these words: 'such as thou wilt and by the means that thou wilt.'

It is this inner attitude alone that can set us free to look upon our neighbour whose creed may differ from ours with a love that springs from our hearts, a love which we then may turn to the same Father of us all, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Should we not be aware that here is more than a mere meeting? At the Unity Rally in Trafalgar Square—that unforgettable 20th of January 1963—I felt still dimly though irrevocably that in praying together before our Lord—as penitents, to quote the Dean of Westminster—a spiritual exchange is established. Several months later when I began to study the writings of the Abbé Couturier and his successor in the work for unity, Père Michalon, I found these words as a deep verification of my experience:

... their prayer passes into me. I must open my heart to receive the treasures of love which the Spirit stirs up and makes fruitful in them, and vice-versa. When Christians are praying that unique prayer of Jesus, they are not merely side by side; but there is a wonderful exchange, by which each receives, through his brethren, the treasures of love and light from the one Lord. Let us not speak merely of a spiritual unity created by the unifying prayer of Jesus, but of a

¹Père Michalon, Consultor of the Secretariat for the Unity of Christians, in *Spiritual Oecumenism*, 1961.

spiritual unity created by the interpenetration of souls. In this communion of saints, we become responsible one for another. It is together that we learn to open our hearts to receive the riches of Jesus Christ, which often reach us through each other; so we realise more and more a sharing in the same benefits, a sharing which one day will lead us into the same fullness of communion.²

More and more I rejoice in this deep unity which already exists among Christians. It is the Holy Ghost, always at work in his Church, who is the cause of our growth into this unity of love between all baptised members of Christ, as we faithfully cooperate with him. May God, as we patiently and humbly persevere in this unity of love, grant that it may blossom into the unity of faith—when and as he wishes it!

I could not have written this a few months ago. But lately our Lord has been doing many things—partly through what you have told me about Taizé—and has given me a new insight into the mystery of his workings through all our multitudinous tangles, so that I have been enabled to have brief glimpses of the face of the Church, which we have disfigured by our four centuries of sin while we have gone our separate ways, the face of the *Ecclesia* as our Lord wills her to be.

Yet how much work still needs to be done by the poor bride of Christ. She still meets so much indifference and also so much narrowness and anxiety about each one's own position. But actually it is only our poor human weakness that she faces, and all the time this is open to the loving workings of God's mercy.

We will pray, dear Susanne, that we ourselves become less and less of an obstacle to the realisation of the divine plan of love.

Please keep me in your prayers,
In our Lord I am your sister,
Margarete Zimmerer.

²ib., p. 17.