



Towards the year 62, Paul, a prisoner in Rome, writes to the Christians of Colossae, who, without being aware of it, belittle Christ. They do not feel assured with only faith in Christ and they want to add some practices from the Old Testament. Or they try to include Christ in a board of celestial persons, or “angels” who are supposed to have the key to our destiny in hand.

Something was lacking in them and in the majority of their contemporaries. They were caught in the Roman Empire which had imposed its peace on the known world at that time, but also prevented them from living a life of their own. They fell back on the “spiritual.” Secret doctrines offered to lead their “perfect ones” to a higher state and theories called “gnosis” (that is, knowledge) were drawn up on the origin of the human and the world. According to them, all comes from a cosmic soup that had been boiling for ages, with impressive celestial families of angels or “eons”, male and female, who devour each other, couple and finally imprison sparks of spirit in material bodies. So people are manufactured who, after “putting on” a series of successive existences, may return to the kingdom of light.

Caught in the wind of these fine discourses, the Colossians went the way of certain Christians today who trust in their devotion to souls or who allow their life to be led by spiritualism, astrology and horoscopes. They no longer consider Christ as the only savior since they give the priority to others or to practices that are not of the Church.

This crisis in the Church of the first century gave us this letter of Paul where he establishes the absolute supremacy of Christ. As in other letters of Paul, the letter to the Colossians mentions that Timothy is with him (1:1). Paul chose him as assistant and looked on him as “his true Son in Christ.” Perhaps it was Timothy who wrote a fair part of this letter; it would explain the difference in style from the more authentic of Paul’s letters while its content—exceptionally rich—is constantly faithful to the inspiration of the apostle. On this subject see the Letter to the Ephesians which has the same themes as the one to the Colossians, but in a more developed way. In several passages of Colossians, relevant commentaries in Ephesians will be indicated.

1Cor 1:1

1 ^{•1} Paul, apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God and Timothy our brother,

² to the saints in Colossae, our faithful brothers and sisters in Christ:

Receive grace and peace from God our Father, and Christ Jesus our Lord.

Eph 1:15

³ Thanks be to God, the Father of Christ Jesus, our Lord!

We constantly pray for you, ⁴ for we have known of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints. Indeed you await in hope the inheritance reserved for you in heaven, ⁵ of which you have heard through the word of truth. This Gospel, ⁶ already present among you, is bearing fruit and growing throughout the world, as it did among you from the day you accepted it and understood the gift of God in all its truth.

4:12;
Phlm
1:23

⁷ He who taught you, Epaphras, our dear companion in the service of Christ, faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, ⁸ has reminded me of the love you have for me in the spirit.

⁹ Because of this, from the day we received news of you, we have not ceased praying to God for you, that you may attain the full knowledge of his will through all the gifts of wisdom and spiritual understanding.

¹⁰ May your lifestyle be worthy of the Lord and completely pleasing to him. May you bear fruit in every good work and grow in the knowledge of God.

¹¹ May you become strong in everything by a sharing of the Glory of God, so that you may have great endurance and persevere in joy.

¹² Constantly give thanks to the Father who has empowered us to receive our share in the inheritance of the saints in his kingdom of light.

¹³ He rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son. ¹⁴ In him we are redeemed and forgiven.

1Thes
2:121P 2:9;
Acts
26:18;
Dt 33:3;
Wis 5:5Eph 1:7;
Rom
3:24Jn 1:1;
Wis 7:26;
Gen 1:26;
Pro 8:22;
2Cor 4:4;
Phil 2:6;
Heb 1:3;
1:6;

Christ is the beginning of everything

^{•15} He is the image of the unseen God,

• **1.1** Paul, as usual, praises his readers. Actually, he is writing because of the information Epaphras gave him about the Colossians' concerns.

Epaphras, about whom Paul speaks (v. 7), is a man from Colossae. When Paul was organizing the evangelization of the province of Ephesus (see Acts 19:26 and 20:4), he did not go to every city, but would send his assistants. Epaphras of Colossae announced the Good News and had started to form communities in Colossae and then in the neighboring cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis (see Col 4:13). He was the man who came to Rome to inform Paul of the difficulties.

Your faith... your love... in hope... (vv. 4-5). Paul constantly regroups these three Christian powers: believe, love and hope. In the Christian world, they are called theological virtues (i.e., powers that go straight to God). The three go together, otherwise they do not exist. In a sense hope is the first: if it is no longer alive, faith and love remain powerless.

Straight away, Paul presents faith as being matchless: the Gospel has already been

preached and believed throughout the world (v. 6) (which is rather too quickly said); faith opens for us the way to true knowledge: precisely what the Colossians are looking for (see Introduction); through this faith God has already placed us in the kingdom of Light (v. 12).

He has transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son. While the Colossians are interested in an invisible world of supernatural forces, where luminous powers battle with those of darkness (see the Introduction, and also Eph 1:21), Paul immediately clarified the situation: there is nothing other than the power of Darkness and the kingdom of the Son.

• **15.** Paul shows that the angels or *invisible powers* (v. 16) whether from the Bible or the story tellers of "gnosis" with their Thrones, Authorities, Principles... are nothing compared with Christ. He is neither agent nor intermediary of a creative adventure without a true creator. He is not one of the saviors of a history rather impersonal: there is only God-Creator and in him is Christ. See the same idea in Hebrews 1.

Jn 1:3; Heb 1:2; 1Cor 8:6 and for all creation he is the firstborn,
 Rom 8:29 ¹⁶for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible: thrones, rulers, authorities, powers... All was made through him and for him.
 Jn 8:58 ¹⁷He is before all and all things hold together in him.
 Eph 1:22; 4:15; 5:23 ¹⁸And he is the head of the body, that is the Church, for he is the first, the first raised from the dead that he may be the first in everything,
 Eph 2:9; Eph 1:23; Jn 1:16; Eph 1:10; Rom 5:10; 2Cor 5:18; Eph 2:14 ¹⁹for God was pleased to let fullness dwell in him.
²⁰Through him God willed to reconcile all things to himself, and through him, through his blood shed on the cross, God establishes peace, on earth as in heaven.

• ²¹You yourselves were once estranged and opposed to God because of your evil deeds, ²²but now God has reconciled you in the human body of his Son through his death, so that you may be without fault, holy and blameless before him. ²³Only stand firm, upon the foundation of your faith, and be steadfast in hope. Keep in mind the Gospel you have heard, which has been preached to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.
²⁴At present I rejoice when I suffer for you; I complete in my own flesh what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for the sake of his body, which is the Church. ²⁵For I am serving the Church since God entrusted to me the ministry to make the word of God fully known. ²⁶I mean that mys-

Eph 4:18; 2:1
 Eph 5:21
 1Cor 15:58; Mk 16:15; 1Tim 3:16
 Acts 9:16; 2Cor 4:10
 2Cor 3:6
 Mk 13:10

In Galatians 4:1-5 Paul recognizes that the history of humanity has been deeply marked by natural and social forces that he does not name. He also affirms that since the resurrection of Jesus, it is he who has in hand all the movement of history (Rev 5:3-5). Something that may astonish those among us who think all history is the responsibility of humankind. In one sense, they are right but on condition that they do not forget the *Firstborn*, the one who has already come to the end of history and of whom we say he is Lord (Phil 2:11) of history.

He is the image of the unseen God. We should not imagine that God has a human form beyond the clouds, and that Jesus is his image; human creature is the image of God, but God is not in the image of human creature.

In all that he is and in all that he does, Christ among us is the perfect image of the Father and of his mercy: his actions reveal God's way of thinking and acting. Already before he became man, the Son of God existed in God, as the eternal and invisible image of God eternal and invisible, the radiance of the glory of the Father (Heb 1:3), the Expression or Word of God (Jn 1:1).

For all creation, he is the firstborn. We take this word in its biblical sense. He is not the first of many creatures, but the one who

has a place apart. In his human nature, Christ is a Galilean Jew, a descendant of David. His person, however, is rooted in God and is presented to us as the model and the *firstborn* not of people but of all creation.

God was pleased to let fullness dwell in him who is the only bridge between God and the universe. The fullness of God is in him to be communicated to the universe, and the fullness of the universe will be found in him when all human beings are reconciled and reunited in him.

All was made through him: John 1:1 and Hebrews 1:2.

And was the first raised... Paul says more precisely "and as the first fruits offered to God, was raised" (as in 1 Cor 15:23). He has not come only for the forgiveness of sins, but for a "passover," a passage from death to life, and his resurrection after his total abandonment to his Father was a first necessary step so that we too would have a resurrection.

God willed to reconcile. Once again the work of Christ is presented as reconciliation: reconciliation between people (2 Cor 5:17-21) and reconciliation of the whole of creation.

• 21. Paul now requires the Colossians to keep their feet on the ground. Do not waste your time imagining struggles between celestial beings and evil ones. The struggle is here

Acts 20:24;
Eph 3:3;
Rom 16:25

terious plan that for centuries and generations remained secret, and which God has now revealed to his holy ones.

Eph 1:18;
Rom 5:2;
8:19

²⁷ God willed to make known to them the riches and even the Glory that his mysterious plan reserved for the pagan nations: Christ is in you and you may hope God's Glory.

Phil 4:13;
Eph 3:7

²⁸ This Christ we preach. We warn and teach everyone true wisdom, aiming to make everyone perfect in Christ. ²⁹ For this cause I labor and struggle with the energy of Christ working powerfully in me.

**Let Christ Jesus, the Lord,
be your doctrine**

Rev 1:11

2 ¹ I want you to know how I strive for you, for those of Laodicea and for so many who have not met me personally. ² I pray that all may be encouraged. May you be established in love, that you may obtain all the

Is 45:3

riches of a full understanding and know the mystery of God, Christ himself. ³ For in him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

⁴ So let no one deceive you with persuasive arguments. ⁵ Although I am far from you, my spirit is with you and I rejoice in recalling how well-disciplined you are and how firm in the faith of Christ.

1Cor 5:3

⁶ If you have accepted Christ Jesus as Lord, let him be your doctrine. ⁷ Be rooted and built up in him; let faith be your principle, as you were taught, and your thanksgiving overflowing.

⁸ See that no one deceives you with philosophy or any hollow discourse; these are merely human doctrines not inspired by Christ but by the wisdom of this world. ⁹ For in Him dwells the fullness of God in bodily form. ¹⁰ He is the head of all

Eph 5:6;
2Tim 4:3;
Mt 15:6;
Gal 4:3

1:16;
Jn 1:14;
Eph 1:21

below and costs blood and life. This is why Paul reminds his readers what he himself is suffering because of the Gospel.

The body of Christ is the place where the peace of all humanity with God, and peace between individuals and nations can be achieved (Eph 2:11).

That you may be, without fault, holy and blameless before him (v. 22): see commentary on Ephesians 5:26.

I complete in my own flesh what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ. After Christ's death something would be lacking in the salvation of the world, if Jesus' followers and apostles did not, in their turn, meet with trials and sufferings. Working for the Church means suffering for the Church; to work for the rule of justice is to suffer for the sake of justice.

His mysterious plan: see Ephesians 3:5. We must not forget that in those days, no one even thought of the common destiny of humanity: they did not even speak of humanity. Moreover, neither the Greeks nor the Romans looked beyond their actual existence. Paul is amazed by the generosity of God whose promises are for all people, without distinction (v. 27). We, too, are offered nothing less than a

share in the *Glory of God*, that is to say, all the riches found in him.

• **2.1** *I want you to know how I strive for you.* This struggle of Paul signifies labor (1:28-29) and prayer (4:2 and Rom 15:30). It would be very tempting (and it is the temptation of the Colossians) to make Christianity an attractive religion, with beautiful explanations, leaving people hanging on to their dreams and passions, a religion that does not attack the sin rooted in our way of life and in our society. To join the attack we must first be convinced that it is in Christ that we find the whole mystery of God.

Let no one deceive you. Philosophy and the search for wisdom are highly respectable. Philosophies always contain some truth; their danger is in seeming to give a total response to our problems. They are *deceptive* insofar as they come from philosophers who have in fact had either a limited or questionable experience of human reality. In faith, on the contrary, rather than a discourse on human concerns, we have a person: Christ. While all the currents of thought are the product of their day and grow old with time, Paul assures us that all the fullness of God is in Christ in a human form.

cosmic power and authority, and in him you have everything.

Baptized and risen

Phil 3:3; Rom 2:25; Jer 4:4; Rom 6:4; Eph 2:6; • ¹¹In Christ Jesus you were given a circumcision but not by human hands, which removed completely from you the carnal body: ¹²I refer to baptism. On receiving it you were buried with Christ; and you also rose with him for having believed in the power of God who raised him from the dead.

Eph 2:15; 1P 3:22; 2Cor 2:14; • ¹³You were dead. You were in sin and uncircumcised at the same time. But God gave you life with Christ. He forgave all our sins. ¹⁴He canceled the record of our debts, those regulations which accused us. He did away with all that and nailed it to the cross. ¹⁵Victorious through the cross, he stripped the rulers and authorities of their power, humbled them before

the eyes of the whole world and dragged them behind him as prisoners.

Useless doctrines

Rom 14; 1Cor 8:8; Gal 4:10; Heb 8:5; 10:1; Mt 11:13; 1Cor 8:1; Eph 4:15; • ¹⁶So, then, let no one criticize you in matters of food or drink or for not observing festivals, new moons or the Sabbath. ¹⁷These things were only shadows of what was to come, whereas the reality is the person of Christ. ¹⁸Do not let anyone disqualify you, insisting on humbling practices and worship of angels. In fact, they are only good to satisfy self-indulgence, ¹⁹instead of holding firmly to the head, Christ. It is he who nourishes and gives unity to the whole body by a complex system of nerves and ligaments, making it grow according to the plan of God. ²⁰If you have really died with Christ, and are rid of the principles of

• 11. Paul has just said that a Christian has wisdom and is on a way of knowledge. He now reminds us that our entry into the Church has been much more than an exterior rite. Through baptism, we have become part of this renewal of the world brought about by the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Paul had been circumcised, and knew from experience that it did not save him. We can be fairly sure baptism did not also miraculously free him of his aggressiveness and weaknesses, but he began to live his human existence differently. He had been liberated, among other things, of what weighed heavily on him: religion with all its commandments. Religion for him was not, as it is for some who like principles, a defensive shield as necessary as a policeman: religion was for him a reminder of a *debt* towards God, something that made love and real trust impossible. Jesus in dying had *nailed to the cross* all kinds of fears of God; at the same time he did away with all the moral principles and pressures (“powers and authorities” of v. 15) that smother our free response to God.

In some countries, many people are baptized but baptism scarcely changes their life and generally speaking they do not belong to communities seeking to renew their faith. It is not enough for us to admit that we are poor

Christians, that we have not really *buried* the sinner within us. Our resurrection depends, first of all on *faith in God who resurrected Jesus*, who has *pardoned us*, and prepared everything so that we may *live* our life.

• 16. Paul has just reminded us that baptism is the beginning of a new life. It is not a matter of replacing old commandments with better commandments: the coming of Christ has put an end to all religions with commandments. That will perhaps shock many Christians: should we not obey the commandments of God and of the Church? What will become of us if there are no longer religious duties?

Indeed there is no religious group—no Christian community—without rites, habits, commandments: what would become of a community where the members would no longer gather to hear the word of God or celebrate the Eucharist? Paul nevertheless shows it is finished with religions where the most important consideration is to do or not to do, where it is believed that God likes us to rest on such a day, not to eat such and such a food, to dress in a certain way, abstain from this or that. Religions give great importance to these laws for they help the faithful to maintain their cohesion and to retain their own identity. All that deforms the idea we have of God. All that

the world, why do you now let yourselves be taught as if you belonged to the world? ²¹“Do not eat this, do not taste that, do not touch that...”

1Cor
6:13

²²These are human rules and teachings, referring to things that are perishable, that wear out and disappear.

Mt 15:9;
Is 29:13

²³These doctrines may seem to be profound because they speak of religious observance and humility and of disregarding the body. In fact, they are useless as soon as the flesh rebels.

Seek the things that are above

3¹So then, if you are risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your mind on the things that are above, not on earthly things. ³For you have died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ, who is your life, reveals himself, you also will be revealed with him in Glory.

Mt 6:20;
Phil 3:20;
Jn 3:1

Gal 2:20;
1Thes
4:17;
1P 1:7;
1Jn 3:2

is human regulation, very useful perhaps, old fashioned perhaps, but still always human. Paul says: God does not share our interest in what is transient, in our cooking, feast days and the like; he does not treat us like little children, saying, “Don’t do that!”

All that may seem very religious. Religious prohibitions always impress those who are not free of their fear of God. Instead of freeing us and leading us to child-like trust in God, these restrictions favor a narrow-mindedness, and later violence exerted against those who think differently from us.

Do not be mistaken in thinking that *contempt for the body* is a sign of holiness (v. 23). Fewer kilos do not mean more Spirit! The penances and sacrifices that we impose on ourselves could cause us to feel superior to others. If you belong to a group that has its fasts, would you not like it to be known?

Let no one criticize you. Who is going to criticize us for celebrating Sunday with the resurrection of the Lord instead of the Jewish Sabbath?

• **3.1** Here we have what was said about baptism (2:12) which joins us to Christ and

⁵Therefore, put to death what is earthly in your life, that is immorality, impurity, inordinate passions, wicked desires and greed which is a way of worshiping idols. ⁶These are the things that arouse the wrath of God.

Rom 6:6;
Gal 5:24;
Mk 9:43

⁷For a time you followed this way and lived in such disorders. ⁸Well then, reject all that: anger, evil intentions, malice; and let no abusive words be heard from your lips.

Eph 2
Jas 1:21;
1P 2:1

Put on the new self

• ⁹Do not lie to one another. You have been stripped of the old self and its way of thinking ¹⁰to put on the new, which is being renewed and is to reach perfect knowledge and the likeness of its creator. ¹¹There is no room for distinction between Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, foreigner, slave or free, but Christ is all and in all.

2Cor 4:6;
Gen 12:6

Gal 3:27;
1Cor
12:13

¹²Clothe yourselves, then, as is fitting for God’s chosen people, holy

Eph 4:1;
Phil 2:1

makes us share in all his wealth. Since Christ left this earth, we leave it too: what is best in our lives, what motivates us to do things is neither visible, nor is it of the earth. God alone knows the riches of the believer’s heart, even when her life seems tarnished by various faults and weaknesses: one day God will manifest the goodness, the “glory” which we do not yet see (see Mt 25:31-46).

Put to death what is earthly in your life. It is not that we have to kill ourselves, but to destroy egoism, wickedness, envy, excessive confidence in self, for sin is there. Being free of a religion of commandments should not make us less aware of what is required in a new life: it means being still more perfect (Mt 5:20 and 48).

• 9. See Ephesians 4:20-24 where Paul develops the same idea of the new self created in Christ and of the old self which must be abandoned.

While *the old self* is self-centered, enslaved by passions, *the new self* is characterized by a communal attitude, a constant concern for others. He lives with a *thankful* heart.

and beloved of him. Put on compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience ¹³to bear with one another and forgive whenever there is any occasion to do so. As the Lord has forgiven you, forgive one another. ¹⁴Above all, clothe yourselves with love which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵May the peace of Christ overflow in your hearts; for this end you were called to be one body. And be thankful.

Jn 15:12;
Rom 5:7

1Cor 13

Eph 5:4

1Thes 5:11;
Eph 5:18

¹⁶Let the word of God dwell in you in all its richness. Teach and admonish one another with words of wisdom. With thankful hearts sing to God psalms, hymns and spontaneous praise. ¹⁷And whatever you do or say, do it in the Name of Jesus, the Lord, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Rom 14:7;
1Cor 10:31

On obedience

• ¹⁸Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as you should do in the Lord. ¹⁹Husbands, love your wives and do not get angry with them. ²⁰Children, obey your parents in everything, because that pleases the Lord. ²¹Parents, do not be too demanding of your children, lest they become discouraged.

Eph 5:21;
6:9

• 18. The brief counsel given to spouses (vv. 18-19) will be largely developed in Ephesians 5:21-33. Paul would not accept the attitude of many Christians who say: "Religion has nothing to do with what I do in my home, my work, my leisure, or in politics." On the contrary, Paul insists that Christians live all of this before the Lord, for the Lord and in the Lord.

This is why Paul preaches the same ethics to everyone: men, women, slaves (we would say bosses and workers); all must be just, loyal and respectful of others, even when they have faults. We should struggle to bring about change and defend our rights; but we must lead these struggles and live our commitments according to the spirit of Christ. Very often what we ask for in order to change the world is less important than the way in which we ask it, and it is often there that a Christian will give

²²Servants, obey your masters in everything; not only while they are present, to gain favor with them, but sincerely, because you fear the Lord. ²³Whatever you do, do it wholeheartedly, working for the Lord, and not for humans. ²⁴You well know that the Lord will reward you with the inheritance. You are servants, but your Lord is Christ. ²⁵Every evildoer will be paid back for whatever wrong has been done, for God does not make exceptions in favor of anyone.

1Cor 7:21;
Tit 2:9;
1P 2:18

Rom 2:11;
1P 1:17

4 ¹As for you, masters, give your servants what is fair and reasonable, knowing that you yourselves have a Master in heaven.

Further instructions

• ²Be steadfast in prayer and even spend the night praying and giving thanks. ³Pray especially for us and our preaching: may the Lord open a door for us that we may announce the mystery of Christ. Because of this I am in chains; ⁴pray then that I may be able to reveal this mystery as I should.

Eph 6:18

⁵Deal wisely with those who do not belong to the Church; take advantage of every opportunity. ⁶Let

1Cor 5:12;
1Thes 4:12

a witness that only she can give. Let others be successful whatever the means that are taken and whatever the disastrous consequences for society: see on this subject the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7).

• **4.2** All this is commented on in Ephesians 6:18-21.

Onesimus is a runaway slave who returns to Colossae with Tychicus after Paul converted him to the faith (see Letter to Philemon).

The evangelist *Mark*, now reconciled with Paul (see Acts 15:38), is with him. *Luke* (v. 14) mentioned here is the author of the Gospel and Acts.

We can see there was much communication between churches of different places. Each one was not locked within its own community: had this been the case, within a short time,

1P 3:15 your conversation be pleasing with a touch of wit. Know how to speak to everyone in the best way.

⁷Tychicus will give news of me.

He is our dear brother and for me a faithful assistant and fellow worker for the Lord. ⁸I am purposely sending him to give you news of me and to encourage you. ⁹With him I am sending Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of yours. They will tell you about everything that is happening here.

Phlm
1:10

¹⁰My companion in prison, Aristarchus, greets you, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, about whom you have already received instructions. If he calls on you, receive him warmly. ¹¹Jesus, called Justus, also greets you. They are the only Jewish people working with me for the kingdom of God, and because of that they have been a comfort to me.

Acts
12:12;
2Tim
4:11;
1P 5:13

¹²Greetings from your countryman Epaphras, a good servant of Christ Jesus. He constantly battles for you through his prayer that you be perfect and firm in whatever God asks of you. ¹³I assure you that he has worked hard for you, as well as for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis.

1:7;
Rom
15:30

¹⁴Greetings from Luke, our dear doctor and from Demas. ¹⁵Greet the brothers and sisters of Laodicea, and don't forget Nympha and the church that gathers in her house.

2Tim
4:11

¹⁶After reading this letter, see that it is read in the Church of the Laodiceans, and have the letter they received read in yours. ¹⁷And say to Archipus, "Do not forget the ministry due to you in the Lord."

1Thes
5:27;
Rev 1:3

Phlm 1:2

¹⁸Greetings in my own hand, Paul. Remember that I am in chains. Grace be with you.

1Cor
16:2;
Gal 6:11

there would have been as many religions as there were churches. Quite to the contrary, they were conscious of being *the* Church of Christ, established in various places, but with one testimony concerning Christ, which explains the interest the believers had in keeping in close contact with one another. At a time in which it seemed difficult to preserve unity due to the distance and differences among the peo-

ple, the power that preserved unity—more than a rigid organization—was the profound sense all the people had that the church was a "communion" or a community enlivened by the Spirit of Christ.

Nowadays when we attempt to form "basic Christian communities," we must also be careful to remain in contact and in harmony with other communities.