

# Reflection: One Body, One Spirit, One Hope

By Bente S. Gundersen in the ecumenical prayer in Centro Pro Unione,  
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**“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling.”**

*Ephesians 4:4*

Dear sister and brothers in Christ.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this reflection today. I want to start with a question today and invite you to reflect on this verse (Eph. 4:4) from this question with me.

## **What do non-believers see when they meet Christians?**

When Paul writes, *“There is one body,”* he doesn’t begin with our differences, our traditions, or our theological details.

He begins with oneness — with unity.

And that challenges me deeply, especially when I think back to my own story.

From I was 15 to 22, I was an atheist. Not mildly uninterested, but actively engaged in questioning, debating, and often challenging Christians. In high school, together with a few others, we made life very difficult for our religion teacher. We asked all the classic questions:

- *What about the Crusades?*
- *What about natural disasters?*
- *How can an all-powerful God allow war, injustice, and suffering?*
- *And why do Christians seem to fight so much amongst themselves?*
- *Why do churches split over details that outsiders barely understand?*

Those were my questions. And they still matter today, because non-believers are still asking them. When they meet Christians, what do they see? What do they hear? What do they experience?

For me, everything began to change when I started my teacher studies.

My class included 5–6 Christians from different denominations — and then the rest of us, about a dozen more. For the first time in my life, I had Christian friends. Real friends. They were thoughtful, humble, humorous, passionate, and... normal. They cared about me. They lived their faith without forcing it on anyone. They studied hard and helped others. They prayed for me — quietly, without telling me.

At the same time, I had an excellent professor in Christianity. Although I found it deeply frustrating that I had to study Christianity as part of my major, that very frustration became the doorway into my journey toward faith.

So, while I normally don't use a lot of time thinking about what other Christians think about each other – or about us and me, I do often wonder:

**What do non-believers see and hear and experience when they meet Christians today?**

And I dream — and I pray — that they might say:

- *“My neighbour is a Christian... she is such a good friend and so important for our neighbourhood.”*
- *“In our town, the Christians work together for the community. They help people who struggle.”*
- *“They don't agree about everything — not at all — but they respect each other. It even looks like they love each other.”*
- *“Because of them, hope has returned to our town.”*
- *“They help us keep hope alive.”*

That — *that* — is what I believe “There is one body” means.

## One Body

This week, as we focus on Christian unity, *one body* reminds us that before we are denominations, before we are traditions, we are the body of Christ.

Christ —  
who became human for us,  
who walked among us,  
who suffered with us,  
who died for us,  
and who rose for us.

Christ —  
who gathers us, reforms us, corrects us, forgives us, and sends us.

One body means that we belong to Christ,  
and because we belong to Christ,  
we belong to one another.

Even in our brokenness.  
Even with our misunderstandings.

Even with our pain, our history, our struggles.

The Church — Christ's body — is God's gift to the world.

And when the world sees Christians living, working, and loving together, they do not see an organization —  
they see Christ.

## One Spirit

From the very beginning, Scripture reveals a God whose Spirit is like breath and wind — moving freely, giving life, awakening hope, and pouring love over all creation.

- In Genesis 1, the Spirit hovers over the waters — the first movement of God in creation.
- In Genesis 2, God breathes His own breath into humanity. One breath for all.

And that breath moves through Scripture like a golden thread:

- With Elijah, God is not in the earthquake or the fire, but in a gentle breeze that reaches him in his fear and loneliness.
- In Ezekiel 37, the Spirit breathes life into dry bones and forms a living people where only death seemed possible.
- With Nicodemus, Jesus says: *"The wind blows where it wants... so it is with everyone born of the Spirit."*
- After the resurrection, Jesus breathes on His disciples and says, *"Receive the Holy Spirit."*
- At Pentecost, the Spirit comes like a mighty wind, filling believers from every nation with one message: *God's love is for all.*

Across all these stories, the message is the same:

One Spirit — one breath — one love — one life shared with all humanity.

And in this week of unity and prayer, we remember:

Regardless of our divisions, misunderstandings, and differences, we are one in Christ because there are one Spirit and we share one Spirit.

Honestly, sometimes it feels easier to talk about unity in Christ than unity between churches. Structures take time. Agreements take time. But Christians themselves — believers — often recognize the unity of the Spirit instinctively. We feel it. We see it. We experience it when we pray together, serve together, or simply honour one another.

## One Hope

Finally:

one hope — the hope of our calling.

Hope is what people around us are longing for.

Hope is what every generation searches for.

Hope is what the Church is called to embody.

Not a naïve hope.

Not a shallow optimism.

But the deep Christian hope that Christ is risen, that love is stronger than death, that reconciliation is possible, that forgiveness is real, and that God is present and at work in His world.

One hope means:

We are not defined by fear.

We are not driven by division.

We are not shaped by despair.

We are a people of resurrection.

A people of new beginnings.

A people who believe that God can breathe life into what seems dead, peace into conflict, and joy into mourning.

When Christians live with this hope — together — the world notices.

And that hope becomes contagious.

So today, as we reflect on Ephesians 4:4, may we hear God's invitation again:

- One Body — belonging to Christ, belonging to one another
- One Spirit — God's breath of life and love in all people and all creation
- One Hope — a hope strong enough for the whole world

And may those who do not yet believe look at us and say:

*"They do not always agree... but they love one another. They bring hope. They make our world better. They show us something of God."*

May it be so. Amen.