



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS TO A DELEGATION OF THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

Friday, 7 March 2014

Dear Brother,

Dear Friends from the World Council of Churches,

I wish all of you a warm welcome and I thank Doctor Tveit for his words to me on your behalf. This meeting marks one more stage, an important one, in the long-standing and fruitful relationship between the Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches. The Bishop of Rome is grateful to you for the work you are doing in support of Christian unity.

From its inception, the World Council of Churches has contributed greatly to making all Christians aware that our divisions represent a serious obstacle to the witness of the Gospel in the world. We cannot be resigned to these divisions as if they were merely an inevitable part of the historical experience of the Church. If Christians ignore the call to unity which comes to them from the Lord, they risk ignoring the Lord himself and the salvation he offers through his Body, the Church: “There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name ... by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Relations between the Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, developing since the Second Vatican Council, have brought us to a sincere ecumenical cooperation and to an ever increasing “exchange of gifts” between the different communities by overcoming mutual misunderstanding. The path to full and visible communion is still today an uphill struggle. The Spirit encourages us, however, not to be afraid, not to allow ourselves to be satisfied with the progress we have made in recent decades, but to move forward in trust.

Prayer is fundamental on this journey. Only with a spirit of humble and unceasing prayer will we be able to have the necessary foresight, discernment and motivation to serve the human family in all

its struggles and needs, both spiritual and material.

Dear brothers and sisters, I assure you of my prayers that during your meeting with the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity it will be possible to find the most effective way for us to advance together on this path. May the Spirit of the Lord sustain every one of you and your families, your colleagues at the World Council of Churches and all those who have the cause of Christian unity at heart. Pray also for me that the Lord may permit me to be a docile instrument of his will and a servant of unity. May the peace and grace of the Lord accompany all of you.