



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE REPRESENTATIVES OF
THE AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH**

Monday, 29 April 1985

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I want to thank you, first of all, for coming to see me. I have met the Presiding Bishop of the American Lutheran Church, Bishop David W. Preus. Please extend my cordial greetings to him. I am happy now to welcome to Rome the Vice-President, the Reverend Lloyd Svendsbye, and this prominent group of Lutheran laity, led by Mr and Mrs Arley Bjella of the Lutheran Brotherhood Fraternal Benefit Society.

From accounts given to me by American Catholic bishops, I know the good relations that have been developing between Lutherans and Catholics in the United States. Your visit today has the effect of adding to this growing relationship. The laity have an important role in the quest for unity. "The concern for restoring unity", according to the *Decree on Ecumenism* (*Unitatis redintegratio*, 5), "involves the whole Church, faithful and clergy alike. It extends to everyone according to the talent of each, whether it be exercised in daily Christian living or in theological and historical studies".

Our commitment is always to Christ, and for this reason we must always strive for unity with one another in Christ. We do this through prayer, dialogue, and collaboration. When I visited the Lutheran church in Rome in December 1983, I said that "I have come because in these days the Spirit of God has urged us, through the ecumenical dialogue, to the quest for the full unity among Christians". I feel that the same motivation has led you here today. We live in an extraordinary time of grace. A time in which the Spirit is transforming the old hostilities of the past into new patterns of reconciliation so that the prayer of Christ for the unity of his followers (Cfr. *Jo.* 17) may be fulfilled. It is the task of all of us to pray and work so that Christians everywhere will be

responsive to the grace of the Spirit leading them to unity.

Please accept my best wishes and the assurance of my prayers during his holy Easter season. "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen" (1 Cor. 16, 21).

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