



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II TO THE MEMBERS OF THE WORLD METHODIST COUNCIL

Thursday, 26 March 1992

*Dr English,
Dear Friends,*

"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 1:2). With these words of the Apostle Paul, I extend a cordial welcome to the *President and members of the World Methodist Council*.

I am pleased to note that this year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the international dialogue between the Catholic Church and the World Methodist Council. Our meeting today provides us with a welcome opportunity to give thanks to God for the evident fruits of this dialogue, carried on with patience and dedication by the members of the Catholic–Methodist International Commission. It likewise invites us to renew our commitment to *continuing dialogue and cooperation in the service of the Gospel*.

Although the path towards agreement in faith is long and at times arduous, we know that by undertaking it we are acting in obedience to the will of Christ himself. While remaining acutely aware that the full restoration of visible unity among Christians can only be sought as a gift of God's grace, we can nonetheless rejoice that our "efforts towards unity are themselves a sign of the work of reconciliation which God is bringing about in our midst" (John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 50).

In this regard, I express my confidence that the theological dialogues and official contacts taking place between Catholics and Methodists on the international level will be increasingly accompanied by a deep desire on the part of individual believers and local communities to support each other in bearing witness to their faith in Christ. An "ardour for holiness" on the part of all

Christians is an essential requirement of Christian mission in our day (Cf. *ibid.*, 90). Such a concern for holiness has been a significant part of the spiritual tradition of both Catholics and Methodists. Authentic Christian holiness will always remain first and foremost a gift of God, who in baptism has freed us from our sins, made us his children in Christ and called us to worship him in spirit and truth in the communion of the Church. We may be confident that *the effort to live in fidelity to this gift will involve its own ecumenical dynamism*, for, as the Second Vatican Council observed, the more Christians strive to live holier lives according to the Gospel, "the better will they be able to further the unity of Christians and put it into practice. For the closer their union with the Father, the Word and the Spirit, the more deeply and easily will they be able to grow in mutual love" (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 7).

Because the growth of Christians in unity of faith and love is awakened and sustained by the Holy Spirit, let us join in praying that our efforts to promote this unity will always be guided by him who is the Spirit of truth and the inspiration of the Church's mission in the world. It is the Spirit whose "fruits" (Cf. Gal. 5:22-23) are evident both in the moral lives of all who belong to Christ Jesus and in the life of the Church herself. It is he who gives us an ever more manifest sharing in the Trinitarian communion which Christ prayed would be the visible sign of his disciples' fidelity (Cf. Jn. 17:21). The more deeply we seek to understand and live the mystery of the Church, the more we will appreciate the Holy Spirit as "the one who points out the ways leading to the union of Christians, indeed as the supreme source of this unity, which comes from God himself" (John Paul II, *Dominum et Vivificantem*, 2).

With hope and confidence that relations between the Catholic Church and the World Methodist Council will go on to produce ever more positive fruits of understanding and cooperation, I pray that your visit here today may be a valid sign of our common desire and determination to "hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev. 3:13).

God bless you abundantly.

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