



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO MEMBERS OF THE JOINT INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION
SPONSORED BY THE BAPTIST WORLD ALLIANCE AND
THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNITY**

*Hall of the Popes
Thursday, 6 December 2007*

Dear Friends,

I offer a cordial welcome to you, the members of the joint international commission sponsored by the Baptist World Alliance and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. I am pleased that you have chosen as the site of your meeting this city of Rome, where the Apostles Peter and Paul proclaimed the Gospel and crowned their witness to the Risen Lord by the shedding of their blood. It is my hope that your conversations will bear abundant fruit for the progress of dialogue and the increase of understanding and cooperation between Catholics and Baptists.

The theme which you have chosen for this phase of contacts – *The Word of God in the Life of the Church: Scripture, Tradition and Koinonia* – offers a promising context for the examination of such historically controverted issues as the relationship between Scripture and Tradition, the understanding of Baptism and the sacraments, the place of Mary in the communion of the Church, and the nature of oversight and primacy in the Church's ministerial structure. If our hope for reconciliation and greater fellowship between Baptists and Catholics is to be realized, issues such as these need to be faced together, in a spirit of openness, mutual respect and fidelity to the liberating truth and saving power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

As believers in Christ, we acknowledge him as the one mediator between God and humanity (*1 Tim 2:5*), our Saviour, our Redeemer. He is the cornerstone (*Eph 2:21; 1 Pet 2:4-8*); and the head of the body, which is the Church (*Col 1:18*). In this Advent season, we look to his coming with prayerful expectation. Today, as ever, the world needs our common witness to Christ and to the

hope brought by the Gospel. Obedience to the Lord's will should constantly spur us, then, to strive for that unity so movingly expressed in his priestly prayer: "that they may all be one... so that the world may believe" (Jn 17:21). For the lack of unity between Christians "openly contradicts the will of Christ, provides a stumbling block to the world, and harms the most holy cause of proclaiming the good news to every creature" (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 1).

Dear friends, I offer you my cordial good wishes and the assurance of my prayers for the important work which you have undertaken. Upon your conversations, and upon each of you and your loved ones, I gladly invoke the Holy Spirit's gifts of wisdom, understanding, strength and peace.

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