



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE LEADERS OF THE WORLD ALLIANCE
OF REFORMED CHURCHES**

Saturday, 7 January 2006

Dear Friends,

At the beginning of this new year I welcome you, the leaders of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, on the occasion of your visit to the Vatican. I recall with gratitude the presence of Delegations from the World Alliance both at the [funeral of my predecessor Pope John Paul II](#) and at the [inauguration of my own papal ministry](#). In these signs of mutual respect and friendship I am pleased to see a providential fruit of the fraternal dialogue and cooperation undertaken in the past four decades, and a token of sure hope for the future.

This past month, in fact, marked the fortieth anniversary of the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council, which saw the promulgation of the Decree on Ecumenism [Unitatis Redintegratio](#). The Catholic-Reformed Dialogue, which came into existence shortly thereafter, has made an important contribution to the demanding work of theological reflection and historical investigation indispensable for surmounting the tragic divisions which arose among Christians in the sixteenth century. One of the results of the Dialogue has been to show significant areas of convergence between the Reformed understanding of the Church as *Creatura Verbi* and the Catholic understanding of the Church as the primordial Sacrament of God's outpouring of grace in Christ (cf. [Lumen Gentium](#), 1). It is an encouraging sign that the current phase of dialogue continues to explore the richness and complementarity of these approaches.

The Decree on Ecumenism affirmed that "there can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without interior conversion" (No. 7). At the very beginning of my Pontificate I voiced my own conviction that

"inner conversion is the prerequisite for all ecumenical progress" (*Homily in the Sistine Chapel*, 20 April 2005), and recalled the example of my predecessor, Pope John Paul II, who often spoke of the need for a "purification of memory" as a means of opening our hearts to receive the full truth of Christ. The late Pope, especially on the occasion of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, gave a powerful impulse to this endeavour in the Catholic Church, and I am pleased to learn that several of the Reformed Churches which are members of the World Alliance have undertaken similar initiatives. Gestures such as these are the building-blocks of a deeper relationship which must be nurtured in truth and love.

Dear friends, I pray that our meeting today will itself bear fruit in a renewed commitment to work for the unity of all Christians. The way before us calls for wisdom, humility, patient study and exchange. May we set out with renewed confidence, in obedience to the Gospel and with our hope firmly grounded in Christ's prayer for his Church, in the love of the Father and in the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 24).

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