



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE MEMBERS
OF THE ECUMENICAL DELEGATION FROM FINLAND**

Thursday, 19 January 2006

*Dear Bishop Heikka,
Dear Bishop Wróbel,
Distinguished friends from Finland,*

It is with great joy that I welcome you, the members of the ecumenical delegation from Finland, on the occasion of today's celebration of the feast of Saint Henrik, your patron saint.

I am pleased to recall that for many years my beloved predecessor, Pope John Paul II, welcomed with joy and gratitude the participants in the yearly pilgrimage to Rome which has become an expression of our close contacts and fruitful ecumenical dialogue. These visits are an occasion for further productive work, as well as for a deepening of the "spiritual ecumenism" (cf. *Ut unum sint*, 21) which prompts divided Christians to appreciate how much already unites them.

The present Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue Commission in Finland and Sweden builds upon the substantial accomplishment of the *Joint Declaration on Justification*. In the specific context of the Nordic countries, the Commission is continuing to study the achievements and practical implications of the *Joint Declaration*. In this way it seeks to address the still existing differences between Lutherans and Catholics concerning certain questions of faith and ecclesial life while maintaining fervent witness to the truth of the Gospel.

During these days of the *Week of Prayer for Christian Unity*, we are especially aware that unity is a grace, and that we need continually to ask the Lord for this gift. Our hope is secure in his promise: "Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there

among them” (*Mt* 18:19-20).

Let us thank God for all that has been achieved so far in Catholic-Lutheran relations and let us pray that he may fill us with his Spirit who guides us towards the fullness of truth and love.

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