



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE MEMBERS
OF THE JOINT INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION
OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH
AND THE WORLD METHODIST COUNCIL**

Friday, 5 December 1980

Dear Brothers in Christ,

It is always a joy and a consolation to receive groups like your own, intense focal points of an activity which is a great blessing in our age - the search for reconciliation among the followers of Christ. The time of the Second Vatican Council, when the Bishops of the Catholic Church committed themselves overwhelmingly to this activity in the Decree on Ecumenism, was a time when the Holy Spirit also moved Christians of many traditions to a like commitment, and many dialogues were instituted at world level, including the one in which you are now engaged. Thus for fourteen years Methodist and Catholic scholars and pastors have added this activity to their ordinary labours.

Some of you formed part of that generous assignment of observers which Methodism made to the successive sessions of the Council. You have often remarked in your reports how these attentive observers were struck by the deep affinities between Catholic and Methodist traditions and ideals: between the fervent preaching of personal holiness by the Wesleys and later Methodist leaders, and the work of the spiritual giants of Catholic history. In choosing this affinity as an anchor for your dialogue, you chose wisely; yours has been a truly "holy converse", centred on a shared love of Christ, so that in it the thorny questions which are the legacy of the sad history of modern Christian division (questions which you have not shirked) have been faced with serenity, good will and charity. No one has more need than the ecumenist to remember the words of Saint Paul: "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal"^[1].

Your dialogue has ranged wide. Besides discussions of doctrinal differences there has been a strong emphasis on the positive challenges which all Christ's witnesses face today - not merely in the social field, trying to state the Christian message effectively in a world bewildered by change, but even more in the delicate inner realm of the Christian conscience, where no man or woman escapes the hard choices, the sacrifices inseparable from holding to Christ.

May God's blessing be abundant on your work. Do not be upset by the cries of the impatient and the sceptical, but do all in your power to ensure that your search for reconciliation is echoed and reflected wherever Methodists and Catholics meet. May the Holy Spirit, on whose mysterious action in the Church you have recently been so fruitfully reflecting, pour out his gifts on us all - the wisdom, the counsel and the fortitude we need to cooperate with one another and with him in accomplishing the will of God, to whom "be glory for evermore through Jesus Christ! Amen"[2].

[1] *1 Cor.* 13, 1.

[2] *Rom.* 16, 27.