



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE MEETING
OF CHRISTIAN WORLD COMMUNIONS***

Popes Hall

Friday, 27 October 2006

Dear Friends,

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (*Rom 1:7*). With these words, the Apostle Paul greeted the early Christian community of Rome, and with this same prayer I welcome you here today, in the city where Peter and Paul ministered and shed their blood for Christ.

For decades the Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions has provided a forum for fruitful contacts between the various ecclesial communities. This has enabled their representatives to build that reciprocal trust needed to engage seriously in bringing the richness of different Christian traditions to serve the common call to discipleship. I am glad to meet all of you here today, and to encourage you in your work. Every step towards Christian unity serves to proclaim the Gospel, and is made possible by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ who prayed that his disciples might be one, “so that the world may believe” (*Jn 17:21*).

It is clear to us all that today’s world is in need of a new evangelization, a fresh accounting on the part of Christians for the hope that is in them (cf. *1 Pet 3:15*). Yet those who profess that Jesus Christ is Lord are tragically divided and cannot always give a consistent common witness. Herein lies an enormous responsibility for us all.

In this light, I am glad to see that the theme of your meeting - *Visions of Christian Unity* - focuses on a basic ecumenical issue. The theological dialogues in which many Christian World Communions have been engaged are characterized by a commitment to move beyond the things

that divide, towards the unity in Christ which we seek. However daunting the journey, we must not lose sight of the final goal: full visible communion in Christ and in the Church. We may feel discouraged when progress is slow, but there is too much at stake to turn back. On the contrary, there are good reasons to forge ahead, as my predecessor Pope John Paul II pointed out in his Encyclical Letter *Ut Unum Sint* on the Catholic Church's ecumenical commitment, where he speaks of brotherhood rediscovered and greater solidarity in the service of humanity (41ff.).

The Conference of Secretaries of the Christian World Communions continues to grapple with important questions of its identity and its specific role in the ecumenical movement. Let us pray that such reflection will bring fresh insight regarding the perennial ecumenical question of "reception" (cf. *ibid.*, 80f.) and that it will help to strengthen the common witness so necessary today.

The Apostle assures us that "the Spirit helps us in our weakness" (*Rom* 8:26). Though there are many obstacles still to be overcome, we firmly believe that the Holy Spirit is ever present and will guide us along the right path. Let us continue our journey with patience and determination as we offer all our efforts to God, "through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever" (*Rom* 16:27).

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