



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO AN ECUMENICAL DELEGATION FROM FINLAND
ON THE OCCASION OF THE FEAST OF SAINT HENRY***

Saturday, 15 January 2011

*Your Excellencies,
Dear Friends from Finland,*

I welcome you with great joy on the occasion of your annual ecumenical pilgrimage to Rome to celebrate the Feast of St Henry, Patron of your beloved land. Every year, during this period, your traditional pilgrimage testifies to the sincere, friendly and helpful relations which have been established between Lutherans and Catholics, as well as in general between all the Christians in your Country.

Even though we have not yet achieved the objective of the ecumenical movement, namely full unity of faith, through dialogue many elements of agreement and closeness have matured which strengthen our general desire to do the will of our Lord Jesus Christ: “that they may all be one” (Jn 17:21). One result recently obtained that deserves attention was the conclusive report on the theme of justification in the life of the Church. This report was prepared by a group centred on Nordic Catholic-Lutheran dialogue in Finland and Sweden, that met last year.

In theology and in faith everything is linked together, and thus a common deeper understanding of the justification will help us to understand together the nature of the Church better and, as you mentioned, the episcopal ministry. Thus it will also help us to find the unity of the Church in a concrete form and thereby to be more capable, as you observed, to explain the faith to all people of today who ask each other about it and to make it more comprehensible to them so that they see that he is the answer, that Christ is the Redeemer for us all. Thus our hope remains alive that, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, many people involved in the ecumenical field, competent and aware, will contribute to the realization of this important ecumenical task and, always guided

by the Holy Spirit, will be able to forge ahead.

Having said this, it is implied that the efficacy of our efforts cannot come solely from study and discussion, but above all depend on our constant prayer, on our life in conformity with the will of God, because ecumenism is not our work but rather a fruit of God's action.

At the same time, we are all conscience of the fact that in recent years the ecumenical path, from certain points of view, has become more difficult and certainly more demanding. Questions will be asked concerning the ecumenical method and the breakthroughs of past years will be mentioned, as well as the uncertainty of the future, and the problems of our time with faith in general. In this light, your annual pilgrimage to Rome for the Feast of St Henry is an important event, a sign and an encouragement for our ecumenical efforts, for our certainty that we must walk together and that Christ is the way for humanity.

Your pilgrimage helps us to look back with joy at what has been achieved so far and to look to the future with the desire to take on a task full of faith and responsibility. On the occasion of your visit, we all wish to reinforce our certainty of the fact that the Holy Spirit, who reawakens us, accompanies us and to this day has made the ecumenical movement fruitful, may continue in this way also in the future.

I firmly hope that your visit to Rome will strengthen the future collaboration of Lutherans and Catholics, yes, between all the Christians in Finland. Looking forward to the upcoming [Week of Prayer for Christian Unity](#) let us pray that the spirit of truth will lead us to even greater love and brotherhood. May God grant you his rich Blessing in newly begun year.