



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE MEMBERS OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

October 2, 1986

Dear Brothers in Christ, You are most welcome to Rome, where the Apostles and Martyrs Peter and Paul preached the Gospel and shed their blood as witnesses of Christ. Jesus Christ, the "one mediator between God and men... who gave himself as a ransom for all, calls Christians to unity and reconciliation with one another. Christian unity therefore will always be an urgent matter because the Church has the sacred mission of preaching the Gospel of reconciliation. Every authentic ecumenical effort helps bring Christians closer to Christ. I therefore wish to congratulate you for this special ecumenical journey to Geneva, Canterbury, Constantinople and Rome, sponsored again this year by the Lutheran Church in America for its bishops. And the fact that you are now joined by an Episcopal bishop and a Catholic bishop who are actively involved in ecumenical relations with the Lutheran Churches in the United States points to the ecumenical progress being made. I pray that your dialogues will continue to bear fruit as we seek full unity in faith. The process of seeking unity is both joyful and painful. There is pain because of the burden of hundreds of years of separations. But if Christ is always the focus of our ecumenical efforts, the pain is eased and the joy increased. As Saint Peter confessed: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God". I am aware that the Lutheran Church in America and two other Lutheran Churches voted at their Conventions in August to unite and form the new Evangelical Church in America, which is to come into being in 1988. May I take this occasion also to thank you for including a prayer for me during the Lutheran Church in America Convention. Please convey my gratitude for that, and for his message just read, to Bishop James Crumley, to whom I extend my best wishes. Finally, I ask your prayers for the success of the day of prayer for peace at Assisi, on October 27. As you know, leaders of Christian Communions and of world religions have been invited to give a special prayerful witness for peace that day. The Lord has said: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God". Please pray that with the help of God's grace this ecumenical and interreligious initiative will be a real contribution to peace in our world. *"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ"*. © Copyright 1986 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana