



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE DELEGATES
OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES OF CHRIST**

IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA *Friday, 14 April 1989* Dear Friends in Christ, I am very pleased to have this opportunity to meet with you, Delegates of the *National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States*, during your visit to Rome. At this Easter season we rejoice at the angel's message to the women at the tomb: "He is not here; for he has risen, as he said" (*Matth. 28, 6*). May this Good News of life and salvation renew our hope today and always. I have very happy memories of my meeting with Christian leaders in Columbia, South Carolina, during my Pastoral Visit to the United States in 1987. Our conversation, as well as the prayer service devoted to Christian witness which followed, were both moving occasions. I am grateful for the warm welcome I received and for all that the National Council of Churches did in cooperation with the Catholic Bishops to ensure the success of the events that day. I know that some of you were personally involved and I wish to thank you. Your presence here today continues, in a sense, the conversation that took place in Columbia. You have expressed the hope that your meeting this week will help to deepen ecumenical relations between your Council and the Catholic Church as we approach the Third Millennium of Christianity. I share this hope in the firm conviction that we must walk the path of reconciliation together in obedience to Christ's will for us. The topics of your meeting are of great concern to Christian Churches. The questions of inculturation, racism, collegiality, the reception of the results of ecumenical dialogue as well as ecumenism's future possibilities – all call for continuing prayerful study as part of our search for deeper fellowship. As followers of Christ we share the joys and hopes, the sufferings and sorrows of people today. Together we are called to bear witness to Christ in a world that searches for faith, hope and love. As we strive for greater communion, the Scriptures offer a fundamental perspective for our efforts: it is the perspective of *fidelity to the Risen Christ*. In the words of Saint Paul, we must "stand firm in the Lord" (*Phil. 4, 1*). Dear friends, is not fidelity to the Lord the only sure foundation of our ecumenical efforts and of all our endeavors for justice and peace? I am confident that, as we seek to remain ever faithful to the Lord, the cause of ecumenism in the United States will steadily progress. Through the prayers and example of Saints Peter and Paul, who gave their lives for Christ in this City, may we grow together in being "rooted and built up in Christ" (*Col. 2, 7*). Upon each of you and the Churches and Ecclesial Communities you represent I invoke a full measure of grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. © Copyright 1989 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana