



# The Holy See

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## **ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER PAUL VI TO A DELEGATION OF THE WORLD LUTHERAN FEDERATION**

*Monday, 25 October 1976*

*Dear Brothers in Christ,*

it was with these words that Cardinal Bea greeted the Observers, when he met them at the beginning of the Second Vatican Council. He used this title of "Brothers in Christ", in order to underline the unity that all Christians have: a unity which Christ created in Baptism itself. In using this very same title now, we wish to communicate to you our joy and gratitude for your visit, which has for its purpose the further advancement of that mutual understanding which is so basic in the movement towards the reestablishment of full ecclesial communion.

We are indeed profoundly grateful to God for the progress made in this regard over the past ten years. And as we reflect on this progress and on the path lies before us, we are convinced of the special importance of the Holy Scriptures. With the Second Vatican Council we recognize that "In dialogue itself the Holy Scriptures are precious instruments in the mighty hand of God for attaining that unity which the Saviour holds out to all men" (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 21).

Although it cannot be denied that there are differences in interpreting the Scriptures, differences which still divide us—a fact that the Decree on Ecumenism itself honestly notes—it is nevertheless always true that the Word of God in the Holy Scriptures "is living and active" (*Hebr.* 4, 12) and is able to build up and to give the inheritance among all those who are sanctified (Cfr. *Act.* 20, 32; *Dei Verbum*, 21).

And we are likewise convinced of the need for authentic Christian living in accordance with the Gospel, if there is to be hope for the reestablishment of full ecclesial communion. The Second Vatican Council warned against the idea of limiting ecumenism to doctrinal conversations and

practical collaboration, when it stated with profound insight: “Let all Christ’s faithful remember that the more purely they strive to live according to the Gospel, the more they are fostering and even practising Christian unity (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 7). And since the full unity of Christians has its highest exemplar and source in the mystery of the Holy Trinity itself (Cfr. *Ibid.* 2), Christians can therefore more deeply and easily grow in mutual fraternal relations to the extent that they enjoy profound communion with the Father, the Word, and the Spirit (*Ibid.* 7).

And for the glory of the Holy Trinity and the completion of our own joy, we look forward, in humble and prayerful longing, to the perfection of our fellowship in Christ Jesus our Lord.