

## Lutherans and Catholics: From Conflict to Communion



“I look with a sense of profound gratitude to Jesus Christ, at the many steps that have been taken in the relations between Lutherans and Catholics in recent decades, and not only through theological dialogue but also by means of brotherly collaboration in many pastoral fields and, above all, in commitment to progress in spiritual ecumenism” said the Pope, who this morning received in audience a delegation of the Luth World Federation and representatives from the Lutheran-Roman Catholic International Commission on Unity.

It is precisely this spiritual ecumenism that constitutes, in a certain sense, “the spirit of our journey towards full communion, and already allows us to reap certain fruit, even if it is still imperfect; insofar as, in approaching, with a humble spirit, Our Lord Jesus Christ, we are sure to move closer together, and insofar as by invoking the Lord's gift of unity, we are sure that He will take us by the hand and will be our guide”.

This year marks fifty years of theological dialogue, and the anniversary of the fifth centenary of the Reformation is approaching. The Lutheran-Roman Catholic International Commission on Unity has therefore published the text “From conflict to communion: the Lutheran-Catholic interpretation of the Reformation in 2017”. The Pope underlined the importance for all to “meet each other in dialogue on the historical reality of the Reformation, on its consequences and the responses that should be given to it. Catholics and Lutherans can ask forgiveness for the harm they have done to each other and for their guilt before God, and together rejoice for the nostalgia for unity that the Lord has reawakened in our hearts, and which makes us look ahead with hope”.

“In the light of the journey through these recent decades, and of the many examples of brotherly communion between Lutherans and Catholics to which we are witnesses, and comforted by trust in the grace that is bestowed upon us by the Lord Jesus Christ, I am sure that we will be able to continue along our path of dialogue and communion”, he continued, “also facing fundamental questions, as well

as divergences that arise in the anthropological and ethical fields. Certainly, there are and there will be difficulties, which will require further patience, dialogue, and mutual comprehension, but let us not be afraid! We are well aware, as Benedict XVI reminded us many times, that unity is not primarily the result of our efforts, but of the action of the Holy Spirit, to which we must open our hearts with trust in order that it might lead us along the paths to reconciliation and communion”.

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