



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO A DELEGATION FROM THE CZECH REPUBLIC
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 600th ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF JAN HUS***

Monday, 15 June 2015

[Multimedia]

Dear Friends,

I welcome you, distinguished representatives of the Czechoslovak Hussite Church and of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, who have come to Rome to celebrate a Liturgy of Reconciliation at the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul on the occasion of the 600th anniversary of the Reformer Jan Hus. I address a cordial greeting to Cardinal Miloslav Vlk.

This meeting gives us the opportunity to renew and deepen the relations between our communities. In obedience to the will of the Lord Jesus, who on the eve of his Passion and death prayed to the Father for the unity of his disciples (cf. Jn 17:21), we have the duty to promote increasing mutual knowledge and active collaboration. Many disputes of the past beg to be revisited in the light of the new context in which we live, and agreements and concurrences will only be reached if we address the traditional issues of conflict with a new view. Above all, we cannot forget that our shared profession of faith in God the Father, in the Son and in the Holy Spirit, in which we were baptized, already unites us in bonds of genuine fraternity.

Six centuries have passed since the day that the renowned preacher and Rector of the University of Prague, Jan Hus, died tragically. Previously in 1999, St John Paul ii, in an intervening international symposium dedicated to this memorable figure, expressed his “profound regret for the cruel death inflicted [on him],” and he numbered him among the Reformers of the Church. In the light of this approach, the study must continue on the person and activity of Jan Hus, who for a long time was the subject of contention among Christians, however today he has become a reason for dialogue. This research, carried out without conditioning of an ideological type, will be

an important service to the historical truth, to all Christians and to the whole society, even beyond the boundaries of your Nation.

The Second Vatican Council stated: the “renewal of the Church”, which “essentially consists in an increase of fidelity to her own calling ... Church renewal therefore has notable ecumenical importance” (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 6). Today, in particular, the need for a new evangelization of so many men and women that seem indifferent to the joyful news of the Gospel, renders urgent the duty of renewal of every ecclesial structure, in order to foster the positive response from all those to whom Jesus offers his friendship (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 27). And the visible communion among Christians will surely render the proclamation more credible.

Responding to Christ’s call to continuous conversion, of which we are all in need, we can move forward together on the path of reconciliation and peace. Along this path we learn, by the grace of God, to recognize one another as friends and to consider others’ motivations in the best possible light. Through this connection, I hope the bond of friendship will be developed also at the level of the local and parish communities.

With these sentiments, I unite myself spiritually to the Penitential Liturgy that you will celebrate here in Rome. May God, rich in mercy, grant us the grace to acknowledge ourselves all sinners and to be able to forgive one another; I assure you of my prayer and I ask all of you, please, to pray for me and for my ministry. Thank you.