



The Holy See

JOHN PAUL II

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Wednesday, 19 January 2005

"The Church's one foundation"

1. The "Week of Prayer for Christian Unity" began yesterday. These days of reflection and prayer are particularly timely for reminding Christians that the *re-establishment of full unity* among them, in accordance with the will of Jesus, *involves every baptized person*, all pastors and all the faithful (cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, n. 5).

The "Week" is being celebrated a few months after the 40th anniversary of the promulgation of the Second Vatican Council's Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, a key text that placed the Catholic Church firmly and irrevocably on the path of the ecumenical movement.

2. This year, the theme sets before us a basic truth for every ecumenical commitment: Christ is the Church's one foundation. The Council strongly recommended prayer for unity as the soul of the whole ecumenical movement (cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, n. 8). Since the reconciliation of Christians "transcends human powers and gifts" (*ibid.*, n. 24), our prayer expresses the hope that does not disappoint us and the trust in the Lord who makes all things new (cf. Rom 5: 5; Rv 21: 5). This prayer, however, must be accompanied by the purification of the mind, sentiments and memory. It will thus become an expression of that "interior conversion" without which there can be no true ecumenism (cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, n. 7). In short, unity is a gift of God to be tirelessly implored with humility and truth.

3. The desire for unity is spreading and becoming deeper, affecting new milieus and new contexts and inspiring a multitude of acts, initiatives and reflections. The Lord also recently granted his disciples to make *important contacts through dialogue and collaboration*. The pain of our

separation is more and more acutely felt as we face the challenges of a world that expects a *clear and unanimous Gospel witness* on the part of those who believe in Christ.

4. As is the custom, the "Week" in Rome will end with the celebration of Vespers on 25 January, in the Basilica of *St Paul-Outside-the-Walls*. I thank Cardinal Walter Kasper who will be representing me at this liturgical encounter in which representatives of the other Christian Churches and Confessions will also take part. I will be joining them in spirit, and I ask you to pray that the whole family of believers may achieve the full communion that Christ desired as soon as possible.

To special groups

I offer a warm welcome to all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors present at today's Audience. I greet particularly the members of the Servite Secular Institute and the groups from Scotland, Finland, Australia and the United States of America. Wishing you a pleasant and fruitful stay in Rome, I cordially invoke upon you the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I wish you all a happy New Year!

I address a special thought to the Patriarch of Cilicia for Armenians, His Beatitude Nerses Bedros XIX, and to the Bishops accompanying him, the members of the Lions Clubs of Puglia and the representatives of the "Circolo Didattico di Somma Vesuviana", gathered here with the Archbishop of Nola.

I also greet the priests, seminarians and lay people of the Neocatechumenal Way. Dear friends, I thank you for your generous commitment to the new evangelization. I hope that the reflections of these days will help you to deepen communion in heartfelt compliance, both with the Pastors of the local Churches and the competent Institutions of the Holy See. Thus, you will be able to make a more and more effective contribution to the cause of the Gospel.

Lastly my thoughts go to the *young people*, to the *sick* and to the *newly-weds*. I entrust you all to the motherly protection of the Virgin Mary.

ENGLISH-SPEAKING GROUPS

From various Countries:

Members of the Servite Secular Institute.

From Scotland:

Pilgrims from the Archdiocese of Glasgow.

From Finland:

Members of the choirs: Chorus Cantorum from the Lutheran Cathedral in Turku and the Schola Cantorum Aboensis.

From Australia:

Students from Santa Maria College in Perth, Western Australia.

From the United States of America:

A group of: seminarians and faculty from Mundelein Seminary in the Archdiocese of Chicago; seminarians and faculty from the Seminary of the Immaculate Conception, Huntington, New York; young pilgrims from the Archdiocese of Atlanta; pilgrims from the following parishes: Holy Spirit in Pensacola, Florida; St John the Evangelist in Ozark, Alabama; St Patrick in Norcross, Georgia; St John the Evangelist in Binghamton, New York; students and faculty from: the University of St Thomas in St Paul, Minnesota; Randolph-Macon College in Ashland, Virginia; students from: the University of Maryland, Baltimore; Pepperdine University, Florence Campus; the University of Tennessee, Knoxville; Austin College in Sherman, Texas.

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