



The Holy See

**LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO Dr. MARY TANNER
MODERATOR OF THE COMMISSION ON FAITH AND ORDER
OF THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES**

*To Dr Mary Tanner
Moderator of the Commission
on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches.*

On the occasion of the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order, meeting on 3–14 August 1993 at Santiago de Compostela, I extend warm greetings to all the participants and offer the assurance of my prayers that the Holy Spirit will guide and direct your deliberations on the significant theme "Towards *Koinônia* in Faith, Life and Witness".

I take this opportunity to express once again my regard for the Commission's patient dedication to the work of overcoming the divisions among Christians, for this discord – as the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council pointed out – "openly contradicts the will of Christ, provides a stumbling block to the world, and inflicts damage on the most holy cause of proclaiming the Good News to every creature" (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 1). I wish likewise to reaffirm the commitment of the Catholic Church to promoting Christian unity, so that the prayer of Jesus "that they may all be one" (Jn. 17:20) may be realized in accordance with his providential design for his flock.

As a means for achieving this incomparably important aim, reflection on the nature of *koinônia* seems especially appropriate, for ecclesial communion is not simply a subject of increasing theological interest but is a notion which the Sacred Scriptures use as a key for understanding the efficacy of the Lord's grace in the lives of his disciples. As Saint Paul writes, our call from Gos is "into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1Cor. 1:9). Made "partakers of the divine nature" (2Pt. 1:4), we participate in the very life shared by the Triune God: the son in us and the Father in the Son (Cf. Jn. 17:23).

A deepened awareness of the profound mystery of ecclesial communion moves Christians to confess that God and not man is the source of the Church's unity; it leads them to repent of their sins against fraternal charity; and it encourages them, under the inspiring grace of the Holy Spirit, to work through prayer, word and action to attain that fullness of unity which Jesus Christ desires (Cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 4).

Important Faith and Order studies, in which Catholic theologians have also taken part for many years, have been of great service to the cause of Christian unity by identifying points of convergence and even agreement on issues over which believers have long been divided. This is indeed a significant accomplishment, which confirms hope in all who have the unity of Christians at heart. I join with you in praying that the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order will, with God's assistance, bear abundant fruit in helping to resolve the remaining issues required for reaching visible unity in one faith and one Eucharistic fellowship. I ask the Holy Spirit to inspire in all present that "change of heart and holiness of life" (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 8) essential for responding to God's continual call to seek unity.

May the abundant gifts of the Triune God sustain you all in your efforts on behalf of Ecumenism.

From the Vatican, 21 July 1993.

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