



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE
"WORLD ALLIANCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES"**

*To Dr. Jane Dempsey Douglass
President of the
World Alliance of Reformed Churches*

I am pleased to take the opportunity offered by the presence of Cardinal Edward I. Cassidy, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, at the twenty-third General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches meeting in Debrecen, Hungary, from August 8 - 20, to send warm greetings to you and to the participants in this important Assembly, which has as its theme: *Break the Chains of Injustice*.

Since the Second Vatican Council, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Catholic Church have engaged in two phases of international dialogue aimed at resolving the doctrinal differences which still prevent us from achieving the visible unity to which Christ calls his disciples. Other significant contacts also have helped to increase understanding between us. The Catholic Church is committed to continuing this theological dialogue so that we can extend the convergences already found, and face those issues still to be resolved, so that together we may honour the Lord Jesus Christ, the one Mediator between God and humanity (cf. 1 Tim 2:5).

I have had occasion in recent years to visit countries in Central and Eastern Europe where centuries ago Catholics and Reformed Christians often clashed with one another. I remember well my visit to Debrecen in 1991. There I took part in an ecumenical service in the Reformed church, and afterwards visited the monument dedicated to Protestant victims of the religious wars who are commemorated there. It was a reminder that Catholics and Reformed must continue to seek a healing of memories as part of their common pilgrimage towards unity. All Christian communities have martyrs for the faith (cf. *Ut Unum Sint*, 83), and often the tragedy behind this is that the evangelical charity which ought to have inspired everyone was not strong enough to ensure even

respect for one another.

Your General Council meets just a few years before the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, when Christians will commemorate the Incarnation of the Son of God, our only light and hope. I pray that we shall approach this Anniversary in a spirit of genuine gratitude that in these recent years, through God's grace, we have begun to heal the divisions of the past. May the Lord help us to continue to respond together to the challenge posed by his prayer for his disciples: "that they may all be one . . . so that the world may believe" (Jn 17:21).

With these sentiments I ask God's blessings upon your Assembly: "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 1:7).

From the Vatican, 30 July 1997

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