



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO A DELEGATION OF THE
"EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA"**

*Consistory Hall
Monday, 14 February 1994*

Dear Friends,

I am happy to welcome this *Delegation from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*. It is my hope that your ecumenical pilgrimage will further strengthen our mutual desire for the unity of Christ's followers, a desire which the Holy Spirit constantly renews and deepens in our hearts.

The many groups of American Lutherans who have come to visit the Holy See over the years are a sign of the good relations which have developed between Lutherans and Catholics in the United States. Another sign is the theological dialogue, begun in 1964, that has produced a number of significant statements on questions over which Lutherans and Catholics have long been divided. It is fitting that in this dialogue special prominence has been given to considering the nature of justification. In my Encyclical Letter "[Veritatis Splendor](#)", I underlined the fact that only by responding in faith to the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ can we live as children of the Father (Cf. John Paul II, [Veritatis Splendor](#), 19-21): "the 'righteousness' which the Law demands, but is unable to give, is found by every believer to be revealed and granted by the Lord Jesus" (*Ibid.*, 23). Then, in the light of that transforming grace, the gift of the Holy Spirit makes it possible to obey the Lord's commandments, not the least of which is that we should love one another as he has loved us (Cf. Jn. 15:12).

I pray that Lutherans and Catholics will be ever more attentive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, so that remaining obstacles to our full and visible communion in the apostolic faith and sacramental life may be overcome. May this be done "through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever! Amen" (Rom. 16:27).

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