



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II ON THE OCCASION OF THE SEVENTH ASSEMBLY

OF THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN CANBERRA On the occasion of the Seventh Assembly of the World Council of Churches I send warm greetings to you and all the participants, and assure you of my closeness in prayer as you gather to consider the theme: "Come Holy Spirit: Renew the Whole Creation". The fact that the World Council of Churches has chosen for its Assembly a theme dedicated to the Holy Spirit is both significant and opportune. It calls to mind the abiding presence of the Spirit who has been with the Church throughout her history and who is among us now in fulfilment of the words of our Lord Jesus Christ who said: "the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name . . . will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (*Jo.* 14, 26). The ecumenical movement, of which your Assembly is an important forum, has been "fostered by the grace of the Holy Spirit" (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 1). It is in fact the Spirit who sustains our prayer, our openness to conversion of mind and heart, and our faithfulness to the word of life transmitted in the Gospel and in the Church. We can truly state that progress towards the restoration of unity among Christians depends above all on the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In the seven years since your last Assembly the Spirit has brought us further along the road towards unity. My visit to the World Council of Churches in 1984 and your subsequent visit to Rome underlined the significant efforts towards unity in which we are engaged. At Assisi in 1986, when the representatives of many Christian communities and of other religious traditions generously responded to my call for a Day of Prayer for Peace, we had a moving experience of the direction in which the Spirit is leading us. Theological dialogue too has made important contributions to the search for unity and is helping to clarify issues which need to be further studied. In this connection, I am mindful of the value of the consultation undertaken with regard to the Document *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*. Such positive aspects of our search for visible unity in faith are surely a sign of the Holy Spirit drawing us closer to the unity which Christ wishes for his disciples. The difficulties which we experience in our ecumenical efforts should not discourage us but rather impel us to commit ourselves anew to the task in hand. May your Assembly be an occasion for a renewed awareness of the Spirit's gifts in this regard. The present tragic situation of our troubled world confirms once again humanity's need for reconciliation, its need for an ever more authentic witness to the Biblical message of peace, justice and the integrity of creation. But the sad fact is that our testimony to these values is less convincing to the degree that the world continues to be confronted by our divisions. Herein lies the urgency of the ecumenical task. It is my prayer that the Lord will bless your Assembly and that the Holy Spirit will guide our common efforts towards unity of faith. May the same Spirit enlighten all those gathering in Canberra to reflect together on the great issues of our times in the light of the Word of God. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (*2 Cor.* 13, 14). *From the Vatican, 30 January 1991.* IOANNES PAULUS PP. II

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