



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE CATHOLIC, LUTHERAN AND
ORTHODOX BISHOPS IN FINLAND**

Monday, 7 January 1985

Dear Brothers in Christ,

It is a great joy for me to welcome you to Rome today, the Catholic, Lutheran and Orthodox Bishops in Finland. It is a particular joy because you have come together to this city in a spirit of true ecumenical fellowship, and the purpose of your visit reflects your appreciation of the fact that prayer must lie at the very heart of all endeavours to reestablish that unity for which Christ prayed.

At the church of Santa Maria Sopra Minerva you are to inaugurate a place of prayer for your countrymen here in this city. In so doing you are looking back to your common roots as Christians and as Finns. Your country is one in which Western and Eastern Christians live side by side; and you join in revering the memory of Saint Henry, the first Western Bishop in your country. You also express your common roots by joining in the recitation of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed in its original form. This recitation of the Creed provides a solid foundation for our hope of achieving full unity among Christians. On the occasion of the Sixteenth Centenary of the Council of Constantinople I wrote: "The teaching of the First Council of Constantinople is still the expression of the one common faith of the whole of Christianity. As we confess this faith – as we do every time that we recite the Creed – . . . we wish to emphasize the things which unite us with all our brothers, notwithstanding the divisions that have occurred in the course of the centuries" (IOANNIS PAULI II *Epistula ad universos Ecclesiae Episcopos volvente anno MCD a Concilio Costantinopolitano I necnon MDL a Concilio Ephesino*, I, 1, die 25 mar. 1981: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, IV, 1 (1981) 816).

At the international level, the Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church and the Lutheran World Federation are all committed to and engaged in the ecumenical dialogue. Our dialogues are

making progress, through God's grace, but it is important that they not remain remote from the life of the Christian people in the local Churches. By your present initiative you are giving vivid expression to the progress already made, and you are doing so in a way that will, I hope, encourage the people you serve to work and pray ever more zealously for the great cause of unity.

Thus your initiative is a striking form of common witness. The fact that you come here together is itself a witness to the importance of efforts for unity. The fact that you pray together is a witness to our belief that only through the grace of God can that unity be achieved. The fact that you recite the Creed together is a witness to "the one common faith of the whole of Christianity" (*Ibid.*).

Dear Brothers in Christ: I thank you for this visit; I pray for you in your pastoral responsibilities; I pray for your beloved country. May your visit, through the prayers of Saint Henry, lead us all nearer to the great day of perfect unity in Christ our Saviour, manifested in the flesh, . . . preached among the nations, believed on in the world" (*1 Tim.* 3,16).

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