



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION
FOR DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH
AND THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST**

Monday, 9 December 1991 Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I wish to extend a cordial welcome to all of you, members of the *International Commission for Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Disciples of Christ*. Your meeting in these days to reflect on "the Church as Communion in Christ" is a source of satisfaction and encouragement, for we must all be convinced that every step along the path of ecumenical understanding is essentially an act of loving obedience to Christ himself. The fact that you have come to Rome during the Advent season in order to continue this dialogue is significant for several reasons. In the first place, the See of Rome recognizes a special responsibility to work for Christian unity. It was here that the Second Vatican Council reaffirmed the Church's irrevocable commitment to the unity of Christians. My predecessors and I have continually endeavoured to fulfil this charge, placing our hope for the restoration of unity among Christians in the grace of the Holy Spirit. In the words of the Council: "It is the Holy Spirit, dwelling in those who believe, pervading and ruling over the entire Church, who brings about that marvellous communion of the faithful and joins them together so intimately in Christ that he is the principle of the Church's unity" (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 2). The Advent season adds a symbolic dimension to your dialogue. It reminds us that the attainment of Christian unity remains ahead of us. It is something to be worked for with great faith and hope, and in expectation of the day when we can rejoice in the removal of the obstacles that divide Christians and in the recovery of full communion. As Saint James writes: "Behold, the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it until it receives the early and late rains. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the Lord's coming is at hand" (James 5:7-8). May the spirit of this Advent season give you the grace of patient discernment in your important work. This is an enormous task and a major responsibility which you bear on behalf of the Catholic Church and the Disciples of Christ. May our Lord Jesus Christ, who has willed that there should be unity among all his followers, continue to enlighten you with his Spirit. I pray that he will bless you, your work and your families. May he give you the fullness of joy and peace during the Christmas season which we shall soon celebrate. © Copyright 1991 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana