



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO MEMBERS OF THE DELEGATION OF THE WORLD EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE

Thursday, 6 November 2014

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father” (*Gal* 1:3-4). With these words the Apostle Paul expresses our common faith and our common hope. I ask you to bring this greeting, and its proclamation that Jesus Christ is Lord and Saviour, to the members of your respective communities.

Whenever we put ourselves entirely and lovingly at the service of the Gospel, we become ever more fruitful branches of that vine which is Christ, “until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (*Eph* 4:13). This truth is grounded in our Baptism, by which we share in the fruits of Christ’s death and resurrection. Baptism is God’s priceless gift which we have in common (cf. *Gal* 3:27). Thanks to this gift, we no longer live a purely earthly existence; we now live in the power of the Spirit.

The sacrament of Baptism reminds us of a fundamental and very comforting truth. The Lord always anticipates us with his love and his grace. He goes before our communities; he goes before all those who proclaim the Gospel of salvation and those who accept it, preparing every heart to welcome him. “Reading the Scriptures makes it clear that the Gospel is not merely about our personal relationship with God. Nor should our loving response to God be seen simply as an accumulation of small personal gestures to individuals in need... a series of acts aimed solely at easing our conscience. The Gospel is about the kingdom of God (cf. *Lk* 4:43); it is about loving God who reigns in our world” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 180). The Kingdom of God always goes before us, just as the mystery of the Church’s unity always goes before us.

From the beginning, there have been divisions among Christians and sadly, even today, conflicts and rivalries exist between our communities. This weakens our ability to fulfill the Lord's commandment to preach the Gospel to all peoples (cf. *Mt 28:19-20*). Our divisions mar the beauty of the seamless robe of Christ, yet they do not completely destroy the profound unity brought about by grace in all the baptized (cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 13). The effectiveness of the Christian message would no doubt be greater were Christians to overcome their divisions, and together celebrate the sacraments, spread the word of God, and bear witness to charity.

It pleases me to know that in various countries Catholics and Evangelicals enjoy good relations and work together as brothers and sisters. The joint efforts of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance have also opened up new horizons by clarifying misunderstandings and by showing the way to overcoming prejudices. It is my hope that these talks may further inspire our common witness and our efforts to evangelize: "If we really believe in the abundantly free working of the Holy Spirit, we can learn so much from one another! It is not just about being better informed about others, but rather about reaping what the Spirit has sown in them, which is also meant to be a gift for us" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 246). I am confident that the document, *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct* can prove helpful for the preaching of the Gospel in multi-religious contexts.

Dear brothers and sisters, I trust that the Holy Spirit, who inspires the Church to persevere in seeking new methods of evangelization, will usher in a new era of relations between Catholics and Evangelicals, so that the Lord's will that the Gospel be brought to the ends of the earth (cf. *Acts 1:8*) may be more fully realized. With this prayer, I ask you to pray for me and for my ministry. Thank you.