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Preparations to commemorate 500 years since the Reformation

Vatican City, 1 June 2016 – The following is the Joint Press Release – from the Lutheran World Federation and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity – concerning the ecumenical events in Lund and Malmö, in Sweden, in which Pope Francis will participate on the 31st of October, for the commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

The joint Lutheran-Catholic ecumenical commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation on 31 October in Lund, Sweden will consist of two parts. It will begin with a liturgy in Lund Cathedral and continue with a public event at Malmö Arena that will be open to wider participation. The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and Roman Catholic Church joint event will highlight the 50 years of continuous ecumenical dialogue between Catholics and Lutherans and the joint gifts of this collaboration. The Catholic-Lutheran commemoration of 500 years of the Reformation is structured around the themes of thanksgiving, repentance and commitment to common witness. The aim is to express the gifts of the Reformation and ask forgiveness for division perpetuated by Christians from the two traditions.

Lund Cathedral will be the venue for the common prayer service based on the recently published Catholic-Lutheran “Common Prayer” liturgical guide that is based on the report *From Conflict to Communion*. Malmö Arena will be the stage for activities focusing on the commitment to common witness and service of Catholics and Lutherans in the world. Highlights of the joint work of LWF World Service and Caritas Internationalis will be featured, including care for refugees, peacebuilding, and advocacy for climate justice. The arena can host up to 10,000 people.

Pope Francis, LWF President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan and LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Martin Junge will lead the common prayer service in Lund and the event in Malmö in cooperation with leaders from Church of Sweden and the Catholic Diocese of Stockholm.

“There is power when communities find their way out of conflict. In Christ we are encouraged to serve together in this world. The joint commemoration is a witness to the love and hope we all have because of the grace of God,” LWF President Younan and General Secretary Junge say.

Kurt Cardinal Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity explains further: “By concentrating together on the centrality of the question of God and on a Christocentric approach, Lutherans and Catholics will have the possibility of an ecumenical commemoration of the Reformation, not simply in a pragmatic way, but in the deep sense of faith in the crucified and resurrected Christ.”

“We look forward to this event which can gather up to 10,000 people. The idea behind the arena event is to further describe the development from conflict to communion with a focus on hope for the future and common service in the world,” says Church of Sweden Archbishop Antje Jackélen.

Bishop Anders Arborelius of the Catholic Diocese of Stockholm adds, “History will be written when Pope Francis and the LWF leaders visit Lund and Malmö to encourage all of us to go further on the road towards Christian unity.”

Information on the Joint Ecumenical Commemoration will be updated on the event website www.lund2016.net
