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Audience with pilgrims from the diocese of Dresden-Meissen and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony

This morning, the Holy Father Francis received in audience a group of pilgrims from the diocese of Dresden-Meissen and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony.

The following is the address delivered by the Pope to those present at the audience:

Address of the Holy Father

Guten Morgen!

Dear brother bishop, dear *Landesbischof*,

Madam Minister, Lord Mayor,

Dear brothers and sisters!

I send you my heartfelt blessing, and I thank the choir for the beautiful hymn, thank you!

To make a pilgrimage means setting out on a journey, usually towards a sanctuary. This journey becomes the symbol of one's own life journey and the great final destination, which is God Himself, as is well expressed in the verse of the German version of the *Te Deum* that you have chosen as the motto of your journey: „Auf dich hoffen wir allein!“, “Our hope is in you alone”.

With your pilgrimage, you intend – as you have written – to “rediscover together and for the men of our time the spiritual treasures of the pilgrimage”. Yes, all the richness of our faith is a gift, a gift from God that we receive not only for ourselves, but always for others too, for the people around us, including those who seem to be far from

faith, who have not yet heard talk of Christ, or who think He has nothing important to say to us. It seems to me that the life of many people today is lacking in the meaning, hope and joy that the world cannot give. Therefore, I urge you to share the meaning, hope and joy of faith with everyone, with confidence and humility.

Personal and credible witness is what counts when one transmits faith. And as a criterion of credibility, the Lord Himself mentions the unity of His disciples and asks the Father "that they may all be one... so that the world may believe" (cf. *Jn 17:21*). On behalf of the Church, I thank you for taking this ecumenical mission of Jesus seriously and for having sought to achieve it with this joint pilgrimage and, equally important, in daily life.

I have heard that a large part of your group is made up of volunteers. My special thanks go to you, because your freely-given service is a particularly credible witness!

And I would like to thank you too, the *Dresdner Kapellknaben*, for your special witness. Art in general, but music in particular, is a language that is understood by all and is able to challenge, inspire and uplift people. Some things are difficult to express in words, and this applies above all to the divine mystery, which goes well beyond our thoughts and concepts. This is why we have this rich symbolism in churches, which makes the unsayable tangible and concrete: candles, incense, art and music! Thank you for the wonderful unison, the harmony that the many voices find, and which reminds us of the work of the Holy Spirit, who unites the many! Thank you for your witness!

Dear brothers and sisters, continue to work together and to bear witness to the hope that is in you (cf. *1 Pt 3:15*). Remember the image of the salt of the earth and the light of the world, of the tiny seed; the Bible is full of these examples in which something small and insignificant can grow into something great with God's grace, something much bigger and more beautiful than what we humans would have been able to achieve alone, by our own forces. In October 1989, you had an idea of this when some Protestant and Catholic Christians in Dresden managed to confront the police. It was like a miracle that not a single shot was fired, and also in other cities a peaceful way opened up that no-one would have thought possible, and that eventually led to the "miracle" of German unity. Tomorrow you too will celebrate this event here in Rome.

Let us now turn to our heavenly Father in prayer, with the prayer that unites all Christians. With Our Father we ask for all that we need to live, for our pilgrimage, at the end of which our great hope will be realized: full harmony in communion with God and each other. Let us pray.

Unser Vater...

Gott segne Sie alle, der Vater, der Sohn und der Heilige Geist. Und beten Sie für mich, diese Arbeit ist nicht einfach! Aber beten Sie *für* mich, nicht *gegen* mich!

[God bless you all, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. And pray for me, this work is not easy! But pray for me, not against me!]
