



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
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BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

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Audience with a delegation from the World Methodist Council

This morning, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience a delegation from the World Methodist Council, to whom he addressed the following greeting:

Greeting of the Holy Father

Dear Sister, dear Brothers, welcome!

It is a joy for me to greet Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett and the Reverend Reynaldo Ferreira Leão-Neto. I express my good wishes as you begin your service as President and General Secretary of the World Methodist Council.

For a long period of time Methodists and Catholics were estranged and also wary of each other. Today, however, we can thank God that, for almost sixty years, we have been progressing together in reciprocal knowledge, understanding and, above all, love. This helps to deepen our mutual communion.

Opening ourselves to one another has brought us closer and made us realize that reconciliation is a task of the heart, a task of the *heart* rather than the mind. When the Heart of the Lord Jesus touches our hearts, he transforms us. This is how our communities will be able to unite their differing minds and wills in order to let themselves be guided by the Spirit as brothers and sisters. This is a journey that takes time, but we must continue along that path, always focussed on the Heart of Christ, because it is from that Heart that we learn to relate well to one another and to serve God's kingdom (cf. Encyclical Letter *Dilexit Nos*, 28).

Next year, Christians around the world will celebrate the 1700th anniversary of the First Ecumenical Council: Nicaea. This occasion reminds us that we profess the same faith, and thus have the same responsibility of offering signs of hope that bear witness to God's presence in the world. Indeed, this is "a summons to all Churches and Ecclesial Communities to persevere on the path to visible unity and in the quest of finding ways to respond fully to the prayer of Jesus 'that they may all be one'." (*Spes Non Confundit*, 17). I am reminded of something that the great Orthodox Bishop Zizioulas used to say, namely that he already knew the date of unity: it would be the day after the final judgement! Yet, in the meantime, we must journey together, as brothers and sisters, pray together, do charitable works together, and move forward together in dialogue. Zizioulas was great!

I thank the pastors and theologians who have served on the International Joint Commission for Dialogue between the World Methodist Council and the Catholic Church, and I encourage the current members to continue in those same efforts.

To you, dear Sister and dear Brothers, I express heartfelt thanks for your visit. Let us remain united in prayer. Happy Christmas!
