Lunedì 24.03.2003

UDIENZA AD UNA DELEGAZIONE DELLA "EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA"

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Alle 11.00 di questa mattina il Santo Padre ha ricevuto in Udienza una delegazione della "Evangelical Lutheran Church in America", ed ha loro rivolto le parole di saluto che pubblichiamo di seguito:

● SALUTO DEL SANTO PADRE

Dear Friends,

I am pleased to welcome the delegation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America making an ecumenical journey to Istanbul, Rome and Canterbury. I also take this occasion to offer my cordial good wishes to Bishop Mark Hansen as he begins his term as Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and as Vice-President of the Lutheran World Federation. May your visit confirm you in your commitment to the cause of Christian unity.

The quest for full communion among all Christians is a duty which springs from the prayer of the Lord himself (cf. *Jn* 17:21). In recent times we have come to appreciate more deeply the fellowship existing between Lutherans and Catholics, which led to the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* signed in 1999. In that document we are challenged to build on what has already been achieved, fostering more extensively at the local level a spirituality of communion marked by prayer and shared witness to the Gospel. In a world situation filled with danger and insecurity, all Christians are called to stand together in proclaiming the values of the Kingdom of God. The events of recent days make this duty all the more urgent.

I join you in praying that Almighty God will bestow upon the world that peace which is the fruit of justice and solidarity (cf. *Is* 32:16-17). Upon you and your families I cordially invoke God's abundant blessings.

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