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OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE



BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS

BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 0622

Venerdì 09.12.2005

UDIENZA ALLA DELEGAZIONE DEL CONSIGLIO METODISTA MONDIALE

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Questa mattina, il Santo Padre Benedetto XVI ha ricevuto in Udienza i Membri della Delegazione del Consiglio Metodista Mondiale ed ha loro rivolto il discorso che riportiamo di seguito:

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE

Dear Bishop Mbang,

Dear friends in Christ,

It gives me great joy to welcome you, representatives of the World Methodist Council, and to thank you for your visit. I remain most grateful for the prayerful presence and support of Methodist representatives at the funeral of Pope John Paul II and at the celebration marking the inauguration of my Pontificate.

Forty years ago this week, Pope Paul VI addressed the ecumenical observers at the end of the Second Vatican Council. During this encounter he expressed the hope that differences between Christians could be resolved, "slowly, gradually, loyally, generously." Now we have to reflect upon the friendly relations between Catholics and Methodists, and upon the patient and persevering dialogue in which we have engaged. Indeed, there is much for which we can today give thanks.

Since 1967, our dialogue has treated major theological themes such as: revelation and faith, tradition and teaching authority in the Church. These efforts have been candid in addressing areas of difference. They have also demonstrated a considerable degree of convergence and are worthy of reflection and study. Our dialogue and the many ways in which Catholics and Methodists have become better acquainted have allowed us to recognize together some of those "Christian treasures of great value". On occasion, this recognition has enabled us to speak with a common voice in addressing social and ethical questions in an increasingly secularized world. I have been encouraged by the initiative which would bring the member churches of the World Methodist Council into association with the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, signed by the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation in 1999. Should the World Methodist Council express its intent to associate itself with the Joint Declaration, it would assist in contributing to the healing and reconciliation we ardently desire, and

would be a significant step towards the stated goal of full visible unity in faith.

Dear friends, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and mindful of God's great and abiding Mercy throughout the world, let us seek to foster a mutual commitment to the Word of God, to witness and to joint prayer. As we prepare our hearts and minds to welcome the Lord in this Advent season, I invoke God's abundant blessings upon all of you and on Methodists throughout the world.

[01599-02.02] [Original text: English]
