

Cardinal Kasper address/greeting at signing ceremony of Methodist association with JDDJ
draft 2

Your Eminences, Your Excellencies, Dear brothers and sisters in Christ who are gathered for this World Methodist Conference,

Grace and peace to all of you and to all the member churches of the World Methodist Council. It is a joy to be with you in Seoul, and a special joy to be here as the WMC and its member churches officially become associated with the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, signed by the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation on the 31st of October, 1999. This is a historic day. This is a gift of God. We can be grateful for it.

For the past forty years, Methodists and Catholics have been engaged in dialogue, seeking to speak the truth in love as we have addressed the doctrinal questions which separate us. Our dialogue has as its goal full communion in faith, mission and sacraments. This is our goal because it is Christ's desire that his disciples be united in him. As you know, our dialogue runs in five year cycles, and through our eight rounds of dialogue, we have come increasingly to articulate those elements of faith which we hold in common. Without compromising the beliefs of our faith communities, we have come to recognize many authentic elements of the Church in each other, and have gained a clearer grasp of remaining differences which we can continue to address in future conversations. In the process, we have grown in mutual understanding, in respect for each other, and in friendship.

Dialogue and an advancing in relations between Methodists and Catholics has not only taken place on an international level. In several places, national or regional theological dialogues meet regularly, often discussing matters of pastoral concern in their particular context. And in cities and villages throughout the world, Methodists and Catholics have come to understand each other better, have gathered to pray together, and have engaged in Spirit-led acts of common witness and mission.

Today we celebrate this forty year heritage of dialogue, prayer and witness as we approach a signing ceremony which represents a significant moment in our relations thus far. The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification is one of the major achievements of ecumenical dialogue to this point in time for churches and ecclesial communities of the West, addressing issues which divided Christians in the 16th century. I rejoice today that the foundation which was laid by the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation seven years ago is now being enlarged to include the Methodist family of churches.

Justification can be seen as the subjective side of what is objectively understood or defined in the field of Christology concerning salvation, redemption and holiness. It provides the basis for a more profound common witness before the world: to proclaim the Gospel, the word of life. Justification celebrates that which the theme of your assembly announces: God is reconciling the world in Christ. That is a message the world needs and longs to hear.

In the text of association with the Joint Declaration being signed today, I welcome especially the

new Methodist accents and emphases which it presents, especially with regard to the abiding Methodist concern with holiness of life. Our common concern with holiness has often allowed Methodists and Catholics to appreciate each other even our ecclesial relations have not been easy.

When representatives of the World Methodist Council came to Rome in December, 2005, to discuss the future of our relations, Pope Benedict offered his encouragement of this initiative, and noted: "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."

I would like to express a special word of gratitude to Professor Geoffrey Wainwright and retired Bishop Walter Klaiber, who were entrusted with much of the drafting and work in the preparation of the Methodist statement of affiliation with the JDDJ.

There remain open questions still to discuss, especially in the area of ecclesiology, before we move towards full communion. The recently completed report of our international dialogue commission, *The Grace Given You in Christ: Catholics and Methodists Reflect Further on the Church*, has helpfully drawn attention to several such questions. So we have not yet arrived at the ecumenical goal which we seek. But this signing is nonetheless an important milestone along the way, and the Catholic Church remains committed to striving through ongoing dialogue to reach the further milestones to which the Holy Spirit is calling us.

I am also pleased that you have welcomed with gratitude and commended for further study the recently completed dialogue report. It develops the notion that our dialogue is not only an exchange of ideas, but that we are also invited to engage in an exchange of gifts. Any authentic expressions of the Gospel and of the Church of Jesus Christ are gifts of the Holy Spirit. In recognizing such gifts in each other, and in receiving them into our own ecclesial lives, we grow closer not only to each other but also to Christ, through the power of that same Holy Spirit. The Report has given us all much to ponder regarding possible gifts which Methodists and Catholics could receive from each other.

Over the past decades, Catholics have come to respect Methodist attentiveness to the pursuit of personal and social holiness, and commitment to mission centred on the proclamation of the Gospel. We have often joined in singing the hymns of Charles Wesley and have appreciated the evangelical zeal which calls forth a commitment to Christian discipleship affecting all aspects of human life. We have also been encouraged when, grounded in a common tradition, the Catholic Church and the World Methodist Council and its member churches have been able to speak with a common voice in addressing social and ethical questions in an increasingly secularized world.

Finally, I would like to say that it is a pleasure to be here with you *in Asia*, and more specifically, *in Korea*. The divisions which separate Christian churches are especially painful in lands where those divisions accompany the spreading of the Gospel message and are an obstacle to it. Let me assure you that those of us who come from Europe are greatly encouraged by your faith and your perseverance, and we are eager to learn from you and to share with you the great calling of

proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ.

It is now time to sign the official common affirmation through which the World Methodist Council and its member churches affirm their fundamental doctrinal agreement with the teaching expressed in the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. As we do so, I ask God's abundant blessings on the life and mission of the member churches of the World Methodist Council, and join you in praying that we may build on this important step. May the agreement being celebrated in this signing ceremony be translated fruitfully into a joint commitment to deepen our common prayer; may it encourage us to continue our theological dialogue, and building on our common foundations, may it lead to an increase in joint witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ; finally, wherever possible, may it call forth a joint living out of the Gospel message. God bless you all!