



# World Methodist Council

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## MESSAGE AT THE PAPAL AUDIENCE

on the 19<sup>th</sup> day of October in the year 2017

Your Holiness, Pope Francis,

We bring warm greetings from the World Methodist Council. Our meeting with you today is unique in a number of ways.

Firstly, we meet at a time when the Catholics and the Methodists celebrate their Golden Jubilee of dialogue since 1967.

Secondly, we meet as ecumenical bodies sharing with Lutherans in commemorating 500 years of Reformation since 1517.

Thirdly, we gather in an age of migration which impacts everyone everywhere. In many places around the world, the integrity of humanity has been compromised by reducing migrants, displaced peoples, and refugees to objects of abuse. We welcome your uncompromising stand to defend the rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. We wish to assure you that Methodists support this moral imperative.

Last year the World Methodist Conference was held in Houston, Texas on the theme “One.” The theme was chosen firstly, to remind the Council of its goal of being a body that unites the eighty member churches from the Methodist and Wesleyan traditions. Secondly, the theme “One” was a reflection of John Wesley’s belief that “Methodists are one people in all the world.” The theme further explored what it means to belong to One God, One faith, and be one people with one mission. As the Council we concluded that, to be one is about life, it is about being together; it is about finding new ways forward, and contributing to real hope for humanity and all creation. To be one is to be accountable to God, who is the communion of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We also noted that the Methodist family is united but not uniform; diverse but not divided. Given our Conference theme, we are reminded that our Golden Jubilee is built on the same premise. We further celebrate the fact that in several places around the world Methodists and Catholics have gathered to pray together and collaborated with other faith communities and civil society organizations in prophetic witness against injustice.

As we celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of dialogue, we remember your words of welcome at the opening of the new Methodist Ecumenical Office in Rome where you said our presence in this city, “is a sign of growing closeness and of our shared desire to overcome all that stands in the way of our full communion.” These words resonated well with John Wesley who in 1749 in his *‘Letter to a Roman Catholic’* claimed, “If we cannot as yet think alike in all

things, at least we may love alike.” Wesley also stressed that Catholics and Methodists are called “to help each other in whatever...leads to the Kingdom” You gave some examples of divergences like ordained ministry and ethics but argued that, “none of these differences constitutes such an obstacle as to prevent us from loving in the same way and offering a common witness to the world”. These words and actions for us are central in the Golden Jubilee.

Our dialogue Report, *‘The Call to Holiness: From Glory to Glory’* compels us to be one. St Irenaeus once said that the church is holy and His holy church is one. The church though scattered in the world carefully preserves it as if living in one house. She believes things as if she has one heart and one soul and preaches harmoniously, teaches them and hands down as if she had but one mouth. One church goes beyond denominationalism (Whitehead 2007).

Our fifty years of walking together coincide with 500 years of Reformation. Today we are reminded of the year of Jubilee in Leviticus 25, where life was renewed. In the New Testament, fifty years reminds us of the birth of the Church in Acts 2. We commend the role Catholics have played in the Reformation events worldwide. Catholics and Methodists have much to learn from each other. We walk side by side, each in service to the world in our response to climate change, human trafficking, abuse of human rights and global terror. In our responses to these challenges, we are called to be a church with fast feet and extended hands, to be in solidarity and embrace the poor and marginalized. We support your call for “One minute for peace initiative” as the only hope for a better world and in all endeavors we seek to have the mind of Christ (Philippians 2: 5).

Catholics and Methodists find themselves together in almost every part of the globe, and the theological dialogues are guided by the theological motif of ‘one Faith, One Lord, one Baptism, one God and Father of us all’ (Ephes. 4:5).

Our prayer during the Golden Jubilee is that our voices will be loud and clear and affirm the Lutheran 500<sup>th</sup> year theme in Namibia that we are “Liberated by God’s grace” and as such, salvation is not for sale, human beings are not for sale and creation is not for sale.” We can and will make the world a better place for all.

Grace and peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ivan Abrahams', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Ivan Abrahams  
General Secretary