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UDIENZA AI MEMBRI DELLA DELEGAZIONE ECUMENICA DELLA CHIESA EVANGELICA LUTERANA DI FINLANDIA

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Alle 11.15 di questa mattina, il Santo Padre Giovanni Paolo II ha ricevuto in Udienza i Membri della Delegazione Ecumenica della Chiesa Evangelica Luterana di Finlandia ed ha loro rivolto le parole di saluto che riportiamo qui di seguito:

• SALUTO DEL SANTO PADRE

Your Excellency,

Dear Friends from Finland,

It is a special joy for me to welcome you to the Vatican so soon after the conclusion of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000. During that special time of grace a great many people experienced a deep spiritual renewal. May the Lord grant us to begin this new millennium with our trust firmly rooted in the saving mystery of his death and resurrection.

I have vivid memories of the great ecumenical liturgies and gatherings which we celebrated during the Holy Year. Among them was the solemn inauguration of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, with the opening of the Holy Door at the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls, where I welcomed with joy Bishop Ville Riekkinen from Kuopio, together with members of the Delegation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland present in Rome for the Feast of Saint Henrik. There was also the Commemoration of Witnesses to the Faith at the Colosseum, with the participation of distinguished representatives from all corners of the Christian world. Events such as these expressed our common faith in Jesus Christ, Lord of all times and of all peoples, "the same yesterday, today and for ever" (*Heb 13:8*).

I am pleased to know that, under the leadership of the Finnish Ecumenical Council, Christians in Finland celebrated the Great Jubilee together, with the theme "Millennium 2000 – Year of Hope". During the year, the celebration of the seven hundredth anniversary of Turku Cathedral, attended by many ecumenical delegates,

was an eloquent reminder of our common history. The Jubilee was also the occasion to ensure that issues of justice for the poor and marginalized become more central not only to Christians in Finland but to Finnish society as a whole; and this too was an area in which Christians in your land worked together effectively.

As we enter the Third Millennium, we are conscious of the need to commit ourselves ever more deeply to the task of restoring full and visible unity among all the disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ, so that the saving truth of the Gospel may be preached more effectively to the people of Europe today. May the Holy Spirit guide us as we renew our dedication to this task.

With happy memories of my visit to your beloved country eleven years ago, I invoke upon you and the people of Finland the abundant blessings of Almighty God, "to whom be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (*Rev* 1:6).

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