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UDIENZA ALLA DELEGAZIONE ECUMENICA DALLA FINLANDIA

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Questa mattina il Santo Padre Benedetto XVI ha ricevuto in Udienza i membri della Delegazione ecumenica proveniente dalla Finlandia in occasione della Festa di Sant'Enrico ed ha loro rivolto le parole di saluto che riportiamo di seguito:

• SALUTO DEL SANTO PADRE

Dear Bishops Peura and Wróbel,
Distinguished Friends,

With joy I welcome you, the members of the ecumenical delegation from Finland, as you visit Rome on the occasion of the feast of Saint Henrik, Patron of your nation.

Your presence here coincides with this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. The theme of the week - "he makes the deaf hear and the mute speak" - (Mk 7:37), illustrates how Jesus frees all of us from spiritual deafness, enabling us to hear his saving word and to proclaim it to others. This charge of common witness in word and deed nurtures our ecumenical journey. In drawing us closer to Christ, converting us to his truth and love, it draws us closer to one another.

In recent times relations between Christians in Finland have developed in a way that offers much hope for the future of ecumenism. Readily they pray and work together, bearing common public witness to the word of God. It is precisely this convincing testimony to the guiding and saving truths of the Gospel that all men and women seek or need to hear. On the part of Christians this demands courage. Indeed, as I suggested at the Ecumenical Vespers during my visit to Bavaria, behind any "weakening of the theme of justification and of forgiveness of sins is ultimately a weakening of the theme of our relationship with God. In this sense our first task will perhaps be to rediscover in a new way the living God present in our lives, in our time, and in our society."

In the *Joint Declaration on Justification*, Lutherans and Catholics have covered a considerable distance theologically. Further work remains and so it is encouraging that the Nordic Lutheran-Catholic dialogue in Finland and Sweden is examining the topic "Justification in the Life of the Church." I hope and pray that these

conversations will effectively contribute to the quest for full and visible unity of the Church, while at the same time offering an ever clearer response to the fundamental questions affecting life and society.

Confident in the knowledge that the Holy Spirit is the real protagonist of the ecumenical endeavour (cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio* 1; 4), let us continue to pray and work for the building of closer bonds of love and cooperation between Lutherans and Catholics in Finland. Upon you and all the beloved people of Finland I invoke God's abundant blessings of peace and joy.

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