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UDIENZA ALLA DELEGAZIONE DELLA "MENNONITE WORLD CONFERENCE"

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Questa mattina il Santo Padre Benedetto XVI ha ricevuto in Udienza i Membri della Delegazione della "Mennonite World Conference" ed ha loro rivolto le parole di saluto che riportiamo di seguito:

• SALUTO DEL SANTO PADRE

Dear Friends,

"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Cor 1:2). I am happy to welcome you to Rome, where Peter and Paul bore witness to Christ by shedding their blood for the Gospel.

In the ecumenical spirit of recent times, we have begun to have contacts with each other after centuries of isolation. I am aware that leaders of the Mennonite World Conference accepted the invitation of my beloved predecessor, Pope John Paul II, to join him in Assisi both in 1986 and in 2002 to pray for world peace at a great gathering of leaders of Churches and Ecclesial Communities and other world religions. And I am pleased that officials of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity have responded to your invitations to attend your world assemblies in 1997 and 2003.

Since it is Christ himself who calls us to seek Christian unity, it is entirely right and fitting that Mennonites and Catholics have entered into dialogue in order to understand the reasons for the conflict that arose between us in the sixteenth century. To understand is to take the first step towards healing. I know that the report of that dialogue, published in 2003 and currently being studied in several countries, has placed special emphasis on healing of memories.

Mennonites are well known for their strong Christian witness to peace in the name of the Gospel, and here, despite centuries of division, the dialogue report *Called Together to be Peacemakers* has shown that we hold many convictions in common. We both emphasize that our work for peace is rooted in Jesus Christ "who is our peace, who has made us both one... making peace that he might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross (Eph 2:14-16)" (Report No. 174). We both understand that "reconciliation, non violence, and active peacemaking belong to the heart of the Gospel (cf. Mt 5:9; Rom 12:14-21; Eph 6:15)" (No. 179). Our continuing

search for the unity of the Lord's disciples is of the utmost importance. Our witness will remain impaired as long as the world sees our divisions. Above all, what impels us to seek Christian unity is our Lord's prayer to the Father "that they may all be one... so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (*Jn* 17:21).

It is my hope that your visit will be another step towards mutual understanding and reconciliation. May the peace and joy of Christ be with all of you and with your loved ones.

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