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Alle ore 12 di questa mattina, il Santo Padre Benedetto XVI riceve in Udienza una Delegazione Ecumenica della Chiesa Luterana di Finlandia in occasione della Festa di Sant'Enrico, nella ricorrenza del 25° anniversario del Pellegrinaggio Ecumenico a Roma.

Pubblichiamo di seguito le parole di saluto che il Papa rivolge ai presenti:

● **SALUTO DEL SANTO PADRE**

Distinguished friends,

With affection I greet all the members of your ecumenical delegation who have come to Rome for the celebration of the feast of Saint Henrik. This occasion marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of your annual visits to Rome. It is therefore with gratitude that I recall how these meetings have contributed significantly to strengthening the relations among the Christians in your country.

The Second Vatican Council committed the Catholic Church "irrevocably to following the path of the ecumenical venture, thus heeding the Spirit of the Lord who teaches us to interpret carefully the 'signs of the times'" (*Ut Unum Sint*, 3). This is the path that the Catholic Church has wholeheartedly embraced since that time. The Churches of East and West, both of whose traditions are present in your country, share a real, if still imperfect,

communion. This is a motive to regret the troubles of the past, but it is surely also a motive which spurs us to ever greater efforts at understanding and reconciliation, so that our brotherly friendship and dialogue may yet blossom into a perfect, visible unity in Christ Jesus.

You mentioned in your address the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, now ten years old, which is a concrete sign of the brotherhood rediscovered between Lutherans and Catholics. In this context, I am pleased to note the recent work of the Nordic Lutheran-Catholic dialogue in Finland and Sweden on questions deriving from the *Joint Declaration*. It is greatly to be hoped that the text resulting from the dialogue will contribute positively to the path which leads to the restoration of our lost unity.

Once again, I am pleased to express my gratitude for your perseverance for these twenty-five years of pilgrimage together. They demonstrate your respect for the Successor of Peter as well as your good faith and desire for unity through fraternal dialogue. It is my fervent prayer that the various Christian Churches and ecclesial communities which you represent may build on this sense of brotherhood as we persevere in our pilgrimage together. Upon you and all those in your pastoral care I am pleased to invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

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