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SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 0027

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UDIENZA ALLA DELEGAZIONE ECUMENICA DALLA FINLANDIA IN OCCASIONE DELLA FESTA DI SANT'ENRICO

Alle ore 12 di questa mattina, il Santo Padre Benedetto XVI riceve in Udienza una Delegazione Ecumenica della Chiesa Luterana di Finlandia in occasione dell'annuale Pellegrinaggio ecumenico a Roma, per celebrare la Festa di Sant'Enrico, patrono del Paese.

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

● SALUTO DEL SANTO PADRE

Your Eminence,
Your Excellencies,
Dear Friends,

Once again I am happy to welcome your Ecumenical Delegation on its annual visit to Rome for the feast of Saint Henrik, the patron saint of Finland. It is fitting that our meeting takes place on the eve of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, whose theme this year is drawn from the Book of the Prophet Micah: "What does God require of us?" (cf. *Mic* 6:6-8).

The Prophet makes clear, of course, what the Lord requires of us: it is "to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God" (v. 8). The Christmas season which we have just celebrated reminds us that it is God who from the beginning has walked with us, and who, in the fullness of time, took flesh in order to save us from our sins and to guide our steps in the way of holiness, justice and peace. Walking humbly in the presence of the Lord, in obedience to his saving word and with trust in his gracious plan, serves as an eloquent image not only of the life of faith, but also of our ecumenical journey on the path towards the full and visible unity of all Christians. On this path of discipleship, we are called to advance together along the narrow road of fidelity to God's sovereign will in facing whatever difficulties or obstacles we may eventually encounter.

To advance in the ways of ecumenical communion thus demands that we become ever more united in prayer, ever more committed to the pursuit of holiness, and ever more engaged in the areas of theological research and cooperation in the service of a just and fraternal society. Along this way of spiritual ecumenism, we truly walk with God and with one another in justice and love (cf. *Mic* 6:8), for, as the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of

Justification affirms: "We are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works" (No. 15).

Dear friends, it is my hope that your visit to Rome will help to strengthen ecumenical relations between all Christians in Finland. Let us thank God for all that has been achieved so far and let us pray that the Spirit of truth will guide Christ's followers in your country towards ever greater love and unity as they strive to live in the light of the Gospel and to bring that light to the great moral issues facing our societies today. By walking together in humility along the path of justice, mercy and righteousness which the Lord has pointed out to us, Christians will not only dwell in the truth, but also be beacons of joy and hope to all those who are looking for a sure point of reference in our rapidly changing world. At the beginning of this New Year, I assure you of my closeness in prayer. Upon all of you I cordially invoke the wisdom, grace and peace of Jesus Christ our Redeemer.

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