



The Holy See

Your Excellencies,

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I gladly welcome you, the members of the International Commission for Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Disciples of Christ (Christian Church). Your visit comes at the end of a ten year period in which you have been reflecting on the theme, "The Church as Communion in Christ". While the results of that work are being studied, you are now ready to begin a third phase of your dialogue, centred on the theme, "The Individual and the Church". You intend to give close attention to a very important factor of all ecumenical discussion, namely the relationship between the individual and the community in the appropriation of the faith of the Church down the ages.

I cordially encourage your persevering efforts. As your meeting is taking place at this time of preparation for the celebration of the Saviour's birth, it is my hope that the sense of expectation which marks our prayer during these days will sustain your confidence in the guiding light of the Holy Spirit who is at the heart of all ecumenical endeavour.

It is the will of our Lord Jesus Christ that we continue to seek the unity for which he prayed before his return to the Father. That unity is intimately connected with the fulfilment of the great commandment of love which the Lord also bequeathed to his followers at the Last Supper. May the season of Christmas increase in our hearts the desire to be faithful to all that the Saviour asks of us in our relations with one another. May God bless you abundantly.

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