



The Holy See

**GREETINGS OF POPE FRANCIS
TO THE FINNISH ECUMENICAL DELEGATION
ON THE OCCASION OF THE FEAST OF SAINT HENRY**

Friday, 17 January 2014

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Dear Friends from Finland,*

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (*Rom 1:7*). I offer you a very warm welcome, as my Predecessors, [Blessed John Paul II](#) and [Benedict XVI](#), have done for over twenty-five years, as I receive your ecumenical delegations on the occasion of the Feast of Saint Henry, Patron of Finland.

Writing to the members of the community of Corinth, marked by divisions, Saint Paul asked: “Is Christ divided?” (*1 Cor 1:13*). This question has been chosen as the theme for the [Week of Prayer for Christian Unity](#), which we begin tomorrow. Today that same question is being asked of us. Ignoring voices which no longer recognize the full and visible unity of the Church as an achievable goal, we are urged not to grow weary of our ecumenical efforts, but to remain faithful to the petition which the Lord Jesus made to the Father: that “all may be one” (*Jn 17:21*).

In our day, ecumenism and relationships between Christians are changing significantly. This is due above all to the fact that we profess our faith within a society and a culture increasingly less concerned with God and all that involves the transcendental dimension of life. We see this especially in Europe, but not only here.

For this reason, our witness has to be centred on the core of our faith: the proclamation of God’s love made known in Christ his Son. This gives us a great opportunity to grow in communion and unity by promoting that spiritual ecumenism which flows directly from the commandment of love given by Jesus to his disciples. The Second Vatican Council itself alluded to it in these words:

“Change of heart and holiness of life, along with public and private prayer for the unity of Christians, should be regarded as the soul of the whole ecumenical movement, and can rightly be called spiritual ecumenism” (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 8). Ecumenism is a spiritual process, one which takes place in faithful obedience to the Father, in fulfilment of the will of Christ and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

So let us constantly implore the help of God’s grace and the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, who leads us to the fullness of truth, the source of reconciliation and communion.

Renewing my warm welcome, I gladly invoke God’s blessings on you, on all the Christians of Finland and on the nation.