

# Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification

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## Preliminary Remarks

No matter how impressive the “*Joint Declaration*” may look, for a real Catholic the ‘feel’ is not good. So it is the duty of thomistic philosophers to search the document beyond equivocations, platitudes, suppressions of known facts and doctrines, for its real essence, its substance, its meaning, and, if it is there, for its true value.

Does this mean that Card. Edward Cassidy, *President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity* is not a thomistic philosopher? Is not a true Catholic, and is incapable of seeing beyond equivocations, platitudes, and suppressions of known facts and doctrines? He may be or he may not be. But his preparation for the job, that is, for the final shape and *output* of this *Joint Declaration*, is not encouraging. He once was Under-Secretary of the most influential Sacred Congregation in the papal service, the Secretariat of State, until removed from that post by the order of His Holiness Pope John Paul II because of a serious wrangle with “*Humanae Vitae*”. Such entanglements with a *known doctrine* have for Catholics the all too familiar ring of howling with the wolves of Modernism, in order to find some common ground with the reigning Modernists.

Common ground....That is what this *Joint Declaration* (JD) is all about. The Holy Father gave Card. Cassidy his important position in the Ecumenical Movement in a sincere expectation of trust. If a genuine conversion from his former lapse with known doctrine had taken place, the Cardinal would make a brilliant job of the *JD*. If not, then the *JD* would fall far below the Catholic mark of known doctrine. If the Truth contained in known Catholic doctrine is allowed to shine its Supernatural Light on the deliberations and is allowed to become an integral part of the final output, the *JD* may have been placed in the *too hard* basket by the Lutheran Confession, and may even never have been signed by its theologians. Yet, Catholics are instructed by Pope Pius XII:

“It is not for the Christian, be he theologian or philosopher, to give every latest fantasy of the day a thoughtless and hasty welcome. He will weigh it carefully, and with a just balance, making sure that he does not lose hold of the truth already in his possession, or contaminate it in any way, with great danger and perhaps great loss of the Faith itself”. [*Humani Generis*, 1950].

## Preamble

1. The doctrine of justification was of central importance for the Lutheran Reformation of the 16th century. It was held to be “the First and chief article” (1) and at the same time the “Ruler and judge over all other Christian doctrines” (2). The doctrine of justification was particularly asserted and defended in its Reformation shape and special valuation over (and?) against the Roman Catholic Church and theology of that time which in turn asserted and defended a doctrine of justification of a different character. From the Reformation perspective, justification was the crux of all the disputes. Doctrinal condemnations were put forward both in the Lutheran Confessions (3) and by the Roman Catholic Church’s Council of Trent. These condemnations are still valid today and thus have a church-dividing effect.

### Comment 1

*“.....of that time.....” Here the equivocations start to creep in. The Council of Trent was far more than ‘mere theology of that time’. It defined infallible doctrine to be believed by all Catholics for all times. Mere theology is never forced to be believed.*

*“.....a church-dividing effect”. The next equivocation. The Catholic Church was **never** divided by the doctrines and condemnations of the Council of Trent. And because the Catholic Church is the One True Church instituted by Christ for the salvation and the justification of **all**, Trent never divided that unique Church. Strictly speaking the Lutheran break-away of the 16<sup>th</sup> century may be classed as a ‘confession’. But in such an important document as this JD wants itself to be taken, it may never be equated with a ‘church’ on equal footing with the Catholic Church, in order that the condemnations of the Council of Trent may be called to have a church-dividing effect.*

*From these small beginnings and this loose talking already in the first paragraph it is starting to become clear what thinking was guiding Card. Cassidy.... They do not give us much hope of a real conversion.*

2. For the Lutheran tradition, the doctrine of justification has retained its special status. Consequently it has also from the beginning occupied an important place in the official Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue.

### Comment 2

*So have the doctrines of the Council of Trent for the Catholic Tradition. Apparently not worthy of a mention here as being too ‘church-dividing’....*

*How ‘official’ is official here?*

3. Special attention should be drawn to the following reports:
- “The Gospel and the Church” (1972) (4),
  - “Church and Justification” (1994) (5) by the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Joint Commission,
  - “Justification by Faith” (1983) (6) of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue in the USA and
  - “The Condemnations of the Reformation Era - Do They Still Divide?” (1986) (7) by the Ecumenical Working Group of Protestant and Catholic theologians in Germany.

Some of these dialogue reports have been officially received by the churches. An important example of such reception is the binding response of the United Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Germany to the “Condemnations” study, made in 1994 at the highest possible level of ecclesiastical recognition together with the other churches of the Evangelical Church in Germany (8).

### Comment 3

*Since we have absolutely no knowledge of the orthodoxy of the Catholic participants of these ‘joint commissions, working groups and dialogues’, nor what is meant here by ‘officially’, or by ‘churches’, or by the highest possible level of ecclesiastical recognition, we Catholics get the distinct impression here of attempts being made at bulldozing us into submission. The safest thing to do in such circumstances is to abide by the teaching of Pope Pius XII as it is expressed in the above quote from *Humani Generis*.*

4. In their discussion of the doctrine of justification, all the dialogue reports as well as the responses show a high degree of agreement in their approaches and conclusions. The time has therefore come to take stock and to summarize the results of the dialogues on justification so that our churches may be informed about the overall results of this dialogue with the necessary accuracy and brevity, and thereby be enabled to make binding decisions.

### Comment 4

*Not a scrap of evidence is being brought out here in support of all these fine-sounding words. What is being presented here are obviously ‘conclusions’ which should never be used as the opening of an argument or of a discussion. Already here in § 4, (and we are still only in the Introduction of this document), the word **binding** is allowed to cast its ominous shadow across any free and impartial investigation. In the end, such free investigations will **never** be accepted or even admitted by the architects of this ecumenical nightmare. When all is said and done, only **binding** will remain.... From this ‘Freudian slip’ we learn, if there is no genuine conversion in Card. Cassidy, how soon this reveals itself: already in the Introduction!*

5. The present Joint Declaration has this intention: namely, to show that on the basis of their dialogue the subscribing Lutheran churches and the Roman Catholic Church (9) are now able to articulate a common understanding of our justification by God's grace through faith in Christ. It does not cover all that either church teaches about justification, it does encompass a consensus on basic truths of the doctrine of justification and shows that the remaining differences in its explication are no longer the occasion for doctrinal condemnations.

#### **Comment 5**

“.... on the basis of their dialogue ....”

*This 'basis' has not been shown here. Neither have the details of 'their dialogue' been divulged. So the reader has to accept all this sola fide, 'on faith alone', a most shoddy and unsatisfactory way of pretending that 'facts' have been presented when they have not been.*

*Once again, we notice here the presentation of a most far-reaching conclusion grabbed out of thin air and we haven't even left the introduction to this JD! Notice too all the glib equivocations being used here as substitutes for facts. There sure is no conversion.*

6. Our Declaration is not a new, independent presentation alongside the dialogue reports and documents to date, let alone a replacement of them. Rather, as the appendix of sources shows, it makes repeated reference to them and their arguments.

#### **Comment 6**

*Since, through a deliberate ploy used by the presenters of this 'not-new' Declaration to introduce the present consensus by way of past conclusions, it is becoming rather obvious that it is their intention to deprive us of any means of comparing 'the older forms of dialogue' with this 'not new' (and therefore equally old) one. They would have nearly succeeded had it not been for that give-away word '**binding**'. Now we know for certain that the 'conclusions' will lack any intellectual conviction because the old and the 'not-new' consensus will be forced upon us without the necessity of presenting us with very fragile 'facts'.*

*It has now become of overriding importance to go in search of this 'lack'.*

7. Like the dialogues themselves, this Joint Declaration rests on the conviction that in overcoming the earlier controversial questions and doctrinal condemnations, the churches neither take the condemnations lightly nor do they disavow their own past. On the contrary this Declaration is shaped by the conviction that in their respective histories our churches have come to new insights. Developments have taken place which not only make possible, but

also require the churches to examine the divisive questions and condemnations and see them in a new light.

### **Comment 7**

*The ‘new insights’ and the ‘new light’ talked about here do **not** come from our Catholic Faith, since that Light comes from “the Father of light with Whom there is no change, no shadow of alteration” [James 1:17]. This Light therefore is always the same: “yesterday, today, forever” [Hebr. 13:8]. We already know that this Light has been excluded from these deliberations by the deep shadow cast by their use of the word **binding**. ‘Binding’ here has the same connotation as it is used in all human efforts to that effect, be they exerted by feminists, or Modernists, or Hitler or Stalin or Antichrist. So it was **not** a Supernatural Light that has guided the participants in these older ‘dialogues’ nor in this ‘not-new’ (meaning ‘old’) one, but a fallible human light. Fallible human light falls directly under the searchlight of thomistic philosophy, the Everlasting Philosophy.*

## **1. Biblical Message of Justification**

**8.** Our common way of listening to the word of God in Scripture has led to such new insights. Together we hear the gospel that “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life” (Jn 3:16). This good news is set forth in Holy Scripture in various ways. In the Old Testament we listen to God’s word about human sinfulness (Ps 51:1-5; Dan 9:5f; Eccl/Qo 8:9f; Ezra 9:6f) and human disobedience (Gen 3:1-19; Neh 9:16f, 26) as well as of God’s “Righteousness” (Isa 46:13; 51:5-8; 56:1 [cf. 53:11]; Jer 9:24) and “judgement” (Eccl/Qo 12:14; Ps 9:5f; 76:7-9).

### **Comment 8**

*There is no “common way of listening to the Word of God” between Catholics and non-Catholics according to the following adage in philosophy: “All that is received is received in the mindset in which the recipients find themselves”. Catholics and non-Catholics are not in the same mindset of listening, otherwise the non-Catholics would listen to the Catholic Church, “the ground and pillar of Truth” [1 Tim. 3:15].*

*“New insights” as is so glibly talked about here do not come from an amalgamation of Catholic and non-Catholic faiths. For Catholics, “new insights” can only come from the Holy Spirit Who has guided the Catholic Church through its infallible 2000-year Tradition which by necessity must include the 16<sup>th</sup> century. “New insights” are not supplied by private interpretations, something all Protestants and Modernists are fond of.*

9. In the New Testament diverse treatments of “righteousness” and “justification” are found in the writings of Matthew (5:10, 6:33, 21:32), John (16:8-11), Hebrews (5:3; 10:37f), and James (2:14-26) (10). In Paul’s letters also, the gift of salvation is described in various ways, among others: “for freedom Christ has set us free” (Gal 5:1-13; cf. Rom 6:7), “reconciled to God” (2 Cor 5:18-21; cf. Rom 5:11), “peace with God” (Rom 5:1), “new creation” (2 Cor 5: 17), “alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Rom 6:11, 23), or “sanctified in Christ Jesus” (cf. 1 Cor 1:2; 1:30; 2 Cor 1:1). Chief among these is the “justification” of sinful human beings by God’s grace through faith (Rom 3:23-25), which came into particular prominence in the Reformation period.

### Comment 9

“.... *gift of salvation* ....”

*A subtle change is being introduced here which, if not carefully monitored, will lead Catholics to thoughtless acceptance of Protestant ‘theology’. In this JD we are dealing with ‘justification’, which on no account is to be confused with ‘salvation’. This JD deals with the **origin** of justification, and **not** with its intended end-product: personal or individual salvation. The Modernists are absolutely convinced that the universal **Redemption** won by Christ is synonymous with a non-existent **universal personal or individual salvation**. Here an attempt is being made to subtly insert this gross misinformation, this unacceptable substitute, into this JD.*

*The Pauline texts can only be accepted by Catholics in the explanation given to them by the teaching authority of the Catholic Church and not by some JD of Catholic and non-Catholic theologians, no matter how **binding** these fallible men consider their ‘agreements’ to be.*

*What did St. Paul say/not say in the above-quoted passages of his letters?*

Gal. 5:1-13. *Here St. Paul speaks about circumcision and the uselessness of justification obtained under the Law. He did **not** speak of ‘salvation’.*

Rom. 6:7. *Here St. Paul simply states that “he that is dead is justified from sin”. (Can no longer sin). No talk of ‘salvation’.*

2 Cor. 5:18-21. *Here St. Paul writes about ‘reconciliation in Christ’. Verse 21: “Him who knew no sin (God) has made sin for us, that we might be made the justice of God in Him”. No talk of salvation, let alone unconditional salvation.*

Rom. 5:11. *Again: reconciliation.*

Rom. 5:1. *“...let us have peace with God through Our Lord Jesus Christ”. “Let us have*

2 Cor. 5:17. *“...a new creation...”, but again, not an inevitable salvation.*

Rom. 6:11, 17. Etc., etc.

*Catholics, beware! Eventually it will be necessary to quote to you, the readers, the authentic Catholic teaching on 'Justification' and its relationship with Faith and Grace.*

**10.** Paul sets forth the gospel as the power of God for salvation of the person who has fallen under the power of sin, as the message that proclaims that “the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith” (Rom 1:16f) and that grants “justification” (Rom 3:21-31). He proclaims Christ as Our “righteousness” (1 Cor 1:30), applying to the risen Lord what Jeremiah proclaimed about God himself (Jer 23:6). In Christ’s death and resurrection all dimensions of his saving work have their roots for he is “our Lord, who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification” (Rom 4:25). All human beings are in need of God’s righteousness, “since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23; cf. Rom 1:18-3:20, 11:32; Gal 3:22). In Galatians (3:6) and Romans (4:3-9), Paul understands Abraham’s faith (Gen 15:6) as faith in the God who justifies the sinner (Rom 4:5) and calls upon the testimony of the Old Testament to undergird his gospel that this righteousness will be reckoned to all who, like Abraham, trust in God’s promise. “For the righteous will live by faith” (Heb 2:4; cf. Gal 3:11, Rom 1:17). In Paul’s letters, God’s righteousness is also God’s power for those who have faith (Rom 1:16f; 2 Cor 5:21). In Christ he makes it our righteousness (2 Cor 5:21). Justification becomes ours through Christ Jesus “whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith” (Rom 3:25; see 3:21-28). “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God - not the result of works” (Eph 2:8f).

#### **Comment 10**

*In this avalanche of biblical texts on faith, grace, righteousness, justification, salvation etc., none properly explained but all taken out of context and sewn together by protestant theology (private interpretations), the end-result (purpose?) is bewilderment and confusion which can never come from “the Father of Light” ....*

*We note that here again, the word ‘salvation’ is surreptitiously slipped into this avalanche. ‘Salvation’ is **not** synonymous with ‘justification’ and may never be used as a substitute for it. Grace and its justification can be lost through sin. They are not inevitable. The Redemption won by Christ can be rejected (nullified) by individual sins, even if faith in God is not uprooted but remains. Indeed, “Christ saves through grace” (Eph. 2:8), but grace can be lost.*

**11.** Justification is the forgiveness of sins (cf. Rom 3:23-25; Acts 13:39; Lk 18:14), liberation from the dominating power of sin and death (Rom 5:12-21) and from the curse of the law (Gal 3:10-14). It is acceptance into communion with God: already now, but then fully in God’s coming kingdom (Rom 5:1 f). It

unites with Christ and with his death and resurrection (Rom 6:5). It occurs in the reception of the Holy Spirit in baptism and incorporation into the one body (Rom 8:1f, 9f; 1 Cor 12:12f). All this is from God alone, for Christ's sake, by grace, through faith in "the gospel of God's Son" (Rom 1:1-3).

### **Comment 11**

*So far no definition, essence or even an attempt at explanation of justification has been presented, and that is what this whole JD is supposed to be all about. Instead, it is bracketed together with a host of other words and meanings in which its unique meaning and purpose have been lost. This is **not** systematic theology but an overload of words meant to short-circuit the whole 'debate'. Same comment as above. Who is going to check out all these texts and remove from them the protestant 'mindset' in which they have been received?*

**12.** The justified live by faith that comes from the Word of Christ (Rom 10:17) and is active through love (Gal 5:6), the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22f). But since the justified are assailed from within and without by powers and desires (Rom 8:35-39; Gal 5:16-21) and fall into sin (I Jn 1:8, 10), they must constantly hear God's promises anew, confess their sins (I Jn 1:9), participate in Christ's body and blood, and be exhorted to live righteously in accord with the will of God. That is why the Apostle says to the justified: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasures" (Phil 2:12f). But the good news remains: "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1), and in whom Christ lives (Gal 2:20). Christ's "act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all" (Rom 5:18).

### **Comment 12**

*Still more of the same. When will we be told specifically how the 'justified' became 'justified', and what 'justification' is all about on its own, in its uniqueness, not covered by an overburden of all sorts of other unexplained words? This truly must be a first-class example of '**divide and conquer**'. Many readers (if they ever got this far!) must feel being dragged along here without being given any pause 'to catch their breath'. In the end the daze in which they have been induced is meant to convince them that Lutheranism and Catholicism are the same because they believe the same.*

## 2. The Doctrine of Justification as Ecumenical Problem

13. Opposing interpretations and applications of the biblical message of justification were in the 16th century a principal cause of the division of the Western church and led as well to doctrinal condemnations. A common understanding of justification is therefore fundamental and indispensable to overcoming that division. By appropriating insights of recent biblical studies and drawing on modern investigations of the history of theology and dogma, the post-Vatican II ecumenical dialogue has led to a notable convergence concerning justification, with the result that this Joint Declaration is able to formulate a consensus on basic truths concerning the doctrine of justification. In light of this consensus, the corresponding doctrinal condemnations of the 16th century do not apply to today's partner.

### Comment 13

*If words mean anything, then the above paragraph 13 states categorically that the Catholic Church has essentially changed her position in order to come closer to the Protestant faith. But **no** explanation has as yet been brought out which makes it clear to the reader of this JD what exactly the Protestant position on Justification is and how this is viewed by the Catholic Faith. Here again far-reaching conclusions are being drawn from totally unknown premises. Convergence is **not** being shown. It is to be accepted on "faith alone" as is the statement that 'doctrinal condemnations' no longer apply. This is shoddy philosophy, shoddy theology and a shoddy view of people's intelligence.*

## 3. The Common Understanding of Justification

14. The Lutheran churches and the Roman Catholic Church have together listened to the good news proclaimed in Holy Scripture. This common listening, together with the theological conversations of recent years, has led to a shared understanding of justification. This encompasses a consensus in the basic truths; the differing explications in particular statements are compatible with it.

### Comment 14

*The most important Pauline text on justification has **not** been read together by Lutherans and Catholics, or if it was, it has **not** been mentioned because of the fact that it lays bare the essential difference between the two 'faiths'. I will bring this deep significance out in the appropriate place of this commentary. "Listening together" does not solve any problems between the two "faiths", because of the different 'mindsets'. In Catholicism the meaning of biblical texts is settled by the teaching authority of the Catholic Church vested in the Pope, and **not**, as is being done here, by private interpretations. Different explications, especially – as we will see – when they touch on fundamentals, are **never** compatible with an essential 'consensus'. To believe and proclaim that is simply delusion, playing with words and indulging in mere 'wishful*

*thinking'. This must be the reason why up till now this consensus has been stressed with so much emphasis without a scrap of evidence being produced.*

**15.** In faith we together hold the conviction that justification is the work of the triune God. The Father sent his Son into the world to save sinners. The foundation and pre-supposition of justification is the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ. Justification thus means that Christ himself is our righteousness, in which we share through the Holy Spirit in accord with the will of the Father. Together we confess: By grace alone, in faith in Christ's saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works (11).

### **Comment 15**

*“...that Christ himself is our righteousness...”*

*Here, at last, we come face-to-face with the essential difference between the Reformed belief in justification which the Lutherans have held for more than 450 years, and the Catholic Faith. Here, in the use of the word 'together, it is explicitly being stated that the Catholic Faith in Justification of the 'catholic theologians' has changed and gone over to the Reformed belief.*

*Reformed belief has always held, and apparently still holds going by the wording used here in this JD, that Christ's merits and righteousness **cover** us sinners in much the same way as God **covered** the sinful pair of our proto-parents with the skins of animals underneath which was still their essential nakedness. “And the Lord God made for Adam and his wife garments of skins and clothed them” [Gen. 3:21]. The significance of this gesture is of course that the animals still had to be slaughtered before their skins could be used for dressing. Thus “The Lamb of God has been slain from the foundations of the world” [Rev. 13:8]. According to 'reformed belief' (Lutheranism) it is held, then, that underneath the covering of Christ's merits and righteousness we remain what we were before: essentially sinners. No “new creation”.*

*This shows that the famous text in St. Paul's Letter to the Romans which expresses the Catholic Faith in Justification, has either not been 'read together' by the architects of this JD or was discarded in its entirety. It is absent from all the quotes mentioned in numbers 8 to 12 of this JD.*

*In the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of his Letter to the Romans St. Paul faithfully records the **revealed** doctrine on Justification.*

**“A whole batch of bread is made holy if the first handful of dough is made holy; all the branches are holy if the root is holy. No doubt some of the branches have been cut off and, like shoots of wild olive, you have been grafted among the rest to share with them the rich sap provided by the olive tree itself. But still, even if you think yourself superior to the**

other branches, remember that you do not support the root; it is the root that supports you. You will say, ‘Those branches are cut off on purpose to let me be grafted in’. True, they were cut off, but through their unbelief. If you still hold firm, it is only thanks to your faith. Rather than making you proud, that should make you afraid. God did not spare the natural branches, and He is not likely to spare you. Do not forget that God can be severe as well as kind: He is severe to those who fell, and He is kind to you, but only for as long as He chooses to be, otherwise you will find yourself cut off too, and the Jews, if they give up their unbelief, grafted back in your place. God is perfectly able to graft them back again: after all, if you were cut from your natural wild olive to be grafted unnaturally on to a cultivated olive, it will be much easier for them, the natural branches, to be grafted back on the tree they came from” [Rom. 11:16-24].

*What is being stated here under God’s infallible inspiration is infinitely more than just being covered by Christ’s merits. Here we are being infallibly taught about an essential change into a ‘new creation’. Lutheran faith does not make room for such an essential change. In that faith we are only being dressed up by someone else’s merits to look pleasing to the Father while remaining essentially sinners underneath that covering. In that faith Redemption by Christ is synonymous with being still unredeemed.*

*In that faith ‘new creation’ means ‘a new dress’, ‘a new suit’, ‘a new frock’. It is becoming quite obvious that the Lutherans have **not** shifted ground on this, whereas the ‘theologians’ from the Catholic side have allowed themselves to be shown as having shifted from the Catholic position. That makes these so-called ‘theologians’ essentially Modernist ‘theologians’. It speaks volumes for the deceptive nature of this so-called JD that this text from St. Paul is completely absent from its sources and deliberations.*

**16.** All people are called by God to salvation in Christ. Through Christ alone are we justified, when we receive this salvation in faith. Faith is itself God’s gift through the Holy Spirit who works through word and sacrament in the community of believers and who, at the same time, leads believers into that renewal of life which God will bring to completion in eternal life.

#### **Comment 16**

*Fine words, but now we know how to read them and to understand them with the eyes and the light of the two mutually exclusive faiths. In Lutheran faith, good works do absolutely nothing towards removing and improving the essential state of nakedness and sinfulness underneath the covering provided by Christ’s merits. If Christ cannot change that, and so has to ‘dress us up’, we certainly cannot. In Catholic Faith good works are essential for the growth in Faith, Hope, Love and merits: “the sap of the cultivated olive tree on which we have been grafted after God’s free gift of Faith, Hope and Love in Baptism.*

17. We also share the conviction that the message of justification directs us in a special way towards the heart of the New Testament witness to God's saving action in Christ: it tells us that as sinners our new life is solely due to the forgiving and renewing mercy that God imparts as a gift and we receive in faith, and never can merit in any way.

#### Comment 17

*For Catholics this is incomplete and very badly put. [See above].*

*For Lutherans it is a deceptive way of formulating a conclusion that does **not** follow from their essential concept of faith. [See above]. Truth and its opposite can never come from "sharing together": "Does a spring pour forth from the same source both fresh water and brackish?" [James. 3:11].*

18. Therefore the doctrine of justification, which takes up this message and explicates it, is more than just one part of Christian doctrine. It stands in an essential relation to all truths of faith, which are to be seen as internally related to each other. It is an indispensable criterion which constantly serves to orient all the teaching and practice of our churches to Christ. When Lutherans emphasise the unique significance of this criterion, they do not deny the interrelation and significance of all truths of faith. When Catholics see themselves as bound by several criteria, they do not deny the special function of the message of justification. Lutherans and Catholics share the goal of confessing Christ in all things, who alone is to be trusted above all things as the one Mediator (1 Tim 2:5f) through whom God in the Holy Spirit gives himself and pours out his renewing gifts. [cf. Sources for section 3].

#### Comment 18

*If somewhere in this JD the above-quoted text from the 11th chapter of St. Paul's Letter to the Romans had been included into the "Biblical Message of Justification" at the same time that it was stated that the Lutheran part of the JD accepted this text unreservedly as the true revelation on justification, the above part in 18 together with what still is to follow, could be seen as a convergence in that it was open to the same explanation in both faiths. Since this acceptance of the Pauline text by the Lutherans is **not** the case, it follows that there still exists an essential divergence between the two faiths, which means that each branch of this divergence must be explained in the light of the faith that produces it.*

*If the text is seen from the Lutheran point of view where justification does **not** change the essential sinfulness under Christ's 'coverings', the human being under this covering remains utterly helpless. Why **he** or **she** would get that covering and other people **not** remains a complete mystery in the Lutheran faith, unless it is approached from the Lutheran concept of Predestination. More about that later. From the Catholic Faith it is perfectly acceptable that there are more than one criteria to guide our conduct here on*

earth en route to the heavenly Fatherland. That too is perfectly explained from the Catholic concept of Predestination, as well as from the following text of St. Paul:-

**For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works,  
which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.**  
[Eph. 2:10].

*As we will see, this text is crucial for the understanding of the difference between the Catholic concept of justification and predestination and the Lutheran version. Needless to say, neither this text nor this distinction do rate a mention in the consensus of this JD. The meaning of this is clear: the Lutheran faith has not shifted ground, but what the modernist 'theologians' of the JD understand by Catholic Faith has gone substantially over to the Lutheran persuasion.*

## **4. Explicating the Common Understanding of Justification**

### **4.1 Human Powerlessness and Sin in Relation to Justification**

**19.** We confess together that all persons depend completely on the saving grace of God for their salvation. The freedom they possess in relation to persons and the things of this world is no freedom in relation to salvation, for as sinners they stand under God's judgment and are incapable of turning by themselves to God to seek deliverance, of meriting their justification before God, or of attaining salvation by their own abilities. Justification takes place solely by God's grace. Because Catholics and Lutherans confess this together, it is true to say:

#### **Comment 19**

*Here again the word 'salvation' has been surreptitiously slipped in into this discussion on justification as its synonym, i.e. as a word having the same meaning. It is therefore of the utmost importance that vital distinctions are being made here before we get helplessly dragged further along modernistic paths into the Lutheran 'faith'. Since 'justification' is not synonymous with 'salvation', we could ignore this paragraph as being immaterial in a discussion on justification. But to clarify Catholic doctrine that is being infringed upon here, it may be helpful to scrutinise it.*

*Although we find ourselves this far in this 'JD on Justification', we still haven't been told **how** the contributors to this JD see 'justification' come into being. Until they tell us we can only bring out Catholic doctrine. According to Catholic belief, justification is only given once, by the **grafting** of a believer onto the cultivated olive tree of which, as we saw above, St. Paul spoke. The grace to become grafted is totally Supernatural and gratuitous; is the work of God alone in conferring to us the Supernatural virtues of Faith, Hope and Love and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which are beyond human works and powers. However, this grace of Justification can be refused and rejected by a decision **not** to walk into this supremely good work as stated by St. James:-*

**“Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by works, and Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness"; and he was called the friend of God. You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. And in the same way was not also Rahab the harlot justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so faith apart from works is dead”. [James 2:21-26].**

*The supernatural act of Justification, the grafting, which is beyond human power, is, as St. James says, completed, established, when, cooperating with grace, a man or a woman walks into that supremely important good work. Although this text from St. James appears in **9** above as part of a much larger quote, the JD does not comment on it. It does not appear as being “read together” but, with the Pauline text quoted above, it was placed in the ‘too hard’ basket. It is certainly **not** Lutheran teaching!*

*After that initial indwelling of the Holy Spirit, of Supernatural Life and Virtues, innumerable acts of Faith, Hope, Love and all the other virtues are needed to keep us, in cooperation with the grace of God, on the road to salvation. Only people who do **not** see themselves as grafted in justification, but only covered by the merits of Christ, can think of themselves as being in need of justification (the work of God alone) every microsecond of their existence. It is for that reason that they wrongly say what they say in **19** above: that they are not free in relation to salvation, being constantly in need of justification. Here the two words are being used as being completely synonymous. Since we can most certainly refuse to “walk into the first good work which God has prepared beforehand for us to walk into”, namely Justification, we must, on the authority of the Apostle St. James, also believe that we must accept that grace.*

*We now go to **20** to see, if, when **19** is accepted, ‘it is true to say’:-*

**20.** When Catholics say that persons “cooperate”, in preparing for and accepting justification by consenting to God’s justifying action, they see such personal consent as itself an effect of grace, not as an action arising from innate human abilities.

### **Comment 20**

*True enough, but Catholics reject the idea that Justification means we are only covered by Christ’s merits and graces and so are constantly in need of ‘justification: a new skin, a new dress’. To cooperate with all the graces needed for our salvation, i.e. to walk into the good works God has from all eternity prepared for us to walk into, including the supremely good work of accepting Justification, is made easier by virtues obtained by means of a virtuous life. In Catholic Faith, virtues are seen as good habits, even the Supernatural virtues of Faith, Hope and Love. That’s why these gifts die off if no **acts** of Faith, Hope and Charity are being performed regularly.*

What is expressed here in **20** is **not** the Lutheran faith on Justification, (see **21**). Which of course means that the two faiths are still poles apart, that the much-vaunted 'consensus' on this vital topic is not present in this Joint Declaration, but if it is claimed to be present, that then the faith of the 'catholic theologians' has shifted....

**21.** According to Lutheran teaching, human beings are incapable of cooperating in their salvation, because as sinners they actively oppose God and his saving action. Lutherans do not deny that a person can reject the working of grace. When they emphasize that a person can only receive (mere passive) justification, they mean thereby to exclude any possibility of contributing to one's own justification, but do not deny that believers are fully involved personally in their faith, which is effected by God's Word. [cf. Sources for 4.1].

#### **Comment 21**

*Here the confusion between 'salvation' and 'justification' has been driven to its upper limit. According to this 'doctrine' human nature is and remains so essentially sinful that it actively opposes God and his saving action. Because they cannot 'dress' themselves, (be justified), human beings cannot even work towards their own salvation which here again is being taken as synonymous with justification. They are constantly in need of being 'dressed up' without any grafting at all. Lutherans may not deny that a person can reject the workings of grace, but do they accept that a person can accept the workings of grace? Not according to the testimony of the above text, where it is emphasised that human beings can only receive mere passive justification. In the absence of anything else, this can then only be conceived as a continuous, ongoing justification (=salvation) with which human beings cannot cooperate. This utter confusion between 'justification' and 'salvation', between faith and works, is totally alien to Pauline, St. James' and other New Testament teaching. What sort of a "Joint" Declaration is this?*

#### **4.2 Justification as Forgiveness of Sins and Making Righteous**

**22.** We confess together that God forgives sin by grace and at the same time frees human beings from sin's enslaving power and imparts the gift of new life in Christ. When persons come by faith to share in Christ, God no longer imputes to them their sin and through the Holy Spirit effects in them an active love. These two aspects of God's gracious action are not to be separated, for persons are by faith united with Christ, who in his person is our righteousness (I Cor 1:30): both the forgiveness of sin and the saving presence of God himself. Because Catholics and Lutherans confess this together, it is true to say that:

## Comment 22

*This can only be seen and understood in the 'light' (?) of what was put forward in 21 above. There it was clearly stated that **everything** was done by God since human beings cannot cooperate with grace and are merely **passive** recipients: passive forgiveness, passive freeing from sin, passive this, passive that... And now for the \$64,000 question: Why should God give these totally impersonal and passive graces to some and not to all? What criterion is being used here by God for this differentiation between one human being and the next one? The Lutheran answer which one will never find in these kind of JDs' is pure arbitrariness, the Reformed doctrine on Predestination. The doctrine that "God has predestined from all eternity who shall go to heaven dressed up in the merits of Christ, and who will go to hell". Remember: everything is passive in the work of justification and its equivalent: salvation! 21 clearly states that a plank in the Lutheran faith is that "human beings are incapable of cooperating in their salvation because as sinners they **actively** oppose God and his **saving action**". And this is said of **all**. It could not be expressed more clearly, especially when this is underscored in the next sentence by "mere passive".*

*It is seen as mere arbitrariness in God that out of **all** helpless creatures some are rewarded and some are punished for the only thing they **all** do: **actively oppose God**. And this blasphemy appears in a JD with Catholics.....*

*We have already seen what the Catholic doctrine on Predestination is: that God from all eternity prepared for the Just the good works for them to walk into **without forcing them to do so**. Here we have a basis for reward and punishment which is absent in the Lutheran persuasion. One of those 'good works' is to cooperate with God's grace to enter into the good work of their own Justification as adults, and to present their children for Baptism and for gratuitous justification (grafting) in Christ.*

**23.** When Lutherans emphasize that the righteousness of Christ is our righteousness, their intention is above all to insist that the sinner is granted righteousness before God in Christ through the declaration of forgiveness and that only in union with Christ is one's life renewed. When they stress that God's grace is forgiving love (the favor of God) (12), they do not thereby deny the renewal of the Christian's life. They intend rather to express that justification remains free from human cooperation and is not dependent on the life-renewing effects of grace in human beings.

## Comment 23

*This, as we saw, is contrary to the teaching of St. James with which St Paul's teaching can never be in contradiction. In this JD we saw that St. Paul's teaching is being presented by Lutherans and Catholics alike as being in contrast to St. Paul's and St. James' teaching combined. This is not only unacceptable: it is untenable!*

**24.** When Catholics emphasise the renewal of the interior person through the reception of grace imparted as a gift to the believer (13), they wish to insist that God's forgiving grace always brings with it a gift of new life, which in the Holy Spirit becomes effective in active love. They do not thereby deny that God's gift of grace in justification remains independent of human cooperation. [cf. Sources for section 4.2].

#### **Comment 24**

*Catholics maintain with St. Paul and St. James that, even if the grace of Justification cannot be merited, a human being, in order to avoid imputing to God arbitrariness, must fully cooperate with that undeserved grace, like Abraham did, in order to receive it. Cooperation with this first grace neither denies nor nullifies that it cannot be merited. 'Gift of new life' and 'essential sinfulness under covering' is a contradiction.*

### **4.3 Justification by Faith and through Grace**

**25.** We confess together that sinners are justified by faith in the saving action of God in Christ. By the action of the Holy Spirit in baptism they are granted the gift of salvation which lays the basis for the whole Christian life. They place their trust in God's gracious promise by justifying faith, which includes hope in God and love for him. Such a faith is active in love and thus the Christian cannot and should not remain without works. But whatever in the justified precedes or follows the free gift of faith is neither the basis of justification nor merits it.

#### **Comment 25**

*So far we have seen that this JD contains two diametrically opposed concepts of Justification: one that is arbitrarily given and passively received, the other accepted without this Lutheran arbitrariness and total passivity. But neither the 'grafting in Our Lord Jesus Christ' nor the 'good works' and the 'walking into them' have found their way into this JD. So Catholic doctrine has been suppressed to make room for a totally alien and unworkable Lutheran ideology. Why should it now suddenly come out of the woodwork? Meaning that the above can only be explained in a Lutheran 'light'*

**26.** According to Lutheran understanding, God justifies sinners in faith alone (*sola fide*). In faith they place their trust wholly in their Creator and Redeemer and thus live in communion with him. God himself effects faith as he brings forth such trust by his creative word. Because God's act is a new creation it affects all dimensions of the person and leads to a life in hope and love. In the doctrine of 'justification by faith alone', a distinction but not a separation is made between justification itself and the renewal of one's way of life that necessarily follows from justification and without which faith does not exist. Thereby the basis is indicated from which the renewal of life proceeds, for it comes forth

from the love of God imparted to the person in justification. Justification and renewal are joined in Christ, who is present in faith.

## Comment 26

*This statement must be seen in the light of the foregoing in which the Lutheran, the true Catholic position and the false position of the 'catholic theologians' have all been brought to the surface.*

*Justification through "faith alone": "sola fide", is out according to St. Paul and St. James if it excludes cooperation with this grace on the human level, which inevitably must lead to 'arbitrariness' in God which is impossible.*

*Other parts in the above are equally impossible to square off with what has been said earlier, esp. in 21 above. Take for instance the line*

*"In faith they place their trust wholly in their Creator...."*

*This, according to words used here, is a good work, of which, according to Lutheran doctrine expressed earlier, human beings are incapable. 21: According to Lutheran teaching, human beings are incapable of cooperating in their salvation, because as sinners "they actively oppose God and his saving action.....a person can only receive (mere passive) justification" and mere passive 'salvation': arbitrariness on the part of God....*

*So human beings are at the same time 'capable' and 'incapable' which of course is impossible. In 21 they are incapable even to cooperate in their salvation, but here in 26 they are capable to cooperate even in their justification, which of course destroys justification "by faith **alone**, sola fide."*

*In a number of places in the JD the talk is about "new creation". This is essentially a Catholic concept. If according to the text from 21 quoted above, "human beings are incapable of cooperating (even) in their **salvation**", which is a life-time job **after** justification, their essential sinfulness must remain **after** the covering with Christ's merits in justification. (23 "the righteousness of Christ is our righteousness") must then mean our 'covering' since, according to 21 "they actively oppose God and his saving action", the essential sinfulness remaining underneath the 'covering'. It is absolutely impossible to have any 'joint declaration' on this with Catholics, only with modernist 'catholic theologians': the preparation for the One-World 'Church'.*

**27.** The Catholic understanding also sees faith as fundamental in justification. For without faith, no justification can take place. Persons are justified through baptism as hearers of the word and believers in it. The justification of sinners is forgiveness of sins and being made righteous by justifying grace, which makes us children of God. In justification the righteous receive from Christ faith, hope, and love and are thereby taken into communion

with him (14). This new personal relation to God is grounded totally on God's graciousness and remains constantly dependent on the salvific and creative working of this gracious God, who remains true to himself, so that one can rely upon him. Thus justifying grace never becomes a human possession to which one could appeal over against God. While Catholic teaching emphasises the renewal of life by justifying grace, this renewal in faith, hope, and love is always dependent on God's unfathomable grace and contributes nothing to justification about which one could boast before God (Rom 3:27). [See Sources for section 4.3].

### Comment 27

*By now it is long overdue that the Catholic position be clarified with the steady light of the teachings of Vatican II. From all the foregoing it has become painfully clear that both the Lutherans and their so-called 'catholic theologians' are convinced that God and grace work **outside** the Catholic Church. "Extra Ecclesia numquam salus" is a doctrine firmly rooted in infallible Catholic Tradition as is testified by the Second Vatican Council. It means that "Outside the Catholic Church as the unique and only Church founded by Christ there are **no** means of Salvation". **All** the means of Salvation come to humanity **solely** through the Catholic Church He founded.*

**"Nevertheless, our separated brethren, whether considered individually or as communities and churches, are not blessed with that unity which Jesus Christ wished to bestow on all those to whom He has given new birth into one body, and whom He has quickened to newness of life - that unity, which the Holy Scriptures and the Ancient Tradition of the Church proclaim. For it is through Christ's Catholic Church *alone*, which is the *universal help towards salvation* that the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained. It was to the Apostolic College alone, of which Peter is the head, that we believe that Our Lord entrusted *all* the blessings of the New Covenant, in order to establish on earth the One Body of Christ into which all those should be fully incorporated who belong in any way to the people of God" [Decree On Ecumenism #3. Emphasis added].**

*Clear language, still proclaimed as late as in the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century, even in documents dealing with new topics such as Ecumenism and Religious Liberty.*

**"However, in forming their consciences the faithful must pay careful attention to the sacred and certain teaching of the Church. For the Catholic Church is by the Will of God the teacher of Truth. It is Her duty to proclaim and teach with authority the Truth which is Christ, and at the same time, to declare and confirm by Her authority the principles of the moral order which springs from human nature itself" [Decree on Religious Liberty, #14].**

**"The one mediator, Christ, established and ever sustains here on earth his holy Church, the community of faith, hope and charity as a visible organization through which he communicates truth and grace to all men.....This is the sole Church of Christ which in the Creed we profess to**

**be One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic, which our Saviour after his resurrection entrusted to Peter's pastoral care, commissioning him and the other Apostles to extend and rule it, and which he raised up for all ages as "the pillar and mainstay of the truth" [1 Tim. 3:15]. This Church, constituted and organized as a society in the present world, *subsists* in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with that successor. Nevertheless, many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside its visible confines. Since these are gifts belonging to the Church of Christ, they are forces impelling towards Catholic unity" [Lumen Gentium, #8].**

*For 1900 years the Church has taught authoritatively (including through Vatican II) and the faithful have always believed that the Catholic Church is absolutely necessary for salvation. And so we came to expect that this Council would have stated "...that the Church Christ founded EXISTS in the Catholic Church..." However, the Council, in dealing with this very question, used the word SUBSISTS:*

*"This Church, constituted and organised in the world as a society, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in union with that successor" [Lumen. Gentium, #8].*

*This is a fortuitous choice of words. If the Council had chosen the word "exists", it would then be natural to assume that the Council was teaching that the Catholic Church extends as far as it exists: in the visible society of Catholics here on earth. And once again the burning question of to whom do the elements of grace and truth and holiness belong found outside Her would still not have been resolved. But, subsists means more than exists and by using the word subsists the Council can now claim what in fact She did claim, that*

*"the many elements of sanctification and of Truth...found outside Her visible structure, as gifts properly belonging to the Church of Christ, possess an inner dynamism to Catholic unity".*

*This is profound. The Council abstains from telling us what all the Modernists have been at pains to tell us ad nauseam, that it is now conciliar teaching, that the bearers of these elements of holiness and truth are members of the Catholic Church. But the Council did tell us that the possessors of these elements of holiness and truth can thank the Catholic Church of Christ for their existence. The Catholic Church, whilst subsists in the visible society of Catholics, extends invisibly further to give to non-Catholics the elements of truth and holiness they may possess, without making the possessors of these elements members. And so, the Catholic Church is essential for non-Catholics so they can possess the graces necessary for salvation. From this text it is obvious that the Council has taught us with much greater clarity where the Catholic Church subsists and how far Her work of salvation extends.*

*If now we look back on paragraph 27 above and on all the paras before it in the light of this infallible teaching, we can see in them "elements of truth and salvation outside the*

*visible confines of the Catholic Church". But they remain 'isolated' elements, in many places contradictory to each other, mixed with untruths, and so not part of a sustained body of truths and their structured exposition. The 'convergence' goes in the direction of the Lutheran persuasion and has lost its impelling force to Catholic unity, which would have been the case if the 'convergence' had been the other way round.*

#### **4.4 The Justified as Sinner**

**28.** We confess together that in baptism the Holy Spirit unites one with Christ, justifies, and truly renews the person. But the justified must all through life constantly look to God's unconditional justifying grace. They also are continuously exposed to the power of sin still pressing its attacks (cf. Rom 6:12-14) and are not exempt from a life-long struggle against the contradiction to God within the selfish desires of the old Adam (cf. Gal 5:16, Rom 7:7-10). The justified also must ask God daily for forgiveness as in the Lord's Prayer (Mt 6:12; I Jn 1:9), are ever again called to conversion and penance, and are ever again granted forgiveness.

#### **Comment 28**

*Here we must note how glib the talk of a modernistic 'catholicism' has become when it is combined with Lutheran Protestantism. According to 21 and in other places of this JD, human beings are not 'truly renewed' because, after justification by 'faith alone', they remain actively opposed to God and his saving action. 'To look constantly for God's justifying grace **after** having been justified (the talk here is about 'the justified'), means 'salvation' and 'justification' are considered here to be identical. If the justified must ask God daily for forgiveness, and are ever called to conversion and penance, then it is because of these good works that they "are ever again granted forgiveness", which 'meriting' is held up as impossible in many places in this JD.*

**29.** Lutherans understand this condition of the Christian as a being "at the same time righteous and sinner". Believers are totally righteous, in that God forgives their sins through Word and Sacrament and grants the righteousness of Christ which they appropriate in faith. In Christ, they are made just before God. Looking at themselves through the law, however, they recognise that they remain also totally sinners. Sin still lives in them (I Jn 1:8; Rom 7:17, 20), for they repeatedly turn to false gods and do not love God with that undivided love which God requires as their Creator (Deut 6:5; Mt 22:36-40 pr.). This contradiction to God is as such truly sin. Nevertheless, the enslaving power of sin is broken on the basis of the merit of Christ. It no longer is a sin that "rules" the Christian for it is itself "ruled" by Christ with whom the justified are bound in faith. In this life then, Christians can in part lead a just life. Despite sin, the Christian is no longer separated from God, because in the daily return to baptism, the person who has been born anew by baptism and the Holy Spirit has this sin forgiven. Thus this sin no longer brings damnation and eternal death (15). Thus, when Lutherans say that justified persons are also sinners

and that their opposition to God is truly sin, they do not deny that, despite this sin, they are not separated from God and that this sin is a “ruled” sin. In these affirmations, they are in agreement with Roman Catholics, despite the difference in understanding sin in the justified.

## Comment 29

*Clear, isn't it, the hopeless contradictions in this type of muddled thinking.*

- “Believers are totally righteous in that God forgives their sins....” *Sins are **not** forgiven by the arbitrariness of God (mere passively, 21), but after sorrow and compunction and the firm resolution to cooperate with grace not to sin again.*
- “...and grants the righteousness of Christ....” *Again, not arbitrarily, because ‘faith’ without the good works is dead (St. James).*
- “Believers are totally righteous and.....totally sinners....” *A contradiction if ever there was one!*
- “...it is a sin ‘ruled by Christ’....” *How? Forgiven? Unforgiven?*
- “This contradiction to God is as such truly a sin....” *Only if seen under the ‘cover’ of Christ’s righteousness. The true identity of sin and forgiveness is totally lost here.*
- “Thus when Lutherans say that justified persons are also (totally) sinners, and that their opposition to God is truly a sin, they do not deny that despite this sin, they are not separated from God....” Etc. etc.

*Justified persons must be understood as ‘explained’ in 21 above and in other places in this JD: as totally passive, which is ‘arbitrarily’.*

*Thus all this is 21 all over again in spite of attempts being made here at explaining it away. I vehemently deny that the architects of this JD “are in agreement with Roman Catholics”. Enough has been said in all the foregoing to show this shambles up as being totally incompatible with Catholic doctrine. Lutheran thinking has not progressed one iota from Martin Luther’s days. The ‘convergence’, as said before, is a one-way street towards Lutheranism taken by modernist ‘catholic theologians’.*

**30.** Catholics hold that the grace of Jesus Christ imparted in baptism takes away all that is sin “in the proper sense” and (all) that is “worthy of damnation” (Rom 8:1)(16). There does, however, remain in the person an inclination (concupiscence) which comes from sin and presses toward sin. Since, according to Catholic conviction, human sins always involve a personal element and since this element is lacking in this inclination, Catholics do not see this inclination as sin in an authentic sense. They do not thereby deny that this inclination does not correspond to God’s original design for humanity and that it

is objectively in contradiction to God and remains one's enemy in lifelong struggle. Grateful for deliverance by Christ, they underscore that this inclination in contradiction to God does not merit the punishment of eternal death (17) and does not separate the justified person from God. But when individuals voluntarily separate themselves from God, it is not enough to return to observing the commandments, for they must receive pardon and peace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation through the word of forgiveness imparted to them in virtue of God's reconciling work in Christ. [See Sources for section 4.4].

### **Comment 30**

*If this can be so clearly expressed by the Catholic contributors to this JD, how is it then possible that they could ever agree with all that contradicts this position in what has been written up so far? They surely must have seen that the Lutheran position: "totally righteous" and "totally sinners" is a contradiction which is incompatible with both reality and Catholicism? Nevertheless, the 'catholic theologians' were reluctant to state categorically that in the Sacrament of Confession the forgiveness of sins is brought about by the words of the Priest: "And I absolve you from your sins in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit", a framing of words with which the Lutherans are in total disagreement. This must surely make us wonder how much other Catholic doctrine has been suppressed in this JD in order to come to a kind of artificial consensus!*

## **4.5 Law and Gospel**

**31.** We confess together that persons are justified by faith in the gospel. Apart from works "prescribed by the law" (Rom 3:28). Christ has fulfilled the law and by his death and resurrection has overcome it as a way to salvation. We also confess that God's commandments retain their validity for the justified and that Christ has by his teaching and example expressed God's will which is a standard for the conduct of the justified also.

### **Comment 31**

*Here again, it is far from clear how the two parties to this agreement see this "justification by faith in the gospel" is brought about. How can they "confess together" on something which has caused so much divergence, even contradiction, in this JD? What is being stated here is pure equivocation if applied to the Lutheran and the Catholic position: same words, different meanings.*

**32.** Lutherans state that the distinction and right ordering of law and gospel is essential for the understanding of justification. In its theological use, the law is demand and accusation. Throughout their lives, all persons, Christians also, in that they are sinners, stand under this accusation which uncovers their sin so that, in faith in the gospel, they will turn unreservedly to the mercy of God in Christ, which alone justifies them.

## Comment 32

*The first line in the above is a flat contradiction of “sola fide”, “by faith alone”, which has been the foundation of their confession in this JD. For neither ‘gospel’ nor ‘law’ is there room in being dressed up in Christ’s righteousness: their understanding of justification. The rest of the above is mere embellishment to show why others should accept their claim of being ‘Christians’.*

**33.** Because the law as a way to salvation has been fulfilled and overcome through the gospel, Catholics can say that Christ is not a lawgiver in the manner of Moses. When Catholics emphasize that the righteous are bound to observe God’s commandments, they do not thereby deny that through Jesus Christ God has mercifully promised to his children the grace of eternal life (18). [See Sources for section 4.5].

## Comment 33

*“The promise of eternal life” is not something hanging loose somewhere ‘in vacuo’ and is most certainly not in contradistinction to good works. Christ has unequivocally bound ‘eternal life’ to ‘keeping My commandments’, i.e. entering into the good works prepared by the Father from all eternity for the just to walk into. Here, in driving a wedge between ‘observing God’s commandments’ and this ‘not denying of the merciful promise of eternal life’, a strong expectation is being aroused that ‘eternal life’ is inevitable. This is a Lutheran article of faith because of their strong belief that ‘good works’ can merit nothing.*

## 4.6 Assurance of Salvation

**34.** We confess together that the faithful can rely on the mercy and promises of God. In spite of their own weakness and the manifold threats to their faith, on the strength of Christ’s death and resurrection they can build on the effective promise of God’s grace in Word and Sacrament and so be sure of this grace.

## Comment 34

*Here again, no matter how careful the wording, the meaning and the necessity of ‘good works’ remain totally hollowed out. In this transcript of the consensus, everything in the moral life depends solely on “God’s effective promise.*

**35.** This was emphasized in a particular way by the Reformers: in the midst of temptation, believers should not look to themselves but look solely to Christ and trust only him. In trust in God’s promise they are assured of their salvation, but are never secure looking at themselves.

### Comment 35

*Yes, the Reformers certainly emphasised to expect God to do everything as this JD amply shows in numerous places. Here as elsewhere, “looking at themselves” and “doing the good works which faith in God demands” are made synonymous. ‘Assurance of salvation’ is a very ambiguous way of speech here as has been stressed elsewhere in this commentary.*

**36.** Catholics can share the concern of the Reformers to ground faith in the objective reality of Christ’s promise, to look away from one’s own experience, and to trust in Christ’s forgiving word alone (cf. Mt16:19; 18:18). With the Second Vatican Council, Catholics state: to have faith is to entrust oneself totally to God (19), who liberates us from the darkness of sin and death and awakens us to eternal life (20) In this sense, one cannot believe in God and at the same time consider the divine promise untrustworthy. No one may doubt God’s mercy and Christ’s merit. Every person, however, may be concerned about his salvation when he looks upon his own weaknesses and shortcomings. Recognizing his own failures, however, the believer may yet be certain that God intends his salvation. [See Sources for section 4.6].

### Comment 36

*This is a tilt at Catholics who do **not** share the Reformed obsession with “sola fide”, “faith alone”. The word ‘**alone**’ is prominently bracketed here with Christ’s forgiving promise as the sole means of salvation. It is libellous to say that, because real Catholics, and not the anaemic type that drew up this JD, believe with all Scripture that Faith depends on good works in order to be alive, that such Catholics “consider the divine promise untrustworthy!” The last twist in this terrible “faith alone” monopoly in this JD: “intends his salvation”, is lightyears removed from being “assured of one’s salvation” as contained in 35.*

## 4.7 The Good Works of the Justified

**37.** We confess together that good works - a Christian life lived in faith hope and love - follow justification and are its fruits. When the justified live in Christ and act in the grace they receive they bring forth, in biblical terms, good fruit. Since Christians struggle against sin their entire lives, this consequence of justification is also for them an obligation they must fulfill. Thus both Jesus and the apostolic Scriptures admonish Christians to bring forth the works of love.

### Comment 37

*This hybrid expressed here is **not** reformed doctrine, unless we see why, in conformity with what is expressed in 21 above, “good works” are made synonymous with “fruits”. In 21 above, everything is passive, and just as the “fruits” grow passively from the fruit trees, so “good works”, in Reformed thinking, grow passively and*

*inevitably from “being clothed in Christ’s merit”. In this type of thinking, the ‘justified’ are predestined for heaven, the as yet unjustified are predestined to hell. In good old Calvinistic parlance, the ‘unjustified’ are predestined to remain unjustified (because of God’s arbitrary predestination), and so will never be justified....*

**38.** According to Catholic understanding, good works, made possible by grace and the working of the Holy Spirit, contribute to growth in grace, so that the righteousness that comes from God is preserved and communion with heaven is promised to these works. Their intention is to emphasise the responsibility of persons for their actions, not to contest the character of those works as gifts, or far less to deny that justification always remains the unmerited gift of grace.

### **Comment 38**

*This second hybrid expressed in the second half of the above is **not** Catholic teaching. According to the New Testament (St. Paul, as quoted in Comment 15, St. James, as quoted in Comment 19), there is a world of difference between justification as the unmerited gift from God, and the possession of justification, not arbitrarily given by God to some and not to others by ‘faith alone’, but granted in cooperation with Faith. It is obvious from the above that here the ‘catholic theologians’ are talking about the possession of grace. If the possession of justification was obtained without the works, then God would be arbitrary in giving it to some and not to others. St. Paul and St. James safeguard Catholics from this blasphemy so glibly admitted here.*

**39.** The concept of a preservation of grace and a growth in grace and faith is also held by Lutherans. They do emphasise that righteousness as acceptance by God and sharing in the righteousness of Christ is always complete. At the same time, they state that there can be growth in its effects in Christian living. When they view the good works of Christians as the fruits and signs of justification and not as one’s own “merits” they nevertheless also understand eternal life in accord with the New Testament as unmerited “reward” in the sense of the fulfillment of God’s promise to the believer. [See Sources for section 4.7].

### **Comment 39**

*There is no escape: right up till the end, the Lutheran contributors to this JD remain adamant that Reformed teaching must underlie, and be covered by, Catholic words and teaching. But it will not do, just as human sinfulness under the ‘cover’ of Christ’s merit cannot remain hidden for long.*

*In **38** we read that the ‘catholic’ position is to see “the character of the works as gifts”, which in Lutheran parlance means “unmerited (that is passive) gifts”. If eternal life, as is so clearly expressed here, must be understood as “unmerited ‘reward’”, then eternal damnation must be understood as “unmerited punishment”. Here in **39** these unmerited,*

*passive gifts are again called 'fruits', given by God, and 'growing' passively from faith. They will **not** admit to growth in justification because that is understood by them as being "always complete".*

## **5. The Significance and Scope of the Consensus Reached**

**40.** The understanding of the doctrine of justification set forth in this Declaration shows that a consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification exists between Lutherans and Catholics. In light of this consensus the remaining differences of language, theological elaboration, and emphasis in the understanding of justification described in paras. 18 to 39 are acceptable. Therefore the Lutheran and the Catholic explications of justification are in their difference open to one another and do not destroy the consensus regarding the basic truths.

### **Comment 40**

*As this commentary has so clearly brought to light from the very words used in this JD, not only the basic understanding of the Lutheran doctrine on 'justification', but also its ramifications are incompatible with the Catholic understanding and with its subsidiary teaching. The "remaining differences" are still the basic ones! The Lutheran position is **not** open to the Catholic one. It was maintained unexpurgated throughout.*

**41.** Thus the doctrinal condemnations of the 16th century, in so far as they relate to the doctrine of justification, appear in a new light: The teaching of the Lutheran churches presented in this Declaration does not fall under the condemnations from the Council of Trent.

### **Comment 41**

*Who says? .... The Lutheran position as it came out in the body of this JD was accurately grasped by the Council of Trent. There is no "new light" in which to view the Council of Trent in the year 2000. Like all Councils of the Catholic Church, Trent is for all times and forever. The teaching of the Lutheran churches presented in this Declaration has been handed over and passed on unaltered since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Only by a genuine conversion away from the Lutheran position will Lutherans and their 'catholic' defenders escape the rejections pronounced by Trent.*

**42.** Nothing is thereby taken away from the seriousness of the condemnations related to the doctrine of justification. Some were not simply pointless. They remain for us "salutary warnings" to which we must attend in our teaching and practices

## Comment 42

*The final contradictions in the closing chapters of this agreement. How can the contributors say in 41: The teaching of the Lutheran churches presented in this Declaration does not fall under the condemnations from the Council of Trent, and in the same breath say in 42: **Nothing** is thereby taken away from the seriousness of the condemnations related to the doctrine of justification? Which of these two statements do the contributors want us to believe??? Do the rejections by Trent no longer apply as seen in “the new light”? Or are they still in place when viewed in the ‘old light’? As a careful analysis of this JD reveals to any attentive reader, the ‘basics’ have not changed.*

**43.** Our consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification must come to influence the life and teachings of our churches. Here it must prove itself. In this respect, there are still questions of varying importance which need further clarification. These include, among other topics, the relationship between the Word of God and church doctrine, as well as ecclesiology, ecclesial authority, church unity, ministry, the sacraments, and the relation between justification and social ethics. We are convinced that the consensus we have reached offers a solid basis for this clarification. The Lutheran churches and the Roman Catholic Church will continue to strive together to deepen this common understanding of justification and to make it bear fruit in the life and teaching of the churches

## Comment 43

*The ‘covering’ and the gloss are now complete. A lot of non-justification topics are being mentioned here, but how can they be resolved if the basics of justification as grasped so accurately by the Council of Trent are still not resolved, as this JD brings out so clearly if studied seriously? The modernist ‘catholic theologians’ were either dumb and duped and had no grasp of the Lutheran faith, or they were deceivers themselves.*

**44.** We give thanks to the Lord for this decisive step forward on the way to overcoming the division of the church. We ask the Holy Spirit to lead us further toward that visible unity which is Christ’s will.

## Comment 44

*Here again that erroneous concept that “the Church” is divided through break-aways. Praying for the unity that Christ willed and prayed for can and must be done in the total absence of admitting that the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, the one true Church Christ founded, is, or can be, divided. The division of Christendom is **not**, and may never be portrayed as being, synonymous with an impossible division of “the Church”.*

*Vatican II, who gave us the “Decree on Ecumenism”, the “Declaration on Religious Liberty”, and “the Nature of the Church” in “Lumen Gentium #8, clearly distinguishes between ‘separated brethren’ and ‘the members of the Catholic Church’. [See Comment 27].*

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## Notes

These Notes, from (1) to (21), refer mainly to Protestant books or documents of earlier agreements. They have no standing in the Catholic Church and are totally useless for people who have no access to them. So they are left out here to save space.

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## Resources for the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification

As is to be expected from all the foregoing, no Catholic sources can be quoted in support of this ‘Joint Declaration’. The few Catholic resources quoted in this large Section add to the confusion because, twisted from their authentic Catholic sense, they are being used to underpin Reformed doctrine to make it appear that a consensus with the Lutherans has actually been achieved. Since they are not available, they cannot be checked for accuracy. Or if they are merely referred to as Catholic sources as was the constant practice in the JD, without being quoted in full, they cannot be checked for accurate interpretation nor for their accurate application.

By far the bulk of these “*Resources*” are used to hammer home relentlessly the Lutheran ideas on *justification, grace, merit, good works, etc.* So, because the Catholic position cannot be verified for interpretation or application, and because the undiluted Lutheran doctrine does not interest any robust Catholics, these *Resources* too will be left out. I will send a photocopy of them to anyone on request.

These ‘resources’ give a true indication of how the One-World ‘Church’ will come into being.

# Official Common Statement by the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church

1. On the basis of the agreements reached in the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (JD), the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church declare together: “The understanding of the doctrine of justification set forth in this Declaration shows that a consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification exists between Lutherans and Catholics” (JD **40**). On the basis of this consensus the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church declare together: “The teaching of the Lutheran Churches presented in the Declaration does not fall under the condemnations from the Council of Trent. The condemnations in the Lutheran Confessions do not apply to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church presented in this Declaration” (JD **41**).

2. With reference to the Resolution on the Joint Declaration by the Council of the Lutheran World Federation of 16 June 1998 and the response to the Joint Declaration by the Catholic Church of 25 June 1998 and to the questions raised by both of them, the annexed statement (called “Annex”) further substantiates the consensus reached in the Joint Declaration; thus it becomes clear that the earlier mutual doctrinal condemnations do not apply to the teaching of the dialogue partners as presented in the Joint Declaration.

3. The two partners in dialogue are committed to continued and deepened study of the biblical foundations of the doctrine of justification, also beyond what is dealt with in the Joint Declaration and the annexed substantiating statement. Based on the consensus reached, continued dialogue is required specifically on the issues mentioned especially in the Joint Declaration itself (JD **43**) as requiring further clarification in order to reach full church communion, a unity in diversity, in which remaining differences would be “reconciled” and no longer have a divisive force. Lutherans and Catholics will continue their efforts ecumenically in their common witness to interpret the message of justification in language relevant for human beings today and with reference both to individual and social concerns of our times.

By this act of signing  
*The Catholic Church and  
The Lutheran World Federation*  
confirm the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification in its entirety

There is no genuine conversion in Card. Cassidy in relation to wrangles over doctrine when he signed a large part of the Deposit of Faith away with his above signature. But Card. Cassidy is **not** the Catholic Church as is so boldly claimed here. Ecumenism **never** consists in Catholics being hounded by non-Catholics and their modernist supporters who were never grounded in the Everlasting Philosophy of St. Thomas

Aquinas. This Joint Declaration does **not** “*chime in, as by a pre-established harmony, with Divine Revelation*” [Pope Pius XII in “*Humani Generis*”, 1950].

## Annex to the Official Statement

**1.** The following elucidations underline the consensus reached in the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JD)* regarding basic truths of justification; thus it becomes clear that the mutual condemnations of former times do not apply to the Catholic and Lutheran doctrines of justification as they are presented in the Joint Declaration.

### Comment

*Before any ‘elucidations’ have been given, it is already taken for granted that we accept one of their conclusions (‘thus’): that mutual condemnations no longer hold. This shows how anxious these people are that we all agree that a ‘genuine consensus’ has indeed been brought about. As all the foregoing has made so forcefully clear: no consensus even on the basic truths of justification has been reached.*

**2.** “Together we confess: By grace alone, in faith in Christ’s saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works” (JD **15**).

### Comment

*If we go back to (15) we see that the wording used by the Lutherans is such that it must lead to that firm plank in their platform: arbitrariness in God, as in their faith (“passive acceptance”, **21**) there is no criterion why God should give that grace to one and not to another, the most severe stumbling block for Catholic acceptance. **2** above echoes this arbitrariness in God. With his muddy feet Card. Cassidy walks all over that, obliterating the so necessary distinctions in his eagerness to be known as the first Cardinal in history to receive the honour of having signed the first “Joint Declaration”.*

**A.** “We confess together that God forgives sin by grace and at the same time frees human beings from sin’s enslaving power (...)” (JD **22**). Justification is forgiveness of sins and being made righteous, through which God “imparts the gift of new life in Christ” (JD **22**). “Since we are justified by faith we have peace with God” (Rom 5:1). We are called children of God; and that is what we are” (I Jn 3:1). We are truly and inwardly renewed by the action of the Holy Spirit, remaining always dependent on his work in us. “So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!” (2 Cor 5:17). The justified do not remain sinners in this sense.

## Comment

*This flatly contradicts the Lutheran doctrine of remaining “total sinners” after justification (29). What is being said here under A is **not** Lutheran doctrine. Meanwhile, these Catholic-sounding phrases fall far short of ‘covering’ the Lutheran fallacies, let alone correcting them, and the Lutherans know it! They know how far all these contributing Catholics have compromised themselves **and** Catholic doctrine while not yielding one inch themselves.*

Yet we would be wrong were we to say that we are without sin (1 Jn 1:8-10, cf. JD 28). “All of us make many mistakes” (Jas 3:2). “Who is aware of his unwitting sins? Cleanse me of many secret faults” (Ps 19:12). And when we pray, we can only say, like the tax collector, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner” (Lk 18:13). This is expressed in a variety of ways in our liturgies. Together we hear the exhortation “Therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions” (Rom 6:12). This recalls to us the persisting danger which comes from the power of sin and its action in Christians. To this extent, Lutherans and Catholics can together understand the Christian as *simul justus et peccator*, despite their different approaches to this subject as expressed in JD 29-30.

**B** The concept of “concupiscence” is used in different senses on the Catholic and Lutheran sides. In the Lutheran Confessional writings concupiscence is understood as the self-seeking desire of the human being, which in light of the Law, spiritually understood, is regarded as sin. In the Catholic understanding concupiscence is an inclination, remaining in human beings even after baptism, which comes from sin and presses towards sin. Despite the differences involved here, it can be recognised from a Lutheran perspective that desire can become the opening through which sin attacks. Due to the power of sin the entire human being carries the tendency to oppose God. This tendency, according to both Lutheran and Catholic conception, “does not correspond to God’s original design for humanity” (JD 30). Sin has a personal character and, as such, leads to separation from God. It is the selfish desire of the old person and the lack of trust and love toward God.

## Comment

*This is wishy-washy stuff employed here to paper over the deep split that exists between Lutherans and Catholics. In 29 the Lutherans categorically declare that “they recognise that they remain also totally sinners precisely because they declare of concupiscence that “this contradiction to God is as such truly sin”. Here Card. Cassidy makes out that “they don’t really mean it so strong. If we water their statements down a bit and we do the same with Catholic doctrine, we can meet each other half-way”. And that is precisely what has been going on right throughout this whole JD. The Lutherans have not watered down their doctrine, but their catholic apologists have watered down both.*

The reality of salvation in baptism and the peril from the power of sin can be expressed in such a way that, on the one hand, the forgiveness of sins and renewal of humanity in Christ by baptism is emphasized and, on the other hand, it can be seen that the justified also “are continuously exposed to the power of sin still pressing its attacks (cf. Rom 6:12-14) and are not exempt from a life-long struggle against the contradiction to God (...)” (JD 28).

## Comment

*See what I mean? The Lutheran doctrine on justification (called here again ‘salvation’) is considerably watered down in the above in order to meet in some way the bare minimum of Catholic requirements. “Being exposed to the power of sin” is **not** the same as “remaining **totally** sinners”, a logical corollary to the Lutheran doctrine that “concupiscence as such is a sin”.*

*Catholics are gravely mistaken if they believe that the above is a true representation of Lutheran belief. There can be no talk of a truly “inward renewal” if people profess that they remain “**totally sinners**” after justification. Under those circumstances “belief in justification” only makes some sense if the believer “passively accepts” justification as being covered by Christ’s merits. Only then can such a human being remain “totally sinner” and “totally justified”(21,29). Totality can never be watered down to only a part. If a Lutheran looks at Christ’s merit covering him, he believes himself as being “totally justified” There is no half measure in Christ. But if he looks at himself underneath that covering, he professes that at the same time **he** truly remains “totally sinner”. “**In faith alone**” and “**mere passive**” have come to be accepted in Lutheran belief as having the same meaning. This was never grasped by the ‘catholic supporters’ of this JD. Nor was the fact that, when both were talking about “inward renewal”, they were talking at cross purposes. Neither was it appreciated that there could be no consensus over this insurmountable hurdle no matter how far the ‘contributing catholics’ were prepared to overlook Lutheran belief and water down Catholic doctrine, as will come out now.*

**C.** Justification takes place “by grace alone” (JD 15 and 16), by faith alone, the person is justified apart from works” (Rom 3:28, cf. JD 25). “Grace creates faith not only when faith begins in a person but as long as faith lasts” (Thomas Aquinas, S. Th. II/II 4, 4 ad , 3). The working of God’s grace does not exclude human action: God effects everything, the willing and the achievement, therefore, we are called to strive (cf. Phil 2:12 95). “As soon as the Holy Spirit has initiated his work of regeneration and renewal in us through the Word and the holy sacraments, it is certain that we can and must cooperate by the power of the Holy Spirit...” (The Formula of Concord, FC SD II, 64f; BSLK 897, 37ff).

## Comment

*The strong Lutheran faith (it has endured for more than 450 years going by this JD) of the unbreakable link between “**justification by faith alone**” and “**mere passive**” is being portrayed here by a Cardinal of the holy Roman Catholic Church as being also the Catholic Faith. For authority the JD is quoted as well as a misconception of the teachings of St. Paul and of St. Thomas Aquinas.*

*St. Paul, together with the whole of the Old and New Testament as well as Catholic Tradition, clearly teaches that **no** human being can boast to have merited and so to have received Justification because of the prior performance of some ‘good works’. But, in order to avoid attributing arbitrariness to God and so to obliterate any ‘mere passivity’ in the reception of Justification (“you get it and you don’t”), the whole of Scripture declares under Divine Inspiration that Faith in Justification is to be accepted by “the one act of Faith” required by God to be performed:  
For what does the Scripture say?*

- **"Abraham put his faith in Yahweh who counted this as making him justified."**  
(Gen. 15:6).
- **"Abraham put his faith in God and this faith was considered as justifying him".**  
(Rom. 4:3).
- **“Take Abraham for example: he put his faith in God and this faith was considered as justifying him”.**  
(Gal. 3:6).

*Now all these testimonies clearly speak of the **one essential act** that had to be performed: “Abraham **put** his faith in God,” an act he could have refused to perform. This is not a purely human act about which he could boast as having earned, merited justification for himself as his due, (wages), but is a supernatural act to which God had raised him up in order to obliterate any arbitrariness in God, that justification is granted by a merely passive faith. Faith is and remains a **human** act on the supernatural level. Nowhere in this JD is this clearly stated as being the Lutheran faith. On the contrary!*

- **By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given friendly welcome to the spies. (Hebr. 11:31)**

**“Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by works, and Scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness”; and he was called the friend of God. You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. And in the same way was not also Rahab the harlot justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so faith apart from works is dead”. [James 2:21-26].**

It is not this one, necessary, supernatural act of Faith which is condemned by St. Paul as useless, since a human being can refuse to perform this so necessary act on the refusal of which **no** “mere passive” justification takes place. God does not arbitrarily give ‘mere passive’ faith, ‘mere passive’ justification to one and not to another. And once this one, necessary, supernatural **act** of Faith has been made, then as Scripture says, **God counts this (act of Faith) as making him justified.** And not without it.

**D.** Grace as fellowship of the justified with God in faith, hope and love is always received from the salvific and creative work of God (cf. JD 27). But it is nevertheless the responsibility of the justified not to waste this grace but to live in it. The exhortation to do good works is the exhortation to practice the faith (cf. BSLK 197, 45). The good works of the justified "should be done in order to confirm their call, that is, lest they fall from their call by sinning again" (Apol. XX, 13, BSLK 316, 18-24, with reference to 2 Pet 1:10. Cf. also FC SD IV 33, BSLK 948, 9-23). In this sense Lutherans and Catholics can understand together what is said about the "preservation of grace" in JD 38 and 39. Certainly, whatever in the justified precedes or follows the free gift of faith is neither the basis of justification nor merits it" (JD 25).

#### **Comment**

*This is dishonest talk to hide the fact of Catholic doctrine that good works must be done in order to **grow** in Faith, not only to just **live** in it, gathering mere passively-growing ‘fruits. Faith without the good works to grow in it and make it stronger is dead.*

**E.** By justification we are unconditionally brought into communion with God. This includes the promise of eternal life “If we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his” (Rom 6:5, cf. Jn 3:36, Rom 8:17). In the final judgement, the justified will be judged also on their works (cf. Mt 16:27; 25:31-46; Rom 2:16; 14:12; 1 Cor 3:8; 2 Cor 5:10 etc.). We face a judgement in which God’s gracious sentence will approve anything in our life and action that corresponds to his will. However, everything in our life that is wrong will be uncovered and will not enter eternal life. The Formula of Concord also states: “It is God’s will and express command that believers should do good works which the Holy Spirit works in them, and God is willing to be pleased with them for Christ’s sake and he promises to reward them gloriously in this and in the future life” (FC SD IV, 38). Any reward is a reward of grace, on which we have no claim.

#### **Comment**

*And so the double talk goes on and on until the great majority of human beings on earth has been gathered (“coerced”) into the “One-World ‘Church’” ready for Anti-christ. If the above and what follows next would find their way into newspapers around the world (which eventually they will), the vast majority of their readers wouldn’t think twice to declare it to be an adequate description of St. Paul’s teaching. And why?*

*Because they do not know enough Catholic doctrine, enough history, enough morality, enough Scripture to understand it properly, especially if bishops and cardinals go along with it as is the case here.*

**3.** The doctrine of justification is measure or touchstone for the Christian faith. No teaching may contradict this criterion. In this sense, the doctrine of justification is an “indispensable criterion which constantly serves to orient all the teaching and practice of our churches to Christ” (JD **18**). As such, it has its truth and specific meaning within the overall context of the Church’s fundamental Trinitarian confession of faith. We “share the goal of confessing Christ in all things, who is to be trusted above all things as the one Mediator (I Tim 2:5-6) through whom God in the Holy Spirit gives himself and pours out his renewing gifts” (JD **18**).

### **Comment**

*Which ‘doctrine of justification’? Whose ‘doctrine of justification’ is singled out here for Catholics? The ‘mere passive’ one? The arbitrary one? The one that merely covers us with Christ’s merit, underneath which we remain “totally sinners”? The one that does not even depend on the one single act of Faith, contrary to St. James’ and St. Paul’s teaching? The one that does not **graft** us on the stem of Christ? Or is it the **act of Faith** which the Council of Trent has declared to be the “beginning, the root and the foundation of all justification”, and which the First Vatican Council has given even greater precision by declaring this to be the **act of Catholic Faith**? As in our days has been so clearly taught by the Second Vatican Council: that God does **not** work His graces of justification outside the Catholic Church, by reminding us that the elements of sanctification and of truth....found outside Her visible structure as gifts properly belonging to the Church of Christ possess an inner dynamism to **Catholic** unity.*

*90% of Catholics the world over no longer believe this just as it is no longer believed by Card. Edward I. Cassidy.*

**4.** The Response of the Catholic Church does not intend to put in question the authority of Lutheran Synods or of the Lutheran World Federation. The Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation began the dialogue and have taken it forward as partners with equal rights (*par cum Paris*). Notwithstanding different conceptions of authority in the church, each partner respects the other partner’s ordered process of reaching doctrinal decisions.

### **Comment**

*One can hear all the ‘catholic’ anarchists, apostates, modernists, free-thinkers, feminists, teilhardians, clapping their hands with shouts of joy “Hear! Hear! Up there, Cassidy! Sock it to them! There is no such thing as a unique Catholic Church!”*

# The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification: Achievements, Implications, Limits

**by Cardinal Edward I. Cassidy**  
**President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity**

## Preliminary Remarks

*The forces for wiping the unique Catholic Church from the face of this earth are in full swing by now. Her enemies want Her replaced by a 'church' of their own making, headed by a 'pope' of their own making, teaching the 'doctrines' of their own making. And just as at the height of Christ's love for sinful man, the Last Supper, any idea that His Sacred Body would be laid in a tomb the next day was far removed from the minds of his friends, so is it equally far removed from Catholic Minds today at the height of the Church's love for that same sinful humanity, that His Sacred Mystical Body, His holy and unique Catholic Church, will also for a while be eclipsed by a great stone in days to come.*

*As we have seen, the 'Joint Declaration' is a fraud. It is part of this eclipse. Let us now take time off to listen to the man whom the Holy Father has placed in charge of the "Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity".*

*Much of this I will pass on in silence. When it is imperative for the spiritual well-being of the readers that a comment is made, I will highlight the offending text with a shadowed background and draw attention to its meaning with a few words.*

In his Apostolic Letter *Tertio millennio adveniente* (1994), Pope John Paul II calls for a spirit of repentance and conversion for sins as a way of preparing well for the Great Jubilee 2000. Among the sins that require a greater commitment to repentance and conversion, he says, are "those which have been detrimental to the unity willed by God for his People" (1). The Pope asks the Church to invoke the Holy Spirit for the grace of Christian unity. Overcoming the divisions of the past which openly contradict the will of Christ and are a cause of scandal to the world, and contributing to the unity of Christians "is one of the tasks of Christians as we make our own way to the year 2000" (2). Thus according to His Holiness:

"the approaching end of the second millennium demands of everyone an examination of conscience and the promotion of fitting ecumenical initiatives, so that we can celebrate the Great Jubilee if not completely united, at least much closer to overcoming the divisions of the second millennium" (3).

At the threshold of the new Christian millennium, the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church have taken an important step toward resolving a source of the divisions of the past. Both have, in the month of June, 1998, officially affirmed and accepted the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*(4). In doing so, the official Response of the Catholic Church pointed to some statements in this document that seemed to need further clarification. The Lutheran World Federation also indicated certain questions that would require further study. As a result of renewed efforts made by both partners to this dialogue in the following months, these concerns were examined and a mutually satisfactory document drawn up and attached to the *Joint Declaration*.

## Comment

*This ‘attachment’ to the JD is the Annex to the Official Common Statement which in our Analysis starts on p. 31. The readers can see for themselves how ‘mutually satisfactory’ this attachment to the JD is. Readers, do not be alarmed, dismayed, and upset about the frequent references made by Card. Cassidy in this final document about “the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church”. The JD was put together, signed and accepted by individual Catholics, **not** by the Catholic Church..... The Catholic Church comprises Our Blessed Lord, Our Blessed Lady, the Apostles, all the Martyrs who died for the difference between the Catholic Faith and any Protestant persuasion, the whole of Catholic Tradition. All these are no party to a political concordat which is the main essence of this JD.*

Together with the President of the Lutheran World Federation, Bishop Christian Krause, I had the privilege of officially signing these texts in Augsburg, Germany, on 31 October 1999.

The purpose of this article is to highlight what has been achieved in the *Joint Declaration*, and to indicate the implications and the limits of this important development.

## I. The Achievement

One of the most important acquisitions of the modern Ecumenical movement has been, without any doubt, the official reception by the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church of the consensus document entitled the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*. This document is the fruit of more than 30 years of dialogues, both international and national, between Lutherans and Catholics. My predecessor Cardinal Johannes Willebrands, already a decade ago stressed the importance of the Lutheran/Catholic dialogue especially for Western Christianity:

“because at the heart of the Reformation in the 16th century was the conflict between Martin Luther and the authorities in Rome. Reconciliation between Lutherans and Catholics would therefore be highly symbolic as well as significant. I believe there is a special ecumenical responsibility here” (5).

The dialogue itself has affirmed that the doctrine of Justification was “decisively important for the Reformation (CA IV)” (6) and could even be considered “the central point of controversy in the 16<sup>th</sup> century” (7) For all the Reformers, the doctrine of justification is seen as the article of faith on which the church stands or falls. They consider justification by faith to be a criterion or corrective for all church practices, structure and theology. It is the heart of the gospel’s proclamation of God’s free and merciful promises in Jesus Christ that can rightly be received only through faith.

The *Joint Declaration*, for its part, speaks of questions of varying importance still in need of clarification (43). Nevertheless we can now say that, in regard to basic truths of the doctrine of justification, Lutherans and Catholics have reached substantial agreement. The understanding of the basic truths of the doctrine of justification described in the *Joint Declaration* has been accepted by the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church. Both can now say that the condemnations hurled at one another in the 16<sup>th</sup> century concerning specific issues treated in the *Joint Declaration*, do not apply today to the other party in so far as they each subscribe to the positions elaborated in the said document.

I believe that we can affirm that, on the eve of the year 2000, thanks to the grace of God and in the spirit of *Tertio millennio adveniente*, Lutherans and Catholics have taken a significant step toward “overcoming the divisions of the second millennium” (8).

#### **a. The Consensus Reached on the Doctrine of Justification**

The *Joint Declaration* is not a new Confessional statement, nor is it a compromise document. It seeks to summarize the results of the Lutheran/Roman Catholic dialogue on this doctrine over a period of some 30 years by stating what each community holds as its faith in basic truths of this doctrine and showing that the two explications of these basic truths are not contrary one to the other. The *Declaration* in fact states that it has the following intention: “to show that on the basis of their dialogue the subscribing

Lutheran churches and the Roman Catholic Church are now able to articulate a common understanding of our justification by God’s grace through faith in Christ. It does not cover all that either church teaches about justification, it does encompass a consensus on basic truths of the doctrine of justification and shows that the remaining differences in its explication are no longer the occasion for doctrinal condemnation” (JD 5).

## Comment

*The Catholic Church was not 'a subscribing Church'. Only Catholics were. It is amazing to read that there is consensus on the basic truths of justification but that the JD does not cover all that either church teaches about justification. Here we see confirmed 'officially' what we discovered in the JD. How can the 'basic truths' be there when not all teaching is there? What truth is there outside the basic truths? Is it capable of nullifying 'basic truths'? As we discovered in the JD, the basic truths of either church were **not** there. They were carefully hidden, but were uncovered.... (End of comment).*

A fundamental principle in ecumenical dialogue is that there may be a distinction between the doctrines of faith and the manner in which these doctrines are formulated or expressed. This was stated already at the opening of the Second Vatican Council by Pope John XXIII, and is a basic principle of the Ecumenical Directory of the Holy See published in 1993. In other words, the same truth may be expressed in different traditions in diverse forms, without that necessarily implying diversity in faith. Differences in expression are not necessarily contradictory or mutually exclusive. Of course, the theological dialogue, and then the Churches concerned, have to discern when this is the case. Diversity of expression may enrich faith understanding. It may also, however, wound unity and divide Christians.

The text that we are considering takes themes that have separated Lutherans and Catholics for centuries and seeks to show how they can now be seen as complimentary position, while emphasising distinctive Lutheran and Catholic concerns. The method followed is to set down firstly our common faith on each of the truths dealt with, and then where necessary explain the different approach or emphasis that each party traditionally follows in regard to a particular truth.

The *Joint Declaration* begins with a *Preamble* and then gives the main points of the biblical message of God's work of justifying fallen human beings. This is followed by an analysis of the doctrine of justification as an ecumenical problem between the Catholic Church and the churches stemming from the Reformation. The result of recent dialogues is then stated as the present-day common, or shared understanding of justification.

The document sets forth in some detail the following seven basic components of this common understanding:

1. Human Powerlessness and Sin in Relation to Justification;
2. Justification as Forgiveness of Sins and Making Righteous;
3. Justification by Grace and through Faith;
4. The Justified as Sinner;
5. Law and Gospel;
6. Assurance of Salvation;
7. The Good Works of the Justified.

The final section of the declaration sets forth the significance and scope of the consensus that has been reached.

It is not possible to dwell at length on the contents of the *Joint Declaration* in more detail in this article. I must, however, present what may be termed the three basic truths on the doctrine of justification concerning which the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation has reached a consensus. These are found in the *Joint Declaration*, in Section 3, **14-18**.

Firstly, justification is a free gift bestowed by the Trinitarian God and centres on the person of Christ who became incarnate, died and rose. In being related to the person of Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit, we enter into a condition of righteousness. This is not something that we merit, but is freely bestowed. And so “together we confess: By grace alone, in faith in Christ’s saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works” (**15**).

Secondly, we receive this salvation in faith. Faith is itself God’s gift through the Holy Spirit who works through word and sacrament in the community of believers and who, at the same time, leads believers into that renewal of life that God will bring to completion in eternal life. Hence, the reality of justification is linked to faith, but not simply as an intellectual assent of the mind. Rather the believer is to give him/herself over to Christ in the renewal of life.

Thirdly, justification points to the heart of the Gospel message, but must be seen in an organic unity with all the other truths of faith: Trinity, Christology Ecclesiology and Sacraments. “It stands in an essential relation to all the truths of faith, which are to be seen as internally related to each other. It is an indispensable criterion which constantly serves to orient all the teaching and practice of our Churches to Christ” (**18**).

The common understanding of justification expressed in the *Joint Declaration* is Trinitarian and Christocentric in character. The core of it, to cite the *Joint Declaration* (n. **15**), is that “in faith we together hold the conviction that justification is the work of the Triune God. The Father sent his Son into the world to save sinners. The foundation and presupposition of justification is the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ. Justification thus means that Christ himself is our righteousness, in which we share through the Holy Spirit in accord with the will of the Father” (n. **15**).

## Comment

“...we together hold the conviction that justification is the work of the Triune God...” How ‘common’ is the understanding as expressed in the JD? Once again we are served up the total absence of the fundamental difference between Lutherans and Catholics: Is this unmerited justification given in “mere passivity” on the human level as a ‘covering’ by Christ’s merit, leaving the human being “totally sinners”, implying arbitrariness in God as to whom He gives justification and to whom He does not give it? This is again strongly suggested by the words used here by Card. Cassidy: that justification means that Christ himself is our righteousness as our covering, to make us pleasing to His heavenly Father.

Or is this unmerited justification given as a grafting on the stem of Christ **after** a supernatural **act of Faith** has been made by a human being in conformity with the whole of Sacred Scripture? Just how “common” is this fundamental difference not only in “understanding” (as the next line in Card. Cassidy’s overview states), but in Faith? (End of comment).

How appropriate it is that we have arrived, together with the Lutheran World Federation at this common understanding of justification which praises the work of the Triune God and focuses on the saving work of Christ, precisely at the time of our formal preparations for the year 2000. For these preparations following the plan of *Tertio millennio adveniente*, are designed to praise the Triune God and are “deeply charged with Christological significance” (TMA, n. 31). Certainly for Catholics this achievement enhances our preparations for the Great Jubilee and provides a decisive ecumenical step into the new century. As we commemorate in the Year 2000 the Birth of Christ, we are now able to say, in humility and with gratitude to God, that we have tried to respond to the prayer of Our Lord for his disciples, “that they may all be one” (Jn 17:21) and that there are some tangible results that we can now offer, even though we realize that we still have a long way to go towards the goal of visible unity to which Christ calls us.

### b. The Meaning of the Joint Declaration

In affirming the *Joint Declaration*, Lutheran and Catholic authorities in effect have also indicated that the doctrine of justification presented therein does not contradict the teaching of that doctrine as found in their authoritative sources; on the Catholic side in the Council of Trent, and on the Lutheran side in the Lutheran Confessions. Rather it is in clear continuity with the essential understanding of that doctrine formulated, on both sides, in the 16th century. But how have we come to this point?

## Comment

“...Catholic authorities in effect have indicated that the doctrine presented here does not contradict the teaching of that doctrine as found in their authoritative sources .....the Council of Trent....”.

*In any other context this would be classed as a “lie”; so here we call it a serious infringement of the truth. The Council of Trent was initiated, supervised and concluded by the legitimate Pope of the day and so shared in the Holy Church’s infallibility. It had a thorough grasp of the Lutheran doctrine on Justification from first-hand witnesses, scrutinised it, rejected it as Catholic and condemned it in the Holy Spirit. Anticipating what follows in the next para, it did **not** have “insufficient mutual understanding”, did **not** labour under “misinterpretation” nor under “excessive mistrust”. As a legitimate Council of the Church, it remains, with Christ, for all times, “yesterday, today, forever” (Hebr. 13:8).*

“Rather it (the JD) is in clear continuity with the essential understanding...”

*This gross infringement of the truth also comes from “the father of lies” as it destroys faith in the Council of Trent in preference for the modern egalitarianism in relation to the building of the “One-World ‘Church’” (Pope St. Pius X, 1910). So,*

“How have we come to this point?”

*Simple. By burying what Trent found and condemned under the bulldozing effect of the modern false ecumenism. (End of comment).*

Historical and dogmatic studies, especially in the ecumenical context of recent times, have been able to clarify the polemical context of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, including the political, social, theological, and philosophical influences at work as each side formulated, at that time, its understanding of this doctrine, and formulated also the condemnations made against the perceived positions of the other. These studies have been able to show that “a number of the differences were caused by insufficient mutual understanding in part also by misinterpretation and excessive mistrust. Others were due to different modes of thought and expression” (9). These studies, which were also encouraged by Pope John Paul II, (10) have therefore provided the intellectual and theological basis needed for careful re-evaluation of the other’s positions, and the clear intention of our own. Furthermore the contemporary ecumenical movement, urging “a change of heart” and a “newness of attitudes”, while calling for prayer “to the divine Spirit for the grace to be genuinely self-denying, humbler, gentle in the service of others, and to have an attitude of brotherly generosity toward them” (*Unitatis redintegratio*, n. 7), helped foster the spiritual basis and strength necessary to take the committed steps implied by such a re-evaluation. For Catholics these steps are also rooted within the teaching of the Second Vatican

Council which made explicit that one of its “chief concerns was promoting the restoration of unity among all Christians” (*Unitatis redintegratio*, n. 1).

### **c. The Ecumenical Implications of the Joint Declaration**

Rapprochement on the issue of justification is obviously of importance for reconciliation of Lutherans and Catholics because this question has been seen as a church-dividing issue between them.

The doctrine of justification received attention in the Lutheran/Catholic dialogue from the beginning. The report of the first phase of international dialogue in 1972 included five paragraphs on “the problem of the doctrine of justification”. The report noted that on this question of justification, “the traditional polemical disagreements were especially sharply defined”. But it also noted that “today, however, a far-reaching consensus is developing in the interpretation of justification” (12). And even then, perspectives were presented opening the way to rapprochement. “Catholic theologians”, the report said, “also emphasize in reference to justification that God’s gift of salvation for the believer is unconditional as far as human accomplishments are concerned. Lutheran theologians emphasize that the event of justification is not limited to individual forgiveness of sins, and they do not see in it a purely external declaration of the justification of the sinner” (13).

The second phase of international dialogue kept this emerging far-reaching consensus in view, mentioning it in two of the reports it published, in 1980 and 1981 (14) At the same time significant reports on Justification were developed in national Lutheran-Catholic dialogues in the USA (*Justification by Faith*, 1985) (15) and in Germany (*The Condemnations of the Reformation Era. Do They Still Divide?*, 1986) (16). These provided extensive discussion of the issues, and strengthened the growing conviction that a Lutheran/Catholic consensus on justification was possible. When the third phase of international Lutheran/Catholic dialogue began in 1986, these two national studies were especially valuable as the Commission developed a lengthy report, completed in 1993, entitled “*Church and Justification: Understanding the Church in the light of the Doctrine of Justification*” (17).

Thus, when at the request of the Lutheran World Federation and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity a small Lutheran-Catholic working group was formed in 1993, to begin development of a joint declaration on the doctrine of justification,

it had impressive resources available to it, resources which already indicated common views between Catholics and Lutherans on this central point of controversy.

## Comment

“..... it had impressive resources available ....”

*None as impressive as the Council of Trent which was also available but had to be obliterated beforehand on, as we saw, very shoddy, in fact insulting, grounds.*

“..... resources which already indicated common views .....

*That was the whole idea of the obliteration of Trent. According to its researches there was **no** ‘common ground’ between Lutheran and Catholic faith on justification.*

(End of comment).

The doctrine of justification is, however, an important issue also for rapprochement between Catholics and other churches coming from the Reformation. It was within Western Christianity that conflict on this central issue took place. Thus we should not be surprised that the doctrine of justification was taken up at length in the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission in its 1987 study *Salvation and the Church* (18). The Co-Chairmen of that Commission indicated that in preparing this text it had been “greatly helped by the statement *Justification by Faith* [...] (approved) by the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Consultation in the USA” (19). The Reformed/Roman Catholic International dialogue also treated Justification in some detail in the 1990 report of its second phase (20). A brief treatment was also given in a report of the Methodist/Roman Catholic International dialogue (21).

Thus, while the *Joint Declaration* is an historic and decisive step forward in Lutheran/Catholic relations, it may well be that this official breakthrough in one bilateral relationship might contribute to fostering formal reconciliation on this question between Catholics and others as well. Whether or not this takes place, what has been achieved in this mutual agreement of the *Joint Declaration* surely is an historic development of particular importance in the history of Western Christianity, and indeed for the whole ecumenical movement as well, since it illustrates that ecumenical progress can be made on questions that are of central importance, and have long been seen as church-dividing issues.

## II. The Limits of Our Achievement

If the doctrine of justification was “the central point of controversy in the 16th century”, we may now ask to what extent, then, does the agreement on this doctrine by the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church bring the conflict between Catholics and Lutherans to a close? While we most certainly need to celebrate the significance of the *Joint Declaration* which has overcome such a significant barrier, we also need to be clear about the limits of the agreement reached. The declaration brings the Catholic Church and the

member churches of the Lutheran World Federation which affirmed it a clear step closer to unity. They have not yet, however, achieved the goal of full, visible unity.

The official responses to the *Joint Declaration*, while affirming the basic consensus of justification presented, confirm this by indicating questions closely connected with the consensus set out in that document that require further study. The Lutheran response refers in this connection to Numbers **18**, **28-30**, and **38**. Numbers **21**, **22** and **29-30** are indicated in the response of the Catholic Church as needing deeper clarification.

Moreover, the *Joint Declaration* (**43**) lists other questions of varying importance that have still to be taken up and examined by the dialogue Commission: the relationship between the Word of God and church doctrine, ecclesiology, authority in the church, ministry, the sacraments and the relation between justification and social ethics. And even in recent decades, as both communities have participated in the modern ecumenical movement, some new differences between us have emerged which can cause difficulty in our mutual journey toward visible unity.

The achievement of the *Joint Declaration* offers a strongly hopeful and significant step toward rapprochement between two families of Christians separated from each other since the time of the Reformation. Since, however, it does not bring us to the full visible unity we seek, Catholics are not able to share the Eucharist with their Lutheran brothers and sisters. For, while common prayer should increase between us, we do not yet share the “oneness in faith, worship and ecclesial life” (22) which, for Catholics, is required for Eucharistic sharing. Our common participation in the Eucharist awaits the full ecclesial communion which we seek, and for which the Eucharist will be the sign par excellence.

### **III. The Pastoral Implications of the Joint Declaration**

Before concluding these reflections on the *Joint Declaration* it would seem very opportune to indicate some of the pastoral implications of the fact that the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation have both officially affirmed. Surely this must have a significant impact from now on in the relations between Lutheran and Roman Catholic churches.

A first consequence of the signing of this document is the realisation that we have been able to overcome one of the fundamental differences that have distinguished us as two communities. This should have a positive and real effect not only on the future theological dialogue, but also on our communities at every level. We should now be able to appreciate more all that binds us together as sons and daughters of the one Lord, to whom we look as the one Mediator between God and his people. Serious difficulties remain, but they are

secondary to what we hold in common. No longer may we look upon our different expressions of faith as being like two huge canons drawn up in battle line and facing each other!

Secondly, we must now be deeply aware of the need to move further along the path to unity. We have not reached the end of the road. We have certainly made good progress and opened the way to further achievements.

Let us all beware, however, not to place new obstacles along that way. We must avoid developments in doctrine and in ecumenical relationships that would hinder our progress towards the unity we seek. At the same time, we have to be sure that our attitudes, our words, our devotions and our understandings respect fully the truths we have set out so clearly in the *Joint Declaration*.

### Comment

“We must avoid developments in doctrine ... that would hinder **our** progress to the unity we seek.

*This surely brings out in all its clarity that the Council of Trent was the infallible work of the Holy Spirit and the whole modern ecumenical Babel is **not**, even if it is hailed everywhere as “the work of the Holy Spirit”.*

*Every orthodox Catholic knows that development of doctrine is the work of the Holy Spirit Who as God is totally free. Here He is “bound up, gagged and blindfolded” by Cassidy so He cannot see (and interfere with) the Protestant acceptance of justification by ‘catholics’. Here He is told **not** to let any Pope declare the Dogma of Mary, Mediatrix of all Graces, because that would not only thoroughly upset the ‘catholic’ drive to the false ecumenism, would not only upset the Lutherans because of their erroneous faith in justification, which they would love to see accepted as the ‘catholic faith’, but would also thoroughly upset all the ‘catholics’ who see nothing wrong with the global “unification” by means of utterly Protestant ‘Joint Declarations’. No more ‘development of Catholic doctrine’ without prior permission from Cassidy, who speaks on His and the Church’s behalf on “**our** progress in the ‘christian unity’ we seek”....*

“At the same time we have to be sure that our attitudes....**fully** respect the **truths** we have set out so clearly in the ‘Joint Declaration’.

*At the expense of the Truths the Holy Spirit has set out so clearly in the Council of Trent and in the infallible Catholic Tradition. Vatican II **never** contradicted Trent. For there is only ONE Truth: Christ, and ONE Spirit of Truth, the Holy Spirit (John 15:26).*

Thirdly, we are reminded by the declaration of the new life that we have received, not through any merit of ours, but through the free gift of Jesus Christ. This is cause for constant thanksgiving and celebration, something that we can and should do together far more often than in the past. It is good to remember also that what we have achieved in the *Joint Declaration* is not primarily the result of the efforts of those involved, but of the grace that comes to us from the

Holy Spirit. Prayer has played an important role and prayer for unity continues to be an essential part of our ongoing relations.

And then, fourthly, we are also reminded of our responsibility to live fully the new life that has been so freely given to us. Catholics and Lutherans are called to give witness to their faith in Christ to the world of the coming third Christian Millennium. Justification calls for transformed living.

Together we can now proclaim to the world the same good news of justification by faith in Christ. As I stated in July 1997 before the General Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in Hong Kong:

To those citizens of today who are so often the victims of false and questionable values created by materialism and secularisation, Lutherans and Catholics can now confess together, in the words of the *Joint Declaration*, “that all persons depend completely on the saving grace of God for their salvation” (JD **19**). To those who are broken-hearted, or feel overwhelmed by the manifold threats to life and to well-being, we can now confess together “that the faithful can rely on the mercy and promises of God” (JD **34**). To those who feel deeply the burden of guilt for sins committed in the past, or of a sinful life today, we can now “confess together that God forgives sin by grace and at the same time frees human beings from sin’s enslaving power and imparts the gift of new life in Christ” (JD **22**). To those citizens today who, as in the time of St Paul, are looking for the unknown God, we can now “confess together that in Baptism the Holy Spirit unites one with Christ, justifies and truly renews the person” (JD **28**), and “that persons are justified by faith in the Gospel ‘apart from works prescribed by the law’ (Rom 3:28)” (JD **31**). To do this more effectively we need also to grow together in Christ.

The *Joint Declaration* must not remain a document somewhere over there in Geneva and Rome. What we have achieved must become part of the lives of our parishes and congregations, wherever they are. How this can best be done needs to be studied and carried out at the local level. One suggestion that I would make is that the Bible Studies on justification that the Lutheran World Federation and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity prepared together a couple of years ago be taken up and reflected on jointly by Lutheran and Catholic congregations.

Famous within the ecumenical movement is the “Lund Principle”. The report of the Third World Conference on Faith and Order at Lund in 1952 requested the churches: “to consider whether they are doing all they ought to do to manifest the oneness of the People of God. Should not our churches ask themselves [...] whether they should not act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately?” (23).

This important principal was presented as a *request* by the Faith and Order World Conference at Lund. Perhaps now, as Lutherans and Catholics have declared agreement on an important aspect of the Apostolic faith, they need to adopt the Lund Principal as a *theological responsibility*. Should they not commit themselves to deepen the degree of unity they share by seeking to act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately?

#### IV. Conclusion

Even with its limits, the *Joint Declaration* can be seen as a sign that, as the Decree on Ecumenism stated, “the Lord of the Ages wisely and patiently follows out the plan of His Grace on behalf of us sinners. In recent times he has begun to bestow more generously upon divided Christians remorse over their divisions and a longing for unity” (*Unitatis redintegratio*, n. 1).

We need, above all, to give thanks to God for this achievement. In the Catholic Church’s preparation for the Great Jubilee, the year 1998, in which the official responses to the *JD* of both the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church were published, was dedicated to the Holy Spirit. We call to mind that the great mystery of the Incarnation which is the focus of the Great Jubilee “was accomplished by the Power of the Holy Spirit” (*TMA*, n. 44). We are reminded of the abiding influence of the Holy Spirit in the Church. We can recall, in regard to ecumenism that the Second Vatican Council stated without hesitation that the movement for the restoration of unity among all Christians is “fostered by the grace of the Holy Spirit” (*Unitatis redintegratio*, n. 1).

This agreement between Lutherans and Catholics has been fashioned by decades of theological dialogue, has been supported by prayer for unity, and is a tribute to the persistence of the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church to see it through. And yet we would surely be remiss if we did not acknowledge our belief that behind all of this, were impulses fostered by the grace of the Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of unity, who assists us in responding to the prayer of Christ for his followers, “that they may all be one” (Jn 17:21).

And so with the psalmist we proclaim: “O give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his steadfast love endures forever!” (Ps 118:1).

We give thanks to the Lord for this decisive step forward on the way to overcoming the division of the church. “We ask the Holy Spirit to lead us further toward that visible unity which is Christ’s will” (JD 44).

## Notes

The 'Notes' have almost all been taken from either Protestant sources or from combined sources, just as dishonest and untrustworthy as is the 'Joint Declaration'. Papal and Vatican II sources have been manipulated and twisted to suit "our unity we seek...."

### For further reading consult the following:-

- "Teilhard de Chardin and the Dutch Catechism";
- "The 'theology' of Teilhard de Chardin".

Both these articles are on the following web page:

<http://www.pipeline.com.au/users/frits/default.HTM>

This page can be reached by clicking on the "AMAIC Internet Homepage" **link** at the bottom of the AMAIC Bookroom Home Page.

- "Vatican II" – the article following this Analysis of the Joint Declaration on the AMAIC Bookroom, Catholic Philosophy page.
- "Darkness" – which is to be found on the AMAIC Bookroom, Catholic Apologetics page.

1<sup>ST</sup> January, 2000