



Message of the 5th World Conference on Faith and Order

On the Way to Fuller Koinonia

1. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the koinonia of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (2 Cor. 13:13).
2. God, who calls all to unity and makes us one in Christ and the Spirit, has drawn us to Santiago de Compostela from around the world. We are a more comprehensive gathering than came together thirty years ago in Montreal at the last World Conference on Faith and Order. Far more of us come from Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Pacific region. There are more women participants than ever before. The group of younger theologians has eagerly participated in the work. For the first time, the Roman Catholic Church has sent official delegates to a World Conference. There is a significant presence of Pentecostal Christians. We have come together, sent by our churches, to further the work of the Faith and Order movement "to proclaim the oneness of the church of Jesus Christ and to call the churches to the goal of visible unity" (Faith and Order Commission By-Law 2).

3. We come in joy, giving thanks for the great strides forward that have been made in recent years and for the eagerness of many Christians for a fuller *koinonia*, but also come in concern for waning commitments to Christian unity. We come in thankfulness for the breakthroughs to freedom that have occurred, for example, in Eastern Europe and Southern Africa. But we also come in concern for a world torn by injustice and strife in such locations as the former Yugoslavia, Somalia and so many other places. We come in pain when we remember what our sin does to humanity and the groaning creation. Our concern and pain become penitence when we think of our failure to do all that is already ecumenically possible and of our silence in the face of hatred and evil, or even worse, our participation in them. We come in hope for the ecumenical future, for the Church, and for the world. We now leave Santiago with renewed commitment and enthusiasm for the ecumenical vision. We say to the churches: *there is no turning back*, either from the goal of visible unity or from the single ecumenical movement that unites concern for the unity of the Church and concern for engagement in the struggles of the world.
4. *Koinonia* has been the focus of our discussions. This word from the Greek New Testament describes the richness of our life together in Christ: community, communion, sharing, fellowship, participation, solidarity. The *koinonia* we seek and which we have experienced is more than words. It springs from the Word of Life, "what we have seen with our eyes, what we have touched with our hands" (1 Jn 1:1), especially where *koinonia* is being realized daily in such forms as local ecumenical projects and base communities. This *koinonia* which we share is nothing less than the reconciling presence of the love of God. God wills unity for the Church, for humanity, and for creation because God is a *koinonia* of love, the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This *koinonia* comes to us as a gift we can only accept in gratitude. Gratitude, however, is not passivity. Our *koinonia* is in the Holy Spirit who moves us to action. The *koinonia* we experience drives us to seek

that visible unity which can adequately embody our koinonia with God and one another.

5. The deeper koinoina which is our goal is for the glory of God and for the sake of the world. The Church is called to be a sign and instrument of this all-encompassing will of God, the summing up of all things in Christ. Jesus broke down walls of division in his identification with women and with the poor, the outcast, and the oppressed. A deeper koinonia will be a sign of hope for all or it will not be a true koinonia in the love of God. Only a Church itself being healed can convincingly proclaim healing to the world. Only a Church that overcomes ethnic, racial, and national hatreds in a common Christian and human identity can be a credible sign of freedom and reconciliation. While our particular focus at this conference has been the visible unity of the Church, the horizon of our work has been the wider reach of God's love.
6. One of our tasks in Santiago has been to examine the concrete ecumenical achievements over the past thirty years of the Faith and Order movement, including the bilateral dialogues. We have particularly noted and affirmed the importance of all convergences toward a common understanding and practice of baptism, eucharist, and ministry; toward a common confession of the one faith witnessed to in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, and towards a shared mission and service. The task before the churches now is to receive these convergences into their life. What steps is God leading the churches to take together *now*?
7. The ecumenical movement has changed over the past thirty years. The voices of women and of those from beyond Europe and North America have joined the ecumenical conversation in strength, bringing new insights, new experiences, new diversities. The significance for koinonia of common ethical commitment and action has been firmly placed on the Faith and Order agenda. The many positive movements of evangelical and charismatic renewal still need to be drawn into ecumenical partnership. The transformation is still going on and is at times difficult and controversial. Differences over

the goals and methods of ecumenical work and theology have led to intense debates. In these debates, conflicting perspectives often each express significant elements of truth. We are confident we are being led through such tensions into a deeper and broader koinonia in the Spirit. A test of our koinonia is how we live with those with whom we disagree.

8. The ecumenical goal has not yet been reached. The churches still have not come to a full mutual recognition of baptism. There are still obstacles that prevent the sharing together of Christians from all churches at the Lord's Table. The obstacles that stand in the way of a fuller koinonia must be felt in all their painfulness and honestly faced in penitence. The way forward will come by new ventures and insights in the faith that unites us, not by compromises that merely obscure the problems. Addressing these obstacles is the specific task of Faith and Order work. This task is more than ever essential to the ecumenical movement. The churches are challenged to an active partnership within the Faith and Order movement in addressing what still divides them.
9. At Santiago, we have again sensed the urgency of our need for greater koinonia in faith, life, and witness. The churches have made some progress in implementing the 1952 Lund principle that they should "act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately." But they must go further. Unity today calls for structures of mutual accountability.
10. Concrete challenges stand before the churches. In relation to *faith*, the churches must continue to explore how to confess our common faith in context of the many cultures and religions, the many social and national conflicts in which we live. Such confession emphasizes the need for a deeper understanding of the church and its apostolic character in the light of the Holy Scriptures. In relation to *life*, the churches must dare concrete steps toward fuller koinonia, in particular doing all that is possible to achieve a common recognition of baptism, agreement on a common participation in the eucharist, and a mutually recognized ministry. In relation to *witness*,

the churches must consider the implications of koinonia for a responsible care for creation, for a just sharing of the world's resources, for a special concern for the poor and outcast, and for a common and mutually respectful evangelism that invites people into communion with God in Christ. But beyond all particular challenges, the churches and the ecumenical movement itself are called to the conversion to Christ that true koinonia in our time demands.

11. The world was made for this koinonia in God, a koinonia that has been won by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We stand before God and our final words must be prayer:

Holy and loving Trinity:

- we come to you in thanksgiving,
for your gift of koinonia which we now receive as a
foretaste of your kingdom.
- we come to you in penitence,
for our failures to show forth koinonia where there is
division, hostility and death;
- we come to you in expectation,
that we may enter more deeply into the joy of koinonia;
- we come to you in confidence,
to commit ourselves anew to your purposes of love,
justice, and koinonia;
- we come to you in hope,
that the unity of your Church, in all its rich diversity,
may be ever more clearly manifest as a sign of your
love;

Kindle our hearts. Direct our wills. Deepen our understanding. Strengthen our resolve. Help us to be open to you and to our sisters and brothers, that we may together witness to the perfect unity of your love. Amen.



Copyright and Use:

As an ATLAS user, you may print, download, or send articles for individual use according to fair use as defined by U.S. and international copyright law and as otherwise authorized under your respective ATLAS subscriber agreement.

No content may be copied or emailed to multiple sites or publicly posted without the copyright holder(s)' express written permission. Any use, decompiling, reproduction, or distribution of this journal in excess of fair use provisions may be a violation of copyright law.

This journal is made available to you through the ATLAS collection with permission from the copyright holder(s). The copyright holder for an entire issue of a journal typically is the journal owner, who also may own the copyright in each article. However, for certain articles, the author of the article may maintain the copyright in the article. Please contact the copyright holder(s) to request permission to use an article or specific work for any use not covered by the fair use provisions of the copyright laws or covered by your respective ATLAS subscriber agreement. For information regarding the copyright holder(s), please refer to the copyright information in the journal, if available, or contact ATLA to request contact information for the copyright holder(s).

About ATLAS:

The ATLA Serials (ATLAS®) collection contains electronic versions of previously published religion and theology journals reproduced with permission. The ATLAS collection is owned and managed by the American Theological Library Association (ATLA) and received initial funding from Lilly Endowment Inc.

The design and final form of this electronic document is the property of the American Theological Library Association.