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COMUNICATO: CONSULTAZIONE ECUMENICA SULLE INDULGENZE

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For the first time since the Reformation, Catholics, Lutherans and Reformed held an ecumenical theological consultation on the theme of indulgences. The meeting involving the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) took place in Rome, February 9 and 10 2001, upon invitation by the PCPCU.

The purpose was to clarify historical, theological and pastoral issues related to indulgences in order to come to a better understanding of each other. It did not aim at an agreement on indulgences - an issue on which there have been longstanding differences between the Roman Catholic Church and the churches of the Reformation.

The consultation took place in a positive atmosphere which lent itself to honest and constructive discussion. There were common prayers at the beginning of each day and at the end of the consultation. Two presentations described the Roman Catholic understanding of indulgences. Prof. Gerhard L. Mueller (Munich, Germany), addressed the "Historical Aspects of the Indulgence". Prof. Jared Wicks, s.j. (Rome, Italy) gave a systematic presentation entitled "Towards Understanding Indulgences: *Vetera et Nova*". On the Lutheran and Reformed side the following responses were given: Prof Michael Root, Lutheran (Columbus, Ohio, USA), gave an analysis of "The Jubilee Indulgence and the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification". Prof. Ellen Babinsky, Reformed (Austin, Texas, USA), presented "A Reformed View of Indulgences". Prof. Theodor Dieter, Lutheran (Strasbourg, France), gave a response to Prof. Mueller's paper. Prof. George Sabra, Reformed (Beirut, Lebanon) responded to Prof. Wicks' paper.

Bishop Walter Kasper, Secretary of the PCPCU, Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko, General Secretary of the LWF, and Rev. Dr. Setri Nyomi, General Secretary of the WARC, each took turns chairing the meeting. His Eminence Edward Idris Cardinal Cassidy, President of the PCPCU, took part in several sessions of the consultation.

Other participants included, on the Catholic side, Prof. Barbara Hallensleben (Fribourg, Switzerland), Prof John M. McDermott, s.j. (Columbus, Ohio, USA), Msgr. John Radano and Rev. Matthias Türk (PCPCU staff, Rome, Italy); on the Lutheran side Archbishop K.G. Hammar (Uppsala, Sweden), Dr. Pirjo Työrinoja (Helsinki, Finland) and Rev. Sven Oppegaard (LWF staff, Geneva, Switzerland); on the Reformed side Dr. Alan Falconer (Geneva,

Switzerland), Dr. Fulvio Ferrario (Milan, Italy) and Dr. Odair Pedroso Mateus (WARC staff, Geneva, Switzerland).

It is intended that the papers from this consultation will be published as a contribution to further discussion.

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