

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. They will also seek further common understanding 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

ANNEX TO THE OFFICIAL COMMON 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.
 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).
- 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“ (1 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.

Yet we would be wrong were we to say that we are without sin (1 Jn 1:8-10, cf. JD 28). „(A)ll 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 recognized 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.

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 emphasised 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 lifelong struggle against the contradiction to God (...)“ (JD 28).

- 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 ff). „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).

- 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).
- 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.
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 (1 Tim 2:5-6) through whom God in the Holy Spirit gives himself and pours out his renewing gifts“ (JD 18).
- 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 pari*“). Notwithstanding different conceptions of authority in the church, each partner respects the other partner’s ordered process of reaching doctrinal decisions.