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Sweden Visit: Homily at Ecumenical Prayer Service Commemorating the Reformation

Pope Francis

Urging Catholics and Lutherans to take decisive steps toward unity, Pope Francis nevertheless offered no new openings to the idea of sharing Communion before full unity is achieved. "We Christians will be credible witnesses of mercy to the extent that forgiveness, renewal and reconciliation are daily experienced in our midst," the pope said Oct. 31 during an ecumenical prayer service in the

"As Catholics and Lutherans, we have undertaken a common journey of reconciliation."

Lutheran cathedral in Lund, Sweden, where the Lutheran World Federation was founded. With the prayer service, Pope Francis and leaders of the federation launched a year of activities to mark the 500th anniversary in 2017 of the Reformation. Pope Francis insisted that Catholics and Lutherans must "look with love and honesty at our past, recognizing error and seeking forgiveness. ... We ought to recognize with the same honesty and love that our division distanced us from the primordial intuition of God's people, who naturally yearn to be one, and that it was perpetuated historically by the powerful of this world rather than the faithful people." The division among Christians, he said, goes against Christ's will for his disciples, weakens their ability to serve the world and often makes it difficult for others to believe Christianity is a religion of peace and fraternity. The pope spoke in Spanish; a Vatican translation of his homily follows, copyright © 2016 by Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

abide in me as I abide in you" (Jn 15:4). These words, spoken by Jesus at the Last Supper, allow us to peer into the heart of Christ just before his ultimate sacrifice on the cross. We can feel his heart beating with love for us and his desire for the unity of all who believe in him. He tells us that he is the true vine and that we are the branches, that just as he is one with the Father, so we must be one with him if we wish to bear fruit.

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