

**A Vote of thanks to the Lord Mayor of the City of Augsburg,  
Dr. Peter Menacher**

**by Edward Idris Cardinal Cassidy,  
President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity  
in the Golden hall of the City Hall - 30 October 1999**

1. When the **Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification** was finally approved by the special Committee that had been entrusted with its preparation, the question of the signing immediately came into discussions between the General Secretariat of the *Lutheran World Federation* and the *Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity*. One important element in those discussions concerned the place for an eventual signing ceremony. Almost automatically Augsburg came into our minds.
2. One cannot read the sad history of the disputes of the sixteenth century without encountering the city and the churches of Augsburg. It was here that Luther and Cardinal Cajetan met but failed to find a solution to the dispute that had arisen, It seemed fitting then that it should be here in Augsburg that we would sign the **Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification** that expresses a common understanding of basic truths of a question that was at the very centre of those discussions almost five centuries ago.
3. It was with deep satisfaction that we then learnt of the enthusiastic welcome given to this idea by both the ecclesiastical and civil authorities of this city. Encouraged by this positive reaction, we had no hesitation, once the **Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification** had been approved, to approach these authorities with the formal request that the signing might take place here on October 31 St 1999.
4. I am well aware of the generous co-operation that our representatives have received over the past months as they have prepared for the events of this historic week-end. I wish to express my gratitude, and that of the Holy See, to all concerned with these preparations.
5. A special word of thanks is due to you, Dr. Peter Menacher, Oberbürgermeister of the City of Augsburg. You have given us your full support and have, moreover, welcomed us officially at this reception here in the Golden Hall of the Rathaus. Your knowledge of those events of five centuries ago, and of the recent developments that have brought us here today, has been of invaluable assistance to those entrusted with the preparations for the signing of the **Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification**. Please accept our most grateful thanks.
6. This week-end we are taking a significant step forward in the search for Christian Unity, a step which is of interest to Christian communities other than the two

directly involved in this signing. But even more than that, it is a step forward in the search for greater unity here in Europe and for all humankind. No important move for unity is without meaning for others than those directly involved in that move. This seems especially the case when such a step is made here in Europe, which has suffered so much as a result of religious divisions and which, unfortunately, has taken those divisions into other continents, adding to the difficulties of the people of those nations to overcome their internal divisions and contribute to the unity of all peoples.

7. For this we give thanks to God, to all those who have contributed to making these days possible, and to all here in Augsburg for opening the gates of your city to us for our celebrations.