



World Council of Churches

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Geneva, December 16, 2016

His Holiness
Pope Francis
The Apostolic Palace
VA-00120 Vatican City

I love the Lord, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy.
Psalm 116:1(NIV)

Your Holiness,

God hears the cry for mercy – this assurance is given to us in many places of the Bible and becomes so real in the cross and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. At the occasion of your 80th birthday, we are praying that God's mercy, love and grace will empower you for your service for the Church and continue to give you strength and this clear sense of the direction to go which we admire.

We are grateful for all steps you have taken to foster the search for the visible unity of the Church. I remember with joy your recent visit to Lund and the celebration of the journey *from conflict to communion* of the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation in which we could participate.

You are speaking frequently from the *unity on the way* that grows when and where we pursue our journey as disciples of Christ together. The tenth assembly of the World Council of Churches called Christians and all people of good will to trust God's mercy, to turn around and to join God's pilgrimage of justice and peace in faith, hope and love.

Psalm 72, the Responsorial Psalm for this Saturday, reminds us of the message that we have, therefore, to convey to all those with public responsibility and power in this world: *Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for ever.* I hope and trust that the churches can come even more closely together to make this message heard in all places and moments where people need justice and peace for their life and survival.

I am confident that we will have an opportunity to meet again in the future and explore together how to move forward with the vision of pilgrimage as model for the ecumenical movement.

Giving thanks to God for you and your service to the Church, I continue to keep my promise to pray for you and to encourage the member churches to do the same.

May God bless you and the journey towards unity and common witness of all Christians,

Yours with fraternal love,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Olav Fykse Tveit". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit
General Secretary

cc. H.E. Kurt Cardinal Koch
H.E. Archbishop Ivan Jurkovic