

# Week of prayer for Christian unity 2005

## Foreword

### Introduction

*It is a joy for us both to announce the birth of a new era of collaboration between the Pontifical Council/Catholic Church and Faith and Order/World Council of Churches and a further, small step in the direction of Christian unity. This year, for the first time, the text for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity that you have in your hands has not only been jointly prepared by the PCPCU and Faith and Order but is being jointly published by them. Although this has been the case de facto for some years we have also now adopted a common format.*

*We urge you to make good use of the text - not only during one particular week in the year but as a basis both for your private and public prayers for unity throughout the year.*

**Brian Farrell, Secretary,  
Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity**

**Samuel Kobia, General Secretary,  
World Council of Churches**



### The search for unity: throughout the year

The traditional date for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is 18-25 January. Those dates were proposed in 1908 by Paul Watson to cover the days between the feast of St Peter and the feast of St Paul, and therefore have a symbolic meaning. In the southern hemisphere where January is a vacation time churches often find other days to celebrate the week of prayer, for example around Pentecost (which was suggested by the Faith and Order movement in 1926), which is also a symbolic date for the unity of the church.

*Mindful of this flexibility concerning the date, we encourage you to understand the material presented here as an invitation to find opportunities throughout the whole year to express the degree of communion which the churches have already received, and to pray together for that full unity which is Christ's will.*

### Adapting the text

This material is offered with the understanding that, whenever possible, it will be adapted for use at the local level. In doing this, account must be taken of local liturgical and devotional practice, and of the whole social and cultural context. Such adaptation should normally take place ecumenically. In some places ecumenical structures are already set up for adapting the material. In other places, we hope that the need to adapt it will be a stimulus to creating such structures.

### **Using the Week of Prayer material**

- For churches and Christian communities which observe the week of prayer together through a single common service, an order for an ecumenical worship service is provided.
- Churches and Christian communities may also incorporate material from the week of prayer into their own services. Prayers from the ecumenical worship service, the “eight days”, and the selection of additional prayers can be used as appropriate in their own setting.
- Communities which observe the week of prayer in their worship for each day during the week may draw material for these services from the “eight days”.
- Those wishing to do Bible studies on the week of prayer theme can use as a basis the biblical texts and reflections given in the “eight days”. Each day the discussions can lead to a closing period of intercessory prayer.

Those who wish to pray privately may find the material helpful for focusing their prayer intentions. They can be mindful that they are in communion with others praying all around the world for the greater visible unity of Christ’s church.