

President Gerald Kieschnick's
Response to the Pope's Release on the Church
July 12, 2007

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

According to an Associated Press report, "Pope Benedict XVI approved a document that says other Christian communities are either defective or not true churches and that only Roman Catholicism provides the true path to salvation."

This declaration, with which Lutherans and other Christian church bodies obviously disagree, is nothing new, similar statements and perspectives having precipitated the 16th century Reformation nearly 500 years ago. At that time Martin Luther said, "Popes and councils can err." Apparently that is still true today.

Even 500 years ago, the church was defined in the simple words of our Lutheran Confessions by those whose faith in Christ precipitated the Reformation:

“ [The church] is the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel. (Augsburg Confession Article VII)
"Thank God, [today] a child seven years old knows what the Church is, namely, the holy believers and lambs who hear the voice of their Shepherd. For the children pray thus: 'I believe in one holy Christian church.'"
(Smalcald Articles: Art. XII; Triglot, p. 499)

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod looks forward to the continuation of our theological dialogues with Roman Catholic leaders in discussion of this very important matter and to strengthening our common witness on such matters as the sanctity of life.

Sincerely, in Christ,

Dr. Gerald B. Kieschnick, President
The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod