

## **Week of Prayer for Christian Unity**

### **I. Welcome**

**Good morning and thank you for accepting the invitation to spend time in prayer and reflection with other Christian church leaders from South Texas during this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.**

**By gathering this morning in Christ's name to learn more about each other, dialogue, pray together, and seek paths of collaboration for the benefit of those who need it the most, we join a rich history of ecumenical encounters that have taken place throughout the world in the past hundred years.**

**We do so in a spirit of gratitude and humbleness for the God-given gift of not being alone. The darkness and coldness that we often find in the world lose their grip when we find ourselves in the company of others to whom "Jesus Christ is Lord" (Phil 2:11).**

**May the warmth and depth of His presence inspire our conversations this morning as we take to heart the theme we have been invited to reflect upon: "Do good; seek justice" (Is 1:17).**

**Thank you very much.**

## **II. Introduction**

Back in 1964, the Second Vatican Council exhorted Roman Catholics to actively participate in the work of ecumenism (*Unitatis redintegratio*, n. 4). As we know, the final goal of such a work is to fulfill Christ's request to the Father regarding his followers: "That they all may be one" (John 17:21). Along with a change of heart and the public and private prayer for the unity of Christians, the Council recognized among the fundamental ecumenical practices the cooperation between Christians in the relief of the "afflictions of our times such as famine and natural disasters, illiteracy and poverty, housing shortage and the unequal distribution of wealth." (*Unitatis redintegration*, n. 12)

Today we find ourselves before yet another invitation to reflect on how the suffering of our brothers and sisters demands an urgent response on our behalf. As we read in the guiding document for the 2023 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, the biblical passage selected by the Minnesota Council of Churches comes from a time similar to ours: a time filled with indifference in the face of profound social injustices; a time in which many of our brothers and sisters face systemic barriers to their development from the moment they are born; a time in which God listens attentively to the cries of his people; a time in which He expects from us a generous response. "Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good, seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow." (Is 1:16-17) May the fruits of

mutual knowledge and collaboration that will follow from this morning's encounter bring hope to everyone around us, starting with those who need it the most in our community.

Thank you.