

World Council of Churches - News Release

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MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENTS OF THE WCC AT PENTECOST 2009

“Brothers and sisters, what should we do?” (Acts 2:37b)

The year 2009 began with grave concern about the catastrophic economic situation of the world of wealth. Towards the end of 2008, in the midst of a life that to many was apparently without problems, disastrous financial and economic difficulties suddenly came to light.

It was reminiscent of the first Pentecost of the Christian era when everything seemed to be going well for believers of the time. Many had made the customary pilgrimage to Jerusalem to mark the festival. They came in large numbers with good intentions of worshipping as usual. Then, when like a mighty rushing wind the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples, filling them and leading them “to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability”, the pilgrims were astonished and amazed: “How is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?” (Acts 2:1-13)

This was an extraordinary and overwhelming experience for these pilgrims from all over the world. Peter, completely transformed and courageous, offered clear responses to their questions in the form of an invitation to a change of heart and behaviour. (Acts 2:14-36)

Following Peter’s stirring speech the pilgrims’ hearts were deeply moved, and they asked: “Brothers and sisters, what should we do?” This response was the beginning of repentance, of “*metanoia*”, that profound transformation of a person which leads to a new way of acting. Peter responded to their questions by saying, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38)

Repentance can come only after recognizing wrongdoing and wrong behaviour. Many of those in charge in today’s world have to recognize that they have been insensitive in managing the resources of our planet: the rich always get a bit richer, to the detriment of the poor who live in acute poverty; the impoverished have no power, given their condition, to say no to what is imposed upon them.

Be it in Africa or in Asia or in any other continent, the situation is everywhere the same. Faced with this, the most pressing question today is still, “Brothers and sisters, what should we do?”

And once more God’s word gives us a better response than anything else: “Repent!”

Repentance in today's world will involve:

- Corporate managers recognizing their errors, publicly confessing them and making reparation.
- All of us who are responsible for the degradation of the ecosystem mending our ways and making efforts to reduce all forms of pollution.
- Those who instigate violence being encouraged to become gentle and tolerant, consistent with our prayer that the ecumenical "Decade to Overcome Violence" which is drawing to a close will not have taken place without having some impact upon us.

The repentance proclaimed by Christ and strongly restated at Pentecost is a force for spiritual transformation, for change and for renewal. Human beings must seek to be reconciled with themselves, with one another, and with their environment, and churches too must go on seeking reconciliation. This is the challenge of our gospel of reconciliation, and it is raised again this year in the United Nation's International Year of Reconciliation, 2009.

May we all find the strength and the will to give new meaning to the claim, "Yes, we can!" Anything is possible for those who believe.

May the Lord bless all of us, and we wish a very joyful feast of Pentecost to everyone.

The Presidents of the World Council of Churches

- Archbishop Dr **Anastasios of Tirana and All Albania**, Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania
- Mr **John Taroanui Doom**, Maohi Protestant Church (French Polynesia)
- Rev. Dr **Simon Dossou**, Methodist Church in Benin
- Rev. Dr **Soritua Nababan**, Protestant Christian Batak Church (Indonesia)
- Rev. Dr **Ofelia Ortega**, Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba
- Patriarch **Abune Paulos**, Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church
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The World Council of Churches promotes Christian unity in faith, witness and service for a just and peaceful world. An ecumenical fellowship of churches founded in 1948, today the WCC brings together 349 Protestant, Orthodox, Anglican and other churches representing more than 560 million Christians in over 110 countries, and works cooperatively with the Roman Catholic Church. The WCC general secretary is Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia, from the Methodist Church in Kenya. Headquarters: Geneva, Switzerland.