

Cardinal Kasper Helps Mark End of Christian-Unity Week



There can be no ecumenism without personal conversion, a Vatican official said at the close of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Cardinal Walter Kasper, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, delivered that message at the ecumenical celebration he presided over Sunday in the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls.

"Ecumenism encourages us to self-criticism," the cardinal said, echoing the words of John Paul II. "It also has the function of an examination of conscience and it should be an exhortation to ask for forgiveness."

Representatives of several Churches and Christian communities, as well as faithful from the Rome Diocese, attended the celebration.

During his address, the cardinal noted the theme of this year's Week of Prayer - "My Peace I Give You" - and said, "On the cross, Christ founded peace and nailed hatred and violence."

Cardinal Kasper then invoked peace especially for the Middle East. "Peace is not only the silence of arms," he said, according to Vatican Radio. Peace is "the ordering willed by God; it is peace among nations, within a people, in the depth of the heart."

Thanks to the "Spirit infused by Christ, in the last decades we have achieved great progress," he said. "We no longer take recourse to reciprocal expressions of hatred or ridicule. A new spirit of brotherhood has developed. We live, work and pray together. We have become friends."

Yet, despite this progress, "we cannot pretend that everything is perfect," the cardinal said. He cautioned about "the signs of ecumenical exhaustion and the attempts to put mines on the path toward unity."