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POPE WITH ROME'S LUTHERANS

On November 15, 2015 Pope Francis visited the Lutheran community of the *Christuskirche* parish in Rome. During his visit the Holy Father participated in a prayer service and interacted with the community answering questions. In his homily during the prayer service he said Catholics and Lutherans must seek forgiveness from each other for the scandal of past divisions as they walk together today in the service of the poor. He also spoke about the importance of shared prayers, joint liturgies and other ways in which Christians can worship together. He appreciated the progress made in the joint theological dialogue and said that After 50 years of ecumenical dialogue, the ground covered shows that what unites us is already much more than what still divides us.

The Holy Father remarked that it is important that the Catholic Church courageously carry forward a careful and honest re-evaluation of the intentions of the Reformation and of the figure of Martin Luther, in the sense of *Ecclesia semper reformanda*, in the broad wake traced by the Councils, as well by men and women,

enlivened by the light and power of the Holy Spirit. He also said that ecumenism between Catholics and Lutherans, which is a fundamental condition for bearing a convincing witness to our faith in Christ before the people of our time, is based on these pillars: common prayer, diaconal sharing with the poor and theological dialogue.

Pope Francis is the third Pope to visit Rome's Evangelical Lutheran Church. Pope Benedict XVI made the pilgrimage in March 2010 and Pope John Paul II prayed at the church in December 1983. Lauding the Pope's visit the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) General Secretary Rev. Dr Martin Junge said that it was a great encouragement for Roman Catholics and Lutherans to move from conflict to communion.

(DECEMBER - 13)