

ZE10021807 - 2010-02-18

Permalink: <http://www.zenit.org/article-28398?l=english>

BENEDICT XVI TO VISIT LUTHERAN CHURCH IN ROME

Ecumenical Event Scheduled for March 14

VATICAN CITY, FEB. 18, 2010 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Benedict XVI will visit a Lutheran church in Rome for a German-language service in which both he and a Lutheran pastor will give homilies.

The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Vatican press office today confirmed that the visit -- previously announced -- will take place March 14.

The president of the unity council, Cardinal Walter Kasper, will participate in the visit.

Rome's Lutheran community had invited the Pope in 2008 to mark the 25th anniversary of Pope John Paul II's visit to the church. The Polish Pontiff's 1983 visit commemorated the 550th anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther (1483-1546).

According to the Lutheran community, Benedict XVI's homily will be on the biblical passage from John: "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."

For his part, Pastor Jens-Martin Kruse will analyze the first chapter of the Second Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians, which speaks about Christ's consolation in moments of tribulation.

In statements to the NEV agency, Kruse noted his sense of the importance of the visit: "To have the Bishop of Rome among us is a good sign for ecumenism in our city."

Earlier this month, the Holy Father gave a special greeting to a U.S. Lutheran delegation visiting the Vatican. On that occasion, he said he has "been encouraged that relations between Catholics and Lutherans have continued to grow, especially at the level of practical collaboration in the service of the Gospel."

Last year, the 10th anniversary of the joint Catholic-Lutheran declaration on justification was celebrated.