



United States
Conference of
Catholic Bishops

Committee on
Ecumenical and
Interreligious Affairs



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America

October 31, 2024

“I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.” —John 15:5

Dear siblings in Christ,

Twenty-five years ago today, Catholic and Lutheran representatives gathered in Augsburg, Germany, to sign the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ), thereby resolving once and for all a central theological conflict of the Reformation.

The JDDJ announced theological consensus on how Catholics and Lutherans understand justification by God’s grace through faith in Christ, lifting 16th-century condemnations. After merely three decades of dialogue, what had divided us as Lutherans and Catholics for nearly 500 years no longer did.

Many of us remember that day as if it were yesterday. Even more of us have experienced how the JDDJ paved the way for us to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017 differently, by doing so together. In recent years, three more world communions — Anglican, Methodist and Reformed — have affirmed the JDDJ.

As we recall these significant milestones, let us remember that they were the God-given fruits of our theological dialogue together, harvested through the labors of our steadfast theologians and leaders. Our commitment is to abide in Christ and with each other, taking the long approach in a quick-fix world.

We are now on the eve of the 60th anniversary of our U.S. Lutheran-Catholic dialogue. As we hope for all that is yet to be, let us pause to give thanks for all that has been on the way.

Gracious God, we give you thanks for the promises you freely offer to us through the life, death and resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Guide us in our journey together as a faithful response to your love. Amen.

In Christ,

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

The Most Rev. Denis J. Madden
Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus of Baltimore
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops
Co-chair, U.S. Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue

Resources:

[Liturgy for the 25th Anniversary of the JDDJ | Lutheran World Federation](#)
[Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification | Lutheran World Federation](#)