

## WELCOME!

### Welcome to the Third Global Gathering

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight, he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In Christ, we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory.*

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*"With all wisdom and insight, he has made know to us the mystery of his will (...), as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth."*

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The church fathers spoke often of the "mysteries" of the faith. John Chrysostom said that they are called "mysteries" because what we believe about them is not the same as what we see in them; we see one thing and believe another.

The New Testament itself is the story of a mystery, a great mystery where what one sees in the beginning is not what one believes in the end. In Ephesians, the Apostle Paul claims that what may have been the greatest mystery of all time is in fact no longer a mystery

In a Tweet-length theological declaration, he describes the mystery of God's plan for the entire cosmos and all of eternity. In and through Christ Jesus, Paul claims ecstatically (Ephesians 1.9-10), God is drawing together all people in the universe, God is drawing together all things in the cosmos. Perhaps we still cannot see it clearly, but God has had a plan from the very beginning — even from before the beginning — and that plan is unity, the gathering up of all people and all things, all things on earth and all things in heaven, through and in Christ Jesus.

That is very good news, indeed. But can you believe it?

Some say "seeing is believing." It is my profound joy to welcome you to this Third Global Gathering of the Global Christian Forum. It is my prayer that this place of our togetherness on the way will be a place where 'seeing is believing'. The Third

Global Gathering is not the place where all things and all people are gathered upon in unity in and through Jesus Christ. But it can be a station on the way.

May our time together be such that the Apostle Paul would say to us what he said to the believers gathered in Ephesus:

*I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason, I do not cease to give thanks for you, as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know the hope to which he has called you..."*

### **Welcome to Colombia**

Stations on the way to the unity of all people, including all Christians, are always 'somewhere'. We are grateful that our 'somewhere' this week is Colombia.

As we began to foresee the Third Global Gathering the only certainty was that we knew we wanted to gather in Latin America. But the country and the city were initially a 'mystery'. Little by little the plan, which we trust is the plan of God, unfolded. And so here we are today in Colombia.

We are honoured that His Excellency Deputy Minister Olimpo Espinosa Oliver has come to greet us this morning.

Your Excellency, these global, continental, and national leaders of Christian churches from around the world have great interest in your country. Wherever we are at home in the world, we are aware of Colombia and Colombians — and not only when your football team humiliates its international opponents, as it did recently in France, the country where I live.

We follow closely the unfolding peace process. We give attention to the developments in favour of religious liberty. So today, we are grateful that you have come to spend a few moments with us.

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Your Excellency, thank you for your words of welcome. We pledge our support for everything and everyone who labours for justice and peace in Colombia.

Your Excellency, for you and your country, our prayer is that God will bless you, and keep you. Our prayer is that God's face will shine upon you, that God will be gracious to you, that God will give peace to you, to your country, and to everyone in it.

### **Welcome to the Colombia Churches**

One of the deepest joys for me as we prepared this 'station' for you in Colombia has been the gift of learning to know the churches of Colombia and, especially, the leaders of the churches of Colombia. So it is now an honour and a privilege to welcome them into our midst to tell the stories of their journeys with Jesus Christ.