

Methodists may accept pope's offer to join statement on salvation: Salvation through grace, reflected in works

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Methodist leaders said they plan to accept an invitation from Pope Benedict XVI to join a 1999 statement between Catholics and Lutherans that overcame centuries of division on the nature of salvation.

Bishop Sunday Mbang of Nigeria, president of the World Methodist Council, said he expects the Joint Declaration to be ratified when the Methodists meet next summer in Seoul, South Korea.

“We are expecting . . . to be able to sign an agreement whereby all three parties will declare and demonstrate their agreement on this doctrine that was crucial and which remains crucial to our preaching and teaching of the gospel,” Mbang told the pope during a meeting December 9.

Martin Luther, the founder of Lutheranism, sparked the 16th-century Protestant Reformation by challenging the Catholic doctrine of justification, which holds that good works are essential to attaining salvation. Lutherans held that salvation was God-given and achieved by faith alone.

In the 1999 compromise, Catholics and Lutherans agreed that salvation is achieved through God’s grace, which is reflected in good works.

The World Methodist Council represents more than 70 Methodist church bodies, including the 8.3 million-member United Methodist Church in the United States. – *Religion News Service*