



PROT. N. 283/2021

**To the Reverend Dr Elijah M. Brown  
General Secretary and CEO, Baptist World Alliance:  
on the occasion of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Baptist World Congress  
7-10 July 2021**

Greetings and prayerful good wishes to you and the members of the Baptist World Alliance gathered virtually from across the globe for your 22<sup>nd</sup> Baptist World Congress.

Allow me to convey to you my appreciation for the theme that you have selected for your congress – “Together.” It is a word that today carries a particular significance in light of the *leitmotif* of “social distancing” that has defined the tragic reality of the Covid-19 pandemic. May we all soon be able to be “together” to experience that personal *communion* which is so essential for the human heart and the work of Christian unity.

The occasion of your 22<sup>nd</sup> World Congress allows me to anticipate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Baptist-Catholic conversations in 2024, when we shall recall the first conversations between our communions which took place from 18-21 July 1984 in then West Berlin, Germany. This first Joint International Conversation resulted in the report entitled *Summons to Witness to Christ in Today's World* (1988) which established a firm agreement between Baptists and Catholics that both communions were building on a common Christology.

This first fruitful conversation nearly forty years ago was followed by a second phase of international conversations from 2006 to 2010, and currently I am glad to say, a third international dialogue scheduled through 2022, is underway exploring *The Dynamic of the Gospel and the Witness of the Church*. This theme seems most appropriate considering the great challenges for the global community today and the increasing need for a Christian witness to the transforming power of faith in the risen Lord Jesus Christ, the only Redeemer of humanity (cf. Acts 4:12).

The Baptist World Alliance and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity have since our first conversations increasingly grown in appreciation for the rich culture and diversity found in each other's theological traditions and global family, allowing for a mutual spiritual exchange of gifts. I pray that this dialogue of love, truth and life, may continue into the future.

As you come “together” virtually online, may the one Holy Spirit through whom we were all baptized into one Mystical Body gather all of you in the bond of charity, which is the bond of perfect unity (cf. Col 3:14).

With my personal prayers and best wishes,

Cardinal Kurt Koch  
*President*