

# Cardinal Kasper: Unity Isn't Optional

## Says Secularized World Needs Christian Testimony

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By Miriam Díez i Bosch

ROME, JAN. 25, 2008 (Zenit.org).— Since Christ wanted and prayed for Christian unity, it is not an option, but a sacred duty, said the president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

Cardinal Walter Kasper affirmed this Thursday at an award ceremony recognizing the collaboration of his dicastery with the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches.

The Centro Pro Unione and the Lay Center of Rome organized an ecumenical celebration in which the two groups received the Christian Unity Award, for having collaborated for 40 years in the preparation of the annual prayer weeks.

The award is given by the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement, founded by Father Paul Wattson, who began the octaves of prayer.

Cardinal Kasper recalled, "The unity of Christians is a command of Our Lord Jesus Christ."

"It is not an option," he said. "It is a commandment, a sacred duty. Jesus Christ has founded only one Church, and Christians should be united to give common testimony in a world that is ever more secularized."

The director of the Anglican Center of Rome, Reverend John Flack, spoke with ZENIT about the importance of the 100th anniversary of the Week of Prayer. "This celebration is very beautiful; it has remembered Father Paul Couturier and Father Paul Wattson, who began this week, and we hope for another 100 years of praying together, not just during one week, but throughout the year."

Father James Puglisi, director of the Centro Pro Unione, said the anniversary gives hope: "For me, this is something that gives great joy and a sign of hope that everything is possible whenever we don't depend on ourselves but on the Spirit of God." Father Puglisi is also the current superior-general of the Society of the Atonement.

Cardinal Kasper also cited words from the Polish Pope: "As John Paul II said, ecumenical dialogue is not just an interchange of ideas, but an interchange of gifts."

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