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**Address by the Bishop
of the Evangelical Church in Central Germany,
Ilse Junkermann,
23 September 2011
Former Chapter House of the Augustinian Monastery
Erfurt**

**Your Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI,
dear brother in Christ!
Chairman of the EKD Council, Brother Schneider,
Your Eminences and Excellencies,
brother Bishops and presidents,
Professors,
Sisters and brothers,**

A warm greeting to you on behalf of the Evangelical Church in Central Germany here in the Chapterhouse of the Protestant Augustinerkloster in Erfurt!

It is a great honor for our church and an even greater joy to be able to receive you in our conference center and monastery church for this encounter and church service.

Many are calling this meeting “historical”. That term reflects the great political and social significance attributed to it by the general public.

I would rather understand this encounter as *historically significant*. In the sense that we are familiar with from our Jewish brothers and sisters in faith, and from our own services of worship: history lies before us. Even if it is about events in the past, we are

invited and called upon to receive history in our present and in this way become part of it.

This applies to the annual Passover celebration and to the celebration of the Eucharist and the Lord's Supper. In Jesus' words of institution "Do this in memory of me" he calls to us: Take this story into your present. In this supper I am in the midst of you.

Despite all that prevents us from partaking in this supper together, one thing certainly unites us: we celebrate Holy Communion in memory of our Lord Jesus Christ and his great service of reconciliation for us; we accept his invitation and are strengthened, as people who belong to his story. We are permitted and privileged to be part of this story – so that we can thereby shape our present and our future.

And that has an effect on the history we share and on the story of our difference and separation. This story is not over and done with, nor is the way we will respond to it. This story, in some ways probably painful, still lies before us so that in the present, today, we are going into it and seeking fellowship with one another, as we converse and listen to God's Word.

In this spirit, our encounter today is historically significant. What guidance and decision lies behind it! We have come together at this place that reaches out to us and, with its history, speaks to us today.

May God's Holy Spirit bless our steps as we go into this story.

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