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**Greetings Message for the Centennial Jubilee Celebration
of Autonomy to the Church (1919 – 2019)
on 10th July 2019
at Navin Doman Theological College, Malar, Ranchi, Jharkhand, India**

My esteemed brothers and sisters,

I greet you warmly in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

As Deputy Head of the Board of the Gossner Mission, I greet you from all your brothers and sisters in Germany. On this special day many people in my country think of the independence of the Gossner Evangelical Lutheran Church, which celebrates its 100th anniversary just today. All Christians who feel connected to the Gossner Mission rejoice with you and say praise and thanks to our God for leading your church 100 years ago to independence. We are heartily grateful that our Lord Jesus Christ has been ruling, leading and protecting our Indian brothers and sisters in an independent church for 100 years now. Hallelujah!

I feel very honoured to be in the midst of you today and thank you very much for the friendly invitation of our delegation. As Christians, we are united by faith, as were our forefathers and foremothers about 100 years ago. Even more: Since 1845, people from Germany and India have been reaching out their hands to confess their common faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and German and Indian Christians have testified to the Lord with heart and hand in their commitment to His Kingdom of Peace.

Like the Holy Bible testifies in Ephesians (ch. 4):

**Be patient, bearing with one another in love.
Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.
There is one body and one Spirit
– just as you were called to one hope when you were called –
one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and father of all,
who is over all and through all and in all.**

Inspired by this biblical message, united in One Holy Spirit, we share today your great joy as we have rejoiced with you for so many years when you have prayed and worked for the glory of God, for the good of men and for the salvation of the world. But as your brothers and sisters, we also share your suffering and pain, as we have always been at your side in dark times and difficult situations. Threats to your body and soul have caused you trouble, and we have always tried to stand at your side in prayer and full of energy as best we could.

To be honest, in this solemn hour we are moved above all by the thought of our unity as Christians in a world where demonic temptations and selfish tendencies are driving many people, churches and nations apart. We suffer from all divisions and disruptions, as we know you also suffer from the divisions and disruptions of this world.

Our Lord Jesus Christ wanted ONE church in ONE world, full of love and hope for one another.

Our Lord Jesus Christ himself suffers from divisions and disruptions.

Our Lord Jesus Christ suffers because His Church is divided into so many different denominations.

Our Lord desires nothing more than that we Christians live and work together in ONE Church.

To be honest, we Christians in Germany, your brothers and sisters of the Gossner Mission, want the same as He does. That is why it is not we, but our Lord Jesus Christ himself, who remind us of His holy will to unite in One Spirit.

Once again let us listen to the holy voice of the Word of God:

**There is one body and one Spirit
- just as you were called to one hope when you were called -
one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and father of all,
who is over all and through all and in all.**

When we hear and heed this, we must do all we can to overcome trenches and reach out to one another. That is why I say it today in the name of the Gossner Mission as your brother in the Lord Jesus Christ:

I am sure that you will do everything to overcome the divides that separate the North Western Gossner Evangelical Lutheran Church from the Gossner Evangelical Lutheran Church.

I am joining hands with you today, my dear brothers and sisters. I am sure that you will join hands with your brothers and sisters in the Gossner Church. Just as I am hopeful that your brothers and sisters will do the same listening to the voice of our common Lord Jesus Christ.

My dear brothers and sisters, I hope that I am not complaining to you, but that you can rejoice from your hearts that a delegation of the Gossner Mission from Germany is among you on this feast day. You yourselves can make our joy complete when on this holiday you remember unity in the spirit of Jesus Christ and unity in the spirit of our common founding father Johannes Evangelista Gossner.

I am certain that there will be infinite joy in heaven and on earth when the Gossner Christians walk hand in hand into a common future!

In this sense I bring the heartfelt congratulations of all your brothers and sisters of the Gossner Mission from Germany - full of hope that the blessed way of your church will very soon lead to a new and blessed togetherness!

Praise be to our Lord Jesus Christ, in heaven and on earth, in all the world and among us. His holy will be done, now and forever. Amen.

