

Catholics 'beg forgiveness' for violence

VATICAN

Vatican City

Catholic and Lutheran leaders issued a joint statement yesterday saying they begged forgiveness for violence waged during a revolution that saw Protestants break away from the Roman Catholic Church.

"We begged for forgiveness for our failures and for the ways in which Christians have wounded the Body of the Lord and offended each other during the five hundred years since

the beginning of the Reformation until today," the Vatican and Lutheran World Federation said.

Five hundred years ago today, German theologian Martin Luther published his groundbreaking "95 Theses" of criticism of the Catholic Church, creating shockwaves that eventually changed the face of Christianity.

The Reformation caused major upheaval in Europe, leading to wars, persecutions and exoduses, including the departure of the Pilgrims for what

was later to become America.

The deadliest of Europe's religious conflicts was the Thirty Years' War which ended in 1648 and after which religion's role in European politics was reduced.

"We recognise that while the past cannot be changed, its influence upon us today can be transformed to become a stimulus for growing communion, and a sign of hope for the world to overcome division and fragmentation," they said.

There are many theological

differences between Protestants and Roman Catholics, including whether or not the Bible is the highest authority in matters of faith and whether the pope has full power over the Church.

Both parties committed to "overcome remaining differences between us", adding that it was "clear that what we have in common is far more than that which still divides us".

AFP