The following message was sent by Walter Cardinal Kasper, the President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

Dear members of the Assumptionist order, dear family and friends of Fr. George Tavard,

It is with sadness that we have learned of the sudden death of Father George Tavard. His life was a life dedicated to the restoration of unity among Christians, and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity owes a geat debt of gratitude to him. He served as a consultor of the then Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity through the years of the Second Vatican Council and up until 1973. He was a member of the dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion from its inception, soon after the Council, until 1981, and then was asked to serve on the International Methodist-Catholic Dialogue Commission from 1982 until 2006. He also served on the Catholic Church's dialouges with Lutherans and Anglicans in the United States. The Pontifical Council had planned to honour Fr. Tavard during the course of the meeting of the Methodist-Catholic Commission in October next, for his uninterrupted participation in national and international dialogues since the end of the Second Vatican Council.

He must be considered one of the great pioneers in Catholic ecumenical work, who put his mind, heart and soul at the service of Christian unity over six decades; indeed he was still diligently engaged in ecumenical work until the time of his death. His commitment to ecumenical relations through patient dialogue and rigorous historical scholarship was marked by a boundless energy and an intellectual creativity which spoke of the presence of the Holy Spirit in his lifelong ministry of reconciliation. As we now join you in bidding farewell to our colleague and friend, we commend him to the Lord, confident that the Good Shepherd will be eager to embrace one who has served so well his desire that all might be one.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

Walter Cardinal Kasper
President