



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE DELEGATION
OF THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE OF CONSTANTINOPLE**

Thursday, 29 June 2006

Dear Brothers in Christ,

With great joy and sincere affection in the Lord I welcome today Your Eminence, Metropolitan John, and the other members of the Delegation that His Holiness Bartholomew I and the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate have graciously sent for the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, patrons of the Church of Rome. To each of you I offer my cordial greetings. It gives me pleasure to welcome you in the words of the Apostle Peter: "*Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ: May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord*" (2 Pet 1:1-2). These words call to mind our common faith and the mystery of the salvation we have received, a gift which we must pass on to the men and women of our day. The fact that the feast of Saints Peter and Paul is celebrated on the same day by both Catholics and Orthodox evokes our shared Apostolic succession and ecclesial fraternity. I am pleased to recall here how Byzantine hymnography attributes to Saint Peter a title charged with meaning, that of *protocoryphaeus*, the first in the choir who has the task of maintaining the harmony of the voices, for the glory of God and the service of his people. I am therefore grateful to you who have come to unite your prayer to ours, prompted by our common commitment to continue the journey that leads us step by step to eliminate all dissonance from the choir of the one Church of Christ.

In the future there will be important opportunities for encounter and fraternal dialogue. Your presence, Your Eminence, as Co-President of the Mixed International Commission for theological dialogue between Orthodox and Catholics, brings to my mind the plenary session of the said Commission which is to take place in Belgrade in September, thanks to the welcome extended by the Serbian Orthodox Patriarchate. Dialogue thus resumes its path and enters a new phase.

Spontaneously we find ourselves wanting to pray that the Holy Spirit will enlighten and inflame our hearts, strengthening our common will to respond, insofar as it depends on us, to the Lord's ardent prayer: "*Ut unum sint*"; in this way, may the disciples of Christ, united in faith, together proclaim his Gospel to the whole world, so that, believing in him, all will be saved.

Furthermore, responding to the invitation extended by the Government, the Patriarchate and the local Catholic Community, I hope to be able to undertake an apostolic pilgrimage to Turkey, a country of ancient and rich culture, a noble country where many holy Fathers of our ecclesial, theological and spiritual tradition spent their lives. This will allow me to take part in the celebrations on the occasion of the Feast of Saint Andrew the Apostle, brother of Saint Peter. As I repeat the gesture of my predecessors of blessed memory, Paul VI and John Paul II, on the occasion of their visits to Phanar, it will be a joy for me to meet His Holiness Bartholomew I, thereby reciprocating the welcome visits that he has been good enough to pay here in Rome. I am certain that this mutual exchange will strengthen our ecclesial fraternity and facilitate collaboration in our common initiatives. May the Lord help us to move forward with renewed confidence towards the day when we will be able to celebrate together the Holy Eucharist of the Lord, as a sign of full communion.

With these cordial sentiments, I ask you, Your Eminence, and those accompanying you, to convey my fraternal greetings to Patriarch Bartholomew I and to the Holy Synod, while I give thanks to the Lord who has granted us to accomplish a new step in the implementation of his will for unity and peace.

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