



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI TO THE LATIN-RITE BISHOPS OF UKRAINE ON THEIR "AD LIMINA" VISIT

Consistory Hall, Papal Summer Residence at Castel Gandolfo
Monday, 24 September 2007

Your Eminences,

Dear and venerable Brothers in the Episcopate,

I am particularly pleased to welcome you and address a cordial greeting to each one of you at the beginning of the *ad limina* visit of the Latin-rite Bishops. I greet with great pleasure the Greek-Catholic Bishops who have accepted my invitation to be present at this meeting. Today, all Pastors of the beloved Church which lives in Ukraine are gathered in spirit round the Successor of Peter. It is an act of ecclesial communion, an eloquent testimony of that brotherly love which Jesus bequeathed as a distinctive sign to his disciples. Let us make our own the Psalmist's words: "Behold how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!". And further, for those who live in his love, the Lord "has commanded the blessing, life for evermore" (Ps 133[132]: 1-3). Conscious of this and with sentiments of esteem and deep cordiality, I thank each one of you for the pastoral work you carry out daily at the service of the People of God.

I know of the great effort you make to proclaim and witness to the Gospel in the beloved Land of Ukraine, at times encountering numerous difficulties but always sustained by your awareness that Christ guides his flock with a firm hand. He himself has entrusted this flock to your hands as his ministers. The Pope and the collaborators of the Roman Curia are close to you and follow with affection the developments in each one of your local Churches, ready in any circumstance to offer you their contribution and fully aware of being called by the Lord to serve unity and communion in the Church.

Today's meeting sheds light on the beauty and riches of the mystery of the Church. As the Second Vatican Council recalls: "The one mediator, Christ, established and ever sustains here on earth his holy Church, the community of faith, hope and charity, as a visible organization.... This Church,

constituted and organized as a society in the present world, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the Successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 8). In the variety of her rites and historical traditions, in every corner of the earth, the one Catholic Church proclaims and testifies to Jesus Christ himself, the Word of salvation for every man and for the whole man. For this reason, the secret of the effectiveness of all our pastoral and apostolic projects is first and foremost fidelity to Christ. We Pastors, as well as all the faithful, are asked to live in intimate and constant familiarity with him, in prayer and in listening with docility to his Word. This is the only way to become in every context signs of his love and instruments of his peace and harmony.

I am sure, dear and venerable Brothers, that motivated by this spirit it would be possible to intensify cordial collaboration between the Latin and Greek-Catholic Bishops for the good of the entire Christian People. Thus, you will be able to coordinate your pastoral plans and apostolic activities, always offering the witness of that ecclesial communion which is also an indispensable condition for the ecumenical dialogue with our Orthodox brethren and those of other Churches. May I be permitted in particular to draw your attention to the proposal of at least one annual meeting that would gather together the Latin-rite Bishops and those of the Greek-Catholic rite, to discuss together how to make your pastoral action increasingly more harmonious and effective. I am convinced that fraternal cooperation between Pastors will be an encouragement and incentive to all the faithful to grow in unity and apostolic enthusiasm, and will also foster fruitful ecumenical dialogue.

Dear and venerable Brothers, thank you once again for accepting my invitation to take part in this fraternal meeting. Upon each one of you and upon your communities, I invoke the motherly protection of Our Lady, whom the Latin Liturgy today venerates as Our Lady of Mercy. May it be she who supports you in your daily ministry and makes it bear spiritual fruit; may she console and comfort you in difficulties and, in the hour of trial, obtain for you the joy of ever deeper communion with her divine Son and increasingly strengthen the brotherhood that exists between you as Successors of the Apostles. Let us entrust to Mary in a special way the *ad limina* visit of the Latin-rite Bishops which begins today, as well as the pastoral initiatives of all your communities. With these hopes, while I invoke an abundant outpouring of grace and heavenly comfort upon you and your respective ecclesial work, I cordially impart to each one of you a special Blessing, which I willingly extend to the faithful entrusted to your episcopal ministry and also to the entire beloved People of Ukraine.

