



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS
TO MEMBERS OF THE CATHOLIC COMMITTEE FOR CULTURAL COLLABORATION
WITH ORTHODOX CHURCHES AND EASTERN ORTHODOX CHURCHES**

*Clementine Hall
Saturday, 11 January 2014*

*Your Eminence,
Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

I am meeting with you at the start of this year, in which we recall the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the *Catholic Committee for Cultural Collaboration with the Orthodox Churches and the Eastern Orthodox Churches*. I greet especially Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, under whose direct responsibility the *Committee* acts, and I thank him for his words, as well as Bishop Johan Bonny of Antwerp, President of the Committee.

The Second Vatican Council had not yet concluded, when Paul VI established the *Catholic Committee for Cultural Collaboration*. The path of reconciliation and fraternal renewal between the Churches, wonderfully marked by the first historic meeting between Pope Paul VI and the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras, also needed the experience of friendship and sharing that had been born from the mutual understanding of the exponents of the different Churches, and in particular among the young people entering sacred ministry. Thus was born, by the initiative of the Eastern Section of the then Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity, this *Committee*. Today as then, with the help of generous benefactors, it allocates scholarships to members of the clergy and lay people in the Orthodox Churches and Eastern Orthodox Churches who wish to complete their theological studies at academic institutions of the Catholic Church, and sustains other joint ecumenical projects.

I express my warm thanks to all the benefactors who have supported and continue to support the

Committee. With gratitude I greet the members of the Management Board, convened in Rome for the annual reunion. Without your valuable contribution, this work would not be possible. Therefore, I encourage you to continue in your work. May God bless you and make fruitful your much appreciated collaboration.

I address a special greeting to you, dear students, who are completing your theological studies in Rome. Your time with us is important between the Churches of today and especially of tomorrow. I thank God for giving me this beautiful occasion to meet with you and to tell you that the Bishop of Rome wishes you well. I wish for each one of you a joyous experience of the Church and of the City of Rome, enriching both from the spiritual and cultural aspects, and may you feel not as guests but as brothers among brothers. I am sure, on the other hand, that by your presence you are an asset to the communities of study which you attend.

Dear brothers and sisters, I assure you of my remembrance in prayer, and I trust also in yours for me and for my ministry. May the Lord bless you and may Our Lady protect you.