



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER TO THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW I FOR THE FEAST OF ST ANDREW

To His Holiness Bartholomew I

Archbishop of Constantinople Ecumenical Patriarch "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (*Eph* 1: 2).

The feast of St Andrew, celebrated by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and the feast of Sts Peter and Paul in Rome, bring us together in a fraternal meeting of dialogue and prayer. Mutual charity, regular meetings and the praise we offer God together are many ways which contribute to full unity between our Churches and enable us to witness to communion in our one Saviour, Christ. Our reciprocal participation in the celebrations of the holy Apostles who are the patrons of our Churches is also a source of joy, the joy we feel when we desire to fulfil the Lord's will. The delegation I am sending this year to Your Holiness and to our Sister Church of Constantinople is once again led by Cardinal Edward Idris Cassidy, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. He is accompanied this year by the Most Reverend Walter Kasper, Bishop emeritus of Rottenburg-Stuttgart and the Council's new Secretary. I have given them the task of conveying my warmest wishes to you, Venerable Brother, to the Holy Synod assembled around you, and to the clergy and faithful of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. May the peace of the Lord be with you all! At the end of this century, as the new Christian millennium is appearing on the horizon, our desire to advance on the path of dialogue and fraternal relations in order to achieve full communion becomes a more pressing need, a more ardent desire to heal our painful wounds which "openly contradict the will of Christ and are a cause of scandal to the world" (Apostolic Letter *Tertio millennio adveniente*, n. 34). This desire, however, is still saddened by the thought of what we should have done to make the true face of Christ more radiant and to make the face of his Church, which through the Spirit's gift will receive the grace of full unity between us, shine with even more beautiful light in the eyes of the world. In my conviction that "among the sins which require a greater commitment to repentance and conversion should certainly be counted those which have been detrimental to the unity willed by God for his People" (*ibid.*), I recalled in my Letter the many ecumenical initiatives undertaken with generosity and determination, and I stressed the enormous effort that is still required to pursue the doctrinal dialogue and to inspire a more generous commitment to ecumenical prayer (*cf. ibid.*). As I entrust to the holy Apostles Andrew, Peter and Paul these intentions, which continue to be one of the Jubilee's essential goals for the Church's future, I would like once again to assure you that the Catholic Church is prepared to do all she can to overcome obstacles, to support dialogue and to collaborate on every initiative aimed at helping us advance towards full communion in faith and witness. Inspired by these sentiments and with a view to the importance of direct exchanges and of our Churches' participation in the important events of their lives, I thank Your Holiness for sending fraternal delegates to the

recent Special Assembly for Europe of the Synod of Bishops in the person of our Venerable Brother Jérémias, Metropolitan of France, and to the Interreligious Assembly in the person of our Venerable Brother Damaskinos, Metropolitan of Switzerland. Their presence gave us great joy and was an example of the sharing for which Christ's disciples strive. I am just as delighted at the prospect of having representatives of Your Holiness with me on 18 January next for the opening of the Holy Door at the Basilica of St Paul-Outside-the-Walls and for the solemn opening of the celebrations which will exalt the One who is "the true light that enlightens every man" (*Jn* 1: 9). Through your representative on the Ecumenical Commission for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, you have wished, Your Holiness, to show your support and thus to express your communion of intention for these Jubilee celebrations. I would also like to thank you for this presence and collaboration. As I wholeheartedly rejoice that on the threshold of the new millennium we are granted, in a certain way, to proclaim together to the new generations that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world, I exchange the kiss of peace with Your Holiness and assure you of my fraternal affection. *From the Vatican, 24 November 1999.*

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