



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II TO A DELEGATION OF THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE OF CONSTANTINOPLE

28 June 1979 I bid you welcome, dear Brothers, who come to join the Church of Rome in celebrating the holy apostles Peter and Paul. Through the one you represent and through what you represent, your presence—while honouring the memory of the holy apostles Peter and Paul—increases the joy we feel on this occasion. I am deeply grateful to you. The annual exchange of delegations between Rome and Constantinople for the feasts of the patron saints of our Church, is not just an opportunity for a meeting which might become a habit. The participation in the feast of St Andrew, brother of St Peter, of a Catholic delegation at the ecumenical patriarchate, and that of an Orthodox delegation at Rome for the feasts of SS Peter and Paul—with mutual participation in the liturgical celebration in memory of the holy apostles, patrons of our Churches—have a very rich significance and they are full of hope. The apostolic faith, the deposit which they transmitted to us, is the unshakeable foundation of all our contacts. These contacts, which are being intensified more and more, bring us closer and closer to the full unity that is so much desired. The times, unfavourable circumstances, and the weaknesses and faults of men have formerly driven our Churches to ignorance about one another and even sometimes to mutual hostility. Today, by the grace of God and by virtue of the goodwill of men listening attentively to the Lord, there is a firm resolution on both sides to do everything possible to re-establish full unity. Contacts between the Churches, between those who bear special responsibilities in them as well as between their faithful, help to teach us to live together in prayer, in consultation with a view to joint solutions to be given to the problems with which Churches have to cope today, in mutual aid, in brotherly life. That is why I particularly rejoice at the meeting today. Opening the Week of Prayer for Unity this year, I had suggested raising also a prayer of thanksgiving to God. It is God, in fact, who has brought forth the desire for unity and has blessed the search for it by making us become more clearly aware of the depth of communion that exists between our Churches. The theological dialogue that we are preparing to begin will have, in this context, a decisive role. It is called to solve the doctrinal and canonical difficulties which still constitute an obstacle to full unity. For this dialogue we must implore incessantly the light and power of the Holy Spirit, who will give us the courage for the decisions to be taken. I can assure you that the Catholic Church approaches this dialogue with a fervent desire for the re-establishment of full unity, in all frankness and fairness with regard to her Orthodox brothers, in a spirit of obedience to the Lord who founded his Church one and unique and who wishes her to be fully united in order that she may be a sign and means of deep union with God and of the unity of the whole of mankind, as also an effective instrument of preaching the kingdom of God among men. I thank you once more for your presence in Rome on this solemn occasion. Beyond yourselves, I cordially greet our revered Brother, Patriarch Dimitrios, and I beg you to assure him of our affection and our solidarity.

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