



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PARTICIPANTS
TO THE 7th INTER-CHRISTIAN SYMPOSIUM**

*To my Venerable Brother
Cardinal Walter Kasper
President of the Pontifical Council
for Promoting Christian Unity*

This year too, venerable Brother, I am glad to convey through you my affectionate greeting to the participants in the Seventh Inter-Christian Symposium on the theme: *"Soteriological perspectives in the Eastern and Western traditions"*. It has been organized in the city of Reggio Calabria by the Institute for Spirituality of the Pontifical Athenaeum "Antonianum" of Rome and by the Theological Faculty of Aristotle University in Thessalonika, Greece.

I have already had occasion in the past to stress the importance of this project of two institutes, one Catholic and one Orthodox, that meet regularly to reflect on their common Christian heritage, with a view to serving the people of our time and to helping, as far as possible, with prayer, study and comparison of theologies, to make straight the way towards the full unity of believers in Christ. It is therefore particularly useful to know about one another much better, in order to verify convergences and complementarity in the field of theology and to intensify dialogue on questions of common interest, guided by Sacred Scripture and by the Tradition.

At this time, I fondly recall my meeting last May with His Beatitude Christodoulos, Archbishop of Athens and All Greece. Together we declared "We firmly believe that in all their manifestations relations among Christians must be marked by honesty, prudence and knowledge of the problems" (*Common Declaration*, n. 2). May the Lord guide our steps on the path of Truth and Love. May there be increased opportunities for dialogue and fraternal reflection among Christians, so that we may attain as soon as possible that full unity for which the Lord prayed during the last moments of his earthly life.

The theme chosen for the symposium this year touches on an essential aspect of the Gospel proclamation: redemption, brought about by Christ with his Death and Resurrection, the redemption of man, created to share in the very life of God, as St Athanasius says in his famous words: "For the Son of God became man so that we might become God" (*De Incarnatione*, n. 54).

As we look towards the new millennium that has opened before us, filled with hope, how can we not be reminded of the providential reality of the immense gift of God, lavished upon us in Christ, our Redeemer? In my recent Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio ineunte*, I recalled that in every ecclesial activity we should "reflect an essential principle of the Christian view of life: the primacy of grace" (n. 38), that freely given favour, in other words, which God grants to men and women so that they may respond to their vocation as children of God, entering into the intimacy of Trinitarian life to participate in the life of God (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nn. 1996-1997).

Consequently, the topic you are addressing during these days is an important one: without a doubt, deep examination of it and reflection on its evolution in the East and in the West will be a precious opportunity to grasp all its richness.

I am sure that intense prayer will accompany the work of the symposium and will help you in your research, along with a sincere will for understanding and reciprocal fraternal charity.

I, for my part, assure you of my remembrance in prayer as with affection I invoke the Lord's Blessing upon the organizers, the presenters and all the participants.

From Castel Gandolfo, 10 August 2001.

JOHN PAUL II