



The Holy See

**COMMON DECLARATION
OF HIS HOLINESS POPE PAUL VI AND
HIS HOLINESS MAR IGNATIUS JACOUB III**

Wednesday, 27 October 1971

As they conclude their solemn meeting which marks a new step in the relations between the Roman Catholic Church and the Syrian Orthodox Church, His Holiness Pope Paul VI and His Holiness Mar Ignatius Jacoub III humbly render thanks to Almighty God, for having made possible this historic opportunity to pray together, to engage in a fraternal exchange of views concerning the needs of the Church of God and to witness to their common desire that all Christians may intensify their service to the world with humility and complete dedication.

The Pope and the Patriarch have recognized the deep spiritual communion which already exists between their Churches. The celebration of the sacraments of the Lord, the common profession of faith in the Incarnate Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God made man for man's salvation, the apostolic traditions which form part of the common heritage of both Churches, the great Fathers and Doctors, including Saint Cyril of Alexandria, who are their common masters in the faith—all these testify to the action of the Holy Spirit who has continued to work in their Churches even when there have been human weakness and failings. The period of mutual recrimination and condemnation has given place to a willingness to meet together in sincere efforts to lighten and eventually remove the burden of history which still weighs heavily upon Christians.

Progress has already been made and Pope Paul VI and the Patriarch Mar Ignatius Jacoub III are in agreement that there is no difference in the faith they profess concerning the mystery of the Word of God made flesh and become really man, even if over the centuries difficulties have arisen out of the different theological expressions by which this faith was expressed. They therefore encourage the clergy and faithful of their Churches to even greater endeavours at removing the obstacles which still prevent complete communion among them. This should be done with love, with openness to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, and with mutual respect for each other and

each other's Church. They particularly exhort the scholars of their Churches, and of all Christian communities, to penetrate more deeply into the mystery of Christ with humility and fidelity to the Apostolic traditions so that the fruits of their reflections may help the Church in her service to the world which the Incarnate Son of God has redeemed.

This world, which God so loved as to send His only begotten Son, is torn by strife, by injustice and by the inhumanity of man towards man. As Christian Pastors, the Pope and the Patriarch raise their common appeal to the leaders of the peoples to increase the efforts towards achieving lasting peace among nations and towards removing the obstacles which prevent so many men from enjoying the fruits of justice and religious freedom. Their appeal is directed to all areas of the world and in particular to that land hallowed by the preaching, the death and the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.