



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO MEMBERS OF THE "ASSEMBLY OF ORGANIZATIONS
FOR AID TO THE EASTERN CHURCHES" (R.O.A.C.O.)**

*Clementine Hall
Thursday, 25 June 2009*

*Your Eminences,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,
Dear Members and Friends of ROACO,*

It has become a happy custom to welcome you at the end of the second annual meeting of the Assembly of *Organizations for Aid to the Eastern Churches*. I am grateful to Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, Prefect of the [Congregation for the Eastern Churches](#), for his kind words on behalf of all. I reciprocate with a cordial greeting which I gladly extend to the Secretary, Archbishop Cyril Vasil', to the recently appointed Undersecretary, to the Dicastery's other collaborators and to Cardinal Foley. I greet their Excellencies the Prelates and the Custos of the Holy Land who are gathered with the Representatives of the International Catholic Agencies and of Bethlehem University. I warmly thank you, dear friends, for all that you do for the Eastern and Latin communities resident in the territories entrusted to this Congregation and in the other regions of the world where the children of the Catholic East, together with their Pastors, strive to build a peaceful coexistence with the faithful of other Christian denominations and different religions.

With the forthcoming Feast of Sts Peter and Paul, the Year dedicated to the Apostle to the Gentiles for the 2,000th anniversary of his birth is coming to a close. Taken by Christ and consumed by the Holy Spirit, he was a privileged witness of the mystery of the love of God manifested in Christ Jesus. His inspired word and his witness confirmed by the supreme gift of martyrdom were an incomparable praise of Christian love and are very timely. I am referring in particular to the hymn to Christian love in the First Letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 13). On the lips of Paul of Tarsus, the word of God points out to us unequivocally what is "greatest" for all disciples

of Christ: love! It is the fruitful source of all service to the Church, its measure, its method and its verification. Through your adherence to ROACO you wish to live out this love in particular by offering your availability to the Bishop of Rome through the intermediary of the [Congregation for the Eastern Churches](#). In this way "the charitable movement, which the Congregation is supervising by the Pope's mandate so that that the Holy Land and other Eastern regions can receive in an orderly and balanced manner the necessary spiritual and material support for their ordinary ecclesial life and special needs, must continue, indeed, must grow" ([Discourse during Visit to the Congregation for the Eastern Churches](#), 9 June 2007).

Today's meeting rekindles the joy of my recent Pilgrimage to the Holy Land. In this regard I renew my gratitude to the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, to the Papal Representative for Israel and for the Palestinian Territories, to Father Custos and to all who have helped to make my pilgrimage fruitful. Indeed, there were many moments of grace, when I was able to encourage and comfort the Catholic communities in the Holy Land, urging their members to persevere in their witness a witness filled with fidelity, celebration, and at times great suffering. I was also able to remind the Christians of the region of their ecumenical and interreligious responsibility, in keeping with the spirit of the [Second Vatican Council](#). I renew my prayer and my appeal for no more war, no more violence, no more injustice. I wish to assure you that the universal Church remains at the side of all our brothers and sisters who reside in the Holy Land. This concern is reflected in a special way in the Annual Holy Land Collection. I therefore exhort your ROACO Agencies to continue their charitable activities with zeal and with fidelity to the Successor of Peter.

Dear friends of ROACO, I accompany with special appreciation the work you do in this sensitive global situation which threatens to jeopardize loving ecclesial service in general, the projects already embarked upon and, especially, the future initiatives of your charitable organizations. I would like to take the opportunity to urge you and the agencies you represent to redouble your efforts. With a spirit of faith and with careful analyses and the necessary realism it will be possible to correct certain impractical decisions and to face effectively the current situations of need. I am thinking of the plight of refugees and migrants, which deeply concerns the Eastern Churches, and reconstruction in the Gaza Strip, still lacking attention, where it is also necessary to take into account Israel's legitimate concern for its own security. In the face of these totally new challenges, the Church's loving service remains an effective instrument of salvation and the safest investment for the present and for the future.

Dear friends, I have several times emphasized the importance of the education of the People of God and, especially at this time when we have just started the Year for Priests, I am eager to recommend that you give the most favourable attention possible to the care of priests and the support of seminaries. [When I inaugurated this unique Jubilee Year last Friday](#), the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart, I entrusted all the priests in the world to the Heart of Christ and to the Heart of the Immaculate Mother, with a special thought for those in the East as in the West who are living moments of difficulty and trial. I take this opportunity also to ask you to pray for priests. I ask you

to continue to support me too, the Successor of the Apostle Peter, so that I may fully carry out my mission at the service of the universal Church. I thank you once again for the work you are doing: may God reward you abundantly. With these sentiments, I impart to each one of you, to your loved ones and to the communities and agencies you represent, the comfort of the Apostolic Blessing.

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