



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO CYPRUS

(JUNE 4-6, 2010)

CONSIGNMENT OF THE *INSTRUMENTUM LABORIS* OF THE SPECIAL ASSEMBLY FOR THE MIDDLE EAST OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

*Eleftheria Sports Centre Eleftheria - Nicosia
Sunday, 6 June 2010*

(Video)

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

I thank Archbishop Eterović for his kind words, and I renew my greetings to all of you who have come here in connection with the launch of the forthcoming Special Assembly for the Middle East of the Synod of Bishops. I thank you for all the work that has been accomplished already in anticipation of the Synodal Assembly, and I promise you the support of my prayers as you enter this final phase of preparation.

Before I begin, it is only fitting that I recall the late Bishop Luigi Padovese who, as President of the Turkish Catholic Bishops, contributed to the preparation of the *Instrumentum Laboris* that I am consigning to you today. News of his unforeseen and tragic death on Thursday surprised and shocked all of us. I entrust his soul to the mercy of almighty God, mindful of how committed he was, especially as a bishop, to interreligious and cultural understanding, and to dialogue between the Churches. His death is a sobering reminder of the vocation that all Christians share, to be courageous witnesses in every circumstance to what is good, noble and just.

The motto chosen for the Assembly speaks to us of communion and witness, and it reminds us how the members of the early Christian community “were of one heart and soul”. At the centre of the Church’s unity is the Eucharist, Christ’s inestimable gift to his people and the focus of our liturgical celebration today on this Solemnity of the Lord’s Body and Blood. So it is not without significance that the date chosen for the *Instrumentum Laboris* of the Special Assembly to be consigned should be today.

The Middle East has a special place in the hearts of all Christians, since it was there that God first made himself known to our fathers in faith. From the time when Abraham set out from Ur of the Chaldeans in obedience to the Lord’s call, right up until the death and resurrection of Jesus, God’s saving work was accomplished through particular individuals and peoples in your homelands. Since then, the message of the Gospel has spread all over the world, but Christians everywhere continue to look to the Middle East with special reverence, on account of the prophets and patriarchs, apostles and martyrs to whom we owe so much, the men and women who heard God’s word, bore witness to it, and handed it on to us who belong to the great family of the Church.

The Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, convoked at your request, will endeavour to deepen the bonds of communion between the members of your local Churches, as well as the communion of the Churches themselves with each other and with the universal Church. This Assembly also wishes to encourage you in the witness of faith in Christ that you are bearing in the countries where this faith was born and developed. It is likewise well known that some of you endure great trials due to the current situation in the region. The Special Assembly is an opportunity for Christians in the rest of the world to offer spiritual support and solidarity to their brothers and sisters in the Middle East. It is an opportunity to bring out the important value of the presence and witness of Christians in the countries of the Bible, not only for the Christian community on a global scale but also for your neighbours and your fellow-citizens. You contribute in countless ways to the common good, for example through education, care of the sick and social assistance and you work to build society. You wish to live in peace and harmony with your Jewish and Muslim neighbours. You often act as peacemakers in the difficult process of reconciliation. You deserve recognition for the incalculable role you fulfil. I seriously hope that all your rights will be increasingly respected, including the right to freedom of worship and religious freedom, and that you will no longer suffer discrimination of any kind.

I pray that the work of the Special Assembly will help to focus the attention of the international community on the plight of those Christians in the Middle East who suffer for their beliefs, so that just and lasting solutions may be found to the conflicts that cause so much hardship. On this grave matter, I reiterate my personal appeal for an urgent and concerted international effort to resolve the ongoing tensions in the Middle East, especially in the Holy Land, before such conflicts lead to greater bloodshed.

With these thoughts, I now present to you the text of the *Instrumentum Laboris* of the Special

Assembly for the Middle East of the Synod of Bishops. God bless your work abundantly! God bless all the peoples of the Middle East!

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