



The Holy See

**LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO CARD. WALTER KASPER
ON THE OCCASION OF THE INTER-CHRISTIAN SYMPOSIUM
ORGANIZED BY THE SPIRITUAL INSTITUTE
OF THE PONTIFICAL UNIVERSITY OF THE ANTONIANUM OF ROME
AND THE THEOLOGICAL FACULTY
OF THE ARISTOTLE UNIVERSITY OF THESSALONICA
(ASSISI 4-7 SEPTEMBER 2005)**

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

I learned with joy that the Ninth Symposium sponsored by the Franciscan Institute for Spirituality of the *Antonianum* Pontifical University and the Theological Faculty of the *Aristotle* University of Thessalonica, a city to whose first Christian community St Paul sent two Letters, is being held at Assisi, an oasis and a reminder of peace.

This initiative is a happy opportunity for a fraternal exchange in which to reflect and examine important themes concerning the patrimony of our common faith, analyzing their implications in Christian life. The search for full and visible unity among all Christ's disciples is seen as particularly urgent in our time, and we therefore feel in need of a deeper spirituality and greater reciprocal love.

This year's theme: "*The Eucharist in the Eastern and Western traditions, with special reference to ecumenical dialogue*", is very important for the lives of Christians and for re-establishing full communion among all Christ's disciples.

The Second Vatican Council appropriately recalled: "With what love the Eastern Christians celebrate the sacred liturgy, especially the Eucharistic mystery, source of the Church's life and pledge of future glory" (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, n. 15), and recalled that by virtue of apostolic

succession, the priesthood and the Eucharist, they "are still joined to us in closest intimacy" (*ibid.*).

The dialogue and confrontation in truth and charity that will be developed during the Symposium will certainly bring out our common faith as well as those specific theological and liturgical aspects of the East and the West that are complementary and dynamic for building up the People of God and constitute the riches of the Church. The absence of full communion, unfortunately, does not permit the concelebration which for both is the sign of that full unity to which we are all called.

In any case, it will be an appeal to intensify prayer, study and dialogue, to resolve the divergences that still endure.

The restoration of full Christian communion must be a goal for all who profess faith in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, "faithful and clergy alike. It extends to everyone, according to the talent of each, whether it be exercised in daily Christian living or in theological and historical studies" (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, n. 5).

The Symposium, which follows the course of other such fruitful ecumenical initiatives, brings into the limelight the common commitment, research and study which aim to clarify differences and surmount misunderstandings. Along these lines, the institutes that teach theology can play a fundamental role in the formation of the new generations and in offering a renewed Christian witness to the contemporary world.

As I invoke the Blessing of the Lord upon the participants so that the Symposium may be rich in doctrinal, cultural and spiritual contributions, I send my cordial greeting to everyone with the Apostle's words: "May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you" (I Thes 5: 28).

From Castel Gandolfo, 1 September 2005

BENEDICT XVI

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