



The Holy See

***LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO HIS HOLINESS BARTHOLOMEW I
ON THE OCCASION OF THE FEAST OF SAINT ANDREW***

*To His Holiness Bartholomew I
Archbishop of Constantinople
Ecumenical Patriarch*

"The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you!

My love to all of you in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor 16:23-24).

It is with great joy that I write to Your Holiness on the occasion of the Feast of Saint Andrew, apostle and brother of Saint Peter

The delegation which I send to you, led by the President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, His Eminence Cardinal Walter Kasper, brings you the warmest fraternal greetings of the Church of Rome. While I myself would have wished to be present to assure you personally of my affection for you in the Lord and to pray with you, I nevertheless convey my fervent hope for an even deeper communion which will overcome those obstacles remaining between us and enable us to celebrate together the Holy Eucharist, the one sacrifice of Christ for the life of the world.

This year we commemorate the Fortieth Anniversary of 7 December 1965, that day on which Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras, dissatisfied with what had occurred in 1054, decided together at Rome and Constantinople "to cancel from the Church's memory the sentence of ex-communication which had been pronounced". That momentous event became the basis of a renewed relationship marked by reciprocal respect and reconciliation. We remember with joy the inspiring words pronounced that day in the Cathedral of the Phanar by the beloved Patriarch Athenagoras : "God is Love (1 Jn 4:9): love is the God-given mark of the disciples of Christ, the

power which gathers in unity the Church, and the source of its peace, harmony and order, as a perpetual and brilliant manifestation of the indwelling Holy Spirit" (*Response to The Common Declaration*, 7 December 1965).

Indeed, this cancellation marked the beginning of a new season of ecclesial life, a season of dialogue, which has seen significant progress yet remains challenged to continue the rigorous pursuit of its much cherished goals. In this regard, it is a source of great satisfaction to me that after a pause of some years our theological dialogue begins once again. I pray that it will indeed be fruitful and am confident that no effort will be spared to make it so. He who puts his hand to the plough must not turn back (cf. *Lk 9:62*). Rather, he must persevere and bring his work to completion, sowing the seed and awaiting the abundant harvest that God in his goodness will provide. Attentive then to what the Spirit says to the needs of the Churches today and in the future, I assure Your Holiness and the Holy Synod, and through you all the Orthodox Churches, that the Catholic Church remains irrevocably committed to promoting all suitable and helpful initiatives to strengthen charity, solidarity and theological dialogue between us.

In the joy of the Feast of Saint Andrew, Holy Guardian of the Church of Constantinople, I renew to Your Holiness my fraternal love and send you my warm greetings in the embrace of peace.

From the Vatican, 26 November 2005

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