



The Holy See

***LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO HIS HOLINESS ALEXIS II
PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA***

*To His Holiness Alexis II
Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia*

The visit to Russia of His Eminence Cardinal Walter Kasper offers me a welcome opportunity to extend my cordial greetings, to express my esteem for your ministry in the Russian Orthodox Church and to restate my appreciation for your commitment to fostering relations between Catholics and Orthodox. It is with joy that I reflect on the experience of growing closeness between us, accompanied by the shared desire to promote authentic Christian values and to witness to our Lord in ever deeper communion. I think with gratitude of the recent visit of Your Holiness to Strasbourg and Paris, and the warm welcome given to the Catholic Archbishop of the Archdiocese of the Mother of God in Moscow during the Christmas celebrations last year.

Another sign of fraternity and friendship towards the Catholic Church is to be seen in the invitation extended to Cardinal Kasper by His Eminence Kirill, Metropolitan of Smolensk and Kaliningrad, President of the Department for External Church Affairs of the Patriarchate of Moscow, to visit that Eparchy on the occasion of his name-day. This is not only a sign of personal goodwill, but also a gesture towards the Catholic Church which Cardinal Kasper represents.

During his time in Russia, Cardinal Kasper will visit Kazan to venerate the icon of the Mother of God which my beloved predecessor, Pope John Paul II, conveyed to Your Holiness through the good offices of Cardinal Kasper, who personally accompanied the sacred image back to its homeland. This icon bears a likeness to all the other venerable icons of the Mother of God, and as such offers a powerful sign of the closeness which exists between us. It also offers an opportunity for encounter with Muslims, who show great respect for Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Your Holiness has been increasingly committed to dialogue with other Christians and the members of other religions, and it is with deep gratitude that I have followed with prayerful interest the signs of friendship and trust which your Church and its representatives have demonstrated in various

ways.

With gratitude for your commitment to dialogue with different ecclesial, religious and social bodies, I extend in this Easter season my warmest best wishes for your ministry, entrusting to the Lord my prayer that the great mystery of our salvation, the Death and Resurrection of our Lord, may ever more deeply guide your life and your service to the Church. May the Risen Saviour grant you health, peace and inner joy, and may he bring us closer to each other, that we may undertake together our journey towards full communion in him.

From the Vatican, 19 May 2008

BENEDICTUS PP. XVI

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