



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO HIS HOLINESS BARTHOLOMEW I
ARCHBISHOP OF CONSTANTINOPLE,
ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH,
ON THE OCCASION OF THE FEAST OF ST. ANDREW**

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

"Grace to you and peace from God the Father" (Gal 1: 3)

It is with deep joy that I address these words of Saint Paul to Your Holiness, the Holy Synod and all the Orthodox clergy and lay people assembled for the feast of Saint Andrew, the brother of Saint Peter and, like him, a great apostle and martyr for Christ. I am pleased to be represented on this festal occasion by a delegation led by my venerable brother Cardinal Walter Kasper, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, to whom I am entrusting this message of greetings. My own prayers join with yours as we plead with the Lord for the well-being and unity of the followers of Christ throughout the world.

I give thanks to God that he has enabled us to deepen the bonds of mutual love between us, supported by prayer and ever more regular fraternal contact. In the course of the year that is now drawing to a close, we have been blessed three times by the presence of Your Holiness in Rome: on the occasion of your magisterial address at the Pontifical Oriental Institute, which is honoured to number you among its *alumni*; [at the opening of the Pauline Year](#) on the feast of Rome's patron saints, Peter and Paul; and at the Twelfth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops of the Catholic Church, held in October on the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church, when you delivered a most thoughtful address.

As a sign of our growing communion and spiritual closeness, the Catholic Church for her part was represented at the celebrations of the Pauline Year overseen by Your Holiness, including a

symposium and a pilgrimage to the Pauline sites in Asia Minor. These experiences of encounter and shared prayer contribute to an increase in our commitment to attain the goal of our ecumenical journey.

In this same spirit, Your Holiness has informed me of the positive outcome of the Synaxis of the Primate and Representatives of the Orthodox Churches, which took place recently at the Phanar. The hopeful signs which emerged for inter-Orthodox relations and ecumenical engagement have been welcomed with joy. I believe and pray that these developments will have a constructive impact on the official theological dialogue between the Orthodox Churches and the Catholic Church, and will lead to a resolution of the difficulties experienced in the last two sessions. As Your Holiness remarked during your address to the Synod of Bishops of the Catholic Church, the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between Catholics and Orthodox is now addressing a crucial issue which, once resolved, would draw us closer to full communion.

On this feast of Saint Andrew, we reflect with joy and thanksgiving that the relations between us are entering progressively deeper levels as we renew our commitment to the path of prayer and dialogue. We trust that our common journey will hasten the arrival of that blessed day when we will praise God together in a shared celebration of the Eucharist. The inner life of our Churches and the challenges of our modern world urgently demand this witness of unity among Christ's disciples.

It is with these brotherly sentiments that I extend to Your Holiness my cordial greetings in the Lord, who assures us of his grace and peace.

From the Vatican, 26 November 2008

BENEDICTUS PP. XVI