



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF POPE BENEDICT XVI
TO HIS HOLINESS BARTHOLOMAIOS I, ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH,
FOR THE FEAST OF SAINT ANDREW**

*To His Holiness Bartholomaios
Archbishop of Constantinople
Ecumenical Patriarch*

“That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith” (Eph 3:17)

Enlivened by sentiments of deep joy and brotherly closeness, I would like today to make my own this desire which St Paul expressed to the Christian community of Ephesus, in order to present to you, Your Holiness, to the Members of the Holy Synod, to the clergy and to all the faithful gathered together on this Feast Day to celebrate the great Solemnity of St Andrew. Following the Apostle’s example, as your brother in the faith, I too “bow my knees before the Father” (Eph 3:14) to ask him to grant that you “be strengthened with might through his Spirit” (v. 16), and, “to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge” (v. 19).

The exchange of Delegations between the Church of Rome and the Church of Constantinople, which takes place every year on the occasion of the respective patronal feasts of St Andrew in the Phanar and Sts Peter and Paul in Rome, is a tangible testimony of the bond of brotherly closeness that unites us. Even though it is still imperfect, it is a profound and real communion that is not based on human reasons of courtesy or suitability, but on our common faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose Gospel of salvation came to us through the preaching and witness of the Apostles which was sealed by the blood of martyrdom.

Relying on these sound foundations, we are able to advance confidently together on the path that leads towards the reestablishment of full communion. We have made great progress on this route Your Holiness, thanks too to your assiduous and active support for which I am deeply grateful. Although it seems that we still have a long and difficult way to go, our intention to continue in this

direction remains firm, since we are comforted by the prayer our Lord Jesus Christ addressed to the Father: “that they may all be one.... in us, so that the world may believe” (Jn 17:21).

Your Holiness, I wish at this moment to renew to you the expression of my deep gratitude for the words you spoke at the end of the celebration for the 50th anniversary of the opening of the [Second Vatican Council](#) and the opening of the [Year of Faith](#), which was held in Rome in October. Through these words you were able to interpret the sentiments of everyone present. I cherish vivid memories of your visit to Rome for this occasion, during which we had the opportunity to renew our ties of sincere and genuine friendship.

This sincere friendship which has been born between us — with a great common vision of the responsibilities to which we are called as Christians and as Pastors of the flock that God has entrusted to us — is the reason for the great hope that an ever closer collaboration will develop in the urgent task of giving fresh vigour to our witness to the Gospel Message in today’s world. In addition, I warmly thank you, Your Holiness, and the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate for sending a Fraternal Delegate to take part in the Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the theme: “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith”.

We have long been in full agreement with Your Holiness on the most urgent challenge today: how to bring the proclamation of God’s merciful love to the people of our time, so often distracted and more or less incapable of profound reflection on the actual meaning of their existence, seen in the light of projects and utopias that cannot but leave them disappointed. The Church has no other message than “the gospel of God” (Rom 1:1) and no other method than apostolic proclamation, sustained and guaranteed by the witness to holiness of life of both the Pastors and People of God. The Lord Jesus told us that “the harvest is plentiful” (Lk 10:2) and we cannot allow it to be lost because of our weaknesses and division.

Your Holiness, in the divine Liturgy which you have celebrated today in honour of St Andrew, Patron of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, you prayed “for peace throughout the world, for the prosperity of the Holy Churches of God and for the union of all”. I join in your prayer with all the Catholic brothers and sisters. The full communion to which we all aspire is a gift that comes from God. Let us confidently address our plea to him “who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think” (Eph 3:20), through the intercession of St Andrew and of St Peter, his brother.

With these sentiments of sincere affection in Christ the Lord, I renew my warm good wishes and exchange with Your Holiness a brotherly embrace.

From the Vatican, 23 November 2012

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