



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE DELEGATES OF OTHER CHURCHES
AND ECCLESIAL COMMUNITIES
AND OF OTHER RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS***

Clementine Hall

Monday, 25 April 2005

Dear Delegates of the Orthodox Churches, of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and of the Ecclesial Communities of the West, I greet you with joy a few days after my election. I particularly appreciated your presence in St Peter's Square yesterday, after we had lived together the sorrowful moments of the farewell to our late Pope John Paul II. The tribute of sympathy and affection that you expressed to my unforgettable Predecessor went far beyond a mere act of ecclesial courtesy. Much progress was made during the years of his Pontificate, and your participation in the mourning of the Catholic Church on his departure has shown how true and great the common eagerness for unity is.

In greeting you, I would like to thank the Lord who has blessed us with his mercy and instilled in us sincere willingness to make his prayer our own: *ut unum sint*. He has thus made us increasingly aware of the importance of moving forward towards full communion. With brotherly friendship we can exchange the gifts we have received from the Spirit, and we feel urged to encourage one another so that we may proclaim Christ and his message to the world, which often appears troubled and restless, uninformed and indifferent.

Our meeting today is particularly important. First of all, it enables the new Bishop of Rome, Pastor of the Catholic Church, to repeat to you all with simplicity: *Duc in altum!* Let us go forward with hope. In the footsteps of my Predecessors, especially Paul VI and John Paul II, I feel strongly the need to reassert the irreversible commitment taken by the Second Vatican Council and pursued in recent years, also thanks to the activity of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. The path to the full communion desired by Jesus for his disciples entails, with true docility to what the

Spirit says to the Churches, courage, gentleness, firmness and hope, in order to reach our goal. Above all, it requires persistent prayer and with one heart, in order to obtain from the Good Shepherd the gift of unity for his flock.

How can we not recognize in a spirit of gratitude to God that our meeting also has the significance of a gift that has already been granted? In fact, Christ, the Prince of Peace, has acted in our midst: he has poured out friendship by the handful, he has mitigated points of disagreement, he has taught us to be more open to dialogue and in harmony with the commitments proper to those who bear his Name. Over and above what divides us and casts shadows on our full and visible communion, your presence, dear Brothers in Christ, is a sign of sharing and support for the Bishop of Rome, who can count on you to continue the journey in hope and to grow towards the One who is Christ, the Head.

On such a special occasion, when we are gathered together at the very beginning of my ecclesial service, welcomed with respect and trusting obedience to the Lord, I ask you all to join with me in setting an example of that spiritual ecumenism which, through prayer, can bring about our communion without obstacles.

I entrust these intentions and reflections to you together with my most cordial greetings, so that you may pass them on to your Churches and Ecclesial Communities.

I turn now to you, dear friends from different religious traditions, and I thank you sincerely for your presence at the [solemn inauguration of my Pontificate](#). I offer warm and affectionate greetings to you and to all those who belong to the religions that you represent. I am particularly grateful for the presence in our midst of members of the Muslim community, and I express my appreciation for the growth of dialogue between Muslims and Christians, both at the local and international level. I assure you that the Church wants to continue building bridges of friendship with the followers of all religions, in order to seek the true good of every person and of society as a whole.

The world in which we live is often marked by conflicts, violence and war, but it earnestly longs for peace, peace which is above all a gift from God, peace for which we must pray without ceasing. Yet peace is also a duty to which all peoples must be committed, especially those who profess to belong to religious traditions. Our efforts to come together and foster dialogue are a valuable contribution to building peace on solid foundations. Pope John Paul II, my Venerable Predecessor, wrote at the start of the new Millennium that "the name of the one God must become increasingly what it is: a name of peace and a summons to peace" (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 55). It is therefore imperative to engage in authentic and sincere dialogue, built on respect for the dignity of every human person, created, as we Christians firmly believe, in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gn 1: 26-27).

At the beginning of my Pontificate, I address to you and to all believers of the religious traditions that you represent, as well as to all who seek the Truth with a sincere heart, a pressing invitation

together to become artisans of peace, in a reciprocal commitment to understanding, respect and love.

My cordial greeting to you all.

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