



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO A GROUP OF PRIESTS AND SEMINARIANS FROM THE THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE OF
THE «APOSTOLIKI DIAKONIA»
OF THE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH**

*Consistory Hall
Monday, 27 February 2006*

*Your Excellency,
Most Reverend Archimandrites,
Priests, Seminarians and
all those taking part in the "study visit" to Rome,*

As I welcome you with joy and gratitude on the occasion of the initiative of this visit to Rome, I would like to recall an exhortation that St Ignatius, the great Bishop of Antioch, addressed to the Ephesians: *"Take pains to meet more often to give thanks to God and to celebrate his praise. For if you meet frequently, the forces of evil will be overcome and his work of death will be destroyed by the harmony of your faith".*

At the beginning of the second millennium, for us Christians of East and West, the forces of evil have also acted in the controversies between us that still endure.

In the past 40 years, however, many comforting signs full of hope have allowed us to glimpse a new dawn, that of the day on which we will fully understand that being rooted and founded in the love of Christ actually means finding a practical way to overcome our divisions through personal and community conversion, the practice of listening to each other and common prayer for our unity.

Among the consoling signs on this journey, which is demanding but indispensable, I would like to recall the recent positive development of relations between the Church of Rome and the Orthodox Church of Greece. Various forms of collaboration and projects that serve to deepen our

understanding of one another and to foster the formation of the youngest generations have followed the memorable meeting on the Areopagus of Athens between my beloved Predecessor, Pope John Paul II, and His Beatitude Christodoulos, Archbishop of Athens and All Greece.

The exchange of visits, scholarship and cooperation in the editorial field have proven to be an effective means of furthering dialogue and deepening charity, which is the perfection of life and - as St Ignatius also said -, together with the principle, faith, will be able to prevail over the discord of this world.

I warmly thank the *Apostoliki Diakonia* for this visit to Rome and for the initiatives of formation that it is developing with the *Catholic Committee for Cultural Collaboration* with the Orthodox Churches in the context of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. I am certain that reciprocal charity will be able to foster our creativity and lead us along new paths.

We must confront the challenges that threaten faith, cultivate the spiritual *humus* that has nourished Europe for centuries, reaffirm Christian values, promote peace and encounter, even in the most difficult conditions, and deepen those elements of faith and ecclesial life that can lead us to the goal of full communion in truth and in charity, especially now that the official dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church as a whole is resuming its journey with renewed vigour.

In Christian life, faith, hope and charity go hand in hand. Our witness in today's world will be truer and more effective if we realize that the way towards unity demands of all of us more living faith, sounder hope and charity which is truly the deepest inspiration that nourishes our reciprocal relations! Hope, however, should be practised with patience and humility, and with trust in the One who guides us.

Although it may not seem within our immediate reach, the goal of unity among Christ's disciples does not prevent us from living with one another in charity at all levels, from this moment. There is no place or time in which love modelled on the love of our Teacher, Jesus, is superfluous; love cannot fail to be a short cut to full communion.

I entrust to you the task of conveying my sentiments of sincere brotherly love to His Beatitude Christodoulos. He was with us here in Rome to say the last farewell to Pope John Paul II. The Lord will point out to us the ways and times to renew our encounter in the joyful atmosphere of a meeting among brothers.

May your visit have all its desired success. May my Blessing go with you.

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