



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO A DELEGATION FROM THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE ON THE OCCASION
OF THE SOLEMNITY OF THE HOLY APOSTLES PETER AND PAUL
AND OF THE CLOSING OF THE PAULINE YEAR**

Saturday, 27 June 2009

"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph 1: 2).

Venerable Brothers,

It is with these words that St Paul, "an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God" addressed "the saints" who lived in Ephesus and the "faithful in Christ Jesus" (Eph 1: 1). Today, through this proclamation of peace and salvation, I wish you welcome on the patronal feast of Sts Peter and Paul with which we shall conclude the Pauline Year. Last year, His Holiness Bartholomew 1, the Ecumenical Patriarch, wished to honour us with his presence in order to celebrate together the inauguration of this year of prayers, reflection and the exchange of acts of communion between Rome and Constantinople. In our turn, we had the joy of sending a delegation to the corresponding celebrations organized by the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Moreover it could not be otherwise in this year dedicated to St Paul who strongly recommended that "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace [be maintained]", teaching us that "there is one body and one Spirit" (Eph 4: 3-4).

Welcome, therefore, dear Brothers who have been sent by His Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch, to whom, in reciprocation, I ask you to take my warm fraternal greeting in the Lord. We will thank the Lord together for all the fruits and benefits that the celebration of the 2,000th anniversary of the birth of St Paul has brought us. We will celebrate in harmony the Feast of Sts Peter and Paul, the protòthroni of the Apostles, as the Orthodox liturgical tradition invokes them, that is, those who occupy the first place among the Apostles and are called "teachers of the ecumene".

By your presence, which is a sign of ecclesial brotherhood, you remind us of our common commitment to seeking full communion. You know this already, but I have the pleasure today once again of confirming that the Catholic Church intends to contribute in every possible way to re-establishing full unity, in response to Christ's will for his disciples and keeping in mind the teaching of Paul who reminds us that we are called "to the one hope". In this perspective we can therefore contemplate confidently the successful continuation of the work of the Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between Orthodox and Catholics. This Commission will be meeting next October to address a crucial topic for relations between East and West, that is, the "role of the Bishop of Rome in the communion of the Church in the first millennium". The study of this aspect is in fact proving indispensable for deepening the overall knowledge of this issue in the current context of the search for full communion. The Commission, which has already carried out important work, will be generously received by the Orthodox Church of Cyprus to which, from this moment, we express all our gratitude, since her fraternal welcome and the prayerful atmosphere that will surround our conversations cannot but facilitate our task and our mutual understanding.

I would like those who are taking part in the Catholic-Orthodox dialogue to know that they are accompanied by my prayers and that this dialogue has the full support of the Catholic Church. I hope with all my heart that the misunderstandings and tension encountered among the Orthodox Delegates at the last Plenary Meetings of this Commission have been resolved in brotherly love in such a way that this dialogue may be more broadly representative of Orthodoxy.

Beloved Brothers, I thank you once again for being with us today and I ask you to convey my fraternal greeting to His Holiness Bartholomew I, the Ecumenical Patriarch, to the Holy Synod and to all the clergy, as well as to the Orthodox faithful. May the joy of the Feast of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul that we traditionally celebrate on the same day fill your hearts with trust and hope.

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