



The Holy See

***GREETINGS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE DELEGATION
OF THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE OF CONSTANTINOPLE***

Thursday, 28 June 2012

“Glorify the Lord with me, let us together exalt his name” (Ps 34[33]:4)

Dear Brothers in Christ,

In this joyful circumstance of the Feast of Sts Peter and Paul, patrons of the city and of the Church of Rome, I am particularly glad to welcome you with the words of the Psalm that will be sung during the solemn Eucharistic liturgy in honour of these two great Apostles and Martyrs. In addressing a warm welcome to you, I ask you to convey to His Holiness Bartholomaios I and to the Holy Synod, my sentiments of fraternal affection and deep gratitude for having deigned to send, this year too, worthy representatives to take part in our celebration, and to pass on a cordial greeting to the clergy, monks and all the faithful of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

Your presence here in Rome on the occasion of the liturgical Feast of Sts Peter and Paul affords us a special opportunity to raise our hymn of praise to God for the wonders that divine grace — from which all good comes — brought about in the life of the two Apostles, making them worthy to enter heavenly glory triumphant, having passed through the regeneration of martyrdom. In addition, the Feast of Sts Peter and Paul gives us the possibility of thanking the Lord together for the extraordinary feats he has accomplished and continues to accomplish through the Apostles in the life of the Church. It is their preaching, sealed by the witness of their martyrdom, which forms the solid, everlasting basis on which the Church is built. Moreover it is in fidelity to the deposit of the faith transmitted by them that we find the roots of the communion between us which we are already experiencing.

Venerable Brothers, in our meeting today, as we entrust to the intercession of the glorious

Apostles and Martyrs Peter and Paul our entreaty that the Lord, rich in mercy, will grant us to arrive soon at the blessed day when we will be able to share in the Eucharistic banquet, we raise our voices in the hymn to God for the journey of peace and reconciliation that he has granted us to make together.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the opening of the [Second Vatican Ecumenical Council](#) which will be solemnly celebrated next 11 October. And it is in conjunction with this Council — at which, as you know well, certain representatives of the Ecumenical Patriarchate were present as Fraternal Delegates — that a new and important phase in relations between our Churches began.

Let us praise the Lord first of all for the rediscovery of the deep brotherhood that binds us and also for the ground covered in the past few years by the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church (as a whole), in the hope that progress may also be made in the current phase.

In remembering the anniversary of the [Second Vatican Council](#), it seems to me fitting to commemorate the figure and activity of the unforgettable Ecumenical Patriarch Athenogras, the 40th anniversary of whose death is in a few days' time. Patriarch Athenogras, together with Blessed [Pope John XXIII](#) and the Servant of God [Pope Paul VI](#), inspired by this passion for the unity of the Church which springs from faith in Christ the Lord, made themselves promoters of courageous initiatives that paved the way to renewed relations between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Catholic Church. It is a cause of special joy to me to note that His Holiness Bartholomew I is following with renewed fidelity and fruitful creativity the way marked out by his predecessors, Patriarch Athenogras and Patriarch Dmitrios, and is distinguishing himself at the international level for his openness to inter-Christian dialogue and for his commitment to the service of Gospel proclamation in today's world.

Your Eminence, dear Members of the Delegation, as I thank you once again for your presence among us, I assure you of my prayers that the Lord will grant holiness and strength to His Holiness Bartholomew I and prosperity and peace to the Ecumenical Patriarchate. May Almighty God grant us the gift of ever fuller communion, so that "of one heart and soul" (Acts 4:32), we may always exalt his name.