



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO THE MODERATOR AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

Monday, 16 February 2015

[Multimedia]

Dear Moderator,

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am happy to have this opportunity to meet this delegation from the Church of Scotland, and to reaffirm our common commitment to the Gospel and to the cause of Christian unity.

Scotland's rich cultural and historical traditions have been shaped by outstanding saintly witnesses to Christ from various confessions. The present state of ecumenical relations in Scotland clearly shows that what we, as Christians, hold in common is greater than all that divides us. On this basis the Lord is calling us to seek ever more effective ways to overcome old prejudices and to find new forms of understanding and cooperation.

It is heartening for me to see that the good relations between the Church of Scotland and the Catholic Church have born fruit in shared reflection on the challenges posed by contemporary society, and that in many cases we are able to speak with one voice on issues which deeply affect the lives of all Christians. In our globalized and often confused world, a common Christian witness is a necessary requisite for the effectiveness of our efforts to evangelize.

We are pilgrims and we journey alongside one another. We need to learn to have "sincere trust in our fellow pilgrims, putting aside all suspicion or mistrust, and turn our gaze to what we are all seeking: the radiant peace of God's face" (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 244).

Faith and Christian witness are presently confronted by such great challenges that only by working together will we be able effectively to serve the human family and enable the light of Christ to reach every dark corner of our hearts and of our world. May the journey of reconciliation and peace between our communities continue to draw us closer, so that, prompted by the Holy Spirit,

we may bring life to all, and bring it in abundance (cf. *Jn* 10:10).

I would now like to turn to my native tongue to express feelings of profound sorrow. Today I read about the execution of those twenty-one or twenty-two Coptic Christians. Their only words were: "Jesus, help me!". They were killed simply for the fact that they were Christians. You, my brother, in your words referred to what is happening in the land of Jesus. The blood of our Christian brothers and sisters is a testimony which cries out to be heard. It makes no difference whether they be Catholics, Orthodox, Copts or Protestants. They are Christians! Their blood is one and the same. Their blood confesses Christ. As we recall these brothers who died only because they confessed Christ, I ask that we encourage each another to go forward with this ecumenism which is giving us strength, the ecumenism of blood. The martyrs belong to all Christians.

Let us pray for one another, and continue to advance in the way of wisdom, good will, strength and peace.