



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

TO ROMANIA

[31 MAY - 2 JUNE 2019]

MEETING WITH THE PERMANENT SYNOD OF THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS

Palace of the Patriarchate (Bucarest)

Friday, 31 May 2019

[Multimedia]

Your Holiness,

Venerable Metropolitans and Bishops of the Holy Synod,

Cristos a înviat! [Christ is risen!] The Lord's resurrection is the very heart of the apostolic preaching handed down and preserved by our Churches. On the day of Easter, the Apostles rejoiced to see the Risen Lord (cf. *Jn* 20:20). In this Easter season, I too rejoice to see a reflection of him, dear Brothers, in your own faces. Twenty years ago, before this Holy Synod, Pope John Paul II said, "I have come to contemplate the Face of Christ etched in your Church; I have come to venerate this suffering Face, the pledge to you of new hope" (*Address to Patriarch Teoctist and the Holy Synod*, 8 May 1999: *Insegnamenti* XXII.1 [1999], 938). Today I too have come here as a pilgrim, a pilgrim brother, desirous of seeing the Lord's face in the faces of my Brothers. As now I look at you, I offer you heartfelt thanks for your welcome.

The bonds of faith that unite us go back to the Apostles, the witnesses of the risen Jesus, and in particular to the bond between Peter and Andrew, who according to tradition brought the faith to these lands. Blood brothers (cf. *Mk* 1:16-18), they were also in an exceptional way brothers in shedding their blood for the Lord. They remind us that there exists a *fraternity of blood* that precedes us and, like a silent and life-giving stream flowing down the centuries, has never ceased

to nourish and sustain us on our journey.

Here, as in so many other places nowadays, you have experienced the passover of death and resurrection: how many sons and daughters of this country, from various Churches and Christian communities, knew the Friday of persecution, endured the Saturday of silence and experienced the Sunday of rebirth. How many were the martyrs and confessors of the faith! In recent times, how many, from different confessions, stood side by side in prisons to support one another in turn! Today their example stands before us and before the young, who did not experience those dramatic conditions. What they suffered for, even to the sacrifice of their lives, is too precious an inheritance to be disregarded or tarnished. It is *a shared inheritance* and it summons us to remain close to our brothers and sisters who share it. United to Christ in suffering and sorrows, and united to Christ in the resurrection, so that “we too might walk in newness of life” (*Rom 6:4*).

Your Holiness, dear Brother, twenty-five years ago, the meeting between our Predecessors was an Easter gift, an event that contributed not only to renewed relations between Orthodox and Catholics in Romania, but also to the Orthodox-Catholic dialogue in general. That visit, the first of a Bishop of Rome to a country of Orthodox majority, opened the way to other similar events. Here I remember with gratitude Patriarch Teoctist. How can we fail to recall the spontaneous cry “*Unitate, unitate!*” that was raised here in Bucharest in those days! It was a proclamation of hope rising up from the people of God, a prophecy that inaugurated a new time: *the time of journeying together* in the rediscovery and revival of the fraternity that even now unites us. And this is already *unitate*.

Journeying together with the strength of memory. Not the memory of wrongs endured and inflicted, judgments and prejudices, excommunications that enclose us in a vicious circle and bring only barrenness. Rather, the *memory of roots*: the first centuries when the Gospel, preached with boldness and prophetic spirit, encountered and enlightened new peoples and cultures; the first centuries of the martyrs, of the Fathers and the confessors of the faith, the holiness daily lived out and witnessed to by so many simple persons who share the same Christ. Those first centuries of *parrhesia* and prophecy. Thank God, our roots are sound, sound and sure, and, even if their growth has undergone the twists and turns of time, we are called, like the Psalmist, *to remember with gratitude* all that the Lord has done in our midst and to raise to him a song of praise for each other (cf. *Ps 77:6.12-13*). The remembrance of steps taken and completed together encourages us to advance to the future in the awareness – certainly – of our differences, but above all in thanksgiving for a family atmosphere to be rediscovered and a memory of communion to be revived, that, like a lamp, can light up the steps of our journey.

Journeying together in listening to the Lord. We have an example in the way our Lord acted on the evening of Easter as he walked alongside his disciples on the way to Emmaus. They were discussing all that had happened, their worries, hesitations and questions. There the Lord listened patiently and entered into heartfelt dialogue with them, helping them to understand and to discern

what had happened (cf. *Lk 24:15-27*).

We too need to listen together to the Lord, especially in these more recent years, when our world has experienced rapid social and cultural changes. Technological development and economic prosperity may have benefitted many, yet even more have remained hopelessly excluded, while a globalization that tends to level differences has contributed to uprooting traditional values and weakening ethics and social life, which more recently has witnessed a growing sense of fear that, often skillfully stoked, leads to attitudes of rejection and hate. We need to help one another not to yield to the seductions of a “culture of hate”, a culture of individualism that, perhaps no longer ideological as in the time of the atheist persecution, is nonetheless more persuasive and no less materialist. Often it takes on the appearance of a path to development that appears fast and easy, but in reality is indifferent and superficial. The weakening of social bonds, which leads to isolation, has particular repercussions on the fundamental cell of society, the family. It requires us to make an effort to go out and engage with the difficulties faced by our brothers and sisters, especially the very young, not with discouragement and nostalgia, like that of the disciples of Emmaus, but with the desire to communicate the risen Jesus, the heart of hope. Together with our brothers and sisters, we need to listen once more to the Lord, so that our hearts can burn within us and our preaching not grow weak (*ibid.*, vv. 32.35). We need to let our hearts be warmed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The journey comes to an end, as it did in Emmaus, with the insistent prayer that the Lord remain with us (cf. vv. 28-29). The Lord who is revealed in the breaking of the bread (cf. vv. 30-31), calls us to charity, to mutual service, to “give God” before we “speak of God”, to a goodness that is not passive, but prepared to get up and set out, a service that is active and collaborative (cf. v. 33). We see an excellent example of this in the many Romanian Orthodox communities that cooperate fruitfully with the many Catholic dioceses in Western Europe where they are present. In many cases, a relationship of reciprocal trust and friendship has developed, grounded in fraternity and nurtured by concrete gestures of acceptance, support and solidarity. Through the growth of this reciprocal knowledge, many Catholics and Romanian Orthodox have discovered that they are not strangers, but brothers, sisters and friends.

Journeying together towards a new Pentecost. The path before us leads from Easter to Pentecost: from that Paschal dawn of unity that emerged here twenty years ago, we have set out towards a new Pentecost. For the disciples, Easter marked the beginning of a new journey, even if their fears and uncertainties did not vanish. Thus it was, even until the day of Pentecost, when, gathered around the Holy Mother of God, the Apostles, in the one Spirit and a plurality and richness of languages, bore witness to the Risen Lord by their words and by their lives. Our own journey has begun anew with the certainty that we are brothers and sisters walking side by side, sharing the faith grounded in the resurrection of the one Lord. From Easter to Pentecost: a time of gathering and praying together under the protection of the Holy Mother of God, a time of invoking the Spirit for one another. May the Holy Spirit renew us, for he disdains uniformity and loves to shape unity

from the most beautiful and harmonious diversity. May his fire consume our lack of confidence and his breath sweep away the hesitation that holds us back from bearing witness together to the new life he offers us. May he, the builder of fraternity, give us the grace to walk beside one another. May he, the creator of newness, make us courageous as we experience unprecedented ways of sharing and of mission. May he, the strength of the martyrs, keep us from making his self-gift fruitless.

Your Holiness and dear Brothers, let us journey together, to the praise of the Most Holy Trinity and for our mutual benefit, as we seek to help our brothers and sisters to see Jesus. I once more assure you of my gratitude and of my own affection, friendship, fraternity and prayer, and that of the Catholic Church.