



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II FOR THE OPENING OF THE JUBILEE YEAR IN BETHLEHEM

I am filled with joy to know that, as we come close to Christmas, in the most Holy Place which welcomed the Son of God, born of a woman (cf. *Gal* 4:4), the highest Representatives of the Christians of the Holy Land are gathering in an ecumenical act of preparation for the opening of the Jubilee Year commemorating the two thousandth anniversary of the birth of our Lord and Saviour, when we shall turn in ever more earnest supplication to the Holy Spirit to implore the grace of full communion (cf. *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, 34). Before the eyes of the Christians of the Holy Land, and indeed of all Christians throughout the world, this meeting in Bethlehem testifies that the places in which Jesus spent his earthly life, bore his witness, died and rose again, are a constant reminder of the grace that we have received in him and an urgent invitation to us to strengthen our will and commitment to be faithful to his prayer: *ut omnes unum sint*. May the Great Jubilee lead all Christ's disciples to atone for our past sins against unity and to work to hasten the blessed hour in which we shall all invoke our Heavenly Father with a single voice. By a happy coincidence today's ecumenical celebration is being attended by the Secretaries of the Christian World Communions. To them too I send my cordial greeting and my encouragement for their efforts to extend the bonds of brotherhood and cooperation. I pray that this solemn ecumenical event in Bethlehem on the eve of the anniversary of Christ's birth will deepen our awareness of the fact that "just as he did then, today too Christ calls everyone to renew their commitment to work for full and visible communion" (*Ut Unum Sint*, 100). With this fervent hope I greet you all in the Lord. 4 December 1999

IOANNES PAULUS II
