



The Holy See

***LETTER OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH,
HIS HOLINESS Bartholomew I***

*To His Holiness Bartholomew I
Archbishop of Constantinople
Ecumenical Patriarch*

“Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (*Eph 6:23*).

The feast of the Apostle Andrew, brother of Peter, a feast which our Churches celebrate on the same day, is another joyful opportunity for me to extend my fraternal greeting to Your Holiness, to the Holy Synod and to all the faithful of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

The delegation I have sent for this happy occasion will join you in prayer to invoke, through the hymn of this day, the intercession of St Andrew, “the first-called of the Apostles and brother of their leader”, so that “the almighty Lord may grant peace to the world and great mercy to our souls” (*Apolytikion*).

The celebration of the Apostles reminds us of the commandment the Lord gave us to transmit the Gospel to all peoples and in all times, “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (*Mt 28:20*).

The apostolic faith, the apostolic tradition and the apostolic mission emphasize the urgent need to overcome the differences and difficulties which still prevent us from achieving full communion, so that we may offer the world a more striking witness of peace and unity. On the path to unity, which is sometimes rough and steep, we draw our strength from the Lord Jesus Christ’s prayer for his Church and from the power of the Holy Spirit, who always comes to help us in our weakness and gives us hope. However, these same difficulties can be an opportunity for spiritual growth and progress towards unity.

On the last Sunday of this month of November, the eve of the feast of St Andrew, the Church of Rome will enter the third year of preparation for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000. The Jubilee, in which we will commemorate the Incarnation of the Word of God, Lord and Saviour of the world, is a special moment for renewing our common commitment to proclaiming together to all men and women that Jesus Christ is Lord, as the Apostles did and with them the brothers, Peter and Andrew, Apostles and Martyrs.

With these sentiments of faith, charity, communion and peace, I assure Your Holiness of my fraternal affection in the Lord.

From the Vatican, 25 November 1998

IOANNES PAULUS PP. II

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