



# The Holy See

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## **MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II TO PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW I ON THE FEAST OF ST ANDREW**

*To His Holiness Bartholomew I*

*Archbishop of Constantinople Ecumenical Patriarch*

*"May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord" (2 Pt 1: 2).*

With these words expressing the hope of salvation, St Peter addresses the Christians of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia and Asia Minor, "those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pt 1: 1).

With these same words I greet you, Your Holiness, the members of the Holy Synod and the Ecumenical Patriarchate on this happy occasion of the feast of St Andrew, the first called, the brother of Peter, the protocoryphaeus, as the liturgy sings. The delegation led by my esteemed Brother, Cardinal Edward Idris Cassidy, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, whom I have asked to represent me on the occasion of this celebration, will bring you the fraternal sentiments of the Bishop of Rome and the Catholic Church.

Our common veneration of the holy Apostles and the prayer we offer to Christ through their intercession remind us of the grace we have received of being rooted in the one apostolic succession and the one mission of passing on to future generations and to the world the salvation brought by the one Mediator, Jesus Christ. Like the Apostle Andrew when he met Jesus for the first time, we would like to proclaim together: "We have found the Messiah" (Jn 1: 41) .

Our common mission obliges us to embrace the cause of restoring the full unity of faith and life. Indeed, as I stressed in the Encyclical *Ut unum sint*, "it is obvious that the lack of unity among Christians contradicts the Truth which Christians have the mission to spread and, consequently, it gravely damages their witness" (n. 98). Pope Paul VI remarked just 25 years ago that "the division among Christians is a serious reality which impedes the very work of Christ" (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*, n. 77).

This Jubilee year, in which we are celebrating the 2,000th anniversary of the Incarnation of the Word of God, has allowed us to bear common witness to our faith. I am grateful to Your Holiness for sending your delegations to Rome. They joined us and those of the other Churches and Ecclesial Communities in proclaiming that Christ is our only Lord and Saviour.

In this year 2000, after a long suspension of its work, the *Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches* was able to meet in Baltimore for its eighth plenary session. Such a meeting is in itself an important event, which was an occasion to emphasize the complexity of the issues being studied; to our deep regret, however, we must note that it did not allow us to make any real progress in our dialogue. For this reason the commission appropriately drew attention to the need to continue the dialogue and to seek more suitable ways to explain and examine the questions under discussion.

As for the Catholic Church, I can assure Your Holiness that I am determined to continue the dialogue of truth and charity. This is why I appeal to the Catholic and Orthodox faithful to intensify and strengthen their fraternal relations wherever they live, with concern for mutual and trusting respect. This is the only way that, with God's grace, minds can be healed of any reticence and hearts be enlarged to correspond fully with the divine will for unity, by eliminating the real difficulties that remain or those that can emerge at the level of the local Churches. This desire and orientation have been expressed to the particular Catholic Churches so that they will be firmly committed in this direction. We must encourage close and disinterested collaboration between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches, avoiding any acts or gestures which might constitute forms of pressure or merely give that impression, and being, as the Apostle Paul urged the Corinthians, "servants of God", "through forbearance, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love" (2 Cor 6: 4, 6), with the concern to be artisans of peace and reconciliation.

With a pure and free heart, then, to obey the will of the one Lord, we must continue our sincere, fraternal and loving quest for full communion. It is in this perspective that I am pleased to have been able to make available to the Ecumenical Patriarchate the ancient and beautiful Roman Church of *St Theodore* on the Palatine, so that it can be used for the worship and pastoral activities of the city's Greek Orthodox community, who will thus be provided with the necessary spiritual assistance for their growth and for dialogue with all the Christians living in Rome.

At the end of this Message, I would like to assure you, dear and venerable Brother, that I personally and the whole Catholic Church are faithfully asking the Lord to grant us his light and strength so that we can deeply understand his prayer: "That they may all be one ... so that the world may believe" (Jn 17: 21), and thus make our own contribution to its full realization.

As the Church of Constantinople celebrates her holy patron, I pray the Apostle Andrew to help us walk on the path of unity and to pursue our relations marked by sensitivity and forgiveness, so that we can proclaim together that Christ is our Saviour and the Saviour of the human race. With these sentiments, I assure Your Holiness, the Bishops and the faithful of your Patriarchate of my profound brotherly love.

*From the Vatican, 25 November 2000.*

