



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE ASSEMBLY OF ORGANIZATIONS
FOR AID TO THE EASTERN CHURCHES (ROACO)**

Thursday, 24 June 2004

*Your Eminence,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

1. I offer each one of you a cordial greeting on the occasion of the 71st Assembly of the ROACO: *Assembly of Organizations for Aid to the Eastern Churches*.

I greet Cardinal Ignace Moussa I Daoud, Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, and thank him for interpreting the sentiments of all those present. I greet the Secretary and Collaborators of the Dicastery as well as the Apostolic Nuncio in Romania, the new Custos of the Holy Land and the Directors of the Agencies. I offer everyone a cordial welcome.

2. Your visit reminds me of the present predicament of the Christian communities of the Eastern Churches which are being subjected in our time to harsh trials due to current hostilities, terrorism and other problems. Faithful to the task you assumed and following the guidelines of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, you have not let them lack your support. In this session, you combined with your generous action for the peoples of Iraq special attention to the Greek-Catholic Church of Romania. I thank you for these signs of your caring. They constitute a precious service of solidarity to those in need. To carry them out in the best way possible, you must draw the strength you need from the Eucharist. On this subject, I wrote in my recent Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* that "the seeds of disunity, which daily experience shows to be so deeply rooted in humanity as a result of sin, are countered by *the unifying power* of the Body of Christ. The Eucharist, precisely by building up the Church, creates human community" (n. 24).

3. An important opportunity to express this supportive communion that unites all believers in Christ is the Collection for the Holy Land, traditionally made on Good Friday in every part of the world.

My venerable Predecessors have always recommended care for the Mother Church in Jerusalem to all the Christian Communities. It is necessary to persevere, praying intensely for peace for the peoples who live in the Land of Jesus. May the Christians so tried by never-ending violence and many other problems that cause financial impoverishment, social conflict, and human and cultural debasement, never lack the support of the entire Catholic Church. Thanks also to the Good Friday Collection mentioned above, it is possible to help those in urgent need and foster the spirit of reciprocal acceptance and respect, encouraging the development of a common desire for reconciliation. All this cannot but contribute to building the much-desired peace.

4. One of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches' most important tasks in sustaining the pastoral life and evangelizing work of the Catholic Churches of the East continues to be *the formation of formation teachers*. Your contribution in this regard must take into account how great the needs of seminaries and formation houses often are, and how priorities vary from one Ecclesial Community to another. This Dicastery is also making a considerable financial effort to train priests and to look after seminarians, Religious and lay people so that the Churches, having overcome the conditioning of the past, may now count on qualified pastors and on a responsible and competent laity.

5. May the Lord Jesus and his heavenly Mother, so beloved and venerated everywhere by the ancient Churches of the East, help our brothers and sisters in the faith to respond courageously to the challenges of the new evangelization. May St John the Baptist, whose birth we are commemorating today, help them with his intercession, together with all the saints.

I assure you of my prayers as I very willingly impart to you, your collaborators, your benefactors and all your loved ones a special Apostolic Blessing.