



The Holy See

**LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO HIS HOLINESS BARTHOLOMEW I, ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH
ON THE OCCASION OF THE SIXTH SYMPOSIUM
ON "RELIGION, SCIENCE AND THE ENVIRONMENT"
FOCUSING ON THE AMAZON RIVER**

Dear and Holy Brother in Christ,

Since I am unable to be present in person at the new and important meeting for the safeguard of creation, which you have organized with the Sixth Symposium on "*Religion, Science and the Environment*", dedicated to the Amazon River, I entrust the task of bringing you my cordial greeting to Cardinal Roger Etchegaray.

I am grateful to you, Your Holiness, for having arranged that the preparation of the Symposium take place in close collaboration with the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Brazil.

In fact, Cardinal Geraldo Majella Agnelo, Archbishop of São Salvador da Bahia, will be taking part and will not fail to express my gratitude to you for your support of the work of the Brazilian Episcopate in Amazonia and its action on behalf of the environment, whose deterioration has profound and serious repercussions on the population.

The joint effort to create awareness on the part of Christians of every denomination, in order to show "the intrinsic connection between development, human need and the stewardship of creation" (*Directory for the Application of the Principles and Norms of Ecumenism*, 1993, n. 215), is truly proving more important than ever.

In this context, I remember Pope John Paul II of venerable memory supporting the Fourth Symposium on the Adriatic Sea, and I also remember the Common Declaration that he signed with you, Venerable Brother.

The duty to emphasize an appropriate catechesis concerning creation, in order to recall the meaning and religious significance of protecting it, is closely connected with our duty as Pastors and can have an important impact on the perception of the value of life itself as well as on the satisfactory solution of the consequent inevitable social problems.

I warmly hope, Your Holiness, that the Sixth Symposium dedicated to the Amazon River will once again attract the attention of peoples and Governments to the problems, needs and emergencies of a region so harshly tried and whose ecological balance is so threatened: in their majestic beauty, its rivers and forests speak to us of God and of his grandiose work for humanity.

This immense region, where waters are an incomparable source of harmony and riches, is presented as an open book whose pages reveal the mystery of life.

How is it possible not to feel, both as individuals and as communities, urged to acquire a responsible awareness that is expressed in consistent decisions to protect such an ecologically rich environment?

With this Symposium, Your Holiness, you have wished to express - over and above any other consideration and there would be many of them - the Christian support for the peoples in the Amazon regions, a support, in short, that stems from contemplation of the eternal Word of God, the Author, Model and End of all things.

As I express to you, Your Holiness, my deep appreciation of the intentions that inspire you, I would like to assure you of my support for the values inherent in the Symposium. I see our common commitment as an example of that collaboration which Orthodox and Catholics must constantly seek, to respond to the call for a common witness.

This implies that all Christians seriously cultivate the mental openness that is dictated by love and rooted in faith. Thus, they will be able together to offer to the world a credible witness of their sense of responsibility for the safeguard of creation.

At the Sixth Symposium dedicated to the Amazon River, prominent figures and experts will be taking part who belong to the great monotheistic Religions. Their presence is important.

There are practical objectives that are a matter of survival for man and can and must bring together all people of good will.

Reciprocal respect also passes through projects such as this event, because the topics that will be addressed are of common interest to all.

Common points must be found on which converge the commitments of each one to safeguard the

habitat that the Creator has made available to the human being, in whom he has impressed his own image.

Your Holiness, I ask you to convey my most cordial good wishes to all who are taking part in the Symposium and to assure them of my prayers that it will constitute an important step forward in the effort, so widely shared, to safeguard this world that God created with wisdom and love (cf. Ps 104[103]).

I exchange a fraternal embrace with you, Your Holiness, in the Name of the One Lord.

From the Vatican, 6 July 2006

BENEDICTUS PP. XVI

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