



The Holy See

***LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO HIS BEATITUDE DANIEL,
ARCHBISHOP OF BUCHAREST,
PATRIARCH OF THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH***

*To His Beatitude Daniel,
Archbishop of Bucharest,
Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church*

I learned with great joy and sentiments of brotherly communion of your election to the Patriarchal See of the Orthodox Church of Romania, thus succeeding H.B. Teoctist, our Venerable Brother in Christ.

At the time when you are beginning your new mission, I join you in a quite special way, Your Beatitude, as well as the Holy Synod of the Romanian Patriarchate, all the clergy and all the faithful who are rejoicing to receive you as the new Pastor called to lead the Romanian Orthodox Church.

I ask the Holy Spirit to sustain you in this weighty office. May he help the Romanian Orthodox Church in her development so that she may face changes with renewed vitality. Material and spiritual reorganization are necessary in our time after the difficulties experienced in the recent past, when there were numerous restrictions on freedom and sometimes manifest persecution. May the Lord accompany you so that your Church may respond to the expectations of the Romanian People and give them increasing hope, which they need in order to journey through life and communicate to the young generations the fundamental moral and spiritual values. These values will enable them to stand up to the different ideological currents that are attracting a considerable number of our contemporaries today.

On this blessed occasion when I join you in my thoughts, Your Beatitude, I wish you a successful pastoral service, illuminated by the light of Christ and fortified by the strength of the Holy Spirit. How can one forget the solemn meeting between my Predecessor of venerable memory and H.B.

Teoctist and the members of the Holy Synod at the Patriarchal Palace in Bucharest on 8 May 1999? This first Visit of a Pope to a country with an Orthodox majority paves the way to hope, which we must follow with a view to achieving full unity. I make my own today Pope John Paul II's words on that occasion: "Know, Your Beatitude, that Catholics are at the side of their Orthodox brethren in prayer and in their willingness to help in any useful way. The one Gospel is waiting to be proclaimed by everyone together, in love and in mutual esteem" (*Address to the Holy Synod, 8 May 1999*, n. 2; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 19 May, p. 3). The spirit that gave life to these words and to the commitment they proclaim remains timely for the Catholic Church and for me, and emphasizes that it is particularly necessary for the Church's good to strengthen the ties that bind us.

Relations between us must also be reinforced in order to respond to the actual needs in Europe and in the world on both the religious and social levels. To respond to our common vocation and to the pressing needs of our time, a common Christian witness is becoming more and more essential.

May I also repeat to you how deeply I have appreciated the commitment that the Romanian Orthodox Church has always shown in the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue through the active and positive participation of its delegates. I am convinced of your desire to pursue and intensify the dialogue between the Orthodox and Catholics in the new phases of the dialogue, for which we are preparing to address issues crucial to our relations.

With patience, mutual charity and hope, we also have to resolve some matters that are certainly of minor importance but at the local level are still an impediment to fraternal communion between Catholics and Orthodox; for all too often Christians living beside one another do not seek the daily links that could always help further the relations between Catholics and Orthodox. In this perspective, all must remember that on the eve of his passion and redeeming death, Jesus told his disciples: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (*Jn* 13: 34). The Lord's commandment must guide us all ceaselessly towards new relations, the prologue to full unity.

With these sentiments of sincere joy and the certainty of a common commitment at the service of the Church's unity, I address my most cordial congratulations to you and once again express my affection in the Lord Jesus Christ, as I pray for you yourself, for the Pastors and for all the faithful of the Orthodox Church of Romania.

From Castel Gandolfo, 27 September 2007

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