



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO CARDINAL WALTER KASPER,
PRESIDENT OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL
FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNITY
ON THE OCCASION OF
THE 11TH INTER-CHRISTIAN SYMPOSIUM**

*To my venerated Brother
Cardinal Walter Kasper
President of the Pontifical Council
for Promoting Christian Unity*

Venerable Brother,

through you, as President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, I have the pleasure and joy of sending a warm greeting to the organizers and participants of the 11th Inter-Christian Symposium sponsored by the Franciscan Institute of Spirituality of the *Antonianum* Pontifical University and the Orthodox Theology Faculty of the *Aristotle* University of Thessaloniki taking place in Rome from 3-5 September.

First of all, I am glad for this fraternal initiative to meet and to discuss the common aspects of spirituality, which is the life-giving sap for the growth of the relationship between Catholics and Orthodox. These symposiums, which began in 1992, have effectively dealt with important and constructive themes for reciprocal understanding and unity of intent. The fact that the meetings are held alternatively in countries with a Catholic or Orthodox majority allows for real contact with the concrete historical, cultural and religious life in our respective Churches.

This year in particular, you have organized the Symposium in Rome, a city that offers all Christians indelible testimonies of history, archaeology, iconography, hagiography and spirituality. A strong stimulus for us to advance towards full communion is, above all, the memory of the

Apostles Peter and Paul, *Protòthroni*, as well as that of many martyrs who were witnesses to the faith in ancient times. Of these, St Clement of Rome wrote that "in suffering... many abuses and torments, the martyrs became a most beautiful example among us" (cf. *Epistula ad Corinthios* vi, 1).

The theme you have chosen for this meeting, "*St Augustine in the Western and Eastern traditions*", a subject to be studied in collaboration with the Augustinianum Patristic Institute is very interesting for a deeper knowledge of Christian theology and spirituality in both the East and the West, as well as for their development. The Saint of Hippo, a great Father of the Latin Church, is of fundamental importance for the theology and for the culture of the West itself, whereas the reception of his thought in Orthodox theology has proven to be rather problematic. Therefore, learning the doctrinal and spiritual riches which form the patrimony of both East and West with historical objectivity and fraternal cordiality is indispensable not only to appreciate them but also to promote better reciprocal knowledge among all Christians.

Thus I express my cordial wish that your Symposium will be fruitful and very profitable in discovering doctrinal and spiritual convergences that are useful for building together the City of God, where his children can live in peace and fraternal love, based on the truth of our common faith. I assure you of my prayers for this end, asking the Lord to bless the organizers and the institutions they represent, the Catholic and Orthodox speakers, and all the participants.

May the grace and peace of the Lord be in your hearts and in your minds.

From Castel Gandolfo, 28 August 2009

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