



The Holy See

COMMON DECLARATION

SIGNED BY POPE BENEDICT XVI

AND H.B. CHRISTODOULOS,

ARCHBISHOP OF ATHENS AND ALL GREECE

1. We, Benedict XVI, Pope and Bishop of Rome, and Christodoulos, Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, in this sacred place of Rome, renowned for the preaching of the Gospel and the martyrdom of the Apostles Peter and Paul, desire to live ever more intensely our mission to offer an apostolic witness, to pass on the faith to those both near and far and to proclaim to them the Good News of the Saviour's birth, which we will both be celebrating shortly. It is also our common responsibility to overcome the many problems and painful experiences of the past *in love and truth*, for the glory of God, the Blessed Trinity, and of his Holy Church.

2. Our meeting *in charity* makes us ever more conscious of our common task: to travel together along the arduous route of a *dialogue in truth* with a view to re-establishing the full communion of faith in the bond of love. Thus, we will be obeying the divine commandment and will put into practice the prayer of Our Lord Jesus Christ. In addition, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, who accompanies Christ's Church and never abandons her, we will persevere in our commitment on this path, following the example of the Apostles and demonstrating our mutual love and spirit of reconciliation.

3. With regard to our relations, we recognize the important steps that have been taken in the dialogue of charity and by the decisions of the Second Vatican Council. Furthermore, we hope that the bilateral theological dialogue will carry forward these positive elements to formulate proposals accepted by both parties in a spirit of reconciliation, after the example of our illustrious Father of the Church, Saint Basil the Great, who, in a period of manifold divisions in the Ecclesial Body, declared his conviction "*that by extended communication and mutual experience without strife, if anything more requires to be added by way of explanation, the Lord, who works all things together for the good of those who love him, will grant it*" (cf. Letter, 113).

4. We unanimously declare the need to persevere on the path of constructive theological dialogue. Despite the difficulties noted, this path is one of the essential means we have at our disposal to re-establish around the altar of the Lord the unity so longed for by the Ecclesial Body, and likewise, to strengthen the credibility of the Christian message in this period of social upheaval in which we live, amid the great spiritual hunger of many of our contemporaries who are anxious about the increasing globalization that sometimes even threatens man's existence and his relationship to God and to the world.

5. In a very special way, we solemnly renew our desire to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world, especially to the new generations because "the love of Christ impels us" (II Cor 5: 14), and to enable them to discover the Lord, who came into our world so that all might have life and have it abundantly. This is particularly important in our societies where many currents of thought distance people from God and fail to give life meaning. We desire to proclaim the Gospel of grace and love so that all people may also be in communion with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and that their joy may be complete.

6. We believe that religions have a role to play in guaranteeing the spread of peace in the world and in ensuring that they themselves in no way foster intolerance or violence. As Christian religious leaders, together we urge all religious leaders to pursue and to strengthen interreligious dialogue and to strive to create a society of peace and brotherhood between individuals and peoples. This is one of the tasks of religions. In this regard, Christians are working and wish to continue working in the world with all people of good will in a spirit of solidarity and brotherhood.

7. We wish to pay tribute to the impressive progress achieved in all areas of science, especially with regard to the human being. However, we invite governments and scientists to respect the sacredness of the human person and his dignity, because his life is a divine gift. We are concerned to see that some branches of science are experimenting on the human being, without respect for either the dignity or the integrity of the person in all the stages of his life, from conception to his natural end.

8. Furthermore, we ask for greater sensitivity in order to *protect more effectively* in our countries, in Europe and internationally, *the fundamental human rights* that are based on the dignity of the human being created in God's image.

9. We look forward to a fruitful collaboration to enable our contemporaries to rediscover the Christian roots of the European Continent which forged the different nations and contributed to developing increasingly harmonious links between them. This will help them live and promote the fundamental human and spiritual values for all people, as well as the development of their own societies.

10. We recognize the merits of the progress of *technology* and *economics* for a great number of

modern societies. Nevertheless, we also invite rich countries to pay greater attention to developing and poorer countries in a spirit of generous solidarity, recognizing that all people are our brothers and sisters and that we are duty bound to come to the aid of the lowliest and the poorest who are the beloved of the Lord. In this regard, it is also important not to exploit or abuse creation, which is the work of God. In this regard, we appeal to social leaders and to all people of good will to engage in a reasonable and respectful stewardship of *creation*, so that it may be correctly *administered* in a spirit of solidarity, especially for the sake of peoples afflicted by famine, so as to bequeath to future generations a world that is truly inhabitable for everyone.

11. Our common convictions impel us to repeat our wish to work together in the development of society with constructive cooperation for the service of humanity and of peoples, bearing witness to the faith and hope that motivate us.

12. Especially mindful of the Orthodox and Catholic faithful, we offer them our greeting and entrust them to Christ the Saviour, so that they may be tireless witnesses of God's love, and we make it our fervent prayer that the Lord will grant peace to all people, in the charity and unity of the human family.

From the Vatican, 14 December 2006

Benedictus PP. XVI

H.B. Christodoulos

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