



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO A DELEGATION FROM THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE ON THE OCCASION
OF THE SOLEMNITY OF THE HOLY APOSTLES PETER AND PAUL**

Monday, 28 June 2010

Dear Brothers in Christ,

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father” (Col 1:2). With great joy and heartfelt affection I welcome you in the Lord to this City of Rome, on the occasion of the annual celebration of the martyrdom of Saints Peter and Paul. Their feast, which the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches celebrate on the same day, is one of the most ancient of the liturgical year, and it testifies to a time when our communities were living in full communion with one another. Your presence here today – for which I am deeply grateful to the Patriarch of Constantinople, His Holiness Bartholomaios I, and to the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate – brings great gladness to the hearts of us all.

I thank the Lord that the relations between us are characterized by sentiments of mutual trust, esteem and fraternity, as is amply testified by the many meetings that have already taken place in the course of this year.

All this gives grounds for hope that Catholic-Orthodox dialogue will also continue to make significant progress. Your Eminence is aware that the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue, of which you are Joint Secretary, is at a crucial point, having begun last October in Paphos to discuss the “The Role of the Bishop of Rome in the Communion of the Church in the First Millennium”. With all our hearts we pray that, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, the Members of the Commission will continue along this path during the forthcoming plenary session in Vienna, and devote to it the time needed for thorough study of this delicate and important issue. For me it is an encouraging sign that Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomaios I and the Holy Synod of

Constantinople share our firm conviction of the importance of this dialogue, as His Holiness stated so clearly in the Patriarchal and Synodal Encyclical Letter on the occasion of Orthodoxy Sunday on 21 February 2010.

In the forthcoming Special Assembly for the Middle East of the Synod of Bishops, which I have convoked for the month of October here in Rome, I am certain that the theme of ecumenical cooperation between the Christians of that region will receive great attention. Indeed, it is highlighted in the Instrumentum Laboris, which I consigned to the Catholic Bishops of the Middle East during my recent visit to Cyprus, where I was received with great fraternal warmth by His Beatitude Chrysostomos II, Archbishop of Nea Justiniana and All Cyprus. The difficulties that the Christians of the Middle East are experiencing are in large measure common to all: living as a minority, and yearning for authentic religious freedom and for peace. Dialogue is needed with the Islamic and Jewish communities. In this context I shall be very pleased to welcome the Fraternal Delegation which the Ecumenical Patriarch will send in order to participate in the work of the Synodal Assembly.

Your Eminence, dear members of the Delegation, I thank you for your visit. I ask you to convey my fraternal greetings to His Holiness Bartholomaios I, to the Holy Synod, to the clergy and all the faithful of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Through the intercession of the Apostles Peter and Paul, may the Lord grant us abundant blessings, and may he keep us always in his love.

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