



The Holy See

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

Tuesday, 28 June 2011

Dear Brothers in Christ,

Welcome to Rome on the occasion of the feast of the Patrons of this Church, the holy Apostles Peter and Paul. I am particularly pleased to greet you with the words that St Paul addressed to the Christians of this city: "The God of peace be with you all" (Rom 15:33). I thank with all my heart my Venerable Brother, the Ecumenical Patriarch, His Holiness Bartholomaios I, and the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate who have wished to send you, dear Brothers, as their representatives to take part here with us in this solemn celebration.

The Lord Jesus Christ, who appeared to his disciples after his Resurrection, gave them the mission of being witnesses of the Gospel of Salvation. The Apostles faithfully carried out this mission, witnessing to faith in Christ the Saviour and to love for God the Father until the supreme sacrifice of their lives. In this City of Rome, the Apostles Peter and Paul faced martyrdom and since then their tombs are the object of veneration. Your participation in our Feast, like the presence of our representatives in Constantinople for the Feast of the Apostle Andrew, expresses the friendship and authentic brotherhood that unites the Church of Rome and the Ecumenical Patriarchate, bonds that are solidly founded on this faith received from the witness of the Apostles. The profound spiritual closeness that we experience each time we meet is a cause of great joy and gratitude to God for me. At the same time, however, the incomplete communion which already unites us must grow until it achieves full and visible unity.

We follow with great attention the work of the Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between

the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church in all its parts. From the purely human viewpoint one might have the impression that the theological dialogue is progressing with difficulty. In fact, the rhythm of the dialogue is linked to the complexity of the themes discussed, which demand an extraordinary effort of reciprocal study, reflection and openness. We are called to continue on this journey together in charity, invoking the Holy Spirit, light and inspiration, in the certainty that he wants to lead us to the full accomplishment of Christ's will: that they may all be one (Jn 17:21). I am particularly grateful to all the members of the Joint Commission, and especially to the co-Presidents, His Eminence the Metropolitan Ioannis of Pergamon, and His Eminence Cardinal Kurt Koch, for their tireless devotion, patience and competence.

In a historical context of violence, indifference and egotism, many men and women of our time feel bewildered. It is precisely by the common witness of the truth of the Gospel that we can help the people of our time to rediscover the way that leads them to the truth. The search for the truth, in fact, is also a search for justice and peace and it is with great joy that I note the important commitment with which His Holiness Bartholomaios spends himself for his subjects. In our common intention and remembering the beautiful example of my Predecessor Bl. [John Paul II](#), I have wished to invite our Christian brethren, the representatives of the other religious traditions of the world and of the important figures of the worlds of culture and of science to take part next 27 October, in the town of Assisi, in a *Day of reflection, dialogue and prayer for peace and justice in the world*, which will have as its theme: "Pilgrims of truth, pilgrims of faith". This joint march through the streets of the town of St Francis will be the sign of the wish to continue on the way of dialogue and brotherhood.

Your Eminence, dear members of the Delegation, in thanking you once again for your presence in Rome in this solemn circumstance, I ask you to convey my fraternal greeting to my venerable Brother, Patriarch Bartholomaios I, to the Holy Synod, to the clergy and to all the faithful of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, assuring them of my affection and of the solidarity of the Church of Rome which today is celebrating her Holy Founders.