



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO HIS EMINENCE STYLIANOS,
ORTHODOX ARCHBISHOP OF AUSTRALIA
AND TO THE HOLY SYNOD
OF THE CHURCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE**

Thursday, 28 June 1984

Your Eminence,

1. To yourself and to those who are with you I say: you are most welcome. Receiving you with brotherly affection and great joy, I wish of course to do honour to those who have sent you: His Holiness Patriarch Dimitrios I and the Holy Synod of the Church of Constantinople. But I am particularly happy to receive you personally, since I know of your work as pastor of the Greek Orthodox Church in Australia, and also that you share with Cardinal Willebrands the presidency of the Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. Your coming amongst us for the Feast of SS. Peter and Paul is a reason for great rejoicing: I am profoundly convinced that personal acquaintance between the pastors of our Churches is a decisive factor for progress in our joint search for full unity. Still more decisive is joint prayer by those pastors for the People of God. Welcome then, in the name of the Lord. May he always bless your steps, and prosper your work.

2. Once again the Feast of SS. Peter and Paul is an occasion for us to meet and celebrate together their memory, just as each year at the Ecumenical Patriarchate there is a common celebration of the memory of Saint Andrew, brother of Peter. Today the words of the Gospel come to our minds: "As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, (Jesus) saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen" (*Matth.* 4, 19). These two brothers from the beginning live in daily communion, do the same work, collaborate for the same family community, have the same place of work: the lake, now quiet, now stormy (*Ibid.*, 8, 24), now yielding no fish, now an abundant catch (*Luc.* 5, 4-7); they experience the same pains

and the same joys.

To this common origin succeeds a common vocation: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (*Matth.* 4, 19).

To this common vocation they give an identical answer: "Immediately they left their nets and followed him" (*Ibid.*, 4, 20).

They followed him all their lives, to the final point of martyrdom. They listened carefully to the Lord's teaching and put it into practice. They heard and carried out the mandate of the risen Lord: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations . . . teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (*Matth.* 28, 19-20).

Their preaching has reached us, the Christians of the West and of the East, uniting us in a common vocation to a single mission: to make all peoples into one family established in the acceptance of the teaching which Jesus Christ entrusted to his disciples.

It is by way of uninterrupted apostolic succession that the truth of Christ has come down to us.

The celebration of the Apostles beckons us again in our time to this vocation. Humanity today is like a stormy sea, swept by whirling currents: of unrest, of anxiety, of fear for its uncertain future. But it also feels gentle and calm breezes which induce hope and trust, which call for faith that the Lord is with us "always, even to the close of the age" (*Ibid.*, 28, 19), and which call too for a harmonious witness of faith, of mutual love and joint action.

3. It is for this reason that, in obedience to the Lord's will, our joint attention is concentrated on prayer, on theological dialogue and deeper study. This unity that the community of the baptized needs today should be untarnished; it should be full and perfect. Hence we need to clear up all the questions which hinder full communion in faith. It seems therefore that the Joint Commission for Dialogue chose aptly when it took as a starting point the study of the sacramentality of the Church and her sacraments. The shared conception of the sacramentality of the Church will give positive support to the whole dialogue. Certainly, the search for unity will in no way mean a search for uniformity. The life of the Church is many-sided. It has aimed - in the course of centuries - to answer as fully as possible to different cultural and spiritual needs, giving full value to the patrimony of the various peoples.

This variety has permeated even liturgical life. When such diversity expresses the same faith, not only is it no obstacle to unity, but it is a valuable complementary manifestation of the inexhaustible Christian mystery.

All this enriches dialogue, emphasizing everything that is compatible with unity, the better to face

and resolve any doctrinal difficulty.

Such an aim calls for the participation of everybody, especially in prayer which should be fervent and unceasing. Many times we have called for the prayers of all Catholics for this dialogue. I am sure that the same call has been made to the Orthodox faithful.

4. A sound and really fruitful continuation of the theological dialogue will need to be supported by that wider dialogue which we call the dialogue of charity. Fraternal relations between our Churches are being intensified, and so also should be encounters between our respective faithful, as well as practical collaboration and, in certain circumstances, mutual pastoral care, disinterested and open-hearted. Mutual love, candid dialogue to bring out the whole truth, and steadily closer contacts, will bring Catholics and Orthodox to full communion of faith within a variety of liturgical, disciplinary, spiritual and theological traditions.

Those holy Apostles, the brothers Peter and Andrew, sustain us by their intercession. They have given us a decisive example: "Immediately they left their nets and followed him". To listen to the Word of God is the decisive factor in our journey together towards full unity.

This joint prayer for the Feast of SS. Peter and Paul and this fraternal encounter are signs of our shared will to follow the Lord in the present and the future. "To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen" (*2 Petr.* 3, 18).

© Copyright 1984 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana