



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO A DELEGATION
OF THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE OF CONSTANTINOPLE**

Monday, 28 June 1999

Dear Brothers in Christ,

1. "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence" (2 Pt 1:3).

This profession of faith in the Second Letter of Peter inspires our meeting today, dear brothers who have been sent by the Ecumenical Patriarch, His Holiness Bartholomew I, for the feast of Sts Peter and Paul. Your presence is a joy for me and for the Church of Rome, that deep joy which flows from brotherly communion. I know that His Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch is stirred by the same sentiment every year when he receives at the Phanar the delegation from the Church of Rome for the feast of St Andrew, brother of Peter, the Apostle who was the first to hear the Lord's call. Each year these two happy occasions unite us and enable us to form a larger assembly of prayer, to implore the Lord and his Spirit for the gift of unity.

2. God has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness. We received the divine gifts through the Apostles, and we are asked to transmit them to men and women from generation to generation. We wish to glorify God together, and together we wish to proclaim his Word and active power, which can renew, enliven and nourish the world. Together we want to make known to others the One who called us, so that they may receive all things that pertain to life and godliness.

On the way to full communion, a plenary session of the Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue had been planned for this spring. The sad situation in the Balkans, which has pained us so much, compelled us to postpone this meeting, by joint agreement, to June of next year. However this should not interfere with continued research, weaken our commitment or prevent us from pursuing and deepening our fraternal relations. The weighty legacy of the past and the tensions which arise from time to time

between people sometimes hamper the action of Churches in historical and cultural contexts which they are obliged to take into account. However, God himself summons us to unity. It is Christ who prayed to the Father that the unity of his followers would be a sign inviting the world to believe, as well as the firstfruits of true renewal and the pledge of peace.

The quest for unity and full communion must be supported by everyone's prayer. May the Lord enlighten pastors and theologians, so that together they can find the ways of sanctification and unity and be able to offer them to all with the strength and conviction which come from the certitude that "to believe in Christ means to desire unity; to desire unity means to desire the Church; to desire the Church means to desire the communion of grace which corresponds to the Father's plan from all eternity" (*Ut unum sint*, n. 9).

3. The third millennium is close at hand. God has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness, and the Jubilee affords us the opportunity to offer the Lord a common and universal doxology, and to implore him together for his support, so that we can proclaim his glory and active power with one voice. This is the ardent desire of the Catholic Church and the Bishop of Rome, so that we can unanimously raise a great prayer of thanksgiving, with the firm determination to do God's will together. At the suggestion of His Holiness Bartholomew I, I have asked that a Jubilee day of prayer and fasting be inserted into the calendar of Roman celebrations for the Year 2000 on the vigil of the feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord Jesus Christ. I wished in this way to show not only our intention to join in the initiatives of our brethren in the faith, but also our desire to see them take part in ours. We must therefore thank the Lord together, with sentiments of brotherhood and ecumenical commitment.

4. At the end of our meeting, dear brothers, please assure His Holiness Bartholomew I and the members of his Holy Synod of my affection in the Lord and convey my deepest gratitude to him for sending me a delegation led by the esteemed Metropolitan of Ephesus. May the Lord always bless our steps on the way to unity!