



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PATRIARCH AND FAITHFUL
OF THE SYRIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH OF ANTIOCH**

Thursday, 23 November 2000

Your Beatitude,
Dear Brothers in the Episcopate and the Priesthood,
Dear Pilgrims,

1. I am pleased to receive you and to wish you welcome. I first greet His Beatitude Ignace Moussa I, Patriarch of Antioch for Syrians, the Bishops, the priests, the religious and all the faithful who have accompanied them.

Since the origins of Christianity, the Apostles Peter and Paul have been closely associated with Antioch. Moreover, it was "in Antioch that the disciples were for the first time called Christians" (*Acts* 11: 26). How could we not remember St Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, who was martyred in Rome and, in his *Letter to the Romans*, said that the Church of Rome presides in charity? He was also concerned for the unity of the Church and asked the faithful to form one heart and one body around Christ (cf. *Letter to the Magnesians*, 1, 6-7; *Letter to the Ephesians*, 4). I am therefore happy to receive you as you make your Jubilee pilgrimage.

2. The Church of Antioch has a special veneration for her holy Bishop Ignatius. As a result, all the Patriarchs have taken this name as their first patriarchal title, thereby showing the same attachment to the See of Peter and their desire to follow the example of their illustrious predecessor.

A Jubilee pilgrimage is an occasion to strengthen one's love of Christ, the only Saviour, and of the Church. I therefore invite you to draw from the sacraments, especially Penance and the Divine

Liturgy, the "source and summit" of Christian life (cf. Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 10), the spiritual strength to be always faithful to the Apostles' teaching and to remain witnesses of the Good News by your words and by your daily life conformed to Christ. Indeed, when we receive his Body, the Lord brings us into the intimacy of the Trinitarian relations, so that we can live by the love that he communicates to us through the power of the Holy Spirit.

I entrust you to the intercession of the Mother of God, the *Theotokos*, so that, like her, you will be ever docile to the word of the Lord and constantly serve others, for to serve God and to serve human beings is one service of charity. When you return home, tell all your Christian brothers and sisters in your Dioceses that I am close to them in prayer and that I encourage them, knowing that they sometimes have difficult trials to bear. May the hope of Christ dwell in every heart! I impart an affectionate Apostolic Blessing to you all.

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