



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II
TO CARD. WALTER KASPER
ON THE OCCASION OF AN INTER-CHRISTIAN SYMPOSIUM
AT IOÁNNINA IN EPIRUS (GREECE)**

To my Venerable Brother Cardinal Walter Kasper

President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity I have learned with satisfaction that the praiseworthy initiative of convoking inter-Christian symposia, begun in 1992 by the Franciscan Spirituality Institute at the Pontifical Antonianum College in Rome and by the Theology Faculty of the Aristotelian University of Thessalonica of the Greek Orthodox Church, continues to offer opportunities for meetings and discussion. In fact, one will occur at Ioánnina in Epirus from 3 to 7 September, with the theme of the convention being: "The relationship between spirituality and Christian dogma in the East and in the West". This reflection will deal with an aspect that builds theological dialogue between Catholics and Orthodox. I entrust to you, Your Eminence, the task of extending my cordial greeting to the organizers and the participants. After having treated such important themes as prayer and contemplation, the spirituality of Monasticism, the ecclesial dimension of spirituality and still others, this new symposium will pause, as its theme already indicates, to reflect on the contribution that spirituality makes to doctrine, assisting its deepening and development. Spirituality, in fact, while influencing the dispositions of mind and heart, creates an appropriate psychological context in which to dialogue in an open and trusting manner. This is particularly important when Catholics and Orthodox tackle questions and problems that still divide them. I renew with pleasure my encouragement to the common efforts of the Antonianum College of Rome and to the Theology Faculty of Thessalonica, dedicated to bringing forth those things common to Orthodox Christians and Catholics in the search for revealed Truth, and I am pleased by the support offered in the initiatives of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. In fact, the search for a deeper communion between the Christian East and West must not be limited to official contacts and to the efforts taken at a higher level. Reciprocal knowledge and understanding are supported by events as well as by programmes that involve the various contexts of Church life and, in particular, those that are academic and formative. Thus, that open and listening spirit is promoted concretely which so benefits progress on the way and that we hope may soon lead to full communion. In wishing a positive outcome to the symposium in Ioánnina, I offer my fraternal salute to the Metropolitan of that city, S.E. Theochlitos, who is the host. The Lord's goodness has allowed us to build more intense and profitable relations in these recent times. While I raise fervent prayers to the Lord for this renewed sign of dialogue, I invoke upon those who have favoured the meeting and to those who will take part in the work God's abundant blessing. *From*

Castel Gandolfo, 28 August 2003, In memory of St Augustine of Hippo. JOHN PAUL II

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