

VISIT TO ROME OF HIS HOLINESS THE PATRIARCH OF THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

June 8-14, 1993

His Holiness Abuna Paulos, Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, made a visit to the Holy Father and to the Church of Rome from June 8-14, 1993. It was the second visit of an Ethiopian Patriarch to the Church of Rome, and the first visit of His Holiness Abuna Paulos, who had been elected July 5, 1992.

This short visit was highlighted by three meetings between the Patriarch and the Holy Father. The first encounter took place before the General Audience, Wednesday, June 9, and consisted in a brief exchange of greetings. The Patriarch then accompanied the Holy Father to the General Audience, where the Pope publicly welcomed his guest.

The second meeting took place during the celebration of Corpus Christi on Thursday, June 10, at the Basilica of St John Lateran.

Finally, the Holy Father received the Patriarch and his delegation in a private audience on Friday, June 11, and gave a speech on that occasion.

The words of greeting and of welcome spoken by the Holy Father, as well as the speech from the private audience are published below.

The Patriarch's stay also included a visit to such principal sights of the City of Rome as the four patriarchal Basilicas, the catacombs, the Sistine Chapel.

The Patriarch was accompanied by Abuna Makarios, Archbishop of Tigray; Abuna Gharima, Archbishop of West-Gojam and Metekel, Secretary of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Ethiopia; by Abuna Timotheos, the Archbishop responsible for Department of interchurch aid and development; Abuna Yohannes, Bishop for Europe, and by deacon Tewolde Johannes, private secretary of the Patriarch.

During the ad limina visit of the Catholic Bishops of Ethiopia, October 4, 1993, the Holy Father also mentioned the Patriarch's visit and its important consequences.

GENERAL AUDIENCE

June 9, 1993

Before delivering his allocution, the Pope addressed a special greeting to the Patriarch.

First of all, I wish to greet and to welcome the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, His Holiness Abuna Paulos.

It is with great joy that I extend a warm fraternal greeting to His Holiness Abuna Paulos, Shepherd and Patriarch of the ancient Church of Ethiopia, rich in noble spiritual traditions and persevering Christian

witness. I am truly pleased that it has been possible for you to make this visit to the Church of Rome, and I look forward to our meetings during these days. I know that we share the ardent hope that this visit will favour relations between our Churches and help to foster that search for full ecclesial communion which is the heart of ecumenical endeavours.

CELEBRATION OF "CORPUS CHRISTI"

June 10, 1993

The Holy Father celebrated Mass of the Solemnity of Corpus Christi in the afternoon of Thursday, June 10, in the Square in front of the Patriarchal Basilica of St John Lateran. In his homily, the Pope stressed the meaning of the presence of the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

I greet you all with affection, dear brothers and sisters. I greet the Cardinal Vicar, the Auxiliary Bishops, the priests, religious, the representatives of the parishes, associations and movements of apostolic commitment. I greet all of you who by your presence want to pay homage to the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, priceless treasure which the Church keeps with unfading gratitude and fervent love.

The Patriarch of the Church of Ethiopia, His Holiness Abuna Paulos, is joining us in this celebration. His participation expresses the common faith of our Churches in the Eucharist, as the living presence of Jesus Christ among his disciples.

We include the person of the Patriarch and his whole Church in our prayer to our one Lord. With fervour let us invoke Christ Jesus, present in the sacrament of the altar, so that he may sustain everyone, Catholics and Orthodox, on the path towards complete unity.

ORE, 16 June, 1993

PRIVATE AUDIENCE

June 11, 1993

On Friday, June 11, the Holy Father received in private audience His Holiness Abuna Paulos, Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Speaking in English, Pope John Paul II underscored the ancient heritage which the two Churches share in common and the desire for unity which should inspire all work and prayer.

Your Holiness,

1. It is truly a great joy for me to receive you and those who accompany you here today. In welcoming you, the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, it is a beloved brother that I greet, one who represents a Church to which I feel very close.

In this time of Pentecost when we celebrate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, who has gathered into one those who were once scattered, I extend most willingly, dear brother, the hand of welcome.

Your presence in Rome reminds us of that long tradition of Ethiopian pilgrims, who since the Middle Ages have come to Rome in great numbers to venerate the tomb of the Prince of the Apostles. To them my Predecessors always accorded cordial hospitality within the Vatican itself. I therefore see your visit as a carrying forward of that venerable tradition, but above all as the visible expression of the profound communion that we have been rediscovering together for some years. How marvellous are the works of the Spirit of God! For we, who had almost thought of ourselves as strangers to one another, now find that we are ever more closely united by the Spirit, who is our reconciliation and the bond of peace (cf. *Eph* 4:3).

2. The deep communion that exists between us, despite the vicissitudes of history, is rooted in the fundamental realities of our Christian faith. For we share the faith handed down from the Apostles, as also the same sacraments and the same ministry, rooted in the apostolic succession. This was strongly stated in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council (cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 15).

Today, moreover, we can affirm that we have the one faith in Christ, even though for a long time this was a source of division between us. Although our traditions used different formulations to express the same ineffable mystery of the union of humanity and divinity in the Word made Flesh, our two Churches in full accord with the Apostolic faith confess both the distinction and the complete union of humanity and divinity in the person of Jesus Christ, Son of God. So it is that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church confess the same faith in Him who forever remains "the Way, and the Truth, and the Life" (*Jn* 14:6), the Lord and Saviour of the world.

All this should spur us on to seek new and suitable ways of fostering the rediscovery of our communion in the concrete daily life of the faithful of our two Churches.

We must do all we can to heal the memories of misunderstanding in the past and to promote new attitudes based on forgiveness, mutual esteem and respect. We must resist all hostility and every spirit of rivalry between us, so that we may engage resolutely, through mutual collaboration, in the building up of our Churches.

3. As we guide our faithful towards the rediscovery of full communion, let us seek to avoid anything that might sow confusion in their ranks. I can assure you that such is the wish of the Catholic Bishops in

Ethiopia. Catholics and Orthodox — in their recognition and respect for one another as pastors of that part of the flock which is entrusted to each — can have no other aim than the growth and the unity of the People of God.

That is the expectation of our faithful who are convinced that "brothers who once shared the same sufferings and trials ought not to oppose one another today, but should look together at the future opening before them with promising signs of hope" (*Letter on Relations between Catholics and Orthodox*, 31 May 1991).

The field for cooperation is vast. It should begin with an improvement in *fraternal relationships* on all levels, but most particularly among those who have the task of leadership.

Having restored this dialogue of charity between us, we may be more confident when we ask the Lord with one heart for the gift of unity, especially on the occasion of the universal *Week of Prayer for Christian Unity*, for which, as you know, the theme is jointly prepared each year by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the World Council of Churches, to which since its inception your Church has belonged.

Finally, the circumstances of the present time require us to work together in the *pastoral domain*, so as not to put any obstacle in the way of "that most holy cause, the preaching of the Gospel to all creatures" (cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 1).

I am thinking particularly of the formation of future priests and parish workers in which the Catholic Committee for Cultural Collaboration is already engaged by providing scholarships for Ethiopian Orthodox students so that they can pursue their studies and undertake specializations; I am thinking also of the Liturgy, our ancient heritage which, if it is to remain alive, must be accessible to the people of our day; I mention also — and it is among the most urgent of problems — pastoral work among Ethiopians who have migrated to Europe and North America; likewise, the evangelization of the young, charitable work among refugees, and all the many forms of development that are necessary in order to reconstruct the country after so many difficult years.

4. On this auspicious occasion, I wish to reiterate to Your Holiness the deep respect in which the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is held by the Catholic Church for having maintained and preserved over the centuries the patrimony of Christian faith and culture. The baptism of the Ethiopian which is reported in the Acts of the Apostles (8:27-39) bears witness to the ancient origins of your Christian faith. Following his lead, and with the same joy, the Ethiopian people embraced the Gospel and have remained faithful to it despite the many sufferings they have had to endure, even in the recent past. The close link between faith and Ethiopian culture, the persistence of the ancient monastic tradition, the riches and splendour of your liturgy — these are among the many things which the Catholic Church observes with sincere admiration.

My dear brothers, for some days now you have

been going to the principal places of pilgrimage in Rome. You have already prayed at the tomb of the Apostle Peter and you will continue this afternoon and tomorrow to visit the great Basilicas and precious Christian treasures of this venerable city. I am also happy that you are also taking the opportunity to visit living communities, both monasteries and parishes, where Christians seek to celebrate and put their faith into practice. It is my earnest prayer that these spiritual meetings between our Churches may demonstrate in a public way the strength of our desire for full communion. Through the intercession of Mary, the great Mother of God, may the Holy Spirit hasten the day when we may once more eat and drink at the same Table of the Lord.

ORE, June 11-12, 1993

AFTER THE VISIT

TO THE BISHOPS OF ETHIOPIA ON THEIR *AD LIMINA* VISIT

October 4, 1993

During the ad limina visit of the Catholic Bishops of Ethiopia during the following October, the Pope

recalled the visit of the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

... In the months and years ahead, the *advancement of ecumenical relations*, especially with the clergy and faithful of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, will naturally be a matter of particular urgency.

As I recalled during my meeting earlier this year with Abuna Paulos, Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church: "We share the faith handed down from the Apostles, as also the same sacraments and the same ministry, rooted in the apostolic succession" (*Discourse of 11 June 1993, N° 2*). The success of the dialogue of charity which has been restored between the Catholic Church and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church requires "an improvement in fraternal relationships on all levels" (*ibid.*, N° 3). I am confident that the Lord who so ardently desires the unity of his followers will sustain you in all your efforts to promote mutual esteem and love, so that everyone who bears the name of Christian will rediscover the fullness of communion...

ORE, October 4-5, 1993