



THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL
FOR PROMOTING
CHRISTIAN UNITY

COMMON DECLARATION OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
AND HIS BEATITUDE CHRISTODOULOS,
ARCHBISHOP OF ATHENS AND ALL GREECE,
BEFORE THE BEMA OF ST PAUL, THE APOSTLE TO THE NATIONS

We, Pope John Paul II, Bishop of Rome, and Christodoulos, Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, standing before the bema of the Areopagus, from which Saint Paul, the Great Apostle to the Nations, "called to be an Apostle, set apart for the Gospel of God" (Rom 1:1), preached to the Athenians the One True God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and called them unto faith and repentance, do hereby declare:

1. We give thanks to the Lord for our meeting and communication with one another, here in the illustrious City of Athens, the Primatial See of the Apostolic Orthodox Church of Greece.

2. We repeat with one voice and one heart the words of the Apostle to the Nations: "I appeal to you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no schisms among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment" (1 Cor 1:10). We pray that the whole Christian world will heed this exhortation, so that peace may come unto "all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 1:2). We condemn all recourse to violence, proselytism and fanaticism in the name of religion. We especially maintain that relations between Christians, in all their manifestations, should be characterized by honesty, prudence and knowledge of the matters in question.

3. We observe that man's social and scientific evolution has not been accompanied by a deeper delving into the meaning and value of life, which in every instance is a gift of God, nor by an analogous appreciation of man's unique dignity, as being created according to the Creator's image and likeness. Moreover, economic and technological development does not belong equally to all mankind but belongs only to a very small portion of it. Furthermore, the improvement of living standards has not brought about the opening of men's hearts to their neighbours who suffer hunger and are naked. We are called to work together for the prevailing of justice, for the relief of the needy and for the ministry unto those who suffer, ever keeping in mind the words of St. Paul: "the kingdom of God does not mean food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom 14:17).

4. We are anguished to see that wars, massacres, torture and martyrdom constitute a terrible daily reality for millions of our brothers. We commit ourselves to struggle for the prevailing of peace throughout the whole world, for the respect of life and human dignity, and for solidarity towards all who are in need. We are pleased to add our voice to the many voices around the world which have expressed the hope that, on the occasion of the Olympic Games to be held in Greece in 2004, the ancient Greek tradition of the Olympic Truce will be revived, according to which all wars had to stop, and terrorism and violence had to cease.

5. We follow carefully and with unease what is referred to as globalization. We hope that it will bear good fruit. However, we wish to point out that its fruits will be harmful if what could be termed the "globalization of brotherhood" in Christ is not achieved in all sincerity and efficacy.

6. We rejoice at the success and progress of the European Union. The union of the European world in one civil entity, without her people losing their national self-awareness, traditions and identity, has been the vision of its pioneers. However, the emerging tendency to transform certain European countries into secular states without any reference to religion constitutes a retraction and a denial of their spiritual legacy. We are called to intensify our efforts so that the unification of Europe may be accomplished. We shall do everything in our power, so that the Christian roots of Europe and its Christian soul may be preserved inviolate.

With this Common Statement, we, Pope John Paul II, Bishop of Rome, and Christodoulos, Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, wish that "our God and Father and our Lord Jesus direct our way, so that we may increase and abound in love towards one another and towards all men and establish the hearts of all unblamable in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of the Lord Jesus with all his saints" (Cf. 1 Thess 3:11-13) Amen.

Athens, at the Areopagus, 4 May 2001

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