

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO TURKEY

28-30 November 1979

EXCHANGE OF ADDRESSES BETWEEN POPE AND PATRIARCH (Istanbul, November 29, 1979)

Address of the Pope

Εἶη το ὄνομα Κυρίου εὐλογημένον

Your Holiness,

Blessed be the Lord , who has granted us the grace and the joy of this meeting here , at your patriarchal see!

It is with deep affection and brotherly esteem that I greet you, Your Holiness , as well as the Holy Synod that surrounds you, and, through your person, I greet all the Churches that you represent.

I cannot hide my joy to be in this land of very ancient Christian traditions and in this city rich in history , civilization and art, which make it figure among the most beautiful in the world . Today as yesterday . For Christians of the whole world accustomed to read and meditate on the New Testament writings , these places are familiar , and likewise the names of the first Christian communities of many cities which are in the territory of modern Turkey today.

Christ "is our peace ", St Paul writes to the first Christians of Ephesus (Eph 2:14), and he adds : " God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with

which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses , made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved) , and raised us up with him ..." (*Eph 2:4-6*).

This proclamation of faith in the divine economy for the salvation of men rings out in this land, re-echoes and is renewed from generation to generation. And it is destined to spread to the ends of the earth.

The fundamental dogmas of Christian faith, of the Trinity and of the incarnate Word of God, born of the Virgin Mary, were defined by the Ecumenical Councils which were held in this city or in neighbouring cities (cf. decree *Unitatis Redintegratio*, n. 14). The very formulation of our profession of faith, the *credo*, took place in these first Councils celebrated together by the East and the West. Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus, Chalcedon, are names known to all Christians. They are particularly familiar to those who pray, who study and who work

in different ways for full unity between our sister-Churches.

Not only have we had in common these decisive Councils, pauses, as it were, in the life of the Church, but for a millennium these two sister-Churches have grown together and developed their great vital traditions.

The visit I am paying today is intended to signify a meeting in the common apostolic faith, to walk together towards this full unity which sad historical circumstances have wounded, especially in the course of the second millennium. How could I fail to express our firm hope in God in order that a new era may dawn?

For all these reasons I am happy, Your Holiness, to be here to express the deep consideration and the brotherly solidarity of the Catholic Church for the Eastern Orthodox Churches.

I thank you here and now for the warmth of your welcome.

Response of the Patriarch

It is glorifying God that we receive you today in this town of the Mother of God, where there is this church of her Son, our common Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, this church which has been for long centuries a sacred centre of the formulation, preservation, confession and evangelization of the Christian faith.

Your coming here, full of Christian charity and simplicity, means far more than a mere meeting between two local bishops; we consider it a meeting of the Western and Eastern Churches.

For this reason the joy we feel on the occasion of this exceptional and historic visit of Your Holiness, is not limited either to this church or to this day, for our meeting is set in the universality and eternity of the divine redemption of mankind.

The meeting takes place locally but it is connected geographically according to the ecclesiastical formulation, with the whole West and East—and according to the modern geographical formulation of ecumenism—it is connected also with the North and the South.

The meeting takes place today, but it is connected with the distant past, the past of the common Apostles, the common Fathers, the common Martyrs and Confessors, the Ecumenical Councils, concelebration on the same altar and communion in the same chalice. It is connected also with the recent past, the past of our two great predecessors, Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras I. Moreover, this meeting today is intended for God's future—a future which will again live unity, again common confession, again full communion in the divine Eucharist.

Considering this historic visit in this perspective, both local and temporal, we recognize the greatness of your step and we thank you for it.

We believe that at this moment the Lord is present among us here, and that the Paraclete is upon us—that the two brothers Peter and

Andrew are rejoicing with us—that the spirits of the common Fathers and Martyrs are hovering over us, to inspire us. But at the same time we feel arriving right in front of us, right in front of our responsibility, the anxious expectation of the divided Christians, the anguish of the man without recognized human rights, without freedom, without justice, without bread, without medical care, without education, without security and without peace.

It is for this reason that we consider the blessed presence of Your Holiness here and our meeting an expression of God's will, a challenge and an invitation of the world to which we must respond. It is for this reason that this doxological Church receives you in this doxology.

For this meeting is a ray of divine light: it is for the glory of God, for the peace of God with man as well as peace among men, and also for the reign of goodwill among all men of this earth.

Glory to God in the Highest—and peace to men of goodwill on earth.

Welcome, holy brother.

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