

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO TURKEY  
28-30 November 1979

CELEBRATION OF THE FEAST OF ST. ANDREW  
(Phanar, November 30, 1979)

*Discourse of the Holy Father*

Παναγιότατε χαί λίαν αγαπητέ αδελφέ. “Ἰδοὺ δὴ τί χαλὸν ἢ τί τερ πνὸν ἀλλ’ ἢ τό χατοιχεῖν ἀδελφούς ἐπὶ τό αὐτό;” (Ps 132)

Very holy and very beloved Brother,  
"Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!" (Ps 133).

These words of the psalmist spring from my heart on this day on which I am with you. Yes, how good it is, how pleasant it is, to be brothers all together!

We are gathered to celebrate St Andrew, an apostle, the first one to be called, the brother of Peter, the leader of the apostles. This circumstance stresses the ecclesial significance of our meeting today. Andrew was an apostle; that is, one of those men chosen by Christ to be transformed by his Spirit, and sent into the world, as he himself had been sent by his Father (cf. Jn 17:18). They were sent to proclaim the good news of

the reconciliation given in Christ (cf. 2 Cor 5:18-20), to call men to enter, through Christ, into communion with the Father in the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Jn 1:1-3) and thus to gather men, become children of God, in a large people of Brothers (cf. Jn 11:52). To gather everything in Christ for the praise of the glory of God (cf. Eph 1:10-12), such is the mission of the apostles, such is the mission of those who, after them, were also chosen and sent, such is the vocation of the Church.

Today, then, we are celebrating an apostle, the first of the apostles to be called, and this feast reminds us of this fundamental requirement of our vocation, of the vocation of the Church.

This apostle, the patron saint of the illustrious Church of Constantinople, is Peter's brother. Certainly, all the apostles are bound to one another by the new brotherhood that unites all those whose hearts are renewed by the Spirit of the Son (cf. Rom 8:15) and to whom the ministry

of reconciliation is entrusted (cf. *2 Cor* 5:18), but that does not suppress, far from it, the special bonds created by birth and upbringing in the same family. Andrew is Peter's brother. Andrew and Peter were brothers and, within the apostolic college, a greater intimacy must have bound them, a closer collaboration must have united them in the apostolic task.

Here again today's celebration reminds us that special bonds of brotherhood and intimacy exist between the Church of Rome and the Church of Constantinople, that a closer collaboration is natural between these two Churches.

Peter, Andrew's brother, is the leader of the apostles. Thanks to the inspiration of the Father, he fully recognized, in Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God (cf. *Mt* 16:16); owing to this faith, he received the name of Peter, in order that the Church may rest on this Rock (cf. *Mt* 16:18). He had the task of ensuring the harmony of apostolic preaching. A brother among brothers, he received the mission of strengthening them in the faith (cf. *Lk* 22:32); he is the first to have the responsibility of watching over the union of all, of ensuring the symphony of the holy Churches of God in faithfulness to "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (*Jude* 3).

It is in this spirit, animated by these sentiments, that Peter's successor has wished on this day to visit the Church whose patron saint is Andrew, to visit its venerated pastor, all its hierarchy and all its faithful. He has wished to come and take part in its prayer. This visit to the first see of the Orthodox Church shows clearly the will of the whole Catholic Church to go forward in the march towards the unity of all, and also its conviction that the re-establishment of full communion with the Orthodox Church is a fundamental stage of the decisive progress of the whole ecumenical movement. Our division may not, perhaps, have been without an influence on the other divisions that followed it.

My initiative is in the line of the opening made by John XXIII. It resumes and prolongs the memorable initiative of my predecessor Paul VI, the one that took him in the first place to Jerusalem, where there took place for the first time the moving embrace and the first oral dialogue with the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, in the very place where the mystery of Redemption was accomplished to unite the dispersed children of God; then there was the meeting which took place here, just over twelve years ago, while waiting for Patriarch Athenagoras to come in his turn to visit Paul VI, in his see of Rome.

These two great figures have left us to join God: they have completed their ministry, both straining towards full communion and almost impatient of bring it about in their lifetime. As for me, I did not want to delay any longer in

coming to pray with you, in your country. Among my apostolic journeys, already carried out or planned, this one had special importance and urgency in my eyes. I venture to hope that we will be able to pray together again, His Holiness Patriarch Dimitrios I and myself, and this time on the tomb of the apostle Peter. Such initiatives express before God and before the whole people of God our impatience for unity.

For nearly a whole millennium, the two sister-Churches grew side by side, as two great vital and complementary traditions of the same Church of Christ, keeping not only peaceful and fruitful relations, but also concern for the indispensable communion in faith, prayer and charity, which they did not at any cost want to question, despite their different sensitivity. The second millennium, on the contrary, was darkened, apart from some fleeting bright intervals, by the distance which the two Churches took in regard to each other, with all the fatal consequences thereof. The wound is not yet healed. But the Lord can cure it and he bids us do our best to help the process. Here we are now at the end of the second millennium: is it not time to hasten towards perfect brotherly reconciliation, so that the dawn of the third millennium may find us standing side by side, in full communion, to bear witness together to salvation before the world, the evangelization of which is waiting for this sign of unity?

On the practical plane, today's visit also shows the importance that the Catholic Church attaches to the theological dialogue which is about to begin with the Orthodox Church. With realism and wisdom, in conformity with the wish of the Apostolic See of Rome and also with the desire of the pan-Orthodox Conferences, it had been decided to reestablish relations and contacts between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches which would make it possible to recognize each other and create the atmosphere necessary for a fruitful theological dialogue. It was necessary to create again the context before trying to rewrite the texts together.

This period has rightly been called the dialogue of charity. This dialogue has made it possible to become aware again of the deep communion that already unites us, and enables us to consider each other and treat each other as sister-Churches. A great deal has already been done, but this effort must be continued. It is necessary to draw the consequences of this mutual theological rediscovery, wherever Catholics and Orthodox live together. Habits of isolation must be overcome in order to collaborate in all fields of pastoral action in which this collaboration is made possible by the almost complete communion that already exists between us.

We must not be afraid to reconsider, on both sides, and in consultation with one another, canonical rules established when awareness of

our communion—now close even if it is still incomplete—was still dimmed, rules which, perhaps, no longer correspond to the results of the dialogue of charity and to the possibilities they have opened. It is important in order that the faithful on both sides realize the progress that has been made, and it would be desirable that those who are put in charge of the dialogue should be concerned to draw the consequences, for the life of the faithful, of future progress.

This theological dialogue which is about to begin now will have the task of overcoming the misunderstandings and disagreements which still exist between us, if not at the level of faith, at least at the level of theological formulation. It should take place not only in the atmosphere of the dialogue of charity, which must be developed and intensified, but also in an atmosphere of worship and availability.

It is only in worship, with a keen sense of the transcendence of the inexpressible mystery "which surpasses knowledge" (*Eph* 3:19), that we will be able to size up our divergences and to lay ... "no greater burden than these necessary things" (*Acts* 15:28) to re-establish communion (cf. decree *Unitatis Redintegratio*, n. 18). It seems to me, in fact, that the question we must ask ourselves is not so much, whether we are able to re-establish full communion, but whether we still have the right to remain separated. We must ask ourselves this question in the very name of our faithfulness to Christ's will for his Church, for which constant prayer must make us both more and more available in the course of the theological dialogue.

If the Church is called to gather men in praise of God, St Irenaeus, the great Doctor of the East and of the West, reminds us that "the glory of God is living man" (*Adv. Haer.* IV, 20,7). Everything, in the Church, is ordained to allowing man to live really in this full freedom which comes from his communion with the Father through the Son in the Spirit. St Irenaeus, in fact, goes on at once: "and man's life is the vision of God", the vision of the Father manifested in the Word.

The Church can respond fully to this vocation only by bearing witness through her unity to the newness of this life given in Christ: "I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me" (*Jn* 17:23).

Sure that our hope cannot be disappointed (cf. *Rom* 5:5). I tell you again, beloved brothers, how joyful I am to be among you, and with you I give thanks to the Father from whom every perfect gift comes (cf. *Jas* 1:17).

#### *Discourse of the Ecumenical Patriarch*

"How beautiful are the feet of those who preach good news" (*Rom* 10:15).

Most Holy Brother,

It is with these words, as prophetic as they are apostolic, that we hail the historic coming of Your Holiness to our holy Church, the servant of the Orthodox East, and your important presence at this feast in pious memory of the holy and glorious Apostle Andrew, the first one called, and at the divine Liturgy celebrated on his altar.

Your march from Rome towards us is really the march of the Angel of peace and good, not only, as we are certain, towards us and the whole holy Orthodox Church but also towards these great countries and even beyond. It is an expression of a new march of Your Holiness towards the image of God: man, man whose person is suffering in his values today. It is a march for these values that are in danger today and for these goods that constitute the very *raison d'être* of humanity and justify its existence on earth.

Considering and judging in this broad framework your visit to our country, a bridge between East and West, to this city, the cradle of great civilizations, of important Christian ferments and formations, and to our Church, we think that we are expressing the view that the Church has of Christ, the world and man, but that we recognize at the same time that since your coming to the throne of Rome all your initiatives and all your travels outside your See had exactly this significance. Thus making good use, according to the inscrutable ways of the Lord, of the talent of freedom that you have been given, you emerge from all kinds of walls and march, preaching the good news to all without distinction.

Yes, "how beautiful are the feet of those who preach good news".

Very Holy Brother,

It is since yesterday that we have received you in our humble See as the one who, full of goodness, brings the good news of peace—the peace of Christ and the boons that it brings.

We, too, desire and seek this peace and goodness, both for the Church and for the world. It is in pursuit of this holy common aim that we meet. It was in this same pursuit that our great Predecessors of holy memory met in Jerusalem, here and in Rome. It is with this purpose that our two Churches have emerged from their isolation and their alienation—not to say their hostility—to take the way of meeting and reconciliation. It was for this purpose that the anathemas between you and us were lifted—and that trusting in the will of the Lord, the Master and Father of peace who wishes us to be One (*Jn* 17:21), armed with courage, patience, wisdom and hope and dialoguing in charity, we came a long way in a relatively short time and arrived at the situation today. During this march it was the Risen Christ who was present, walking with us and leading us even to the breaking of bread.

That is why, having in view this full communion and the breaking of bread, we have gone on our way together up to this day and through your symbolic and significant presence in this liturgical celebration of the Church of Constantinople.

From today we are opening a new and extremely important stage.

Very Holy Brother,

The two Churches that we represent at this moment, the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches, the other Christian Churches and Confessions, other religions and the world in general, are waiting to learn what concrete stage this meeting today, realized after so many effort on your side, represents in our march towards Christian unity.

Thanks be to God, we are both able to answer this question and to say today that we are entering a new phase of our co-fraternization, a serious and important stage, the outcome of which will influence our whole march towards the purpose at which we aim, that is, unity.

We are entering the phase of the official theological dialogue between the two Churches, the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox.

After having prepared the ground in the dialogue of charity by mutual efforts but also by ecclesiastical manifestations and acts, and after having started the theological dialogue, through work in special commissions, today we are happy, both the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, to announce that we have both officially designated two theological commissions which, in the form of a mixed theological commission and on the basis of an agenda prepared and approved by the two Churches for a first phase, will undertake the dialogue in the near future.

Our meeting here today, therefore, can announce this concrete fact.

Christians of other Churches and confessions may have been wondering if this dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, the beginning of which we bless today, is our final purpose. We could both answer this question in the negative, and we could add at once that our further and principal aim is not just the unity of the two Churches, but the unity of all Christians in the one Lord and in participation in the same chalice.

To those non-Christians who might be wondering what significance Christian unity would have for them, if it would constitute a coalition and front of Christians against non-Christians, we could answer that the Christian unity pursued is not turned against anyone, but that it rather constitutes a positive service for all men, regardless of their sex, race, religion and social class—in accordance with the fundamental Christian principle that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female" (*Gal 3:20*).

Very Holy Brother,

It is in this theanthropical embracing of mankind, by the Church of Christ, that today we embrace Your Holiness and the Roman Catholic Church in this sacred centre of Orthodoxy.

Certainly, various obstacles rear up before us. In the first place we have the serious theological problems which concern essential chapters of Christian faith, for the solution of which we are starting the theological dialogue. But at the same time there are obstacles coming from mistrust, irresponsibility, fear—like that of the disciples in the garden of Gethsemane—non-theological factors concerning Christian differences, intolerance and fanaticism which set Christians and religions against one another—in one word all the obstacles that come from the arms of Lucifer. It is from Lucifer, moreover, that there come all heresies and divisions and all opposition between man and God and between men themselves.

We live and work for the accomplishment of God's will and for the preaching of love, unity and peace at a critical hour of the history of mankind. At an hour when the person and spirit of evil, Lucifer, is tempting humanity beyond its strength.

Really, Your Holiness, we find ourselves before an exaltation of temptation and of the activity of the Evil One in the world, in all fields, religious, social, cultural and political, to such an extent that we see before us a phenomenon, a sign of the times. To such an extent that we see in front of us a sole victim, man, the image of God. We are up against a phenomenon, a sign of the times, which can be described as a return to an age of religious fanaticism, wars of religion, and the self-destruction of men and their faith, and always in the name of God.

Before this image of mankind, an image that appears before us in its stark and tragic reality, when we are threatened with a diabolic anarchy, Your Holiness comes in our midst so that we may preach peace and goodness together in all directions.

According to a very ancient and pious tradition, the brother of Peter the first leader, the apostle Andrew, the first to be called, was crucified on a cross forming the monogram of Christ. It is this cross that has been since then his throne and the throne of his successors. It is from this throne that we greet you to bear witness to charity, peace and salvation with you to the whole world. Amen.

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