

III. THE POPE'S STATEMENT OF WELCOME

June 27, 1995

THE POPE'S STATEMENT AT THE MEETING WITH THE
PATRIARCH

June 27, 1995

On Tuesday afternoon, 27 June, the Holy Father greeted the Ecumenical Patriarch, His Holiness Bartholomew I, when he received him in his private library at the Vatican and welcomed him to Rome to take part in the celebrations for the Solemnity of Sts Peter and Paul. Here is a translation of his address, which was given in Italian.

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord" (Ps 118 [117]:26).

Your Holiness,
Beloved Brothers accompanying the Ecumenical
Patriarch as he visits the Church of Rome,

With a deep sense of personal gratitude I am pleased to offer you my most cordial and fraternal welcome.

I am particularly grateful because your desired and appreciated visit enriches with joy the Solemnity of Sts Peter and Paul, the feast of the patron saints of the Church of Christ which is in Rome.

"Behold how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!" (Ps 133 [132]: 1).

The meeting of brothers in mutual love cannot fail to produce a deep spiritual resonance in each one. Indeed, brothers experience the grace of common gifts and feel the Lords mysterious presence: "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Mt 18:20).

Your Holiness, it is my intention to greet in your person, and in those who have accompanied you, the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and all the Orthodox of the world. I feel that your presence is an expression of the Orthodox Churches' very rich spiritual heritage and variety of gifts. In our time, following the great upheavals of recent years, the Orthodox Churches have been committed to reorganizing their pastoral life and their work of evangelization. They can be assured of our sympathy and our readiness to collaborate in the service of proclaiming the one Gospel.

Together we walk towards the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, which we would like to celebrate closer together, in order to proclaim our common faith to the world as we strive for an ever stronger and fuller communion between us.

This is another reason, Your Holiness, why I consider this meeting of ours to be blessed by God. I pray the Lord to give Catholics and Orthodox an eloquent sign of the hope that animates us. Beloved Brother, may he make our meeting a precious opportunity to advance together in prayer, dialogue and collaboration on the path of visible unity.

I thank you with all my heart for the honour you have paid me by visiting the See of Rome and for the joy your presence brings us.

As I again extend my most cordial welcome to you, I would like to assure you that the whole Catholic Church and especially this Diocese of Rome, welcomes you with the love that is felt for brothers, and with the veneration that is due to the Successors of the Apostles. "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord".

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