

ECUMENICAL PRAYER SERVICE AT THE
PATRIARCHAL CHURCH OF SAINT GEORGE
IN THE PHANAR

29 November 2014

ADDRESS OF THE PATRIARCH

Your Holiness,

(...) We welcome You with joy, honor and gratitude because You have deemed it proper to direct Your steps from the Old Rome to the New Rome, symbolically bridging West and East through this movement, while translating the love of the Chief Apostle to his brother, the First-Called Apostle.

(...) This sacred space, where in the midst of diverse historical challenges Ecumenical Patriarchs have for centuries celebrated and celebrate the holy Mystery of the Divine Eucharist, constitutes a successor to other illustrious places of worship in this City, which have been brightened by renowned ecclesiastical personalities already adorning the choir of great Fathers of the universal Church. Such luminaries include our predecessors Saints Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom, whose sacred relics now lie in this holy church, thanks to their gracious return to the Ecumenical Patriarchate by the Church of Rome; their relics are alongside those of Basil the Great and Euphemia the Great Martyr, who validated the Tome of the Fourth Ecumenical Council, as well as other saints of the Church. This year marks the tenth anniversary since the blessed return of the relics of St. Gregory and St. John; wherefore, we express to Your Holiness our fervent thanks for this fraternal gesture on behalf of Your Church to our Patriarchate. May these holy Fathers, on whose teaching our common faith of the first millennium was founded, intercede for us to the Lord so that we may rediscover the full union of our Churches, thereby fulfilling His divine will in crucial times for humanity and the world. (...)

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ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER

Your Holiness, my dear Brother,

Each evening brings a mixed feeling of gratitude for the day which is ending and of hope-filled trust as night falls. This evening my heart is full of gratitude to God who allows me to be here in prayer with Your Holiness and with this sister Church after an eventful day during my Apostolic Visit. At the same time my heart awaits the day which we have already begun liturgically: the Feast of the Apostle Saint Andrew, Founder and Patron of this Church.

In the words of the prophet Zechariah, the Lord gives us anew in this evening prayer, the foundation that sustains our moving forward from one day to the next, the solid rock upon which we advance together in joy and hope. The foundation rock is the Lord's promise: "Behold, I will save my people from the countries of the east and from the countries of the west... in faithfulness and in righteousness" (8:7.8).

Yes, my venerable and dear Brother Bartholomew, as I express my heartfelt "thank you" for your fraternal welcome, I sense that our joy is greater because its source is from beyond; it is not in us, not in our commitment, not in our efforts – that are certainly necessary – but in our shared trust in God's faithfulness which lays the foundation for the reconstruction of his temple that is the Church (cf. *Zech* 8:9). "For there shall be a sowing of peace" (*Zech* 8:12); truly, a sowing of joy. It is the joy and the peace that the world cannot give, but which the Lord Jesus promised to his disciples and, as the Risen One, bestowed upon them in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Andrew and Peter heard this promise; they received this gift. They were blood brothers, yet their encounter with Christ transformed them into brothers in faith and charity. In this joyful evening, at this prayer vigil, I want to emphasize this; they became brothers in hope – and hope does not disappoint us! What a grace, Your Holiness, to be brothers in the hope of the Risen Lord! What a grace, and what a responsibility, to walk together in this hope, sustained by the intercession of the holy Apostles and brothers, Andrew and Peter! And to know that this shared hope does not deceive us because it is founded, not upon us or our poor efforts, but rather upon God's faithfulness.

With this joyful hope, filled with gratitude and eager expectation, I extend to Your Holiness and to all present, and to the Church of Constantinople, my warm and fraternal best wishes on the Feast of your holy Patron. And I ask a favor of you: to bless me and the Church of Rome.

ORE, 5 December 2014