

DIVINE LITURGY IN THE CHURCH OF SAINT GEORGE

30 November 2014

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS

Your Holiness, beloved brother Bartholomew,

When I was the Archbishop of Buenos Aires, I often took part in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy of the Orthodox communities there. Today, the Lord has given me the singular grace to be present in this Patriarchal Church of Saint George for the celebration of the Feast of the holy Apostle Andrew, the first-called, the brother of Saint Peter, and the Patron Saint of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

Meeting each other, seeing each other face to face, exchanging the embrace of peace, and praying for each other, are all essential aspects of our journey towards the restoration of full communion. All of this precedes and always accompanies that other essential aspect of this journey, namely, theological dialogue. An authentic dialogue is, in every case, an encounter between persons with a name, a face, a past, and not merely a meeting of ideas.

This is especially true for us Christians, because for us the truth is the person of Jesus Christ. The example of Saint Andrew, who with another disciple accepted the invitation of the Divine Master, “Come and see”, and “stayed with him that day” (*Jn* 1:39), shows us plainly that the Christian life is a personal experience, a transforming encounter with the One who loves us and who wants to save us. In addition, the Christian message is spread thanks to men and women who are in love with Christ, and cannot help but pass on the joy of being loved and saved. Here again, the example of the apostle Andrew is instructive. After following Jesus to his home and spending time with him, Andrew “first found his brother Simon, and said to him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ (which means Christ). He brought him to Jesus” (*Jn* 1:40-42). It is clear, therefore, that not even dialogue among Christians can prescind from this logic of personal encounter.

It is not by chance that the path of reconciliation and peace between Catholics and Orthodox was, in some way, ushered in by an encounter, by an embrace between our venerable predecessors, Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras and Pope Paul VI, which took place fifty years ago in Jerusalem. Your Holiness and I wished to commemorate that moment when we met recently in the same city where our Lord Jesus Christ died and rose.

By happy coincidence, my visit falls a few days after the fiftieth anniversary of the promulgation of *Unitatis Redintegratio*, the Second Vatican Council’s Decree on Christian Unity. This is a fundamental document which opened new avenues for encounter between Catholics and their brothers and sisters of other Churches and ecclesial communities.

In particular, in that Decree the Catholic Church acknowledges that the Orthodox Churches “possess true sacraments, above all – by apostolic succession – the priesthood and the Eucharist, whereby they are still joined to us in closest intimacy” (15). The Decree goes on to state that in order to guard faithfully the fullness of the Christian tradition and to bring to fulfilment the reconciliation of Eastern and Western Christians, it is of the greatest importance to preserve and support the rich patrimony of the Eastern Churches. This regards not only their liturgical and spiritual traditions, but also their canonical disciplines, sanctioned as they are by the Fathers and by Councils, which regulate the lives of these Churches (cf. 15-16).

I believe that it is important to reaffirm respect for this principle as an essential condition, accepted by both, for the restoration of full communion, which does not signify the submission of one to the other, or assimilation. Rather, it means welcoming all the gifts that God has given to each, thus demonstrating to the entire world the great mystery of salvation accomplished by Christ the Lord through the Holy Spirit. I want to assure each one of you here that, to reach the desired goal of full unity, the Catholic Church does not intend to impose any conditions except that of the shared profession of faith. Further, I would add that we are ready to seek together, in light of Scriptural teaching and the experience of the first millennium, the ways in which we can guarantee the needed unity of the Church in the present circumstances. The one thing that the Catholic Church desires, and that I seek as Bishop of Rome, “the Church which presides in charity”, is communion with the Orthodox Churches. Such communion will always be the fruit of that love which “has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (cf. *Rom* 5:5), a fraternal love which expresses the spiritual and transcendent bond which unites us as disciples of the Lord.

In today’s world, voices are being raised which we cannot ignore and which implore our Churches to live deeply our identity as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The first of these voices is that of the poor. In the world, there are too many women and men who suffer from severe malnutrition, growing unemployment, the rising numbers of unemployed youth, and from increasing social exclusion. These can give rise to criminal activity and even the recruitment of terrorists. We cannot remain indifferent before the cries of our brothers and sisters. These ask of us not only material assistance – needed in so many circumstances – but above all, our help to defend their dignity as human persons, so that they can find the spiritual energy to become once again protagonists in their own lives. They ask us to fight, in the light of the Gospel, the structural causes of poverty: inequality, the shortage of dignified work and housing, and the denial of their rights as members of society and as workers. As Christians we are called together to eliminate that

globalization of indifference which today seems to reign supreme, while building a new civilization of love and solidarity.

A second plea comes from the victims of the conflicts in so many parts of our world. We hear this resoundingly here, because some neighbouring countries are scarred by an inhumane and brutal war. I think in a particular way of the numerous victims of the grotesque and senseless attack which recently killed and injured so many Muslims who were praying in a Mosque in Kano, Nigeria. Taking away the peace of a people, committing every act of violence – or consenting to such acts – especially when directed against the weakest and defenceless, is a profoundly grave sin against God, since it means showing contempt for the image of God which is in man. The cry of the victims of conflict urges us to move with haste along the path of reconciliation and communion between Catholics and Orthodox. Indeed, how can we credibly proclaim the Gospel of peace which comes from Christ, if there continues to be rivalry and disagreement between us (cf. Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 77)?

A third cry which challenges us is that of young people. Today, tragically, there are many young men and women who live without hope, overcome by mistrust and resignation. Many of the young, influenced by the prevailing culture, seek happiness solely in possessing material things and in satisfying their fleeting emotions. New generations will never be able to acquire true wisdom and keep hope alive unless we are able to esteem and transmit the true humanism which comes from the Gospel and from the Church's age-old experience. It is precisely the young who today implore us to make progress towards full communion. I think for example of the many Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant youth who come together at meetings organized by the Taizé community. They do this not because they ignore the differences which still separate us, but because they are able to see beyond them; they are able to embrace what is essential and what already unites us.

Dear brother, very dear brother, we are already on the way, on the path towards full communion and already we can experience eloquent signs of an authentic, albeit incomplete union. This offers us reassurance and encourages us to continue on this journey. We are certain that along this journey we are helped by the intercession of the Apostle Andrew and his brother Peter, held by tradition to be the founders of the Churches of Constantinople and of Rome. We ask God for the great gift of full unity, and the ability to accept it in our lives. Let us never forget to pray for one another.

ORE, 5 December 2014

ADDRESS OF PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW

[...] We still vividly preserve in our heart the recollection of our encounter with Your Holiness in the Holy Land for a joint pious pilgrimage in the place where the pioneer of our faith was once born, lived, taught, suffered, was risen and ascended as well as for a thankful remembrance of the historical event of the meeting there by our predecessors, the late Pope Paul VI and Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras. As a result of their meeting in the Holy City fifty years ago, the flow of history has literally changed direction: the parallel and occasionally conflicting journeys of our Churches have coincided in the common vision of restoring our lost unity; the cold love between us has been rekindled, while our desire to do everything in our capacity so that our communion in the same faith and the same chalice may once again emerge has been galvanized. Thenceforth, the road to Emmaus has opened up before us – a road that, while perhaps lengthy and sometimes even rugged, is nonetheless irreversible – with the Lord as our companion, until He is revealed to us "in the breaking of the bread" (Luke 24.35).

This way has since been followed – and is still being followed – by all of the successors of those inspired leaders, in turn establishing, dedicating and endorsing the dialogue of love and truth between our Churches in order to lift a millennium of burdens amassed in our relations. This dialogue is one that befits friends and not, as in former times, adversaries, inasmuch as sincerely seek to be rightly dividing the word of truth and respect one another as brothers. [...]

For what is the value of our fidelity to the past unless this denotes something for the future? [...]

Therefore, in directing our sight toward today, we cannot avoid being anxious also for tomorrow. "There is fighting without and fear within" (2 Cor. 7.5) – This recognition of the Apostle Paul about his age is indisputably valid also for us today. Indeed, even as we are preoccupied with our own contentions, the world experiences the fear of survival, the concern for tomorrow. How can humanity survive tomorrow when it is severed today by diverse divisions, conflicts and animosities, frequently even in the name of God? How will the earth's wealth be distributed more equitably in order for humanity tomorrow to avoid the most heinous slavery ever known in history? What sort of planet will future generations inherit when modern man is destroying it so mercilessly and irrevocably through greed?

Nowadays many people place their hope on science; others on politics; still others in technology. Yet none of these can guarantee the future, unless humanity espouses the message of reconciliation, love and justice; the mission of embracing the other, the stranger, and even the enemy. The Church of Christ, who first proclaimed and practiced this teaching, is

compelled to be the first to apply this teaching "so that the world may believe" (John 17.21). [...]

Your hitherto brief tenure at the helm of Your Church has already manifested You in people's conscience today as a herald of love, peace and reconciliation. You preach with words, but above and beyond all with the simplicity, humility and love toward everyone that you exercise your high ministry. You inspire trust in those who doubt, hope in those who despair, anticipation in those who expect a Church that nurtures all people. Moreover, You offer to Your Orthodox brothers and sisters the aspiration that during Your tenure the rapprochement of our two great ancient Churches will continue to be established on the solid foundations of our common tradition, which always preserved and acknowledged in the constitution of the Church a primacy of love, honor and service within the framework of collegiality, in order that "with one mouth and one heart" we may confess the Trinitarian God and that His love may be poured out upon the world.

The Church of Constantinople, which today for the first time receives You with fervent love and honor as well as with heartfelt gratitude, bears upon its shoulders a heavy legacy, but also a responsibility for the present and the future. Unfortunately, the Eucharistic communion of our Churches that was interrupted one thousand years ago does not yet permit the convocation of a joint Great Ecumenical Council. Let us pray that, once full communion is restored, this significant and special day will also not be prolonged. However, until that blessed day, the participation in one another's synodal life will be expressed through the involvement of observers, as we observe now, with Your gracious invitation to attend Synods of Your Church, just as we hope will also occur when, with God's grace, our Holy and Great Council becomes reality. [...]

ORE, 5 December 2014

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