COMMON DECLARATION
OF HIS HOLINESS POPE PAUL VI AND
THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH ATHENAGORAS I

28 October 1967

Pope Paul VI and the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras I give thanks in the Holy Spirit to God, the author and finisher of all good works, for enabling them to meet once again in the holy city of Rome in order to pray together with the Bishops of the Synod of the Roman Catholic Church and with the faithful people of this city, to greet one another with a kiss of peace, and to converse together in a spirit of charity and brotherly frankness.

While recognizing that there is still a long way to go on the road toward the unity of all Christians and that between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church there still remain points to clarify and obstacles to surmount before attaining that unity in the profession of faith necessary for re-establishing full communion, they rejoice in the fact that their meeting was able to contribute to their Churches rediscovering themselves still more as sister Churches.

In the prayers they offered, in their public statements and in their private conversation, the Pope and the Patriarch wished to emphasize their conviction that an essential element in the restoration of full communion between the Roman Catholic Church on the one side and the Orthodox Church on the other, is to be found within the framework of the renewal of the Church and of Christians in fidelity to the traditions of the Fathers and to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit Who remains always with the Church.

They recognize that the true dialogue of charity, which should be at the basis of all relations between themselves and between their Churches, must be rooted in total fidelity to the one Lord Jesus Christ and in mutual respect for each one's traditions. Every element which can strengthen the bonds of charity, of communion, and of common action is a cause for spiritual rejoicing and should be promoted; anything which can harm this charity, communion and common action is to be eliminated with the grace of God and the creative strength of the Holy Spirit.

Pope Paul VI and the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras I are convinced that the dialogue of charity between their Churches must bear fruits of a cooperation which would not be self-seeking, in the field of common action at the pastoral, social and intellectual levels, with mutual respect for each one's fidelity to his own Church. They desire that regular and profound contacts may be maintained between Catholic and Orthodox pastors for the good of their faithful. The Roman Catholic Church and the Ecumenical Patriarchate are ready to study concrete ways of solving pastoral problems, especially those connected with marriages between Catholics and Orthodox. They hope for better cooperation in works of charity, in aid to refugees and those who are suffering and in the promotion of justice and peace in the world.

In order to prepare fruitful contacts between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, the Pope and the Patriarch give their blessing and pastoral support to all efforts for cooperation between Catholic and Orthodox scholars in the fields of historical studies, of studies in the traditions of the Churches, of patristics, of liturgy and of a presentation of the Gospel which corresponds at one and the same time with the authentic message of the Lord and with the needs and hopes of today's world. The spirit which should inspire these efforts is one of loyalty to truth and of mutual understanding, with an effective desire to avoid the bitterness of the past and every kind of spiritual or intellectual domination.

Paul VI and Athenagoras I remind government authorities and all the world's peoples of the thirst for peace and justice which lies in the hearts of all men. In the name of the Lord, they implore them to seek out every means to promote this peace and this justice in all countries of the world.

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