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Audience with the Delegation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople on the occasion of the Solemnity of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul

At 10.00 this morning, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the delegation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, in Rome for the traditional visit on the occasion of the Solemnity of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul.

The following is the Holy Father Francis' address to the members of the delegation during the audience:

Address of the Holy Father

Your Eminence,
Dear Brothers in Christ,

On this, the eve of the Solemnity of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, I greatly rejoice to meet you who have come to Rome to represent His Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and the Holy Synod. I offer you a heartfelt welcome. Your presence at these celebrations in honour of the principal patrons of the Church of Rome is a sign of the growth of communion between the Catholic Church and the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

To commemorate the Apostles, their teachings and their witness is to be mindful of the common roots of our sister Churches, but also to acknowledge our common mission in the service of the Gospel, for the sake of bringing about a new humanity, ever closer to God.

In many traditionally Christian societies, side by side with radiant examples of fidelity to the Lord Jesus Christ, we see a gradual dimming of the light of faith, which no longer inspires the choices of individuals and public policies. Contempt for the dignity of the human person, the idolatry of money, the spread of violence, a totalizing view of science and technology, the reckless exploitation of natural resources: these are only a few of the grave signs of a tragic reality to which we must not resign ourselves. I agree fully with the words spoken by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew during his recent visit to Rome to take part in the International Conference on "New

Policies and Life-Styles in the Digital Age”: “We reject the cynical phrase ‘there is no alternative’... It is unacceptable for the alternative forms of development and the strength of social solidarity and justice to be ignored and slandered. Our Churches can create new possibilities of transformation for our world. In fact, the Church itself is an event of transformation, of sharing, of love and of openness... In our Churches we experience the blessed certainty that the future does not belong to ‘having’ but to ‘being’, not to ‘pleonexia’ but to ‘sharing’, not to selfishness but to communion – nor does it belong to division but to love”.

It is comforting for me to realize that this convergence of views with my beloved brother Bartholomew is being translated into a concrete common effort. Even in recent months, the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Catholic Church have cooperated in initiatives involving important issues such as combating modern forms of slavery, protecting creation and promoting peace. In this regard, I am deeply grateful to His Holiness Bartholomew for having readily accepted my invitation to meet on 7 July next in Bari, together with the Heads of Churches and Christian Communities in the Middle East, in order to pray and reflect on the tragic situation afflicting so many of our brothers and sisters in that region.

It is my prayerful hope that there will be increased opportunities for us Catholics and Orthodox at all levels to work together, pray together and proclaim together the one Gospel of Jesus Christ received from the apostolic preaching, in order to experience ever more fully in our shared journey the unity that by God’s grace already joins us.

Your Eminence, dear Brothers, thank you once more for your presence. Through the intercession of Saints Peter and Paul, and of Saint Andrew, the brother of Saint Peter, may the Almighty Lord grant that we may be faithful heralds of the Gospel. As I invoke his blessing upon us all, I ask you, please, to remember me in your prayers. Thank you.
