



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
BOLLETTINO

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLIS
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

N. 240628a

Friday 28.06.2024

Audience with a delegation from the Ecumenical Patriarchate

This morning, the Holy Father Francis received in audience a delegation from the Ecumenical Patriarchate on the occasion of the feast of Saints Peter and Paul.

The following is the address delivered by the Pope to those present during the audience:

Address of the Holy Father

Your Eminence, dear Brothers in Christ, good morning and welcome!

I thank you for your presence. I am grateful to my beloved Brother His Holiness Bartholomew and to the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate for once again sending a delegation to share in our celebration of the Holy Patrons of the Church of Rome, the Apostles Peter and Paul, who crowned their witness of faith in Christ Jesus by suffering martyrdom in this City. Your presence, and that of my own delegation to the Phanar for the feast of the Apostle Andrew, Peter's brother, enable us to experience the joy of fraternal encounter. They also make it possible for us to bear witness to the profound bonds uniting the sister Churches of Rome and Constantinople, as well as our firm resolve to progress together towards the restoration of that unity to which the Holy Spirit alone can guide us, which is communion in legitimate diversity.

This journey of reconciliation and pacification received new impetus with the meeting between Pope Paul VI and the saintly Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras sixty years ago in Jerusalem. After centuries of mutual estrangement, that meeting was a sign of great hope that continues to inspire the hearts and minds of all those men and women who today yearn to arrive, with God's help, at the day when we can share together in the Eucharistic banquet. Ten years ago, in May 2014, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and I made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of that historic event. There, where our Lord Jesus Christ died, rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, and the Holy Spirit was first poured out upon the disciples, we reaffirmed our commitment to continue journeying together towards the unity for which Christ the Lord prayed to the Father, "that they may all be one" (*Jn 17:21*). I cherish vividly and gratefully the memory of that shared

pilgrimage with His Holiness Bartholomew, and I give thanks to God the merciful Father for the fraternal friendship that has developed between us over these years. It has been nurtured in our numerous meetings and in the many instances of concrete cooperation between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church on matters of great significance for the Churches and for the world, such as the care of creation, the defence of human dignity, and peace.

Certain that I am also echoing the sentiments of my beloved Brother, I would reaffirm what we stated together on that occasion, namely, that dialogue between our Churches poses no risk to the integrity of the faith; rather, it is a necessity arising from our fidelity to the Lord and leading us to the whole truth (cf. *Jn 16:13*) through an exchange of gifts and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (cf. *Common Declaration of Pope Francis and the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I*, Jerusalem, 25 May 2014). For this reason, I wish to encourage the work of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, which has embarked on the study of delicate historical and theological issues. It is my hope that the pastors and theologians engaged in this process will go beyond purely academic disputes and listen with docility to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the life of the Church. And, at the same time, that what has already been studied and agreed upon will find full reception in our communities and places of formation. There will always and everywhere be resistance to this, but we must move forward with courage.

As we recall that meeting in Jerusalem, our thoughts turn to the dramatic situation unfolding in the Holy Land today. Immediately following that pilgrimage, on 8 June 2014, His Holiness Bartholomew and I, in the presence of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem, His Beatitude Theophilos III, welcomed to the Vatican Gardens the late President of the State of Israel and the President of the State of Palestine, in order to invoke peace in the Holy Land, in the Middle East, and throughout the world. Ten years later, present events have tragically shown us the necessity and urgency of praying together for peace, so that the war may end, the leaders of nations and the parties in conflict may rediscover the path to concord, and all parties come to recognize one another as brothers and sisters. Naturally, this invocation for peace extends to all current conflicts, particularly the war now being fought in war-torn Ukraine.

At a time when so many men and women are prisoners of fear for the future, our Churches have the mission to proclaim always, everywhere, and to everyone Jesus Christ as “our hope” (1 *Tim 1:1*). For this reason, following a venerable tradition of the Catholic Church, according to which the Bishop of Rome proclaims a Jubilee every twenty-five years, I have decided to proclaim the Ordinary Jubilee for the year 2025, with the motto “Pilgrims of Hope.” I would be grateful if you and the Church you represent can accompany and support with your prayers this year of grace, so that abundant spiritual fruits may not be lacking. It would also be very nice to have you present.

2025 will also mark the 1700th anniversary of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea. It is my hope that the commemoration of this highly significant event will inspire all believers in Christ the Lord to testify together to their faith and their desire for greater communion. In particular, I am pleased that the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity have begun to reflect on how to join in commemorating this anniversary, and I thank His Holiness Bartholomew for inviting me to celebrate it near the place where the Council met. It is a trip that I truly wish to make.

Dear friends, let us confidently commend our Churches to the intercession of the Holy Brothers Peter and Andrew. May the Lord grant that we may continue to walk on the path that he points out to us, which is always the way of love, reconciliation and mercy. I thank you again for your visit, and I ask you, please, to pray for me!

I am reminded of something that the late Bishop Zizioulas said. He was ironic at times, but very good, and I really appreciated him. Once he jokingly said, “I know when the day of full unity will be: the day of the Last Judgment. But in the meantime, let us walk together, pray together and work together”. That is wise. Thank you, thank you very much.

Now I would like us to pray the Lord’s Prayer together before we finish, each in our own language: Our Father...

