



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
BOLLETTINO

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

N. 0343

Martedì 01.07.2003

MESSAGGIO AL SANTO PADRE DEL PATRIARCA DI COSTANTINOPOLI BARTOLOMEO I

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Pubblichiamo di seguito il Messaggio che il Patriarca Ecumenico Bartolomeo I ha inviato a Giovanni Paolo II in occasione della Solennità dei Santi Pietro e Paolo:

• TRADUZIONE DEL MESSAGGIO IN LINGUA INGLESE

To His Holiness Pope John-Paul II of Rome, greetings in the Lord.

With great love and honour, we communicate with Your Holiness to congratulate you and your venerable Church of Rome on the occasion of your patronal feast of Saint Peter, Chief of the Apostles.

The fact that it has not yet become possible to achieve the unity of faith, which is the prerequisite of joint worship casts a shadow on the joy of the feast and saddens our Modesty.

However, we are encouraged by the fact that we have achieved the bond of peace and love, which is the necessary foundation for the progress of the Theological Dialogue, which is carried on between our two Churches. In this, we are enabled by the protectors and patron saints of our two Churches, the Apostle Andrew the First-called and the Apostle Peter, festally honoured today, who in the first of his Catholic Epistles, counsels us to place our entire hope in the omnipotent Divine Grace, which supplements that which is lacking, when he writes "therefore gird up the loins of your minds, be vigilant, have perfect hope in the grace which comes upon you, in the revelation of Jesus Christ. (1 Pt 1:13).

The preserved written word of the Holy Apostle Peter is small, but full of faith, grace and strength, on account of which the Lord Himself characterised him as "Petrus" (Mt 16:18 and Mk 3:16), that is to say, "immovable" and gave to him also the power to bind and to loose (Mt 16:19) which after His Resurrection, He gave also to all His other disciples (Jn 20:28). Being such, the Holy Apostle Peter did not avoid displaying the innate human weakness, which took the form of the triple denial of Christ and indeed with an oath (Mt 26:70-74), "so that the superiority of power should be from God and not from us" (2 Cor 4:7). He gave him in addition the power to preach the Gospel of salvation, in the same way and to the same extent as he did to all his other disciples (Mt 28: 18-20, Mk 16:15, Lk 24:47-49, Jn 20-21). A small, but very comprehensive and important, part of his

preaching is preserved in his two Catholic Epistles, in which excellent and very concentrated counsels to the faithful are contained, in such a way as to be impossible to choose between them. "Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth through the Spirit for a sincere love of the brethren, love another from a pure heart fervently", is part of a long exhortation, which is always timely, and particularly in our times, in which all of us have come to understand that the separate paths of the different Christian Confessions lead to an impasse. Hardening unto this exhortation, we declare to Your Holiness our sincere fraternal affection in obedience to the truth and our fervent love from a pure heart, at the same time expressing the wish that the Lord may grant us, through the intercessions of the Chief among equals Apostle Peter, to be built as living stones into spiritual dwelling, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (1 Pt 2:5).

In this hope and expectation, we are sending to You and to Your Church, which celebrates this great day, our Patriarchal Delegation, under the leadership of the Most Reverend Archbishop of America, Monsignor Demetrios, and with the participation of His Grace, Monsignor Theodoretos, Bishop of Nazianzos and the Very Reverend Great Archimandrite Athenagoras.

This delegation will convey to you verbally the congratulations, the love and the good wishes of our Church. Once again, we embrace festally Your Holiness with a fraternal kiss and we remain with profound love in our Lord, cordial good wishes and particular respect.

[01073-02.02] [Original text: English]
