



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS
BENEDICT XVI
TO TURKEY
(NOVEMBER 28 - DECEMBER 1, 2006)

EUCCHARISTIC CELEBRATION

HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER

Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Istanbul
Friday, 1 December 2006

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

At the conclusion of my pastoral visit to Turkey, I have the joy of meeting the Catholic community of Istanbul and celebrating the Eucharist in thanksgiving to the Lord for all his gifts. I wish first to greet the Patriarch of Constantinople, His Holiness Bartholomew I, and the Armenian Patriarch, His Beatitude Mesrob II, my venerable brothers, who have graciously joined us for this celebration. I express to them my deep gratitude for this fraternal gesture, which honours the entire Catholic community.

Dear brothers and sisters of the Catholic Church, Bishops, priests and deacons, religious and lay men and women belonging to the different communities of the city and the various rites of the Church: I greet all of you with joy in the words of Saint Paul to the Galatians: "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!" (*Gal* 1:3). I thank the civil authorities present for their gracious welcome, and particularly all who made it possible for my visit to take place. Finally, I greet the representatives of the other ecclesial communities and the other religions who are present. How can we fail to think of the various events which took place here and forged our common history? At the same time I feel obliged to recall with particular gratitude the many witnesses of the Gospel of Christ who urge us to work together for the unity of all his disciples in

truth and charity!

In this Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, I wish to thank God for all his works in human history and to invoke upon everyone the gifts of the Spirit of holiness. As Saint Paul has just reminded us, the Spirit is the enduring source of our faith and unity. He awakens within us true knowledge of Jesus and he puts on our lips the words of faith that enable us to acknowledge the Lord. Jesus had already said to Peter after his confession of faith at Caesarea Philippi: "Blessed are you, Simon, Son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven" (*Mt* 16:17). We are indeed blessed when the Holy Spirit opens us to the joy of believing and makes us enter the great family of Christians, his Church. For all her rich diversity, in the variety of gifts, ministries and works, the Church is already one, since "it is the same God who inspires them all in every one". Saint Paul adds that: "to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good". To manifest the Spirit, to live by the Spirit, is not to live for oneself alone, but to let oneself be conformed to Christ Jesus by becoming, like him, the servant of his brothers and sisters. Here is a very concrete teaching for each of us Bishops, called by the Lord to guide his people by becoming servants like him; it is also true for all the Lord's ministers and for all the faithful: when we received the sacrament of Baptism, all of us were immersed in the Lord's death and resurrection, "we were given to drink of the one Spirit" and Christ's life became our own, that we might live like him, that we might love our brothers and sisters as he has loved us (cf. *Jn* 13:34).

Twenty-seven years ago, in this very Cathedral, my predecessor, the Servant of God John Paul II, expressed his hope that the dawn of the new millennium would "rise upon a Church that has found again her full unity, in order to bear witness better, amid the exacerbated tensions of this world, to God's transcendent love, manifested in his Son Jesus Christ" (*Homily in the Cathedral of Istanbul*, 5). This hope has not yet been realized, but the Pope still longs to see it fulfilled, and it impels us, as disciples of Christ advancing with our hesitations and limitations along the path to unity, to act ceaselessly "for the good of all", putting ecumenism at the forefront of our ecclesial concerns. Thus we will truly live by the Spirit of Jesus, at the service of the common good.

Gathered this morning in this house of prayer consecrated to the Lord, how can we not evoke the other fine image that Saint Paul uses in speaking of the Church, the image of the building whose stones are closely fitted together to form a single structure, and whose cornerstone, on which everything else rests, is Christ? He is the source of the new life given us by the Father in the Holy Spirit. The Gospel of Saint John has just proclaimed it: "out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water". This gushing water, this living water which Jesus promised to the Samaritan woman, was seen by the prophets Zechariah and Ezechiel issuing forth from the side of the Temple, so that it could make fruitful the waters of the Dead Sea: a marvellous image of the promise of life that God has always made to his people and that Jesus came to fulfil. In a world where men are so loath to share the earth's goods and there is a dramatic shortage of water, this good so precious for the life of the body, the Church discovers that she possesses an even greater treasure. As the Body of Christ, she has been charged to proclaim his Gospel to the ends of the earth (cf. *Mt* 28:19),

transmitting to the men and women of our time the Good News which not only illuminates but overturns their lives, even to the point of conquering death itself. This Good News is not just a word, but a person, Christ himself, risen and alive! By the grace of the sacraments, the water flowing from his open side on the Cross has become an overflowing spring, “rivers of living water”, a flood that no one can halt, a gift that restores life. How could Christians keep for themselves alone what they have received? How could they hoard this treasure and bury this spring? The Church’s mission is not to preserve power, or to gain wealth; her mission is to offer Christ, to give a share in Christ’s own life, man’s most precious good, which God himself gives us in his Son.

Brothers and Sisters, your communities walk the humble path of daily companionship with those who do not share our faith, yet “profess to hold the faith of Abraham, and together with us adore the one, merciful God” (*Lumen Gentium*, 16). You know well that the Church wishes to impose nothing on anyone, and that she merely asks to live in freedom, in order to reveal the One whom she cannot hide, Christ Jesus, who loved us to the end on the Cross and who has given us his Spirit, the living presence of God among us and deep within us. Be ever receptive to the Spirit of Christ and so become attentive to those who thirst for justice, peace, dignity and respect for themselves and for their brothers and sisters. Live in harmony, in accordance with the words of the Lord: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (*Jn* 13:35).

Brothers and sisters, let us now hand over our desire to serve the Lord to the Virgin Mary, Mother of God and Servant of the Lord. She prayed in company with the Apostles in the Upper Room, in the days leading up to Pentecost. Together with her, let us pray to Christ her Son: Send forth, O Lord, your Holy Spirit upon the whole Church, that he may dwell in each of her members and make them heralds of your Gospel!

Amen.

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