



The Holy See

VISIT OF HIS BEATITUDE CHRYSOSTOMOS II
ARCHBISHOP OF NEA JUSTINIANA AND ALL CYPRUS
TO HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

Saturday, 16 June 2007

- ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
- ADDRESS OF HIS BEATITUDE CHRYSOSTOMOS II
- COMMON DECLARATION

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

Your Beatitude and Dear Brother,

I welcome you today with joy, hearing the words of the Apostle ring out in my heart: "May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 15: 5-6).

Your visit is a gift of *the God of steadfastness and encouragement* of which St Paul speaks, addressing those who heard the message of salvation for the first time in Rome. Today, we are experiencing the gift of *perseverance* because, despite the presence of centuries-old divisions, diverging paths and the effort required in stitching up grievous wounds, the Lord has not ceased to guide our steps on the path of unity and reconciliation. And for all of us this is a cause of *consolation* because our meeting today is part of an ever more intense process in the search of that full communion so longed for by Christ: "*ut omnes unum sint*" (cf. Jn 17: 21).

We know well that adherence to the Lord's ardent desire cannot and must not be proclaimed solely in words or in a purely formal manner. For this reason, Your Beatitude, in following in the footsteps of the Apostle to the Gentiles, you did not come from Cyprus to Rome merely for an "exchange of ecumenical courtesy", but rather to reaffirm your firm decision to persevere in praying to the Lord to show us how to achieve full communion. At the same time, your visit is a cause of intense joy, for in our encounters we have already been granted to sample the beauty of the desired full Christian unity.

Thank you, Your Beatitude, for this gesture of esteem and brotherly friendship. In you, I greet the Pastor of an ancient and illustrious Church, *a shining tessera* of that bright mosaic, the East, which, to use a favourite phrase of the Servant of God John Paul II of venerable memory, constitutes one of the two lungs with which the Church breathes.

Your appreciated presence reminds me of the fervent preaching of St Paul in Cyprus (cf. Acts 13: 4ff.) and the adventurous voyage which brought him to Rome, where he proclaimed the same Gospel and sealed his luminous witness of faith with martyrdom.

Does not the memory of the Apostle to the Gentiles perhaps invite us to turn our hearts with humility and hope to Christ, who is our one Teacher?

With his divine help we must not tire of seeking together the ways of unity, overcoming those difficulties which in the course of history have given rise to divisions and reciprocal diffidence among Christians. May the Lord grant us that we may soon be able to approach the same altar, to partake together of the one Banquet of the Eucharistic Bread and Wine.

In welcoming you, dear Brother in the Lord, I would like to pay homage to the ancient and venerable Church of Cyprus, rich in saints, among whom I would like to remember in particular Barnabas, a companion and collaborator of the Apostle Paul, and Epiphanius, Bishop of Constantia, once called Salamis, today Famagusta.

Epiphanius, who exercised his episcopal ministry for 35 years in a turbulent period for the Church because of the Arian revival and the controversies of the "Pneumatomachians", wrote works with a clear catechetical and apologetic intention, as he himself explained in his *Ancoratus*.

This interesting treatise contains two Creeds, the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed and the Creed of the Baptismal Tradition of Constantia, which corresponds to the Nicene faith but is differently formulated and amplified and "more suited", Epiphanius himself pointed out, "to combating the errors that arise because it conforms to that [faith] determined by the aforementioned Holy Fathers" of the Nicean Council (*Ancoratus*, n. 119). In it, he explained, we affirm our faith in the "holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, the perfect Spirit. The Spirit Consoler, not created, who proceeds from the Father and comes from the Son, the object of our faith" (*ibid.*).

As a good Pastor, Epiphanius pointed out to the flock entrusted to him by Christ, the truth in which to believe, the way to take and the pitfalls to avoid.

This is a method for proclaiming the Gospel that is also effective today, especially to the new generations strongly influenced by currents of thought contrary to the Gospel spirit. At the beginning of this Third Millennium, the Church finds herself facing challenges and problems not at all unlike those which Bishop Epiphanius had to tackle.

It was as necessary then as it is now to be on the alert in order to put the People of God on their guard against false prophets and the errors and superficiality of proposals that are not in conformity with the teaching of the divine Teacher, our one Saviour.

At the same time, it is urgently necessary to find a new language in which to proclaim the faith that brings us together, a shared language, a spiritual language that can transmit faithfully the revealed truths and thereby help us to reconstruct, in truth and charity, communion among all members of the one Body of Christ.

This need, for which we are all aware, impels us to persevere without being discouraged in the theological dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church as a whole. It leads us to using effective and permanent instruments to ensure that the search for communion is not interrupted or sporadic in our Churches' life and mission.

As we face the immense task expected of us, whose implementation is far beyond human capacities, we must entrust ourselves first of all to prayer. This does not mean that it is not only right to have recourse, today as well, to every effective human means that can serve this purpose.

In this perspective, I consider your visit a particularly useful initiative for enabling us to progress towards the unity desired by Christ. We know that this unity is a gift and fruit of the Holy Spirit; but we also know that it requires at the same time a constant effort, enlivened by a sure will and steadfast hope in the power of the Lord.

Thank you, therefore, Your Beatitude, for coming to pay me a visit, together with the brothers who have accompanied you; thank you for this presence, which gives concrete expression to the desire to seek full communion together.

For my part, I assure you that I share in this same desire, sustained by firm hope. Yes, "may the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus".

Thus, let us turn confidently to the Lord, so that he may guide our footsteps on the path of peace, joy and love.

ADDRESS OF HIS BEATITUDE CHRYSOSTOMOS II

"To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints: grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 1: 7).

Your Holiness, Pope of Ancient Rome and Bishop of the historical Chair of the Blessed Apostle Peter,

The grace of the Holy Spirit and our duty as Archbishop-Primate of the Most Holy Martyr Church of the Holy Apostle Barnabas for the unity and peace of our Apostolic Churches, have guided our footsteps here today, together with our reverend entourage. We have come to the place of the martyrdom of the *Coryphaei* of the Apostles, Peter and Paul, the shrine of the Catacombs of the martyrs of our common faith, to meet you, the one among the Bishops who holds the primacy of honour of undivided Christianity, to give you the fraternal kiss of peace and, after a non-fraternal journey down the centuries, to build new bridges of reconciliation, collaboration and love!

This is our third meeting after the unforgettable funeral of your beloved Predecessor Pope John Paul II, of blessed memory, and the joyful ceremony of your own elevation to this Apostolic Throne. The whole of the Christian Ecumene looks with great hopes to this throne, awaiting gestures of dialogue, re-pacification, *rapprochement* and love from the wise theologian, the tireless pastor, the dynamic ecclesiastical leader who presides over it. In this regard, the development of the official theological dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church - in which our Apostolic Church of Cyprus takes part, with responsibility and coherence - is of paramount importance.

Our eyes will perhaps not be able to see the longed for unity of the Church, but with the grace of the Holy Spirit we will have done our duty in time and space as peacemakers and true brothers *"ut omnes unum sint"*.

Furthermore, it is our personal conviction that since the drifting apart of our Sister Churches and the schism between them took place over so many centuries of accumulated misunderstandings, so their reunification and the re-establishment of mutual trust and true love between them will need time, patience and sacrifices.

Yet, with an awareness of our great responsibility, we take it upon ourselves to bring this task to completion *"in truth and charity"* under the infallible guidance of God's life-giving Spirit.

Our meeting today is felicitously taking place on the eve of the 35th anniversary of the beginning of official diplomatic relations between the Holy See and the Republic of Cyprus. Indeed, in 1973,

after the encounter of the Ethnarch, Archbishop Makarios III, with Pope Paul VI in Castel Gandolfo, the representation of these two parties was entrusted respectively to the current Cardinal Pio Laghi, who was then titular Archbishop of Mauriana and Apostolic Delegate in Jerusalem and Palestine, and to H.E. Mr Polys Modinòs, then Ambassador of Cyprus in Paris.

Your Holiness, allow me to mention here the first Ambassador of Cyprus to the Holy See, resident in Rome: our dear friend, H.E. Mr Georgios Poulides, and to thank him warmly for his devotion, respect and love for the Church, and his important and indispensable work.

In recent decades after the Second Vatican Council, some of our Cypriot theologians, clerics and lay people have done *post lauream* studies at various Pontifical Universities with scholarships awarded by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. We would therefore like to express our gratitude to you and likewise our own intention to offer as a minimal *antidoron* of gratitude, summer scholarships in Cyprus for Catholic theologians interested in learning modern Greek together with the liturgical riches of the Orthodox Church from close at hand, so that they in turn may one day contribute to the vision of the united Church.

Recently, Your Excellency, the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Mr Tassos Papadopoulos, said very gracefully: "Cyprus has always been Europe, even before Europe was established. With its entry into the European Union, Cyprus has come home". Yet, this common home of ours, Europe, the cradle of Western civilization, the glorious seat of the Christian spirit, the Mother of Saints and Missionaries, is passing through a period of crisis and confusion, of atheism and doubt, of secularization and decadence.

Society and the people of our time are thirsting and seeking. They have values and principles, traditions and customs that were formed in the light of the Gospel and under the wise guidance of the Fathers of the Church and of other ecclesiastical personalities, but are unable to recognize Christ's presence and the power of his soteriological message. They refuse to admit the fundamental importance of Europe's Christian roots: it is the hour of the Church and the new evangelization, the hour of the mission *ad intra!*

Yet, without the collaboration of the European Churches and our common Christian witness, it is certain that very little will have a positive outcome and that the many isolated efforts of the various Churches and Christian denominations will unfortunately be doomed to failure.

Instead of exercising a positive influence on the convinced European Christian, our globalized epoch seems to reject the historical ecumenicity of the Christian message and to marginalize its dynamic and effectiveness. Secularization, eudaemonism, the deification of technology and atheistic science confuse our neighbour and lead him inevitably to existential desperation. His anguished cry is heard: "Lord, to whom shall we go?" (Jn 6: 68).

What, then, is our responsibility as spiritual fathers? What is our approach to spiritual care for our young people? Shall we succeed at last in protecting the sacred institution of the family? The sacredness of the human person, now defenceless in the face of medical research, abortion, euthanasia? And the oneness of God's creation which surrounds us and risks being destroyed irreparably by us?

The Orthodox path passes through spirituality, asceticism, fasting, the study of the texts of the Church Fathers who were inspired by God, the sense of the sacred and first and foremost the Divine Eucharist: these are our spiritual weapons and we wish to fight side by side with the Sister Church of Rome to transform European society, which is anthropocentric, into a Christocentric society with respect for our brethren of other religions, for immigrants, the poor, refugees and the weak of this earth.

Our presence here today, Your Holiness, is an appeal to you, the Pope who comes from a friendly country, traumatized by division for decades, like ours, but thanks be to God reunited. Therefore, you alone can understand how sad we feel! Our Homeland and Your Sister, the Apostolic Church of Cyprus, is suffering but is also persevering with dignity through the intercession of her saints and in particular the protection of her founder, the blessed Apostle Barnabas.

Human rights are trampled upon, monuments are destroyed, works of our spiritual patrimony become the object of international trade, and the division of the last European capital, Nicosia, seems doomed to continue. Will no one hear our just lament and raise their voices in protest to the powerful of the earth, who exploit Christ's Name but are deaf to the law of love?

Your Holiness,

We ask your support through the invincible weapons of brotherly prayer, but also through your fatherly cry for the defence of the inalienable rights of the Ancient and Apostolic Sister Church of Cyprus, this crossroads of peoples, religions, languages and civilizations of the Mediterranean and Middle East.

We want you beside us! Through us the Holy Apostle Barnabas invites his elder brother, the Blessed Apostle Peter, to make a first Visit to his humble home and to receive hospitality in it, to feel as though it were his own home and to bless it!

We await you, Your Holiness, as Bishop of the Roman See which presides in charity, in the Cyprus of dialogue, democracy, dignity, faith, monasticism, hospitality, monuments and works of art! May you deign to come to us and give us the opportunity to reciprocate your fraternal hospitality during these splendid days that we have spent in the Eternal City!

Your Holiness, with the intercession of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, Patrons of the Diocese

of Rome, of the Holy Apostle Barnabas, Founder of the Church of Cyprus, and of the Holy Greeks Isapostolic Cyril and Methodius, Co-Patrons of Europe, we offer you our heartfelt good wishes for health, a long life and the illumination of the Holy Spirit for the success of your lofty mission as Pontiff-builder of bridges between peoples, religions and cultures.

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope" (Rom 15: 13).

COMMON DECLARATION

"Blessed be God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" (Eph 1: 3).

1. We, Benedict XVI, Pope and Bishop of Rome, and Chrysostomos II, Archbishop of Nea Justiniana and All Cyprus, full of hope for the future of our Churches' relations, thank God with joy for this fraternal meeting in our common faith in the Risen Christ. This visit has enabled us to observe how these relations have increased, both at a local level and in the context of the theological dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church as a whole. The Delegation of the Church of Cyprus has always made a positive contribution to this dialogue; among other things, for instance, in 1983 it hosted the *Coordination Committee* of the International Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue, so that in addition to doing the demanding preparatory work, the Catholic and Orthodox Members were able to visit and admire the great spiritual riches and wealth of art works of the Church of Cyprus.

2. On the happy occasion of our fraternal encounter at the tombs of Sts Peter and Paul, the *"coryphaei* of the Apostles", as liturgical tradition says, we would like to declare of common accord our sincere and firm willingness, in obedience to the desire of Our Lord Jesus Christ, to intensify our search for full unity among all Christians, making every possible effort deemed useful to the life of our Communities. We desire that the Catholic and Orthodox faithful of Cyprus live a fraternal life in full solidarity, based on our common faith in the Risen Christ. We also wish to sustain and encourage the theological dialogue which is preparing through the competent International Commission to address the most demanding issues that marked the historical event of the division.

For full communion in the faith, the sacramental life and the exercise of the pastoral ministry, it is necessary to reach substantial agreement. To this end, we assure our faithful of our fervent prayers as Pastors in the Church and ask them to join us in a unanimous invocation *"that they may all be one... so that the world may believe"* (Jn 17: 21).

3. At our meeting, we reviewed the historical situations in which our Churches are living. In particular, we examined the situation of division and tensions that have marked the Island of Cyprus for more than 30 years, with its tragic daily problems which impair the daily life of our communities and of individual families. More generally, we considered the situation in the Middle East, where the war and conflicts between peoples risk spreading with disastrous consequences. We prayed for the peace that "comes from the heavenly places". It is the intention of our Churches to play a role of peacemaking in justice and solidarity and, to achieve all this, it is our constant wish to foster fraternal relations among all Christians and loyal dialogue between the different religions present and active in the Region. May faith in the one God help the people of these ancient and celebrated regions to rediscover friendly coexistence, in reciprocal respect and constructive collaboration.

4. We therefore address this appeal to all those who, everywhere in the world, raise their hand against their own brethren, exhorting them firmly to lay down their weapons and to take steps to heal the injuries caused by war. We also ask them to spare no effort to ensure that human rights are always defended in every nation: respect for the human person, an image of God, is in fact a fundamental duty for all. Thus, among the human rights to be safeguarded, freedom of religion should be at the top of the list. Failure to respect this right constitutes a very serious offence to the dignity of the human being, who is struck deep within his heart where God dwells. Consequently, to profane, destroy or sack the places of worship of any religion is an act against humanity and the civilization of the peoples.

5. We did not omit to reflect on a new opportunity that is opening for more intense contact and more concrete collaboration between our Churches. In fact, the building of the European Union is progressing, and Catholics and Orthodox are called to contribute to creating a climate of friendship and cooperation. At a time when secularization and relativism are growing, Catholics and Orthodox in Europe are called to offer a renewed common witness to the ethical values, ever ready to account for their faith in Jesus Christ, Lord and Saviour. The European Union, which will not be able to restrict itself to merely economic cooperation, needs sound cultural foundations, shared ethical references and openness to the religious dimension. It is essential to revive the Christian roots of Europe which made its civilization great down the centuries and to recognize that in this regard the Western and Eastern Christian traditions have a common task to achieve.

6. At our encounter, therefore, we considered our Churches' long journey through history and the great tradition which has come down to our day, starting with the proclamation of the first disciples, who came to Cyprus from Jerusalem after the persecution of Stephen, and reviewing Paul's voyage from the coasts of Cyprus to Rome as it is recounted in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 11: 19; 27: 4ff.). The rich patrimony of faith and the solid Christian tradition of our lands should spur Catholics and Orthodox to a renewed impetus in proclaiming the Gospel in our age, in being faithful to our Christian vocation and in responding to the demands of the contemporary world.

7. The treatment of bioethical issues gives rise to serious concern. Indeed, there is a risk that certain techniques, applied to genetics, intentionally conceived to meet legitimate needs, actually go so far as to undermine the dignity of the human being created in the image of God. The exploitation of human beings, abusive experimentation and genetic experiments which fail to respect ethical values are an offence against life and attack the safety and dignity of every human person, in whose existence they can never be either justified or permitted.

8. At the same time, these ethical considerations and a shared concern for human life prompt us to invite those nations which, with God's grace, have made significant progress in the areas of the economy and technology, not to forget their brothers and sisters who live in countries afflicted by poverty, hunger and disease. We therefore ask the leaders of nations to encourage and promote an equitable distribution of the goods of the earth in a spirit of solidarity with the poor and with all those who are destitute in the world.

9. We also concurred in our anxiety about the risk of destroying the creation. Man received it so that he might implement God's plan. However, by setting himself up at the centre of the universe, forgetting the Creator's mandate and shutting himself in a selfish search for his own well-being, the human being has managed the environment in which he lives by putting into practice decisions that threaten his own existence, whereas the environment requires the respect and protection of all who dwell in it.

10. Let us address together this prayer to the Lord of history, so that he will strengthen our Churches' witness in order that the Gospel proclamation of salvation may reach the new generations and be a light for all men and women. To this end, we entrust our desires and commitments to the *Theotokos*, the Mother of God *Hodegetria*, who points out the way to Our Lord Jesus Christ.

From the Vatican, 16 June 2007

Benedictus PP. XVI

Chrysostomos II

© Copyright 2007 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

© Copyright - Libreria Editrice Vaticana