



The Holy See

*FIRST VESPERS OF THE 29th SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME
PRESIDED OVER BY THE HOLY FATHER BENEDICT XVI
ON THE OCCASION OF THE PARTICIPATION
OF HIS HOLINESS BARTHOLOMEW I, ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH
IN THE 12th ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS*

*ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE
HIS HOLINESS BARTHOLOMEW I*

*Sistine Chapel
Saturday, 18 October 2008*

*Your Eminences,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

With the celebration of Vespers, we have addressed God using his very words: the Psalms. The meditation on the Word of God is a light that guides our steps. We have had the joy of having with us on this occasion of intense recollection the Ecumenical Patriarch, His Holiness Bartholomew I, whom I greet warmly also on your behalf. I now invite you to listen to the reflections he will present to us on the subject of the Word of God, the theme of the Synod of Bishops which is being celebrated in the Vatican in these days.

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Your Holiness,

I would like to say a wholehearted "thank you" to you for your words. The applause of the Fathers was far more than an expression of courtesy, it was truly an expression of deep spiritual joy and of

a vital experience of our communion. At that moment we truly lived the "synod": we were travelling together in the land of the divine Word under Your Holiness' guidance, and we savoured its beauty with the great joy of being listeners to the Word of God, of being set before this gift of his Word.

What you said was profoundly nourished by the spirit of the Fathers, by the Sacred Liturgy, and for this very reason also strongly contextualized in our time, with a great Christian realism that made us see the challenges. We saw that in going to the heart of Sacred Scripture, truly encountering the Word in words, penetrating God's Word also opens our eyes to our world, to today's reality.

And this was also a joyful experience an experience of unity, perhaps not perfect yet true and profound. I thought: your Fathers, whom you cited extensively, are also our Fathers, and ours are also yours: if we have common Fathers, how is it possible for us not to be brothers? Thank you, Your Holiness. Your words will accompany us in our work this coming week, they will enlighten us and also in the next week and beyond we shall be sharing the journey with you.

Thank you, Your Holiness.

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