



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE
OF THE CATHOLIC COMMITTEE
FOR CULTURAL COLLABORATION
WITH THE CHURCHES OF THE EAST**

Saturday, 18 January 2003

*Your Eminences,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate,
Dear Fathers,
Gentlemen,*

1. I am happy to meet you as the members of the "*Steering Committee*" of the *Catholic Committee for Cultural Collaboration*, with your President, Bishop Gérard Daucourt and officials of the Pontifical Council.

First, I desire to express my appreciation for the readiness and generosity with which the persons and the societies that are part of this consultative body, included in the range of responsibility of the *Oriental Section* of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, for years have carried on this activity of ecclesial support for the Orthodox Churches and for the Ancient Oriental Churches, according the will of my Venerable Predecessor, Pope Paul VI, which I completely endorse.

The action of the *Committee* includes the awarding of scholarships to Orthodox candidates presented by their ecclesial authorities; the donation of books and theological and patristic literature to Orthodox seminaries and libraries; the promotion of special projects at the level of these seminaries and institutes of formation.

It is an important work that is inspired by the criterion of reciprocity and that, by its nature, stands

as an important witness of communion. In fact, the Orthodox candidates who receive the scholarships follow the courses in the different universities of Rome and in other Western cities and are generally housed in Pontifical Colleges and other Catholic structures. In this way, their presence expresses an effective synergy that puts into practice a fundamental element of ecumenical activity: *the exchange of gifts between the Churches in their complementarity*. That makes communion particularly fruitful (cf. Encyclical Letter, *Ut unum sint*, n. 57).

2. The *Committee*, from the beginning of the new millennium and in the light of the changing context of our relations with the Churches of the East, wished to reflect on the progress made and find ways to expand its action to respond even better to the many requests that come from the East. I hope that your meeting can help to reinforce concretely the assiduous activity of your committee and foster a more generous activity in the field of formation.

At the beginning of the new millennium, in this period of transition from *what has been accomplished to what we are called to accomplish* to promote the ecumenical journey toward the realization of full communion (cf. *ibid*, n. 3), we have an unavoidable mission which the *Committee* has to focus on with reason: namely, that of fostering the grassroots acceptance of the results achieved in a number of ecumenical initiatives, and not missing a chance to stress that the promotion of the ecumenical perspective should be a constant concern of the work of formation. It is no longer time for reciprocal ignorance; it is time for meeting and sharing the gifts of each one on the basis of a mutual objective and deep familiarity.

3. In this perspective I encourage you to continue in the activity that you carry on with outstanding dedication, and I assure you of the support of my prayers. With these sentiments, I impart to all a heartfelt Blessing.