



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI TO THE UKRAINIAN LATIN-RITE BISHOPS ON THEIR "AD LIMINA" VISIT

*Consistory Hall, Papal Summer Residence, Castel Gandolfo
Thursday, 27 September 2007*

*Your Eminence,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate,*

"Grace to you and peace from God Our Father" (Col 1: 2)! I address this apostolic greeting to you, the members of the Latin-rite Episcopate of Ukraine. I wish each one of you the Lord's grace and peace, which are the secret of our mission as Bishops at the service of man. At the end of your *ad limina* visit, which has given me the opportunity to meet you personally, to be better acquainted with the situation in each of your Dioceses and to share with you the hopes and problems that mark your daily journey, I thank God for all that in his merciful love he continues to fulfil through your pastoral ministry. I offer a special greeting to Cardinal Marian Jaworski and thank him for his words expressing your common sentiments. I noted in his discourse your eager desire to strengthen unity with one another and to join forces to present a united front to face today's great social, cultural and spiritual challenges. Nor do you ever tire of seeking possible solutions, also in dialogue with the local Authorities, for the sole purpose of providing spiritual care for the flock entrusted to you by the Lord. I learned with deep appreciation of the catechetical, liturgical, apostolic and charitable efforts being made in your Dioceses: a programme that also aims to consolidate the yearning for catholicity which makes all the baptized feel they are members of the one Body of Christ.

Your pastoral work, venerable Brothers, is carried out in a territory in which Latin- and Greek-Catholic-rite Catholics live side by side with other believers who find the reason for their very existence in the one Lord Jesus Christ. Even among Catholics, collaboration is not always easy,

since it is normal that different sensitivities should surface, given the diversity of the respective traditions. Yet, how is it possible not to consider as a providential opportunity the fact that two communities, whose traditions differ but which are wholly Catholic, coexist together, each one aspiring to serve the one *Kyrios* [Lord] and to proclaim his Gospel? The unity of Catholics in the diversity of rites, and the endeavour to demonstrate it in every context, shows the genuine face of the Catholic Church and is a particularly eloquent sign for other Christians and for the whole of society. Your analysis reveals a series of problems whose solution will demand an indispensable combined effort for a renewed proclamation of the Gospel. The long years of atheist and Communist domination have left visible traces in today's generations. They are as many challenges that call you into question, dear Brothers, and are rightly the focus of your concern and your pastoral planning.

"*Ut unum sint!*"! Christ's prayer in the Upper Room constantly resounds in the Church as an invitation to tirelessly seek unity. If communion is consolidated in the Catholic communities it will be easier to carry on a fruitful dialogue between the Catholic Church and the other Churches and Ecclesial Communities. Having lived beside our Orthodox brethren for centuries, attempting to weave with them a daily dialogue that embraces many aspects of life, you are acutely aware of the ecumenical requirement. May the problems, obstacles and even possible failures not dampen your enthusiasm as you move in this direction. With patience and humility, with charity, truth and an open spirit, the journey before you will be less laborious, especially if you never lack the basic outlook, in other words, the conviction that all Christ's disciples are called to follow in his footsteps, docilely allowing themselves to be guided by his Spirit, who is always active in the Church.

Dear Brothers, there would be so many topics to discuss in our personal conversations, to which I should like to return in order to encourage you to continue on the way on which you have set out. I am thinking, for example, of the fundamental need to impart a satisfactory formation to priests, so that they may carry out their mission in the best possible way; as well as the care of vocations, which is a pastoral priority to ensure workers for the Lord's harvest. The vast majority of priests are witnesses of true self-denial, joyful generosity, humble adaptation to the precarious situations in which they find themselves, working sometimes also with financial difficulties. May God preserve and protect them always! Love them, because they are your irreplaceable collaborators, support and encourage them, pray with them and for them. Be loving fathers to them to whom they can confidently turn. I know of your efforts to promote vocations with various initiatives. Make sure that candidates to the priesthood at the seminaries receive a harmonious and complete formation. Accompany young priests in the first steps of their ministry with fatherly concern, and do not overlook the continuing formation of priests. I noted with pleasure the presence and commitment of consecrated men and women, an authentic gift for the spiritual growth of every community. The care of vocations naturally presupposes an effective family ministry. The formation of lay people who are able to account for their faith is becoming more necessary than ever in our time and is one of the pastoral goals to aim for with perseverance.

Dear and venerable Brothers, at times the overall situations with their relative problems might make your work seem arduous and truly beyond human capacity. Never fear, the Lord is always with you! Stay united to him, therefore, in prayer and in listening to his Word I entrust you and your communities to Mary, the Virgin Mother of God and of the Church, so that she may always protect and guide you with her motherly hand, while with affection I impart to you all my Apostolic Blessing.

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