

Orthodox Leader Stresses Unity in Truth

Encourages Dialogue on the Dividing Issues

ISTANBUL, Turkey, DEC. 2, 2010 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople is underlining the value of unity with the Catholic Church, but is pointing out that truth must be its foundation.

"Unity in love is of no benefit if it is not at the same time unity in faith and truth," the patriarch said Tuesday during the celebrations for the feast of St. Andrew, patron of that patriarchate.

The Orthodox leader gave an address to the president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Cardinal Kurt Koch, who took part, in representation of Benedict XVI at the head of a Holy See delegation, in the divine liturgy and other celebrations in Istanbul.

Quoting St. Paul, the patriarch pointed out that "'being sincere in love,' according to the Apostle's exhortation, we maintain this theological dialogue by the unanimous decision of all the autocephalous Orthodox Churches to examine, in love and sincerity, both the theological questions that unite as well as those that divide, 'until we all arrive at the unity of faith.'"

Bartholomew I explained that the ecumenical patriarchate follows "with growing interest the development of this theological dialogue."

"We pray for its success," he said, "especially during this present phase in which controversial topics are being debated that in the past were the cause of acute conflict between our Churches."

In this regard, the patriarch referred to the recent plenary session of the International Mixed Commission for Theological Dialogue Between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church held in Vienna in September under the joint presidency of Cardinal Koch and Metropolitan Ioannis Zizioulas of Pergamum. The meeting participants discussed the role of the Bishop of Rome in the communion of the Church in the first millennium.

Bartholomew I pointed out that this meeting "revealed the existence of difficulties but also the willingness and decision of the members of the commission to overcome those difficulties with love as well as with fidelity to the doctrine and to the life of the Church transmitted to us since the first millennium to advance in its resolution."

The Lord's prayer

The patriarch told Cardinal Koch, "We yearn for your cooperation with our ecumenical patriarchate for the future improvement of the fraternal relations between our Churches for the benefit of promoting unity, for which our Lord prayed to his Father immediately before his passion."

Bartholomew I noted the 50th anniversary that the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity is celebrating this year.

In this regard, he affirmed, "Our thought goes to the deceased Pope John XXIII, who founded this council in 1960 originally in the form of a secretariat."

The patriarch also expressed appreciation for the convocation of the Second Vatican Council and asserted that the "audacious historic decisions" of this Pontiff "prepared the way for the participation of the Roman Catholic Church in the effort for the reconciliation of Christian unity."

"Among the fruits of this historic initiative of the deceased Pope, the development of fraternal relations between the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches occupies a preeminent place," he said.

The patriarch expressed his gratitude to the ecclesiastical leaders who worked in that task, concretely Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II, the ecumenical patriarchs Athenagoras and Dimitrios, the presidents of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Cardinal Augustine Bea, Cardinal Johannes Willebrands, Cardinal Edward Cassidy and Cardinal Walter Kasper, and their collaborators, among them Bishop Pierre Duprey and Monsignor Eleuterio Fortino.

Through their work, the patriarch affirmed, "relations between our Churches were cultivated even more through mutual respect and fraternal love."

Brothers

Bartholomew I affirmed that the patron saints of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, the brothers Peter and Andrew "not only were related by blood but especially by the infinitely more significant bond with Christ and communion in Christ."

"They kept this bond of communion in Christ irreproachable during a whole millennium, so that the Churches that derived from the preaching and martyrdom of those Apostles, called the Churches of Rome and Constantinople, are obliged once again to recover this bond of communion to show themselves worthy successors of its deposit," he said.

Quoting Saint John's Gospel, the patriarch added that "the Church of Christ shows herself 'apostolic' transmitting Christ from generation to generation and from place to place 'so that the world may believe' in him as Redeemer and Savior."

In this connection he said that "also today, faced with many dead ends, the world seeks redemption and salvation."

Bartholomew I warned that "those who preach Christ separated from one another cannot convince the world that 'we have found the Messiah' -- which means Christ."

He stressed that "faithful to the authentic and authoritative message of the Apostles, we are called to transmit this message to the contemporary world 'with one voice and one heart,' aware of the concerns and embracing the problems of the world."

Cardinal Koch delivered in return a message from Benedict XVI to Bartholomew I, in which the Pope also affirmed the need to continue progressing toward full communion between Catholics and Orthodox.

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