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Are Talks With Orthodox Getting Anywhere? Pope Says Yes

Suggests Rhythm of Dialogue Reflects Complexity of Issues

VATICAN CITY, JUNE 28, 2011 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Benedict XVI today told an official Orthodox delegation that talks between the two Churches can appear to progress slowly due to the complexity of the themes.

The Pope said this when he addressed a delegation from the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, which came for the traditional Orthodox visit to Rome in honor of Wednesday's feast of Sts. Peter and Paul.

The Holy Father spoke of the "friendship and genuine fraternity that unites the Church of Rome and the Ecumenical Patriarchate," but he also affirmed that "the incomplete communion that already unites us must grow until it attains full visible unity."

In reference to the official dialogue commission, the Pontiff acknowledged that "from a purely human point of view, one might have the impression that the theological dialogue is having trouble in progressing."

"In reality," he said, "the rhythm of dialogue is linked to the complexity of the themes being discussed, which call for an extraordinary effort of study, of reflection and of reciprocal openness."

The commission is discussing the question of the role of the Bishop of Rome in the Church communion of the first millennium, when the Church in the West and East was still united.

The Pope reminded that the Holy Spirit is the force behind the dialogue, and that it is His wish that Christ's prayer for unity be fulfilled.

Mutual witness

Benedict XVI also spoke to the delegation about the need for a "common testimony of the truth of the Gospel," so that men and women of today, who feel lost "in a historical context of violence, of indifference and of egoism," can come to "rediscover the way that leads them to truth."

The Pope further mentioned the meeting he will lead in October, in which representatives of Christian Churches and other world religions will gather in Assisi.

"Walking together along the streets of St. Francis' city," he said, "will be a sign of the will to continue to advance on the path of dialogue and fraternity."

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