

## Pope Francis' Address to Delegation from the Patriarchate of Constantinople

**"If all of us can learn, prompted by the Spirit, to look at one another in God, our path will be even straighter and our cooperation all the more easy in the many areas of daily life which already happily unite us."**

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Here is the translation of the Holy Father's address to the delegation from the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, His Holiness Bartholomew I, for the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul.

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The Solemnity of the Holy Patrons of the Church of Rome, the Apostles Peter and Paul, once again gives me the joy of greeting a delegation from the sister Church of Constantinople. In extending to you a warm welcome, I express my gratitude to the Ecumenical Patriarch, His Holiness Bartholomaios I, and to the Holy Synod for having sent you to share with us in the joy of this feast.

I have vivid and moving memories of my recent meetings with my beloved brother Bartholomaios. During our common pilgrimage to the Land of Jesus, we were able to relive the gift of that embrace between our venerable predecessors, Athenagoras I and Paul VI, which took place fifty years ago in the holy city of Jerusalem. That prophetic gesture gave decisive impulse to a journey which, thank God, has never ceased. I consider it a special gift from the Lord that we were able to venerate the holy places together and to pray at each other's side at the place of Christ's burial, where we can actually touch the foundation of our hope. The joy of that meeting was then renewed when, in a certain sense, we concluded our pilgrimage here at the tomb of the Apostle Peter as we joined in fervent prayer, together with the Presidents of Israel and Palestine, for the gift of peace in the Holy Land. The Lord granted us these occasions of fraternal

encounter, in which we were able to express the love uniting us in Christ, and to renew our mutual desire to walk together along the path to full unity.

We know very well that this unity is a gift of God, a gift that even now the Most High grants us the grace to attain whenever, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we choose to look at one another with the eyes of faith and to see ourselves as we truly are in God's plan, according to the designs of his eternal will, and not what we have become as a result of the historical consequences of our sins. If all of us can learn, prompted by the Spirit, to look at one another in God, our path will be even straighter and our cooperation all the more easy in the many areas of daily life which already happily unite us.

This way of "looking at one another in God" is nourished by faith, hope and love; it gives rise to an authentic theological reflection which is truly *scientia Dei*, a participation in that vision which God has of himself and of us. It is a reflection which can only bring us closer to one another on the path of unity, despite our differing starting points. I hope and I pray, then, that the work of the Joint International Commission can be a sign of this profound understanding, this theology "on its knees". In this way, the Commission's reflections on the concepts of primacy and synodality, communion in the universal Church and the ministry of the Bishop of Rome will not be an academic exercise or a mere debate about irreconcilable positions. All of us need, with courage and confidence, to be open to the working of the Holy Spirit. We need to let ourselves be caught up in Christ's loving gaze upon the Church, his Bride, in our journey of spiritual ecumenism. It is a journey upheld by the martyrdom of so many of our brothers and sisters who, by their witness to Jesus Christ the Lord, have brought about an ecumenism of blood.

Dear members of the Delegation, with sentiments of sincere respect, friendship and love in Christ, I renew my heartfelt gratitude for your presence among us. I ask you to convey my greeting to my venerable brother Bartholomaios and to continue to pray for me and for the ministry with which I have been entrusted. Through the intercession of Mary, the Most Holy Mother of God, and of Saints Peter and Paul, the princes of the Apostles, and Saint Andrew the first-called, may Almighty God bless us and fill us with every grace. Amen.

[Original text: Italian]

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