



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW I
FOR THE FEAST OF ST ANDREW**

*To His Holiness Bartholomew I
Archbishop of Constantinople*

Ecumenical Patriarch After welcoming with joy the Delegation that Your Holiness sent to Rome for the Feast of Sts Peter and Paul, through this Message I am taking part in the Feast of the Apostle Andrew, Patron of the Church in Constantinople, with equal joy today, and join in your prayers. These patronal feasts enable us to live better the joy of being brothers and to share in the same communion of intentions and one hope; they are also a sign of our desire for unity and full communion that we must encourage and follow up if they are to appear clearly to the world, to our faithful and to all those who work and pray for the communion of the Christian East and West. Ever since the introduction of these patronal feasts we have understood the importance of our reciprocal participation in them, for it is the most perfect expression of our mutual desire to re-create between us a context of love and participation in each other's prayer, in order to nourish and deepen our desire for full communion. Last 16 October was a day I lived with special spiritual intensity. I entrusted to the Lord the 25 years that have passed since my election to the Chair of Peter. During the celebrations for this Anniversary, I also thought back over the many events that have marked my commitment to making the Church of Christ breathe more deeply with both her lungs; so that the Churches of the West and of the East, which for one millennium could develop and express their great living traditions together, may draw closer and closer to the full communion that the historical circumstances of the second millennium undermined (cf. *Address of His Holiness Patriarch Dimitrios I at St George's Cathedral, the Phanar, 29 November 1979; L'Osservatore Romano* English edition [ORE], 3 December 1979, p. 1). I recall the meeting in Jerusalem during the Second Vatican Council of my Predecessor Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras. They inaugurated the dialogue of charity that leads to the dialogue of truth. I remember my Visit to the Phanar soon after my election and the visit to Rome of your Predecessor of happy memory, Patriarch Dimitrios. I remember many moments with gratitude to the Lord, many gestures that highlighted our desire for communion. Subsequently, through God's grace, Rome and Constantinople set out on the same path and, before the Council assembly, formally lifted the excommunications of 1054. We will soon be celebrating the 40th anniversary of this event, the symbol and guarantee of our commitment and resolutions. In thinking back over the ground we have covered, I recall our meetings with emotion, especially your visit to Rome in 1995 for the Feast of Sts Peter and Paul when we proclaimed the Creed together in St Peter's Basilica in the liturgical language of the East and, together, we blessed the

faithful from the loggia of the Basilica; and more recently, when Your Holiness joined me in Assisi to pray for the gift of peace in a world threatened by hatred and ever more intent on seeking God. All this shows the extent of our on-going commitment and enables us to entrust ourselves confidently to the Lord. God is good for us; in fact, throughout these years, our ties have expressed the family spirit that unites us and which, despite the difficulties, enables us to advance on the path to the goal that Christ fixed for us, to which our Predecessors energetically showed the way forward. We can say that we are living under the sign of the Cross and in the hope of Easter. We are full of hope that the Lord will bring to completion the work of re-establishing the unity that he inspired. For her part, the Church of Rome will adhere to the irreversible choice of the Second Vatican Council which embraced this cause, this duty. In the Roman Liturgy, we associate ourselves every day with the prayer of Christ who, on the eve of his death, asked his Father for the unity of his disciples. We are certain that one day, when he chooses, the Lord will give us the joy of rediscovering each other in full communion and in the visible unity that he desires for his Holy Church. Dear Brother, His Eminence Cardinal Walter Kasper will exchange the kiss of peace with you at the end of the Liturgy at which you are presiding over today in the patriarchal Church of St George. Know that it is the Bishop of Rome who offers you this kiss, with sentiments of gratitude for the journey you have undertaken with him thus far. I ask the Lord to bless your Ministry for the Church of Constantinople and all the holy Orthodox Churches, so that they may grow and prosper in proclaiming the One who is Holy and who pours out upon us in abundance his gifts of holiness, wisdom and peace. *From the Vatican, 26 November 2003*

JOHN PAUL II