



# The Holy See

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**MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II  
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE CONFERENCE  
ON THE THEME: "VLADIMIR SOLOVYOV,  
RUSSIA AND THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH"**

*To Cardinal Lubomyr Husar*

*Major Archbishop of Lviv for Ukrainians*<sup>1</sup>. I learned with deep joy of the international Conference organized by the Ukrainian Catholic University, in collaboration with the Solovyov Society of Geneva and other cultural Ukrainian Institutions, to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the birth of Vladimir Sergeyevich Solovyov. On this happy occasion I would like to convey through you, Venerable Brother, my cordial greetings and encouragement to the organizers, the speakers and the participants of this Conference for this initiative that aims to examine in depth the thought of one of the greatest Russian Christian philosophers of the 19th and 20th centuries. This event, which gathers people of the Eastern and Western cultures, will enable them to compare their reflections on the truth of the one Gospel of Christ and to see the reciprocal fruitfulness that can result, confirming the Church's need to be able to breathe with both her lungs: the Eastern Tradition and the Western Tradition. The strictly cultural dimension is consequently combined with an undeniably ecumenical aspect, so important in the ecclesial context of our time.<sup>2</sup> The unity of the Church was one of the main aspirations of Vladimir Solovyov, who was very familiar with the prayer that Christ addressed to his Father during the Last Supper (cf. Jn 17: 20-23). Raised in deep Orthodox spirituality from his earliest years, he lived through various cultural periods during which he had the opportunity to become acquainted with Western philosophical thought. Disappointed, however, by the incomplete responses that human reflection offered to the anguish that tormented his heart, in 1872 he returned to the Christian faith of his childhood. His thought, based on God's wisdom and on the spiritual foundations of life, like his insight concerning moral philosophy and the meaning of human history, influenced the rich flourishing of contemporary Russian thought and also made an impact on European culture by fostering a fertile and enriching dialogue concerning the fundamental issues of theology and spirituality. Especially in his later years, Solovyov harboured the ardent desire that the Churches would likewise enter into a perspective of encounter and communion, each one contributing the treasures of her own tradition and feeling mutually responsible for the unity of the faith and for ecclesial discipline. With a view to attaining this goal, so dear to the great Russian thinker, the Catholic Church has irrevocably committed herself at all levels.<sup>3</sup> The theme of the Congress, "Vladimir Solovyov, Russia and the Universal Church", clearly mirrors the basic concern of this great author. The study of his thought on the universal nature of Christ's Church will highlight once again the duty of the Christian communities of East and West to listen to Christ's desire with regard to the unity of his disciples. Solovyov was convinced that it is only in the Church that humanity will be able to coexist in full solidarity. May the rediscovery of the treasures of his thought foster a better understanding between East and West and,

in particular, hasten the progress of all Christians towards full unity in the one fold of Christ (cf. Jn 10: 16). As I express my fervent best wishes for the success of this international Conference, I invoke the intercession of the Most Holy Mother of the Saviour, and I impart an affectionate Apostolic Blessing, the source of abundant heavenly gifts, to you as well as to the other Cardinals, to the different speakers and to all the people who in their different capacities will be attending this meeting. *From the Vatican, 28 October 2003, Feast of the Holy Apostles, Sts Simon and Jude***JOHN PAUL II**

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