



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO MEMBERS OF
ORIENTAL EPARCHIES AND
EXARCHIAL MONASTERY**

Tuesday, 11 January 2005

*Your Beatitude,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

1. I welcome you with joy and offer you all my cordial greeting. I greet first of all the Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches and thank him for his courteous words on behalf of everyone present. I extend my greeting to the Communities you represent here and to those who are taking part in your Synod on the theme: "*Communion and Gospel Proclamation*".

This topic is particularly timely both for your two Eparchies and for the Exarchial Monastery of Grottaferrata. Heirs to a common spiritual heritage, your ecclesial institutions are called to witness to the *unity of the same faith* in different social contexts. They collaborate in pastoral affairs with the communities of Latin tradition and continue to strengthen their identity, treasuring their 1,000-year-old Byzantine tradition.

2. To encourage all this, your Synod has placed an emphasis on essential topics such as *catechesis* and *mystagogy*, with a view to the satisfactory spiritual growth of the entire People of God. The Synod has also determined theological and ascetical approaches for *the training of clergy and members of institutes of consecrated life*. In addition, to avoid any undue alteration in the spiritual identity that distinguishes you, you intend to encourage a *sound formation* that is rooted in the Eastern tradition and can respond effectively to the growing challenges of secularization.

The Holy See, through the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, will not fail to offer its support to this practical renewal, while you will be able to find useful references to back your efforts in the texts of the Second Vatican Council and the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches.

3. The Byzantine-rite *Mirabilia Dei* for humanity and, in this regard, the Anaphoras of St John Chrysostom and St Basil, serve as sublime examples. The Eucharistic Prayers and the celebration of the other sacraments, such as the full development of the liturgy and divine worship with their rich hymnography, are a powerful vehicle of catechesis for the Christian people.

You celebrate almost daily *the Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom*, who has been called "Mouth-of-Gold" for his oratorical skill and knowledge of Sacred Scripture. Still today, his words penetrate human ears and hearts. You are right, therefore, to make his words ring out, comprehensible to all, in the languages of our time.

4. I next encourage you, through your common liturgical tradition, to pursue your contacts with *the Orthodox Churches*, which also desire to glorify the One God and Saviour. May Almighty God, who at Christmas, just over, has revealed his divine tenderness in the luminous Incarnation of the Word, grant that all believers in Christ may live to the full the unity of the same faith. I pray for this, and I ask the Lord that your Synod may contribute to encouraging *a renewed proclamation of the Gospel* in every one of your Communities, as well as vigorous ecumenical enthusiasm.

I entrust this ardent hope to Mary Most Holy, Mother of God, as I wholeheartedly impart to you who are present here and to your Eparchies a special Apostolic Blessing.

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