

ADDRESS

By His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew

To His Holiness Pope Francis

During the Divine Liturgy for the Feast of St. Andrew

In the Venerable Patriarchal Church

(November 30, 2014)

Your Holiness Pope Francis, beloved brother in Christ, bishop of Senior Rome,

We offer glory and praise to our God in Trinity for deeming us worthy of the ineffable joy and special honor of the personal presence here of Your Holiness on the occasion of this year's celebration of the sacred memory of the First-called Apostle Andrew, who founded our Church through his preaching. We are profoundly grateful to Your Holiness for the precious gift of Your blessed presence among us, together with Your honorable entourage. We embrace you wholeheartedly and honorably, addressing you fervently with a greeting of peace and love: "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 1.7). "For the love of Christ controls us" (2 Cor. 5.14).

We still vividly preserve in our heart the recollection of our encounter with Your Holiness in the Holy Land for a joint pious pilgrimage in the place where the pioneer of our faith was once born, lived, taught, suffered, was risen and ascended as well as for a thankful remembrance of the historical event of the meeting there by our predecessors, the late Pope Paul VI and Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras. As a result of their meeting in the Holy City fifty years ago, the flow of history has literally changed direction: the parallel and occasionally conflicting journeys of our Churches have coincided in the common vision of restoring our lost unity; the cold love between us has been rekindled, while our desire to do everything in our capacity so that our communion in the same faith and the same chalice may once again emerge has been galvanized. Thenceforth, the road to Emmaus has opened up before us – a road that, while perhaps lengthy and sometimes even rugged, is nonetheless

irreversible – with the Lord as our companion, until He is revealed to us “in the breaking of the bread” (Luke 24.35).

This way has since been followed – and is still being followed – by all of the successors of those inspired leaders, in turn establishing, dedicating and endorsing the dialogue of love and truth between our Churches in order to lift a millennium of burdens amassed in our relations. This dialogue is one that befits friends and not, as in former times, adversaries, inasmuch as sincerely seek to be rightly dividing the word of truth and respect one another as brothers.

In such an atmosphere fashioned by our aforementioned predecessors with respect to our common journey, we too fraternally welcome Your Holiness as bearing the love of St. Peter to his brother, St. Andrew, whose sacred feast we celebrate today. In accordance with a holy custom established and observed for decades now by the Churches of Senior and New Rome, official delegations exchange visits on the occasion of their respective patronal feasts in order to demonstrate by this manner as well the fraternal bond between the two chief Apostles, who together came to know Jesus Christ and to believe in Him as God and Savior. These Apostles transmitted this common faith to the Churches founded by their preaching and sanctified by their martyrdom. This faith was also jointly experienced and articulated into doctrine by our Church Fathers, who assembled from East and West in ecumenical councils, bequeathing it to our Churches as an unshakable foundation of our unity. It is this same faith, which we have together preserved in both East and West for an entire millennium, that we are once again called to deposit as the basis of our unity in order that, “being in full accord and of one mind” (Phil. 2.2), we may press on with Paul “forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead” (Phil. 3.13).

After all, Your Holiness and dear Brother, our obligation is surely not exhausted in the past but primarily extends to the future, especially in our times. For what is the value of our fidelity to the past unless this denotes something for the future? What is the benefit of boasting for what we have received unless these translate into life for humanity and our world both today and tomorrow? “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and to the ages” (Heb. 13.8). And His Church

is called to keep its sight fixed not so much on yesterday as on today and tomorrow. The Church exists not for itself, but for the world and for humanity.

Therefore, in directing our sight toward today, we cannot avoid being anxious also for tomorrow. "There is fighting without and fear within" (2 Cor. 7.5) – This recognition of the Apostle Paul about his age is indisputably valid also for us today. Indeed, even as we are preoccupied with our own contentions, the world experiences the fear of survival, the concern for tomorrow. How can humanity survive tomorrow when it is severed today by diverse divisions, conflicts and animosities, frequently even in the name of God? How will the earth's wealth be distributed more equitably in order for humanity tomorrow to avoid the most heinous slavery ever known in history? What sort of planet will future generations inherit when modern man is destroying it so mercilessly and irrevocably through greed?

Nowadays many people place their hope on science; others on politics; still others in technology. Yet none of these can guarantee the future, unless humanity espouses the message of reconciliation, love and justice; the mission of embracing the other, the stranger, and even the enemy. The Church of Christ, who first proclaimed and practiced this teaching, is compelled to be the first to apply this teaching "so that the world may believe" (John 17.21). This is precisely why the path toward unity is more urgent than ever for those who invoke the name of the great Peacemaker. This is precisely why our responsibility as Christians is so great before God, humankind and history.

Your Holiness,

Your hitherto brief tenure at the helm of Your Church has already manifested You in people's conscience today as a herald of love, peace and reconciliation. You preach with words, but above and beyond all with the simplicity, humility and love toward everyone that you exercise your high ministry. You inspire trust in those who doubt, hope in those who despair, anticipation in those who expect a Church that nurtures all people. Moreover, You offer to Your Orthodox brothers and sisters the aspiration that during Your tenure the rapprochement of our two great ancient

Churches will continue to be established on the solid foundations of our common tradition, which always preserved and acknowledged in the constitution of the Church a primacy of love, honor and service within the framework of collegiality, in order that “with one mouth and one heart” we may confess the Trinitarian God and that His love may be poured out upon the world.

Your Holiness,

The Church of Constantinople, which today for the first time receives You with fervent love and honor as well as with heartfelt gratitude, bears upon its shoulders a heavy legacy, but also a responsibility for the present and the future. In this Church, through the order instituted by the holy Ecumenical Councils, divine providence has assigned the responsibility of coordinating and expressing the unanimity of the most holy local Orthodox Churches. In the context of this responsibility, we are already working very assiduously for the preparation of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church, which – as decided – will convene here, God willing, in 2016. At this time, the appropriate committees are laboring feverishly to prepare this great event in the history of the Orthodox Church, for whose success we also implore Your prayers. Unfortunately, the Eucharistic communion of our Churches that was interrupted one thousand years ago does not yet permit the convocation of a joint Great Ecumenical Council. Let us pray that, once full communion is restored, this significant and special day will also not be prolonged. However, until that blessed day, the participation in one another’s synodal life will be expressed through the involvement of observers, as we observe now, with Your gracious invitation to attend Synods of Your Church, just as we hope will also occur when, with God’s grace, our Holy and Great Council becomes reality.

Your Holiness,

The challenges presented to our Churches by today’s historical circumstances oblige us to transcend our introversion in order to meet them with the greatest degree of collaboration. We no longer have the luxury of isolated action. The modern persecutors of Christians do not ask which Church their victims belong

to. The unity that concerns us is regrettably already occurring in certain regions of the world through the blood of martyrdom. Together let us extend our hand to people of our time; together let us extend the hand of Him, who alone can save humankind through His Cross and Resurrection.

With these thoughts and sentiments, once again we express our joy and thanks at the presence here of Your Holiness, even as we pray that the Lord – through the intercessions of the one we celebrate today, the First-called Apostle and brother of the Chief of the Apostles Peter – may protect His Church and direct it to the fulfillment of His sacred will.

Welcome among us, dearly beloved brother!