



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO MEMBERS OF THE "ASSEMBLY OF ORGANIZATIONS
FOR AID TO THE EASTERN CHURCHES" (ROACO)**

Clementine Hall

Thursday, 21 June 2007

Your Beatitudes,

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,

Dear Friends of ROACO,

Today's encounter reawakens in me the joy of [my recent Visit to the Congregation for the Oriental Churches](#) on the 90th anniversary of its institution. In that circumstance, you, Your Eminence, expressed a particular greeting in the name of the Agencies linked to the Dicastery and now again you have been the interpreter of their collective cordial greeting.

I exchange the kind wishes of His Beatitude Cardinal Ignace Moussa Daoud, the Archbishop Secretary Antonio Maria Vegliò, to the collaborators of the Congregation, to the representatives of the Agencies that comprise ROACO (Assembly of Organizations for Aid to the Eastern Churches) and to all the participants at this annual gathering.

The presence of the venerable Eastern Prelates permits me to share in the suffering and worry for the delicate situation prevailing in vast areas of the Middle East. Peace, much implored and awaited, is unfortunately still widely violated.

It is violated in the hearts of individuals, and this compromises interpersonal and community relationships. Old and new injustices further weaken the fragile peace. Thus, it wilts and leaves room for violence, which often degenerates into more or less declared war, until it constitutes, as in our day, a persistent international problem.

Together with each one of you, I feel I am in communion with all the Churches and Christian

communities as well as with those who venerate the Name of God and seek him in sincerity of conscience, and with all men of good will I wish to knock again at the heart of God, Creator and Father, to ask with immense trust for the gift of peace.

I knock at the heart of those who have specific responsibilities so that they may adhere to their grave duty to impartially guarantee peace for all, freeing them from the mortal illness of religious, cultural, historic or geographic discrimination.

With peace, the whole earth rediscovers its vocation and mission to be the "common home" for every people and nation, thanks to the shared commitment to a dialogue that is always sincere and responsible.

Once again I assure you that the Holy Land, Iraq and Lebanon are present, with the urgency and constancy they deserve, in the prayer and action of the Apostolic See and of the whole Church. I ask the Congregation for the Oriental Churches and each of the Agencies linked to its work to adhere with the same concern so as to make your closeness and intervention more incisive for the benefit of so many of our brothers and sisters. They already feel the comfort of the ecclesial brotherhood and, as we hope with fervent prayer, may they soon see the day of peace dawn. With these sentiments, I renew to Your Beatitude, the Chaldean Patriarch who is with us today, the Pope's sympathy for the barbaric killing of a defenceless priest and three subdeacons that took place at the end of the Sunday liturgy this past 3 June in Iraq.

With affection and admiration the entire Church accompanies all her sons and daughters and she sustains them in this hour of authentic martyrdom for the Name of Christ.

My embrace equally includes the Pontifical Representative and the Pastors coming from Israel and Palestine, so that they may share their strengthened, tested hope with their own faithful.

As I extend my cordial thoughts to the Apostolic Nuncio and to the dear Bishops from Turkey, I am pleased to recall the consideration of that beloved Ecclesial Community during my Apostolic Visit.

Dear friends, on the [Visit to the Oriental Dicastery](#) cited above, thinking of ROACO's work, I had occasion to say: "The charitable movement, which the Congregation is supervising by the Pope's mandate so that the Holy Land and other Eastern regions can receive in an orderly and balanced manner the necessary spiritual and material support for their ordinary ecclesial life and special needs, must continue, indeed, must grow" ([Address](#), 9 June 2007, *L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition, 27 June, n. 26, p. 3).

I thank you for having consolidated the praiseworthy habit of collaborating with the Congregation. I encourage you to continue it, so that your unique contribution that witnesses to ecclesial charity may find its full expression in the communitarian form it exercises.

Your presence confirms the will to avoid an individualistic management of the planned works and of the allocation of available funds deriving from the faithful's charity. You know well, in fact, what a dangerous illusion it is to think one can work better on one's own: the effort of comparing and collaborating is always a guarantee of a more ordered and just service.

And it is clearly attested that it is not the single individual, but rather the Church that gives what the Lord destined for all in his providential goodness.

As regards the irreversibility of the ecumenical choice and the unbreakability of the interreligious choice, which I have often repeated, I want to emphasize on this occasion how they draw nourishment from the movement of ecclesial charity. Such choices are none other than expressions of the same charity, the only one able to spur the steps of dialogue and to open unhoped for horizons.

While we implore the Lord to hasten the day of full unity among Christians and that of the much-awaited interreligious common life based on reciprocal respect, we ask him to bless our endeavours and enlighten us so that our work may never diminish but rather increase ecclesial communion.

May he make us always more attentive so that, far from any type of indifferentism, we may never shirk, in the exercise of charity, the mission of the local Catholic community.

In practice our ecumenical and interreligious sensitivity must always be built on the local Catholic Churches' involvement with the most cordial appreciation of the different ritual expressions.

Then, recalling the words of St Paul: "So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth" (I Cor 3: 7), may we always glimpse through prayer the true source of commitment in charity and by it, verify its authenticity.

The same Apostle's admonition is clear: "Let each man take care how he builds upon it. For no other foundation can any one lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (I Cor 3: 10-11). Being rooted in the Eucharist is indispensable to our work. The future scope of ecclesial charity must be based on the "Eucharistic measure": only what does not contradict, but rather finds and draws nourishment from the mystery of Eucharistic love and by the vision of the cosmos, man and history that flows from it, can guarantee the authenticity of our giving and provide us with a sure foundation on which to build.

It is what I affirmed in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*: "The food of truth demands that we denounce inhumane situations in which people starve to death because of injustice and exploitation, and it gives us renewed strength and courage to work tirelessly in the service of the civilization of love" (n. 90).

But it is precisely the Eucharistic inspiration of our action that will radically challenge man who cannot live by bread alone (cf. Lk 4: 4), proclaiming to him the food of eternal life prepared by God in his Son Jesus.

I entrust these prospects to you with great trust and I renew deep thanks to His Beatitude Cardinal Ignace Moussa Daoud, who has worked hard in these years as President of ROACO.

Invoking the intercession of the Most Holy Mother of God upon your works, I warmly impart the Apostolic Blessing.

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