



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
Friday, 25 June 2010*

*Your Eminences,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,
Dear Members and Friends of ROACO,*

I welcome you with joy at the summer session of the Assembly of Organizations for Aid to the Eastern Churches and I cordially thank Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, Prefect of the [Congregation for the Eastern Churches](#), for his greeting to me. I reciprocate and accompany my greeting to him with remembrance to the Lord, extending it to the Archbishop Secretary, to the Undersecretary and to the Collaborators of the Dicastery, with a cordial thought for the Papal Representative in Jerusalem, in Israel and in Palestine, for the Maronite Archbishop of Cyprus and for the Father Custos of the Holy Land, who are gathered here with the Representatives of the International Catholic Agencies and of Bethlehem University. I express to you all my gratitude and that of the whole Church and in particular of the Eastern and Latin-Rite Pastors and faithful of the territories entrusted to the Eastern Congregation and of all who are emigrants from their homeland.

We wish for everyone in the Holy Land, in Iraq and in the Middle East the gift of a lasting peace based on genuine friendly coexistence. They are born from respect for the rights of individuals, families, communities and peoples, and, by overcoming all religious, cultural and social discrimination. I entrust to God, but likewise to you, the appeal for the Christian East that I launched in Cyprus. As instruments of ecclesial charity, may you collaborate increasingly in building justice in freedom and in peace!

I encourage our brothers and sisters here, who in the East, share the priceless gift of Baptism, to persevere in the faith and, despite the numerous sacrifices, to remain where they were born. At the same time, I urge Eastern migrants not to forget their origins, especially their religious origins, their fidelity and human and Christian credibility depend on them. I would like to pay a special tribute to the Christians who suffer violence for the sake of the Gospel, and I entrust them to the Lord. I always rely on the Leaders of Nations to guarantee in a concrete way without making distinctions and everywhere the public and community profession of the religious convictions of each person.

Last year, on this occasion and because of the [Year for Priests](#), I asked that special attention be paid to the ministers of Christ and of the Church. Abundant fruits of sanctification have matured, not only for priests but also for the whole People of God. Let us implore the Holy Spirit to reinforce the signs of divine benevolence through the gift of vocations, of which the ecclesial community stands in great need in both the West and the East.

I am delighted to note that the Eastern Catholic Churches have collaborated with zeal in the implementation of the objectives of the [Year for Priests](#), and that the relief agencies of ROACO have wished to support them in this context too. You did not only take into consideration the formation of candidates to Sacred Orders, which is a constant priority, but also the needs of the clergy active in pastoral work, such as, for example, a spiritual and cultural updating and aid to priests, especially in the difficult yet at the same time fruitful phase of illness and old age. In this way you help to radiate in the Church and in contemporary society the precious and indispensable gift of priestly service. In the ancient world, the East was the seat of important schools of priestly spirituality. The Church of Antioch, to give an example, produced exceptional Saints: extremely cultured priests who did not put themselves but Christ and the Apostles in the front line. They devoted themselves without reserve to proclaiming the word and to the celebration of the divine mysteries. They were in a condition to stir people's consciences profoundly, reaching depths they would have been unable to fathom with merely human means.

Dear friends, with your commitment you contribute above all to enabling priests of the Eastern Churches in our day and age to be an echo of this spiritual heritage. This will give a strong impetus to the network of educational and social institutions, which is rightly your province, so that it will branch out into a sound pastoral perspective. When priests are guided in their service by a truly spiritual motivation then lay people too are strengthened in their commitment to manage temporal matters in accordance with their Christian vocation.

We now have the common task of preparing for the Special Assembly for the Middle East of the Synod of Bishops. I thank God for this initiative, which is already producing the beneficial fruits of "communion and witness" for which the Synod was initially convoked. Last year at Castel Gandolfo, I had the pleasure of announcing this Synodal Assembly during a meeting of fraternal prayer and reflection with the Patriarchs and Major Archbishops of the Eastern Churches. During

my recent Visit to Cyprus, which I recall with deep gratitude to God and to those who welcomed me, I consigned the *Instrumentum Laboris* of this Special Assembly to representatives of the Episcopate of the Middle East. I am pleased at the broad cooperation provided thus far by the Eastern Churches and for the work which, from the beginning ROACO has done and continues to do for this historical event. This joint effort will have fruitful results because of the presence of your representatives at this episcopal gathering and your ongoing relationship with the Congregation for the Eastern Churches.

Dear friends, I ask you to contribute with your agencies to keeping alive among the Christians of the East "the hope that does not disappoint" (Rom 5: 5; cf. *Instrumentum Laboris*, Conclusions). In the "little flock" (Lk 12: 32) that they make up, the future of God and the "hard way" that they are taking is described in the Gospel as "the way... that leads to life" (Mt 7: 13-14). Let us always be beside them! Trusting in the intercession of the Most Holy Mother of God and of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, I commend to the Lord the benefactors, friends and collaborators, alive or deceased, linked in various ways with ROACO, with a special remembrance of Bishop Padovese, who died recently, while I impart to each one of you, members and supporters of the international Agencies, and to all the beloved Eastern Catholic Churches, the comfort of the Apostolic Blessing.

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