



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL

FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNITY *To my Venerable Brother Cardinal Edward I. Cassidy*

President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity I am particularly pleased to send my greetings to the distinguished representatives of the Christian Churches and Confessions who are taking part in the meeting "*Sister Churches, Brother Peoples*". This convention is linked in spirit with that of Assisi, which continues to bear precious fruits of peace and dialogue among Christians and among the members of the other great world religions. I thank the Sant'Egidio Community for courageously and boldly supporting this unusual pilgrimage which continues to visit various cities of the world so that men and women will realize that they are brothers and sisters who belong to the same human family. At the Interreligious Assembly which was held at the Vatican last October, I said to the Christians present: "Those of us who are Christians believe that this hope is a gift of the Holy Spirit, who calls us to widen our horizons, to look beyond our own personal needs and the needs of our particular communities, to the unity of the whole human family.... From this spiritual awareness spring compassion and generosity, humility and modesty, courage and perseverance. These are qualities that humanity needs more than ever as it moves into the new millennium" (*Closing Address at the Interreligious Assembly, St Peter's Square, 28 October; L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 3 November 1999, p. 2). I am therefore particularly pleased that this assembly of Christians is being held in Genoa in order to reflect, to pray and to strengthen our commitment to continue on the path of unity. I would first of all like to greet the Patriarchs and representatives of the various Eastern Churches gathered here. Their presence, together with that of the Catholic Church's representatives, is a comfort and an incentive to everyone. I gladly join in the prayer and fraternal sentiments that pulsate in the hearts of all, and at the same time offer thanks to God for the fruits which ecumenical dialogue has borne in recent years. In the Encyclical *Ut unum sint*, I said with particular reference to this century now coming to an end that "it is the first time in history that efforts on behalf of Christian unity have taken on such great proportions and have become so extensive" (n. 41). It has happened that "Christians of one confession no longer consider other Christians as enemies or strangers but see them as brothers and sisters" (n. 42). Indeed, rediscovered brotherhood among Christians is one of the most precious fruits of the ecumenical dialogue. As the psalmist sings, it enables us to experience the joy of brothers who dwell in unity (cf. *Ps* 133 [132]: 1) and makes us even more aware of how serious is the sin of division, a scandal for us and for the world. Therefore we cannot delay our steps towards the unity of the Churches. Every delay, in fact, not only risks lessening our fraternal joy, but makes us accomplices of the divisions that are growing more acute in various parts of the world. The more brotherhood is strengthened between the Churches, the more people will be encouraged to recognize one another as brothers and sisters. Brotherhood, in fact, is an energy that knows no bounds and bears fruit for the whole human race. In this spirit, which I have chosen to call the "spirit of Assisi", I would like to greet you, Your Eminence, and to ask you to remember me affectionately to the beloved Archdiocese of Genoa and to its

Archbishop, Cardinal Dionigi Tettamanzi, as well as to the Sant'Egidio Community, which jointly organized this meeting. I also extend a cordial greeting to all the participants, assuring them of a remembrance in my prayer that we can cross the threshold of the new century in brotherly love as servants of Christ and his Gospel. I accompany these wishes with my Apostolic Blessing. *From the Vatican, 11 November 1999.* **JOHN PAUL II**

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