



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II
TO HIS BEATITUDE CHRISTODOULOS,
ARCHBISHOP OF ATHENS AND ALL GREECE**

*To His Beatitude Christodoulos
Archbishop of Athens and All Greece*

"Persevere in brotherly love. Do not neglect hospitality" (Heb 13,1-2).

Recalling this exhortation from the Letter to the Hebrews to build our relations on that brotherly love that we must nourish for one another, I have the joy of sending you this Message, Your Beatitude, through Cardinal Walter Kasper and the Delegation of the Holy See which is visiting the Orthodox Church of Greece.

The representatives of the Holy See, invited by Your Beatitude to visit Athens, intend in this way to return the kind visit of the Delegation of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church of Greece to Rome in March last year. This is also a concrete sign of our will to *persevere in brotherly love*. We do not forget that duty of hospitality which must distinguish relations between Christians. Wherever they meet one another, they can meet and rediscover one another as brothers in Christ. Together, they can *set out anew from Christ*.

The Delegation of the Holy See will then be able to resume the topics we proposed for the consideration of Europe in our Common Declaration on the Areopagus of Athens on 4 May 2001, and continue the fruitful exchanges between the representatives of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church of Greece and those in charge of the various offices and institutions of the Holy See, which took place last March in Rome.

All this is a cause of joy and pleasure for me. The Catholic Church knows she has a mission to fulfil on the continent of Europe, at this time in history, and the responsibility she perceives coincides with that of the Orthodox Church of Greece. This responsibility constitutes the common

ground on which to develop reciprocal collaboration. The future of Europe is so important that it impels us to go beyond our past of divisions, misunderstandings and reciprocal drifting apart. What is at stake is the promotion in Europe, here and now, of human and religious values, of the recognition of the Churches and Ecclesial Communities, of the protection of the sacredness of life and of the safeguard of creation. We are motivated by the deep conviction that the "old continent" must not lose the Christian riches of its cultural heritage, and must not forego any of what made it great in the past. We are conscious of the need to give a new and more decisive form to our witness of faith, so that the Christian roots of Europe may thrive on new sap, the sap of our more harmonious witness.

This collaboration, to be developed and increased, could be an effective remedy to the ideological relativism that is so widespread in Europe, to an ethical pluralism that forgets the perennial values and to a form of globalization that leaves the human being dissatisfied because it erodes the legitimate differences that have enabled the spread of so many treasures in the East and West of Europe. It is up to us to work together to achieve these important and urgent objectives.

Your Beatitude, I hope that this new contact may inspire concrete forms of cooperation between us. The Church of Rome is available for reciprocal collaboration, conscious of the need to integrate the Greek, Latin and Slav traditions of contemporary Europe, so that they may be joined together in a harmonious whole.

With these sentiments, I assure Your Beatitude of my brotherly love.

From the Vatican, 8 February 2003.

JOHN PAUL II