



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO A GROUP OF ORTHODOX STUDENTS** 19 May 1979

Beloved Students,

I extend to you a warm welcome and my most cordial greeting. Theologians engaged in various ways in service of your Church, you have come to this City to specialize and, at the same time, to get to know directly the great effort of theological reflection and pastoral renewal carried out at all levels of the life of the Catholic Church, especially after the recent Council. An effort of spiritual deepening, purifying tension towards what is essential, increasingly dynamic and consistent faithfulness to our one Lord and to all aspects of his message of salvation, which we must announce to the men and women of today.

In this vast field of the mission of the Church in the modern world, the possibilities of collaboration between the Catholic Church and the venerable Orthodox Churches, to which you belong, are vast, since they spring from the communion which, although not yet full, already unites us. Then, too, it is just by endeavouring to live and present together the whole reality of the Gospel given to the Church and handed down to us, from generation to generation, that we will be able to dispel and overcome better the divergences inherited from the incomprehension of the past.

This collaboration is not only possible immediately, but it is necessary, if we really wish to be faithful to Christ. He wants our unity. He prayed for our unity. Today more than ever, in a world that demands authenticity and consistency, our division is an intolerable counter-testimony. It is as though we denied in our lives what we profess and proclaim.

I wished to communicate these thoughts to you, on receiving you here for the first time, to ask you to tell your Bishops and your Patriarchs my firm determination to collaborate with them to progress towards full unity, manifesting in the life of our Churches that unity that already exists among us. That charity without deception, in which we have found ourselves again and met again in recent years, must become inventive and courageous to find safe and rapid paths which will lead us to that full communion which will seal our faithfulness to our one Lord.

This is the message I ask you to transmit to those who have sent you to study in the various

Institutes of the Church of Rome, the Church that presides over charity.

For you, dear students, I hope that this stay in Rome will be a fruitful one, above all for your growth in Christ under the action of the Holy Spirit. A strong personal spiritual life is the indispensable condition for all theological work and the spring at which every true ecclesial service must continually be nourished and renewed. And may this stay be fruitful also for your preparation for the tasks that will be entrusted to you in the future.

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