



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO HIS HOLINESS MAR DINKHA IV, CATHOLICOS-PATRIARCH
OF THE ASSYRIAN CHURCH OF THE EAST**

Friday, 11 November 1994 *Your Holiness*, 1. Exactly ten years have passed since I had the joy of welcoming you here on your first official visit to this Apostolic See. This pleasure is renewed today as you are accompanied by a delegation of eminent Bishops from your Holy Synod. In the words of the Apostle Paul, I wish you "grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord" (1 Tim. 1:2). At the time of your previous visit, you shared with me your ardent wish that a declaration of the Pope of Rome and of the Catholicos-Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East would one day be able to express our two Churches' common faith in Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary. Historians and theologians immediately set about examining very carefully the Christological consequences of the Council of Ephesus. In an atmosphere of fraternity and mutual confidence, a fruitful dialogue has enabled us to overcome the ambiguities and misunderstandings of the past. Today, we have arrived at the *Common Christological Declaration* which we are about to sign together. This constitutes an important witness which will not fail to cause rejoicing among the faithful of our two Churches. 2. For my part, I am confident that this agreement will open up wide horizons at the level of *pastoral collaboration*. Of great importance will be the strengthening of co-operation in the spiritual and theological formation of future priests and responsible laity. The same applies to catechesis of children and of young people: we must apply all possible concern in this direction. Moreover, in order to "share with the saints who are in need" (Rom. 12:13), should we not also seek to coordinate our efforts to welcome with dignity and to help effectively those who are uprooted from their homeland or are forced to emigrate because of the severe trials which they have endured (cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 18)? We do not forget the long night of *suffering* endured by your *Eastern Syriac communities*, which were scattered, persecuted and massacred down the centuries for professing the name of Christ. Those who despite everything have remained in their countries in the Middle East-and who have had to face war and unjust deprivation of every kind-should know that the Holy See will employ the means at its disposal, particularly through its contacts with Governments and International Organizations, to lessen their sufferings and if possible make them cease. Finally, a Church so distinguished in its past for its heroism as regards fidelity to the faith cannot remain marginalized in the Christian world, and especially among the Churches of the Middle East. We hope to be able to help you break down any isolation that still exists. 3. From my contacts with your brother Chaldean Bishops, whom I am meeting again in these days, I am able to assure you that they are ready to foster *the great movement towards the restoration of the unity of all Christians*, in accordance with the principles of the Decree on Ecumenism of the Second Vatican Council. They are truly concerned for "the preservation in a communion of faith and charity of those family ties which ought to exist between local Churches, as between sisters" (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 14). We all recognize that it is of supreme importance to understand, venerate, preserve and foster the rich heritage of each of our Churches, and that a diversity of customs and observances is in no way an

obstacle to unity. This diversity includes the power of our Churches to govern themselves according to their own disciplines and to keep certain differences in theological expressions which, as we have verified, are often complementary rather than conflicting (cf. *ibid.*, 15-17). In all things and in whatever circumstance, it is essential that we foster between ourselves mutual respect and a profound spirit of charity such as to exclude all forms of rivalry (cf. *ibid.*, 18).4. Your Holiness and Beloved Brothers: here then is the spirit in which the Catholic Church proposes this exchange of gifts. Together let us ask the Most Holy Trinity, Model of true Unity within diversity, to strengthen our hearts so that we will respond to the call for one visible Church of God, a Church truly universal and sent forth to the whole world, that the world may be converted to the Gospel and so be saved, to the glory of God. May God who has begun this good work in us bring it to completion in Christ Jesus (cf. Phil. 1:6). Amen. © Copyright 1994 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

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