

# The Meeting of the East and the West

Following is the text of the address given by Pope John Paul II on meeting with Patriarch Dimitrios I at the Phanar in Istanbul.

Blessed be the Lord, who has granted us the grace and the joy of this meeting here, at your patriarchal see.



It is with deep affection and brotherly esteem that I greet you, Your Holiness, as well as the Holy Synod that surrounds you, and, through your person, I greet all the Churches that you represent.

I cannot hide my joy to be in this land of very ancient Christian traditions and in this city rich in history, civilization and art, which make it figure among the most beautiful in the world. Today as yesterday, for Christians of the whole world accustomed to read and meditate on the New Testament writings, these places are familiar, and likewise the names of the first Christian communities of many cities which are in the territory of modern Turkey.

Christ "is our peace," St. Paul writes to the first Christians of Ephesus, and he adds: "God who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with him..."

This proclamation of faith in the divine economy for the salvation of men rings out in this land, re-echoes and is renewed from generation to generation. And it is destined to spread to the ends of the earth.

The fundamental dogmas of Christian faith, of the Trinity and of the incarnate Word of God, born of the Virgin Mary, were defined by the Ecumenical Councils which were held in this city or in neighboring cities. The very formulation of our profession of Faith, the Creed, took place in these first Councils celebrated together by the East and the West. Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus, Chalcedon, are names known to all Christians. They are particularly familiar to those

who pray, who study and who work in different ways for full unity between our sister-Churches.

Not only have we had in common these decisive Councils, pauses, as it were, in the life of the Church, but for a millennium these two sister-Churches have grown together and developed their great vital traditions.

The visit I am paying today is intended to signify a meeting in the common apostolic faith, to walk together towards this full unity which sad historical circumstances have wounded, especially in the course of the second millennium. How could I fail to express our firm hope in God in order that a new era may dawn?

For all these reasons I am happy, Your Holiness, to be here to express the deep consideration and the brotherly solidarity of the Catholic Church for the Eastern Orthodox Churches.

I thank you here and now for the warmth of your welcome.

Following is the text of the address given by the Ecumenical Patriarch, His Holiness Dimitrios I.

It is glorifying God that we receive you today in the town of the Mother of God, where there is this church of her Son, our common Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, this church which has been for long centuries a sacred center of the formulation, preservation, confession and evangelization of the Christian faith.

Your coming here, full of Christian charity and simplicity, means far more than a mere meeting between two local bishops; we consider it a meeting of the Western and Eastern Churches.

For this reason the joy we feel on the occasion of this exceptional and historic visit of Your Holiness, is not limited either to this church or to this day, for our meeting is set in the universality and eternity of the divine redemption of mankind.

The meeting takes place locally but it is connected geographically according to the ecclesiastical for-

mulation with the whole West and East — and according to the modern geographical formulation of ecumenism — it is connected also with the North and South.

The meeting takes place today, but it is connected with the distant past, the past of the common Apostles, the common Fathers, the common Martyrs and Confessors, the Ecumenical Councils, celebration on the same altar and communion in the same chalice. It is connected also with the recent past, the past of our two great predecessors, Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras I. Moreover this meeting today is intended for God's future — a future which will again live unity, again common confession, again full communion in the divine Eucharist.

Considering this historic visit in this perspective, both local and temporal, we recognize the greatness of your step and we thank you for it.

We believe that at this moment the Lord is present among us here, and that the Paraclete is upon us, that the two brothers Peter and Andrew are rejoicing with us — that the spirits of the common Fathers and Martyrs are hovering over us, to inspire us. But at the same time we feel arriving right in front of us, right in front of our responsibility, the anxious expectation of divided Christians, the anguish of the man without recognized human rights, without freedom, without justice, without bread, medical care, without education, without security and without peace.

It is for this reason that we consider the blessed presence of Your Holiness here and our meeting an expression of God's will, a challenge and an invitation of the world to which we must respond. It is for this reason that this doxological Church receives you in this doxology.

For this meeting is a ray of divine light: it is for the glory of God, for the peace of God with man as well as peace among men, and also for the reign of goodwill among all men of this earth.

Glory to God in the Highest — and peace to men of goodwill on earth.

Welcome, holy brother.

## New View of Monasteries Is Emerging

By Religious News Service

Monasteries. Cloistered shelters from the world where monks and nuns study, pray, handicraft, and do other things not related directly to the hustle and bustle of "everyday life." Centers of quiet contemplation and otherworldly experience.



Special  
Report

This may still be the popular conception of monastic life, and to some extent remains representative of certain aspects of it. But today's monasteries are much more than this — in many cases they have become ventures in ecumenism and social action as well as centers of spirituality.

Perhaps the most famous ecumenical monastic community is the Community of Taize, on a hilltop in France near the ruins of the great medieval abbey of Cluny. It was founded in 1944 by three young Protestant students, and has become famous for its youth councils, which began in 1974.

The original aim of Taize was to "end the scandal of Christians who all profess to love their neighbor but who live in separation." Gradually, it became a center of liturgical renewal in French Protestantism, compiling an "evangelical and ecumenical prayer book" which incorporated some elements from Greek Orthodox rites.

Today the Taize community includes Anglicans, Lutherans and Roman Catholics as well as Reformed Church members. It has set up small communities in Indonesia, Bangladesh and Brazil as witness to the "convergence of prayer and social justice."

Brother Leonard, who has been at Taize since the early 1960s and is a member of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, says these small communities, known as fraternities, are "ready to join with the poor and oppressed in the process of conscientization."

He explains that persons who go to Taize from various Christian traditions do not generally lose their distinctive emphases in an ecumenical mush, but rather "open up the riches of the communities from which they come" to others whose Christian experience has been different.

Another ecumenical monastic center is the Community of the Transfiguration in the small mining town of Roslin, seven miles out of Edinburgh, Scotland. Kevin Bean, a former member of the community who now lives with the evangelical Sojourners Fellowship in Washington, D.C., describes it as "a remarkable combination of elements: church tradition and modern practice, a contemplative prayer life and prophetic vision, biblical orthodoxy and radical discipleship, a global vision and a local parish orientation."

Writing in Sojourners magazine, Bean relates that "the work of the Community of Transfiguration is first and foremost prayer and devotion to the love of God. The members engage in other occupations to support themselves, but this work may never overshadow the essential life in prayer and the commitment to live with joy, simplicity and compassion."

The community, which was founded in 1965, ministers to the homeless, drug addicts, troubled clergy, and individuals in mental distress. Its members participate in anti-nuclear demonstrations and teach about social injustices. It is based on the "skete" form of Christian community, a term based on a Greek work which means "a training place for the warfare of the spirit."

According to Bean, the advantage of the skete form of life is that it "combines solitude, community, and involvement in society in a way that is so integrated that each element forms the ground of the other two."

What about more traditional monastic communities in the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions? How are they faring in a day of rapid religious and social change?

Dom (Abbot) Columban Bissey, OSCO, of Melleray Abbey in France, a monastic "ombudsman" and a

"spiritual father" to 1,400 Trappist monks around the world, says there is a "new and healthier spirit in Catholic monasteries today because of Vatican II."

He says that before Vatican II there was a heavy emphasis on conformity and a tendency to "depersonalize" monks and nuns.

But now, he said, "the person has come into his own, individual spirit and tendencies are seen as precious and to be cultivated."

The Trappist life, along with the Carthusians and the cloistered Carmelites, is the strictest in the Church. The monks work at hard physical labor for at least four or five hours a day, and spend many hours in prayer and study and in chanting the divine office in the monastery church.

Eastern Orthodoxy is in many ways the most conservative and resistant to change of the branches of Christianity. It might therefore be assumed that Orthodox monasteries would be failing to adapt to modern times — but such is not the case.

Delegates to a conference on Orthodox monasticism, held in Cairo last spring by the World Council of Churches, declared that "in the Orthodox churches one is convinced that the renewal of spiritual life today should begin with a revitalization of our monastic communities."

An official of the interdenominational World Association of Christian Communication, based in London, England, reports that Eastern Orthodox communities are providing an important person-to-person communications link in Communist East Europe where Christian publications and broadcasts are severely restricted if not banned outright.

The Rev. Albert Manuel, director of the group's media unit, says that "the dimension of person-to-person Christian communication is warmly and enthusiastically carried on in monasteries, reflecting the ultimate dimension of the giving of God Himself through Christ."