



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS
BENEDICT XVI
TO TURKEY
(NOVEMBER 28 - DECEMBER 1, 2006)

**DIVINE LITURGY OF SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM
ON THE FEAST OF SAINT ANDREW THE APOSTLE**

HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER

*Patriarchal Church of Saint George in the Phanar, Istanbul
Thursday, 30 November 2006*

This Divine Liturgy celebrated on the Feast of Saint Andrew the Apostle, Patron Saint of the Church of Constantinople, brings us back to the early Church, to the age of the Apostles. The Gospels of Mark and Matthew relate how Jesus called the two brothers, Simon, whom Jesus calls Cephas or Peter, and Andrew: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (*Mt 4:19, Mk 1:17*). The Fourth Gospel also presents Andrew as the first to be called, "*ho protoklitos*", as he is known in the Byzantine tradition. It is Andrew who then brings his brother Simon to Jesus (cf. *Jn 1:40f.*).

Today, in this Patriarchal Church of Saint George, we are able to experience once again the communion and call of the two brothers, Simon Peter and Andrew, in the meeting of the Successor of Peter and his Brother in the episcopal ministry, the head of this Church traditionally founded by the Apostle Andrew. Our fraternal encounter highlights the special relationship uniting the Churches of Rome and Constantinople as Sister Churches.

With heartfelt joy we thank God for granting new vitality to the relationship that has developed since the memorable [meeting in Jerusalem in January 1964](#) between our predecessors, Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras. Their exchange of letters, published in the volume entitled *Tomos Agapis*, testifies to the depth of the bonds that grew between them, bonds mirrored in the

relationship between the Sister Churches of Rome and Constantinople.

On 7 December 1965, the eve of the final session of the Second Vatican Council, our venerable predecessors took a new and unique and unforgettable step in the Patriarchal Church of Saint George and the Basilica of Saint Peter in the Vatican respectively: they removed from the memory of the Church the tragic excommunications of 1054. In this way they confirmed a decisive shift in our relationship. Since then, many other important steps have been taken along the path of mutual rapprochement. I recall in particular the visit of my predecessor, Pope John Paul II, to Constantinople in 1979, and the visits to Rome of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I.

In that same spirit, my presence here today is meant to renew our commitment to advancing along the road towards the re-establishment – by God’s grace – of full communion between the Church of Rome and the Church of Constantinople. I can assure you that the Catholic Church is willing to do everything possible to overcome obstacles and to seek, together with our Orthodox brothers and sisters, ever more effective means of pastoral cooperation to this end.

The two brothers, Simon, called Peter, and Andrew, were fishermen whom Jesus called to become fishers of men. The Risen Lord, before his Ascension, sent them out together with the other Apostles with the mission of making all nations his disciples, baptizing them and proclaiming his teachings (cf. *Mt 28:19ff.*; *Lk 24:47*; *Acts 1:8*).

This charge left us by the holy brothers Peter and Andrew is far from finished. On the contrary, today it is even more urgent and necessary. For it looks not only to those cultures which have been touched only marginally by the Gospel message, but also to long-established European cultures deeply grounded in the Christian tradition. The process of secularization has weakened the hold of that tradition; indeed, it is being called into question, and even rejected. In the face of this reality, we are called, together with all other Christian communities, to renew Europe’s awareness of its Christian roots, traditions and values, giving them new vitality.

Our efforts to build closer ties between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches are a part of this missionary task. The divisions which exist among Christians are a scandal to the world and an obstacle to the proclamation of the Gospel. On the eve of his passion and death, the Lord, surrounded by his disciples, prayed fervently that all may be one, so that the world may believe (cf. *Jn 17:21*). It is only through brotherly communion between Christians and through their mutual love that the message of God’s love for each and every man and woman will become credible. Anyone who casts a realistic glance on the Christian world today will see the urgency of this witness.

Simon Peter and Andrew were called together to become fishers of men. This same task, however, took on a different form for each of the brothers. Simon, notwithstanding his human weakness, was called “Peter”, the “rock” on which the Church was to be built; to him in a particular

way were entrusted the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven (cf. *Mt* 16:18). His journey would take him from Jerusalem to Antioch, and from Antioch to Rome, so that in that City he might exercise a universal responsibility. The issue of the universal service of Peter and his Successors has unfortunately given rise to our differences of opinion, which we hope to overcome, thanks also to the theological dialogue which has been recently resumed.

My venerable predecessor, the Servant of God Pope John Paul II, spoke of the mercy that characterizes Peter's service of unity, a mercy which Peter himself was the first to experience (Encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, 91). It is on this basis that Pope John Paul extended an invitation to enter into a fraternal dialogue aimed at identifying ways in which the Petrine ministry might be exercised today, while respecting its nature and essence, so as to "accomplish a service of love recognized by all concerned" (*ibid.*, 95). It is my desire today to recall and renew this invitation.

Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, received another task from the Lord, one which his very name suggests. As one who spoke the Greek language, he became – together with Philip – the Apostle of the encounter with the Greeks who came to Jesus (cf. *Jn* 12:20ff.). Tradition tells us that he was a missionary not only in Asia Minor and the territories south of the Black Sea, that is, in this very region, but also in Greece, where he suffered martyrdom.

The Apostle Andrew, therefore, represents the meeting between early Christianity and Greek culture. This encounter, particularly in Asia Minor, became possible thanks especially to the great Cappadocian Fathers, who enriched the liturgy, theology and spirituality of both the Eastern and the Western Churches. The Christian message, like the grain of wheat (cf. *Jn* 12:24), fell on this land and bore much fruit. We must be profoundly grateful for the heritage that emerged from the fruitful encounter between the Christian message and Hellenic culture. It has had an enduring impact on the Churches of East and West. The Greek Fathers have left us a store of treasure from which the Church continues to draw riches old and new (cf. *Mt* 13:52).

The lesson of the grain of wheat that dies in order to bear fruit also has a parallel in the life of Saint Andrew. Tradition tells us that he followed the fate of his Lord and Master, ending his days in Patras, Greece. Like Peter, he endured martyrdom on a cross, the diagonal cross that we venerate today as the cross of Saint Andrew. From his example we learn that the path of each single Christian, like that of the Church as a whole, leads to new life, to eternal life, through the imitation of Christ and the experience of his cross.

In the course of history, both the Church of Rome and the Church of Constantinople have often experienced the lesson of the grain of wheat. Together we venerate many of the same martyrs whose blood, in the celebrated words of Tertullian, became the seed of new Christians (*Apologeticum*, 50, 13). With them, we share the same hope that impels the Church to "press forward, like a stranger in a foreign land, amid the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God" (*Lumen Gentium*, 8, cf. Saint Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, XVIII, 51, 2). For its part, the century

that has just ended also saw courageous witnesses to the faith, in both East and West. Even now, there are many such witnesses in different parts of the world. We remember them in our prayer and, in whatever way we can, we offer them our support, as we urge all world leaders to respect religious freedom as a fundamental human right.

The Divine Liturgy in which we have participated was celebrated according to the rite of Saint John Chrysostom. The cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ have been made mystically present. For us Christians this is a source and sign of constantly renewed hope. We find that hope beautifully expressed in the ancient text known as the *Passion of Saint Andrew*: “I greet you, O Cross, consecrated by the Body of Christ and adorned by His limbs as by precious pearls ... May the faithful know your joy, and the gifts you hold in store ...”.

This faith in the redeeming death of Jesus on the cross, and this hope which the Risen Christ offers to the whole human family, are shared by all of us, Orthodox and Catholics alike. May our daily prayer and activity be inspired by a fervent desire not only to be present at the Divine Liturgy, but to be able to celebrate it together, to take part in the one table of the Lord, sharing the same bread and the same chalice. May our encounter today serve as an impetus and joyful anticipation of the gift of full communion. And may the Spirit of God accompany us on our journey!

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