



The Holy See

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

VISIT TO THE ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC PATRIARCHATE AND
MEETING WITH HIS BEATITUDE PATRIARCH MESROB II

GREETING OF THE HOLY FATHER

*Armenian Apostolic Cathedral, Istanbul
Thursday, 30 November 2006*

Dear Brother in Christ,

I am pleased to have this opportunity to meet Your Beatitude in this very place where Patriarch Shnork Kalustian welcomed my predecessors Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II. With great affection I greet the entire Armenian Apostolic community over which you preside as shepherd and spiritual father. My fraternal greeting goes also to His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and *Catholicos* of all Armenians, and the hierarchy of the Armenian Apostolic Church. I give thanks to God for the Christian faith and witness of the Armenian people, transmitted from one generation to the next, often in very tragic circumstances such as those experienced in the last century.

Our meeting is more than a simple gesture of ecumenical courtesy and friendship. It is a sign of our shared hope in God's promises and our desire to see fulfilled the prayer that Jesus offered for his disciples on the eve of his suffering and death: "that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I in you, may they also be one in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (*Jn 17:21*). Jesus gave his life on the Cross to gather into one the dispersed children of God, to break down the walls of division. Through the sacrament of Baptism, we have been incorporated into the Body of Christ, the Church. The tragic divisions which, over time, have arisen among

Christ's followers openly contradict the Lord's will, give scandal to the world and damage that most holy cause, the preaching of the Gospel to every creature (cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 1). Precisely by the witness of their faith and love, Christians are called to offer a radiant sign of hope and consolation to this world, so marked by conflicts and tensions. We must continue therefore to do everything possible to heal the wounds of separation and to hasten the work of rebuilding Christian unity. May we be guided in this urgent task by the light and strength of the Holy Spirit.

In this respect I can only offer heartfelt thanks to the Lord for the deeper fraternal relationship that has developed between the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Catholic Church. In the thirteenth century, Nerses of Lambron, one of the great Doctors of the Armenian Church, wrote these words of encouragement: "Now, since we all need peace with God, let its foundation be harmony among the brethren. We have prayed to God for peace and continue to do so. Look, he is now giving it to us as a gift: let us welcome it! We asked the Lord to make his holy Church solid, and he has willingly heard our plea. Let us climb therefore the mountain of the Gospel faith!" (*Synodal Discourse*). These words of Nerses have lost nothing of their power. Together let us continue to pray for the unity of all Christians, so that, by receiving this gift from above with open hearts, we may be ever more convincing witnesses of the truth of the Gospel and better servants of the Church's mission.

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