



The Holy See

JOHN PAUL II

ANGELUS

Sunday, 27 June 2004

1. The day after tomorrow, 29 June, we will be celebrating the Solemnity of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul. On that happy occasion I will have the joy of welcoming to the Vatican once again His Holiness Bartholomew I, Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. We intend to commemorate together the *historical encounter* between our venerable Predecessors, *Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras I*, who exchanged an unforgettable embrace of brotherhood and peace in Jerusalem. This happened during the pilgrimage there of the Servant of God Paul VI in 1964, while the Second Vatican Council was under way.

2. It was precisely in November of that same year that the Council Fathers approved the Decree *Unitatis Redintegratio*. The Decree solemnly declares that promoting Christian unity is one of the Council's main priorities, and that ecclesial institutions and communities must make every effort in striving for it (cf. nn. 1, 18).

In this period, despite the difficulties that still remain, ecumenism has made notable headway and an ecumenical sensitivity has developed in the People of God. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity has become part of the normal liturgical and pastoral programme of dioceses and parishes. Many associations and ecclesial communities pay constant attention to fostering reciprocal knowledge and friendship among Christians of different denominations, so that they are growing ever closer in works of solidarity, justice and peace.

3. While we prepare to welcome the Ecumenical Patriarch, I invite everyone to pray for the full unity of Christians, invoking the intercession of the Virgin Mary. May the Holy Mother of God, to whom Christians of the East are so devoted, obtain in particular that the memory of the embrace of Paul VI and Athenagoras I may encourage a renewed commitment of communion between

Catholics and Orthodox.

After the Angelus

Yesterday, *the World Day against torture* was celebrated. May the common commitment of the institutions and citizens totally ban this intolerable violation of human rights which is radically opposed to human dignity.

I greet *the Israeli and Palestinian children* who with their families have received hospitality in Naples. Together they want to tell the world that they desire peace and reconciliation for the Holy Land. Their words have an even greater impact because *members of their families*, both Palestinian and Israeli, *have been victims of the current war*. It is the duty of one and all not to disappoint these children and to help increase their confidence in God and others.

I greet the pilgrims who have come here, especially the participants in the National Meeting of the Third Order Franciscans on the 25th anniversary of the Rule that Paul VI gave them.

I also greet choir members of the city of Rosolini who have come on pilgrimage to the memorial places of the Apostles and the holy Roman Protomartyrs.

I wish a good Sunday to you all!

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