



The Holy See

**LETTER OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PATRIARCH OF THE BULGARIAN
ORTHODOX CHURCH** *To His Beatitude Maxim,*

Patriarch of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church I have received the letter of 28 March which Your Beatitude addressed to me, in your own name and also on behalf of the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, pleading the cause of Mr Sergey Antonov, your fellow-citizen, who is detained in an Italian prison by reason of the accusations made against him by the person who carried out the attack on me on 13 May 1981. I give thanks to God for the dialogue and the fraternal relationships which, as you mention, are steadily developing between our Churches and which have made possible the confident appeal which Your Beatitude and the Holy Synod have addressed to me in a question which is certainly regrettable and which - by reason of the anxiety and sufferings of the people in various ways involved - cannot leave me unmoved. I have therefore read with close attention your words on behalf of Mr Antonov, and I well understand and I share the sentiments of Christian charity which have inspired the humanitarian gesture of Your Beatitude and of the other Members of the Holy Synod. In order to take into account the desire expressed by the Bulgarian Government Authorities, the Holy See had informed the Italian Government of its concern regarding this humanitarian case. Now, in consideration of the initiative of Your Beatitude and of the Holy Synod, a further approach has been made to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Italian Government has, in its turn, communicated that it is bound to observe the objective limits of its constitutional powers, which do not permit it to interfere in the judgment which belongs exclusively to the Judiciary. The Government has however taken steps to speed up the proceedings concerning Mr Antonov. I avail myself of the occasion to renew to Your Beatitude the expression of my cordial and fraternal sentiments, and to offer once again to you and to the Members of the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church my sincere best wishes of joy and peace at this holy Easter season. *From the Vatican, 30 April 1984.* **IOANNES PAULUS PP. II** © Copyright 1984 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana