



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II DURING HIS VISIT TO THE UKRAINIAN CATHEDRAL

*Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Philadelphia
Thursday, 4 October 1979*

Sława Isusu Chrystu!

Z tym chrystyjanskym przywitom zwertajusia do was, dorohi Bratia i Sestry, u waszjy ridnij ukrajinskij mowi, zaky zacznu howoryty do was po anglijsky.

W perszu czerhu wytaju wsich tut prysutnych Władyk, tak Filadelfijskoji jak też Pitsburgskoji mytropoliji.

Zokrema wytaju nowoimenowanoho Mytropolyta Filadelfiji.

Wytaju wsich dorohych swiaszczenykiw, monachiw i monachyń.

Serdeczno wytaju was wsich dorohych wirnych ukrajinskoji Filadelfijskoji mytropoliji, szczo zibralysia tut, u tomu chrami Preświatoji Bohorodyci, szczo prywytaty w mojj osobi naslidnyka Światoho Petra na Rymśkim Prestoli, Chrystowoho Namistnyka na zemli.

Dla was wsich, dorohi Bratia i Sestry, blahaju obylnych lask wid Wsemohuczoho Boha, za mołytwamy Neporoczno Zaczatoji Diwy Mariji, jakij pryswiaczona wasza katedra.

Wsich was blahosłowlu zo szczyroho sercia.

Sława Isusu Chrystu !

Dear brothers and sisters,

"Now in Christ Jesus ... you are citizens like all the saints, and part of God's household. You are part of a building that has the apostles and prophets for its foundations, and Christ Jesus himself for its main cornerstone" (*Eph 2 :13, 19-20*). With these words the Apostle Paul reminded the Ephesians of the tremendous blessing they had received in becoming members of the Church. And those words are still true today. You are part of the household of God. You, members of the Ukrainian tradition, are part of a building that has the apostles and prophets for its foundations, and Christ Jesus himself for its main cornerstone. This has all occurred according to the providential plan of God.

Several years ago, my beloved predecessor, Paul VI, gave a stone from the tomb of Saint Peter to be included in the construction of this beautiful Cathedral dedicated to Mary Immaculate. Pope Paul intended this gift to be a visible symbol of the love and esteem of the Apostolic See of Rome for the Ukrainian Church. At the same time, this stone was meant to serve as a sign of the fidelity of the Ukrainian Church to the See of Peter. In this profound symbolic gesture, Paul VI was re-affirming the teaching of the Apostle Paul in the letter to the Ephesians.

Today, as successor to Paul VI in the Chair of Saint Peter, I come to visit you in this magnificent new Cathedral. I am happy for this opportunity. I welcome the occasion to assure you, as universal pastor of the Church, that all who have inherited the Ukrainian tradition have an important and distinguished part to fulfill in the Catholic Church.

As history testifies, the Church developed a number of rites and traditions as in the course of time she spread from Jerusalem to the nations and took flesh in the language, culture and human traditions of the individual peoples who accepted the Gospel with open hearts. These various rites and traditions, far from being a sign of deviation, infidelity or disunity, were in fact unailing proof of the presence of the Holy Spirit who continually renews and enriches the Church, the kingdom of Christ already present in mystery (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 3).

The various traditions within the Church give expression to the multitude of ways the Gospel can take root and flower in the lives of God's people. They are living evidence of the richness of the Church. Each one, while united to all the others in the "same faith, the same sacraments and the same government" (*Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, 2), is nevertheless manifested in its own liturgy, ecclesiastical discipline and spiritual patrimony. Each tradition combined particular artistic expressions and unique spiritual insights with an unparalleled lived experience of being faithful to Christ. It was in view of these considerations that the Second Vatican Council declared: "History, tradition, and numerous ecclesiastical institutions clearly manifest how much the universal Church is indebted to the Eastern Churches. Thus this sacred Synod not only honors this ecclesiastical and spiritual heritage with merited esteem and rightful praise, but also unhesitatingly looks upon it as the heritage of Christ's universal Church" (*Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, 5).

For many years, I have highly esteemed the Ukrainian people. I have known of the many sufferings and injustices you have endured. These have been and continue to be matters of great concern to me. I am also mindful of the struggles of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, throughout its history, to remain faithful to the Gospel and to be in union with the successor of Saint Peter. I cannot forget the countless Ukrainian martyrs, in ancient and more recent times, most of whose names are unknown, who gave up their lives rather than abandon their faith. I mention these in order to show my profound esteem for the Ukrainian Church and its proved fidelity in suffering.

I also wish to mention those things which you have preserved as your special spiritual patrimony: the Slavonic liturgical language, the ecclesiastical music and the numerous forms of piety which have developed over the centuries and continue to nourish your lives. Your appreciation of these treasures of the Ukrainian tradition is demonstrated by the way that you have maintained your attachment with the Ukrainian Church and have continued to live the faith according to its unique tradition.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, I want to recall in your presence the words Jesus prayed on the vigil of his death upon the Cross: "Father ... that they may be one" (*Jn 17:11*). We must never forget this prayer ; in fact we must continually search for still better ways to safeguard and strengthen the bonds of union which unite us in the one Catholic Church.

Remember the words of Saint Paul : "you form part of a building that has the apostles and prophets for its foundations, and Christ Jesus himself for its main cornerstone" (*Eph 2 :20*). The unity of this spiritual building, which is the Church, is preserved by fidelity to the cornerstone, who is Christ, and to the teaching of the apostles preserved and explained in the tradition of the Church. A real unity of doctrine binds us as one.

Catholic unity also entails a recognition of the successor of Saint Peter and his ministry of strengthening and preserving intact the communion of the universal Church, while safeguarding the existence of legitimate individual traditions within it. The Ukrainian Church, as well as the other Eastern Churches, has a right and duty, in accordance with the teaching of the Council (cf. *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, 5), to preserve its own ecclesiastical and spiritual patrimony. It is precisely because these individual traditions are also intended for the enrichment of the universal Church that the Apostolic See of Rome takes great care to protect and foster each one. In turn, the ecclesial communities that follow these traditions are called to adhere with love and respect to certain particular forms of discipline which my predecessors and I, in fulfilling our pastoral responsibility to the universal Church, have judged necessary for the well-being of the whole body of Christ.

To a great extent, our Catholic unity depends on mutual charity. Let us remember that the unity of the Church originated on the Cross of Christ, which broke down the barriers of sin and division and reconciled us with God and with one another. Jesus foretold this unifying act when he said : "...

and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (*Jn 12 :32*). If we continue to imitate the love of Jesus, our Savior, on the Cross, and if we persevere in love for one another, then we shall preserve the bonds of unity in the Church and witness the fulfillment of Jesus' prayer : "Father ... that they may be one" (*Jn 17 :11*) .

As for the future, I entrust you to the protection of Mary Immaculate, the Mother of God, the Mother of the Church. I know that you honor her with great devotion. This magnificent Cathedral dedicated to the Immaculate Conception bears eloquent witness to your filial love. And for centuries, our Blessed Mother has been the strength of your people throughout their sufferings, and her loving intercession has been a cause of their joy.

Continue to entrust yourselves to her protection.

Continue to be faithful to her son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the world.

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

© Copyright 1979 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana