



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC PILGRIMAGE TO INDIA

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
ON OCCASION OF THE VISIT TO THE CATHOLICS
OF THE MALANKARESE SYRIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH**

Cochin (India)

Friday, 7 February 1986

Your Beatitude,

Dear Brothers in Christ,

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing of heaven in Christ” .

1. Today I make my own these words which Saint Paul addressed to the Christians of Ephesus. I do so because I consider our meeting today to be a blessing bestowed by God on our Churches and especially on the Catholics and Syrian Orthodox of India.

The joy and the hope which I experience at this moment are out of proportion to the inevitable brevity of our meeting – brevity due simply to the very full programme of my pastoral visit to your great country.

2. It is a joy for me to see Your Beatitude again and to greet you, your bishops and all who accompany you. Nor have I forgotten your presence with His Holiness Ignatius Zakka Iwas I, Patriarch of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch, during the visit he paid me in Rome two years ago.

The Common Declaration that I signed with him on that occasion in its doctrinal and pastoral implications marked a decisive step in relations between our two Churches as we move towards unity. I know that this Declaration made a great impact here, both in your Church and among the Catholic faithful. I know also that Your Beatitude is concerned to emphasise its importance and that you have made proposals for putting it into practice. The proposals have found a favourable response among many Catholics. It is my hope that shortly our Church will find new and effective

means of going forward together in theological dialogue and in pastoral collaboration.

His Holiness Zakka Iwas and I affirmed in our Common Declaration: "We do not forget that we must still do all in our power to achieve the full visible communion between the Catholic Church and the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch and ceaselessly we implore our Lord to grant us that unity which alone will enable us to give to the world a fully unanimous Gospel witness". We went on to say: "We pledge ourselves solemnly to do all that in us lies to remove the last obstacles still hindering full communion between the Catholic Church and the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch" .

3. Your Beatitude: it is a blessing of God that we are able here to confirm our commitment and to invite all our brother bishops and all the faithful to make it their own. Since we are called to be a source of unity and reconciliation within our Churches, between our Churches and in the world, we must give due importance to the search for unity at the local level, since all division is an obstacle to the spreading of the Gospel and thus to the Church's fulfilment of her calling. Together in this church, before the altar of God, may we hear anew his call to do all we can to hasten that blessed day when we will be able to celebrate the Eucharist together.

This meeting, through you and the bishops and others who are with you, is for me a meeting with the whole of your Church. With fraternal love for my brother His Holiness Patriarch Zakka Iwas I, I implore God's abundant blessing on him, on Your Beatitude, on your clergy and on your people.

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