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Messaggio di S.S. Bartolomeo I, Patriarca Ecumenico di Costantinopoli, al Santo Padre Francesco in occasione della Solennità dei Santi Apostoli Pietro e Paolo

Riportiamo di seguito il testo del Messaggio che il Patriarca Ecumenico di Costantinopoli, S.S. Bartolomeo I, ha inviato al Santo Padre Francesco in occasione della Solennità dei Santi Apostoli Pietro e Paolo.

Il Messaggio è stato consegnato al Papa questa mattina nel corso dell'Udienza alla Delegazione del Patriarcato Ecumenico di Costantinopoli:

Messaggio di S.S. Bartolomeo I

His Holiness and Beatitude Pope Francis of Elder Rome: rejoice in the Lord.

It is with delight and thanksgiving to the God in Trinity that we hasten once again this year to concelebrate with You the sacred commemoration of the Chief among the Apostles, Peter and Paul, founders and protectors of Your most holy Church and unshakeable pillars of the universal One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ. We do so again herewith in adherence to an already long and blessed tradition of the exchange of formal visits of Delegations from our two ancient Churches during one another's Thronal feast as an expression and manifestation of the bond of love, which by God's grace holds us together, guiding our steps to greater rapprochement between us until the dawn of that much-desired day of our unity in the common faith of the Gospel and of the Fathers in the same Chalice of life.

Following this sacred custom, this year we again recall with profound sentiments and much gratitude the great gift from God toward our most holy Church of Constantinople that was honored by Your Holiness' personal visit and participation in the celebration of our Thronal feast last year. This communion person-to-person left behind an indelible joy in our heart, and so we would like to use this occasion to express once more the thanks of our Church and ourselves personally in the hope and wish that we shall again have in the not too distant future the joy of this personal communion with each other.

The celebration of the Thronal feast of our Churches is a reminder, Your Holiness, of the very significant fact that, despite the regrettable interruption of full communion among us, both of our Churches remain united in

honoring the memory of our common Saints, who comprise the stable foundation on which we are called to build full union inasmuch as the Church of Christ is essentially a communion of Saints. This holds true especially for the Chief among the Apostles, Peter and Paul, who through their preaching but also with their blood invite us even today to increase our efforts in order that our already existing communion in honoring the Saints may as in the past become a communion also in the body and blood of the Leader of our Faith, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our efforts toward this sacred goal are rendered for years in the field of erasing theological differences, which have been accrued by an entire millennium of estrangement among our Churches, through our ongoing Dialogue. We are called to support this Dialogue with all our strength by means of active participation in the appropriate Committee of the best theological representatives at the disposal of our Churches, so that this difficult work may continue beyond political or other forms of motivations, particularly in the present critical phase when we are examining the thorny issue of Primacy in the Church.

However, as Your Holiness has emphasized, our unity must be sought and edified not only in our common past, but also in the contemporary reality lived in the world, which invites us jointly to transmit to modern man the message of the Gospel about joy, hope and love. Therefore, we personally greet the recent Apostolic Exhortation of Your Holiness to the world, namely *EVANGELII GAUDIUM* in 2013 and especially the Encyclical only days ago and entitled *LAUDATO SI'*. The latter filled us with immense satisfaction, given that our most holy Church of Constantinople was the first in the Christian world to proclaim publicly the urgent need to protect the natural environment, which is deplorably threatened by human greed, which we did through the Encyclical of our late predecessor Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios in 1989, as well as with an series of conferences and other activities initiated by our Modesty.

Wherefore, by together conveying the message of the Gospel to the contemporary world and the existential problems of concern to it, we also approach one another in our responsibility of continuing the work of the saintly Apostles that we honor, thereby manifesting through our efforts that "they did not run their course in vain" (Phil. 2, 16) and that our faith "is declared throughout the world" (Rom. 1,8).

These personal thoughts and sentiments, together with our congratulatory fraternal wishes on the occasion of the Thronal feast of Your sister Church, will be brought to Your Holiness by our Delegation led by His Eminence Metropolitan John of Pergamon, accompanied by His Eminence Metropolitan Maximos of Selyvria and the Very Reverend Protopresbyter Heikki Huttunen, who will assure You of the deepest feelings of love and great honour of our most holy Church to Your Holiness and Your most holy Church. May the Protocoryphaei Apostles, whom we honor together, always intercede "for the stability of the holy churches of God and for the unity of all." Amen.

June 19, 2015

Your Holiness'

Beloved brother in the Lord

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