



The Holy See

MEETING WITH THE PATRIARCHS AND MAJOR ARCHBISHOPS OF THE ORIENTAL CATHOLIC CHURCHES

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS

Consistory Hall

Thursday, 21 November 2013

Your Beatitudes,

I receive you with joy and in a spirit of fraternity at this meeting, in which I have the opportunity for the first time to converse with the Fathers and Heads of the Oriental Catholic Churches. In your faces I see your Churches, and I would first of all like to assure you of my closeness to, and prayer for, the flock that the Lord Jesus has entrusted to each one of you, and I invoke the Holy Spirit, that he may indicate what we must learn together and put into practice in order faithfully to serve the Lord, his Church and the whole of humanity.

Our coming together offers me an opportunity to renew our deep esteem for the spiritual patrimony of the Christian East, and to recall what beloved Benedict XVI states regarding the Heads of Churches in his Post-Synodal Exhortation *Ecclesia in Medio Oriente*: you are — and I quote — “watchful guardians of communion” and “servants of ecclesial unity” (n. 39). This unity, which you are called to realize in your Churches by responding to the gift of the Spirit, finds its natural and full expression in the “indefectible union with the Bishop of Rome” (n. 40), rooted in the *ecclesiastica communio* which you received following your election. To be inserted in the communion of the whole Body of Christ makes us aware of the duty to strengthen union and solidarity within the various Patriarchal Synods, consulting “one another in matters of great importance for the Church prior to taking a unified collegial action” (*ibid.*).

In order for our testimony to be credible we are called always to seek “righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness and gentleness (cf. 1 Tim 6:11), and to adopt a modest manner of life in

imitation of Christ, who became poor so that by his poverty we might become rich (cf. 2 Cor 8:9). We are called to exercise both untiring zeal and that fraternal and paternal charity which bishops, priests and faithful, especially those who are alone or marginalized, expect of us. I am thinking above all of our priests who are in need of understanding and support, also at a personal level. They have a right to benefit from our good example in the things which pertain to God, as they do in every other ecclesial activity. They ask us for transparency in the administration of temporal goods, and understanding in every weakness and need. May everything be done with the thorough application of that authentic synodal praxis, which distinguishes the Oriental Churches.

With the help of God and his Most Holy Mother, we shall be able to respond to this call. I ask you to pray for me. And now I shall happily listen to all that you would like to communicate to me, and I wish to express to you in advance my gratitude.