



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER POPE FRANCIS
TO HIS HOLINESS POPE TAWADROS II,
POPE OF ALEXANDRIA AND PATRIARCH OF THE SEE OF ST. MARK,
HEAD OF THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH OF EGYPT**

Friday, 10 May 2013

Χριστός ανέστη

*Your Holiness,
Dear Brothers in Christ,*

For me it is a great joy and a truly graced moment to be able to receive all of you here, at the tomb of Saint Peter, as we recall that historic meeting forty years ago between our predecessors, Pope Paul VI and the late Pope Shenouda III, in an embrace of peace and fraternity, after centuries in which there was a certain distance between us. So it is with deep affection that I welcome Your Holiness and the distinguished members of your delegation, and I thank you for your words. Through you, I extend my cordial greetings in the Lord to the bishops, the clergy, the monks and the whole Coptic Orthodox Church.

Today's visit strengthens the bonds of friendship and brotherhood that already exist between the See of Peter and the See of Mark, heir to an inestimable heritage of martyrs, theologians, holy monks and faithful disciples of Christ, who have borne witness to the Gospel from generation to generation, often in situations of great adversity.

Forty years ago the [Common Declaration of our predecessors](#) represented a milestone on the ecumenical journey, and from it emerged a Commission for Theological Dialogue between our Churches, which has yielded good results and has prepared the ground for a broader dialogue between the Catholic Church and the entire family of Oriental Orthodox Churches, a dialogue that continues to bear fruit to this day. In that solemn Declaration, our Churches acknowledged that, in

line with the apostolic traditions, they profess “one faith in the One Triune God” and “the divinity of the Only-begotten Son of God ... perfect God with respect to his divinity, perfect man with respect to his humanity”. They acknowledged that divine life is given to us and nourished through the seven sacraments and they recognized a mutual bond in their common devotion to the Mother of God.

We are glad to be able to confirm today what our illustrious predecessors solemnly declared, we are glad to recognize that we are united by one Baptism, of which our common prayer is a special expression, and we long for the day when, in fulfilment of the Lord’s desire, we will be able to communicate from the one chalice.

Of course we are well aware that the path ahead may still prove to be long, but we do not want to forget the considerable distance already travelled, which has taken tangible form in radiant moments of communion, among which I am pleased to recall the [meeting in February 2000 in Cairo](#) between Pope Shenouda III and [Blessed John Paul II](#), who went as a pilgrim, during the Great Jubilee, to the places of origin of our faith. I am convinced that – under the guidance of the Holy Spirit – our persevering prayer, our dialogue and the will to build communion day by day in mutual love will allow us to take important further steps towards full unity.

Your Holiness, I am aware of the many marks of attention and fraternal charity that you have shown, since the early days of your ministry, to the Catholic Coptic Church, to its Pastor, Patriarch Ibrahim Isaac Sidrak and to his predecessor, Cardinal Antonios Naguib. The institution of a “National Council of Christian Churches”, which you strongly desired, represents an important sign of the will of all believers in Christ to develop relations in daily life that are increasingly fraternal and to put themselves at the service of the whole of Egyptian society, of which they form an integral part. Let me assure Your Holiness that your efforts to build communion among believers in Christ, and your lively interest in the future of your country and the role of the Christian communities within Egyptian society find a deep echo in the heart of the Successor of Peter and of the entire Catholic community.

“If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together” (1 Cor 12:26). This is a law of the Christian life, and in this sense we can say that there is also an ecumenism of suffering: just as the blood of the martyrs was a seed of strength and fertility for the Church, so too the sharing of daily sufferings can become an effective instrument of unity. And this also applies, in a certain sense, to the broader context of society and relations between Christians and non-Christians: from shared suffering can blossom forth forgiveness, reconciliation and peace, with God’s help.

Your Holiness, in sincerely assuring you of my prayers that the whole flock entrusted to your pastoral care may be ever faithful to the Lord’s call, I invoke the protection of both Saint Peter and Saint Mark: may they who during their lifetime worked together in practical ways for the spread of

the Gospel, intercede for us and accompany the journey of our Churches.

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