



## His Holiness Pope JOHN PAUL II and Christian Unity

On Saturday, November 27, 2004, on the feast of the Miraculous Medal, a great step was taken by His Holiness Pope John Paul II in favor of the unity of Christians. During an ecumenical ceremony over which he presided in the Vatican basilica with the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew I, the Pope returned to this Eastern Church the relics of Saint Gregory of Nazianzen and of Saint John Chrysostom which had been kept at the Vatican for centuries. These two Fathers and Doctors of the Church who lived in the 4th century are a bridge between East and West where they are similarly venerated.

Saint Gregory of Nazianzen was a bishop of Constantinople. His remains were transferred from Constantinople to Rome in the 8th century in order to preserve them during the iconoclast persecution ("iconoclast" comes from two Greek words and means "breaker of images"). In fact, the Byzantine Emperors Leo III (717-741) and his son Constantine V (741-775) had ordered the destruction of holy images and relics, and those who venerated them were fiercely persecuted.

Saint John Chrysostom was named Patriarch of Constantinople at the end of the 4th century. Having died in exile a few years later, his body was brought back to Constantinople by the Emperor Theodosius. His relics were then transferred to Rome in the 13th century, during the Latin empire of Constantinople.

On June 29, 2004, the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I asked Pope John Paul II to transfer the relics of these two saints to Constantinople, and the Sovereign Pontiff agreed. The Patriarch announced that the relics would be placed in the Patriarchal Cathedral of Saint George. This gesture by Pope John Paul II in favor of the Eastern Church is highly significant. As Cardinal Walter Kasper, President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, explained, the handing back of the relics

"is a sign of a common heritage from the two first centuries of Christianity: the same faith in Jesus Christ, true Man and true God, the same faith in the Blessed Trinity and in many other things. Now, we have added a kind of "communicatio in sacris" for the relics. In fact, it is not a matter of dead bones for either the Orthodox or for us, but they are a part of saints who are in the glory of heaven, a kind of contact with the reality of heaven, and together we participate in this reality. That is why this gesture has a very, very profound significance. It has a great effect. When all is said and done, it is an act of reconciliation between the East and the West and therefore a very important step for the future of ecumenism." (Comments made on Vatican Radio and published in the French edition of Zenit on November 28, 2004.)

### THE POPE'S LETTER TO THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH

During the ceremony of the handing

over of the relics on November 27, Archbishop Sandri, Substitute of the Vatican Secretariat of State for general affairs, read the letter addressed by Pope John Paul II to Patriarch Bartholomew I in which the Holy Father reiterated his will "of searching out, steadfastly and with determination, this communion between Christ's disciples".

"Now, at the tomb of the Apostle Peter, the Lord in his goodness gives us the opportunity to meet once again, in fraternal charity, in prayer and in the desire to journey together towards the full and visible union that Christ wills for his disciples.

"In the transferral of such holy relics we find a blessed occasion to purify our wounded memories in order to strengthen our journey of reconciliation, to confirm that the faith of these Holy Doctors is the faith of the Churches of East and West. We also witness to a favourable moment to 'show in word and deed today the immense riches that our Churches preserve in the coffers of their traditions'.

"This is the 'acceptable time' to join our prayer to their intercession, so that the Lord will hasten the arrival of the moment when we can live full communion together in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, and thus to contribute more effectively so that the world believes that Jesus Christ is Lord.

"Beloved Brother, I will never tire of searching out, steadfastly and with determination, this communion between Christ's disciples; my desire, in responding to God's will, is to be a servant of communion 'in truth and love so that the ship – that beautiful symbol which the World Council of Churches has chosen as its emblem – will not be buffeted by the storms and will one day reach its haven'."

### THE EUCHARISTIC EXPERIENCE OF OCTOBER 22, 1978

Pope John Paul II was identified on several occasions by the seeress of the Lady of All Peoples in the *Eucharistic Experiences* which followed the apparitions. The Eucharistic experience of October 22, 1978, the very day of Pope John Paul II's installation, he whose appointment had been "announced" to Ida, brings us to the very particular moment we are living.

Ida found herself at the foot of a mountain against which a ladder was leaning (just like in the Eucharistic experience of December 8, 1978 which was fulfilled in a surprising way through what Mother Paul-Marie experienced recently with regard to the putting in the tomb of the pierced heart – cf. the article "It Is Accomplished!" in the last issue of the paper). After having climbed the ladder and found herself at the summit, Ida heard the Voice coming from the clouds:

"This period has come to an end.

["It is accomplished," the Voice would say in the apparition that followed



November 27, 2004 - His Holiness Pope John Paul II and the Patriarch Bartholomew I during an ecumenical celebration at the Vatican.

on December 8, 1978.]

"The tide will turn. Watch well! The face of the sun-dial has changed."

At the top of the mountain Ida saw a "large sun-dial" whose needle oscillated several times between the letters "W" (Westen: West) and "O" (Oosten: East). Next to the letter "O", there appeared

"clergymen of various Oriental Churches. One of them had an icon<sup>1</sup> in his hand, another was wearing a pointed brocaded cap and others had different attributes."

She also saw, next to the sun-dial, several crosses different from the ordinary cross.

Near the letter "W" "stood an ordinary Cross, which was very tall and radiated on all sides. A large, scintillating Star surmounted the whole image and over it appeared the sign, the Chi-Rho [the Christogram]."

That is not the only passage in the apparitions or the Eucharistic experiences that deals with an upheaval in nature, but with regard to the "clergymen of various Oriental Churches", it is quite significant that this image should be shown on the very day of the installation of Pope John Paul II, under whose pontificate important steps of reconciliation have been taken between the Church of Rome and the Eastern Churches. In fact, the Holy Father has clearly indicated, on many occasions, his commitment in favor of the unity of Christians as well as that of all peoples.

"We must pull down the walls of division, hostility and hate," he declared last November 17, "so that the family of God's children may once again live in harmony at the one table, to bless and praise the Creator for the gifts he lavishes upon all without distinction." (General Audience in the Paul VI Hall)

Pope John Paul II, with his mystical soul, is a precious gift from the Lord to His Church which, we must acknowledge, is going through a deep crisis. And, after the image of the Lord, it is when he is fixed to the cross that his ministry is the most fruitful, for, as Father Veilleux said to Marie-Paule in his letter of September 15, 1965:

"The cross alone is the assurance of God's work, and it alone will be exalted." (*Life of Love*, vol II, chap. 91)

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1. This image of an Eastern religious bearing an icon reminds us of Pope John Paul II's gesture in favor of the Orthodox Church in Russia and the entire Russia people when, in August 2004, he handed over to the Orthodox Patriarch Alexis II the icon of the Mother of God of Kazan which had been kept in his private apartments in the Vatican.