

**ADDRESS OF HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL CHRISTOPHE PIERRE  
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
53<sup>RD</sup> NATIONAL MELKITE CATHOLIC CONVENTION  
QUINCY, MASSACHUSETTS  
JULY 6, 2024**

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

I am grateful to Bishop François Beyrouti for inviting me to join you for your annual Convention. As representative of the Holy Father to the Catholic Church in this country, I want to convey to you the spiritual closeness and affection of Pope Francis.

Being here in the name of the Pope gives me the opportunity to experience in person what the Holy Father spoke about in a message last January, regarding the Eastern Churches. He said that while having your own traditions and characteristic liturgical rites, you “maintain the unity of the faith”, strengthening this unity, not dividing it. “If we are guided by the Holy Spirit,” the Pope said, then “abundance, variety, diversity never cause conflict.”<sup>1</sup>

Back in 2019, Pope Francis also spoke of unity in an address he gave to the Eastern Catholic Bishops of Europe. Quoting the Second Vatican Council’s document on the Eastern Churches, he observed: “Variety within the Church in no way harms its unity; rather it manifests it.”<sup>2</sup> In the Consistory for the creation of new Cardinals last September, the Pope told us that “the College of Cardinals is called to resemble a symphony orchestra, representing the harmony and synodality of the Church.” Each member of the symphony makes its contribution in such a way that the uniqueness of each member is vital, and at the same time the harmonizing of the parts is necessary. That is what produces a beautiful piece of music. And for this to occur, mutual listening is necessary.<sup>3</sup> “Christian unity,” said the Pope to the Eastern Bishops, “is not uniformity. Uniformity is the destruction of unity.

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, Video Message for the Pope’s Worldwide Prayer Network, 2 January 2024.

<sup>2</sup> Vatican Council II, Decree on the Catholic Churches of the Eastern Rite *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, 21 November 1964, 2; cited by Pope Francis, Address to Eastern Catholic Bishops of Europe, 14 September 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Pope Francis, Homily at the Ordinary Public Consistory for the Creation of New Cardinals, 30 September 2023.

Christian truth is not monotonous, but ‘symphonic’; otherwise it would not come from the Holy Spirit.”<sup>4</sup>

Brothers and sisters, to live this unity is such an important witness today, when, as the Pope said, “all too many inequalities and divisions threaten peace”, when there is so much incivility, and when “so many people allow themselves to be caught up in a spiral of violence, in a vicious circle of demands and constant mutual recriminations”. Instead of contributing to this kind of division, we can choose to be, in the words of the Pope, “artisans of dialogue, promoters of reconciliation and patient builders of a civilization of encounter”, and “meek sowers of the Gospel of love”.<sup>5</sup>

To do this involves a commitment to “walking together”. The great biblical emblem for this kind of shared journey is the Emmaus encounter,<sup>6</sup> which is the theme for this year’s Convention. The two people who were walking toward Emmaus were able to have their faith resurrected because Jesus came alongside them and walked with them in patience and love. He took time to listen to them. He opened the Word of God for them. Gradually, he led them to discover the truth that had always been there in front of them, but which they needed help to see. Because he encountered them in this way, they were brought to greater faith; and then, they were able to speak of their encounter to the other disciples.

This is also how it is with us. Jesus has entered our lives and has made himself a companion on our journey. We did not start out as a “finished product”. He has shown us patience and mercy, and has helped us become true disciples. And now, we are called to walk with others in the same way that the Lord has walked with us. To listen to them, to be patient with them, and to help them to discover Christ who is hidden within their own hearts’ desires.

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<sup>4</sup> Address to Eastern Catholic Bishops of Europe, 14 September 2019.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Luke* 24:13-35.

I trust that your time together during these days has enriched your faith and strengthened the bond of your communion with one another. I pray that your encounter with Christ will have been deepened. When you leave from here tomorrow, may you find renewed joy in our mission of sharing with everyone the life-giving presence of Jesus.

Thank you very much. Enjoy your evening!