

JOHN PAUL COUNSELS PERSEVERENCE
IN FACE OF ECUMENICAL OBSTACLES

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By Religious News Service (11-23-79)

VATICAN CITY (RNS) -- Pope John Paul II, speaking on the eve of his departure on an historical ecumenical visit to Turkey, urged an international group of ecumenists to confront obstacles to Christian unity with "courage, faith, and perseverance."

The pontiff received in audience 62 bishops and priest representatives of national Roman Catholic ecumenical commissions from around the world, who were meeting in Rome under the auspices of the Vatican Secretariat for Christian Unity.

Also present at the audience were three guest-observers to the ecumenical parley: Metropolitan Damaskinos, representing Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios I of Istanbul, Turkey, whom the pope was to visit; Bishop Edward Fisher of the Anglican Church; and Dr. Daniel F. Martensen of the Lutheran World Federation.

Referring to his scheduled meeting in Istanbul with Patriarch Demetrios, the spiritual leader of worldwide Eastern Orthodoxy, Pope John Paul said his "first ecumenical journey" would be a concrete expression of the Catholic Church's commitment to the "restoration of unity along all Christians."

The pontiff said he hoped that further ecumenical meetings between himself and "other pastors and Christian leaders" would be held "with a view to cooperating with them and intensifying joint efforts for unity."

Addressing, then, his remarks to the delegates to the Vatican-sponsored meeting on "Ecumenism as a Pastoral Priority in the Church's Mission," the pope said that the word, ecumenism, should not evoke "that false fear of the adjustments necessary to any genuine renewal of the church, but still less should the term be interpreted as a passport to indifferentism, or to neglect of what is essential to our sacred tradition."

"Rather," the pope went on, "ecumenism is a challenge -- a vocation to work under the guidance of the Holy Spirit for the visible and perfect oneness in faith and love, in life and work, of all who profess faith in our one Lord Jesus Christ."

The pope observed that, despite "the rapid progress" in ecumenism in recent years, "much remains to be done," and added: "In this regard, the task of further theological dialogue in cooperation with other churches and communities must continue to be faced."

Noting that "there is hardly a country in which the Roman Catholic Church is not cooperating with other Christians in work for social justice, human rights, development, and relief for those in need," the pope said, "such work already bears the common witness to faith."

Touching on the theme of the Vatican-sponsored meeting of Catholic ecumenists, Pope John Paul stressed that the task of promoting Christian unity "must be seen as essentially a pastoral task."

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Said the pope: "It is pastoral, in that bishops are the principal ministers of unity within local churches and therefore have a special responsibility for promoting the ecumenical movement.

"It is pastoral also in that all who are entrusted with this work must see it as primarily ordered to the building up of the Body of Christ and to the salvation of the world.

"As long as Christians are divided, so long will the work of preaching the Gospel be hampered.

"Ecumenism is truly a pastoral service."

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PONTIFF'S VISIT TO TURKEY
TO INCLUDE TOURIST STOPS

By Religious News Service (11-23-79)

VATICAN CITY (RNS) -- Pope John Paul II's visit to Turkey will include a meeting with the nation's President, as well as tours of some of its most historic sites, in addition to meetings with leaders of the Eastern Orthodox Church, according to the official itinerary of the upcoming papal visit.

Following his arrival in Ankara, the Turkish capital, on Nov. 23, the pope will be received by President Fahri Koruturk at the official residence of Cankaya Kosku.

The Polish-born pontiff's first trip as pope to a Muslim nation will also include a stop at the tomb of Kemal Ataturk, the founder of modern, secularized Turkey.

On Nov. 29, the pope will fly to Istanbul, after a brief prayer session with the small Catholic community of Ankara. There, the pope will visit the renowned Topkapi as well as the museum of Santa Sofia, the famous Byzantine church.

The same day, the pontiff will meet with what the Vatican itinerary refers to "various spiritual leaders." Among these is expected to be the symbolic leader of Eastern Orthodoxy, Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios I of Constantinople (Istanbul).

In the evening, the pope will celebrate a prayer-for-peace-service in the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit.

On the last day of his visit to Turkey (Nov. 30), the pope will take part in a ceremony in honor of the feast of Saint Andrew, revered by the Orthodox much the way Roman Catholics revere Saint Peter.

Later, the pope flies to the port town of Izmir and then to the ruins of the ancient city of Ephesus, where in 431, an ecumenical council defined "Theotokos" (Bearer of God) as the title of Mary, mother of the Son of God, made man.

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