

SEPTEMBER 13, 2008

**MASS**

Most Holy Father,

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” To welcome you this morning, please allow me to borrow this biblical greeting, which suggests the sacramental and spiritual significance of our gathering. It is with enormous joy and deep gratitude that we receive you today on this impressive site—we who live in Paris and the Ile de France, along with representatives of numerous French dioceses, some of whom have travelled a long way to participate in the celebration you are presiding this morning.

All the generations are represented here and you will see again the large group of young people whom you addressed yesterday night outside the Cathedral. Last night, they traced across the sleeping city a way of light which materializes the hope fostered by their Christian faith and their social commitment.

Like other European countries, France—and especially Paris and its Region—truly is a crossroads where many nations meet. Members of oriental-rite Christian Churches are numerous here: Armenians, Ukrainians, Maronites, Copts, Syrians, Chaldeans and Melkite Greeks, Romanian and Russian Greek Catholics have living communities in France. But there are also countless immigrants from the five continents: Europeans from various countries, Oceanians, Americans, Africans and Asians from more than fifty national communities.

Some have been living here for decades and now have roots in the French society. Others have arrived more recently. Many among them have had to leave their countries, their homes and their families because of war, or political repression, or even simply because of economic misery. Our Christian communities are happy to welcome them, and to help them find their place among us as they have their place at the Eucharistic Table. We also want our nation to make a significant and sustained contribution to the development of the countries they came from and to political sanity there, so that they may be reunited with their families when they wish to.

Most Holy Father,

We rejoice in the thought that our deep communion with you and, through you, with the universal Church should express and strengthen itself in one and the same confession of faith, that it should be nurtured at the Table where our Lord gives us the Bread of His Word and Life, and that it should be developed by the bonds of Love. As Peter’s successor, you preside over communion and love, and we want to manifest the unity of our Church by joining you in one celebration, just as we have “only one Lord, only one faith, only one God and Father.”

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”

+ André Cardinal VINGT-TROIS