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**Closing of the Syndesmos ecumenism leadership training workshop**  
Chambesy, Switzerland, 06/04/1995

When Ann asked you to give one word, one word for me was joy. Joy is the heart overflowing with love of the Lord and love of the brothers. And in many places St Paul says, “*be joyful*” and again I tell you “*be joyful*”. The message of Orthodoxy is a message of joy. It’s a message of resurrection. And through the joy of resurrection, it is the joy of victory over sin and death. “*Be of good cheer, because I have overcome the world*”<sup>1</sup>. This is the message of Orthodoxy today and everyday. You have come from various places, with different cultures, different political systems, different languages, different colours, different sexes. And in these meetings of Syndesmos, God gives us the experience of our unity, as Christians, as orthodox Christians, our unity over space, but also our unity over time with the apostles, the saints, the martyrs. This is the experience of Syndesmos, the experience of joy in the unity of the body of Christ, in the diversity of languages countries, cultures, colours, sexes, ethnicities, the diversities of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Think that before Syndesmos there was not one place where the young orthodox could meet together and express this unity. That there was not one place where they could discover that beyond distances they were one, they love each other. And although our churches through a wrong understanding of autocephaly as a separation between the churches - while autocephaly originally was a mean of communion between the churches - in spite of this separation that history has imposed on us as orthodox, we are coming together and suddenly we discover that we are one. And I have attended official meetings of orthodox churches today, and sometimes in these meetings you find an underlying tension because of a spirit of dominion, or a spirit of affirming cultural identities but here in Syndesmos we know that we are one, because we are humble, we are servants of God, servants of His Church. Keep this in your mind, that the future of Orthodoxy depends on the purity of your devotion to Christ, who as the apostle said “*has loved me and gave himself for me*”<sup>2</sup>, for each one of us. The purity of your love for the church before your love for yourself, before your love for your country or your culture, the church forms your personality. God has loved the Church, Christ has loved the Church and gave himself to her so that she be pure and stainless. Keep that sentence of Ephesians that you hear at every marriage<sup>3</sup>. The marriage between Christ and the Church is the sacrifice of Christ for the Church that she remains pure and undefiled and it is your sacrifice in Christ for the Church so that she remains pure and undefiled, and that whatever are the tensions around. And Church can only live in tensions. You remain in peace because you are united with the Lord of peace. One picture of the church growing into the world, the Orthodox Church in particularly, to mystery has not been kind at all! In every country, in every Church, Orthodoxy has been suffering, from divisions from persecutions from tensions, from new religions, from proselytism, from sectarianism but yet the Church will continue if it continues to look to its Lord .The image of the Church navigating on the terrible waters and storms of this world is the image of the small boat where the apostles were and the Lord comes walking on the sea. And when the tempest is there Peter is afraid to sink because he has ceased to look to the Lord, and he looked around him to what was happening in the sea. Let’s keep our mind fixed to the Author of our salvation as the epistle to the Hebrews says<sup>4</sup>. Now, what about ecumenism? Patriarch Athenagoras of blessed memory, used to say “*ecumenism derives from the scene after the resurrection that you have in the gospel of St John, of the miraculous fishing that the nets of Peter’s boat were going to tear*

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<sup>1</sup> John 16:33

<sup>2</sup> Gal 2:20

<sup>3</sup> Eph 5:21,33

<sup>4</sup> Heb 12:2

*down, and he called his partners to come and help him to take the fish*". And Patriarch Athenagoras used to say *"today neither the boat of Peter, nor the boat of John, nor the boat of Paul can alone think and try to resolve the problems of fishing the world into the net of Christ"*. And ecumenism is this cooperation in order to bring the world of life to the world.

When you will be going back to your places you will keep the memory of your unity in Christ and His Church, of the beauty of every faces that we have seen here which, as we say in our liturgy, *"the light of Your Face has shown on us oh Lord"*<sup>5</sup>. The light of the Face of Christ reflects on our faces and therefore it reflects on faces of love, of purity, of humility. Let us be humble. Participating in ecumenism is a sign of humility of orthodoxy. Humility is not against truth. Humility is not against devotion to the Church from the beginning. Humility is the sign that we are taking this treasure of Orthodoxy in earthly vessels, as the apostle says *"in earthen vessels"*<sup>6</sup>. That's humility of the orthodox. It's not that we don't bare life giving treasures, it's that we bare it knowing that we are personally and as a community unfaithful and that we need every time through humility and repentance to go back to the day of resurrection. You will be called in the future to be part of the orthodox representation in your churches, you will have responsibility some of you in your churches and many people from Synodesmos are now patriarch archbishops, bishops, catholicos, and so on. And you may also be called to represent your churches in dialog with other Christians and with non-Christians. But all the time keep before you the same words, which I heard now from my sister here, of the Lord knocking at your door, wanting to come and have dinner with you. And this it is through this intimate contact with the Lord by the power of the Holy spirit that you can say or hear the words of the Lord *"Be of good cheer"*<sup>7</sup>, *"I am with you"*, *"Don't be afraid"*, I have been struck when I started reading the Gospel by this message which comes from the first day *"Don't be afraid"*. See how many times it is repeated in the first chapters of Matthew and the first chapters of Luke. *"Don't be afraid"*, *"Don't be afraid"*, *"I have overcome the world"*<sup>8</sup>, He is our Lord forever. Grace and thanks and worship be to Him forever in His Holy Church and His holy men. God bless you all.

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<sup>5</sup> *To check.Ref?*

<sup>6</sup> 2 Cor 4:7

<sup>7</sup> John 16:33

<sup>8</sup> John 16:33