

(English translation)

Rome, 2000¹

Athenagoras, a Deeply Charismatic Person

... During the pontificate of Paul VI, too, I had the adventure of becoming acquainted with and loving a very special countenance of Jesus forsaken, which brought not pain to be embraced but solely the *most*

intense love: that which shone in the great Athenagoras I, Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. By the will of Providence I found myself an unofficial intermediary between the Patriarch and the Holy Father. I came to know Athenagoras' thought, his all-consuming longing for the unity of the Orthodox Church with ours. For years I became the ambassador of *his tender*, delicate love for the pope and the bearer of the pope's replies to him.

Athenagoras was a deeply *charismatic person*, more endowed with the gifts of the Spirit than anyone I have known outside of the Catholic Church. As such, he was also a *prophet*, who saw the future and suffered the present as a time of waiting.

He used to say to me: "The day shall come... the sun shall rise high, the angels will sing and dance, and all of us, bishops and patriarchs, gathered around the pope, will celebrate in the one chalice."

Chiara Lubich

¹ Taken from *The Cry*, New City Press, New York 2001.