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PATRIARCH AND PONTIFF MEET—Pope Paul VI greets Patriarch Athenagoras in Istanbul where they will discuss peace in the Middle East, the holy places of Jerusalem and ways of ending 900 years of division between Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christians. (AP Photo)

Pope, Turkey Discuss Mideast

By DENNIS REDMONT

ISTANBUL — Pope Paul VI conferred with the top leaders of Moslem Turkey Tuesday concerning the Middle East. Informants said he appealed to them to help mediate the crisis between Israel and the Arab states.

Then the Roman Catholic pontiff exchanged a "kiss of peace" with Orthodox Patriarch Athenagoras. Both vowed to make historic concessions in the drive to unite what the Pope called their "sister churches" after nine centuries of schism.

In the first papal visit to Turkey in 12 centuries, the slender Pope, 69, and the tall, white-bearded patriarch, 81, met in a tree-shaded court to exchange the symbolic kiss of brotherhood and good will.

They had met before in Jerusalem on the Pope's Holy Land visit in January, 1964.

Pope Paul's political talks with Turkish leaders and his unity meeting with the patriarch were the highpoints of the whirlwind opening day of his two-day visit.

The Pope undertook the trip—fifth journey in his four-year reign—to reiterate his desire for church unity and peace in the world and to commemorate the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus, site of the house of the Virgin Mary.

During a day packed with activities, the Pope also:

- Startled Moslems by kneeling to pray in the Hagia Sophia, once the greatest church in Christendom but long a Moslem Museum. He suggested to an attendant that it needed repairs.

- Took the first pleasure boat ride by a Pope in this century, a spray-drenched cruise along the Bosphorus.

- Visited Topkapı, a museum of precious jewels made famous outside Turkey by a film of the same name.

- Crisscrossed among the minarets of the old city, once known as Constantinople, without feeling any of the earth tremors which had jolted the country since a disastrous earthquake Saturday left a swath of death and destruction in western Turkey.

BRIDGE FOR CONTACTS

Pope Paul arrived by a Pan American jetliner from Rome to be greeted by Turkey's highest officials and top religious leaders of the Moslem majority and Christian and Jewish minorities.

In closed political talks with President Cevdet Sunay, Premier Suleyman Demirel and Foreign Minister İhsan Sabri Cakir, the Pope discussed the Middle East crisis and was given Turkey's views on the Cyprus dispute.

Informed sources said the Vatican considered Turkey, which has relations with both Arabs and Israel, in an excellent position to serve as a bridge for contacts.

They said Pope Paul urged Turkey to make every effort to help bring peace.

Before going to his formal meeting with Athenagoras, the Pope prayed at the Istanbul Cathedral and appealed to Catholics to change their ways of thinking to hasten Christian unity.

(Associated Press)