Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue
between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church

Synodality and Primacy
in the Second Millennium and Today

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Introduction

0.1 As a result of careful study of synodality and primacy in the first millennium, the Chieti document stated: 'From earliest times, the one Church existed as many local churches. The communion (koinonia) of the Holy Spirit (cf. 2Cor 13:13) was experienced both within each local church and in the relations between them as a unity in diversity. Under the guidance of the Spirit (cf. Jn 16:13), the Church developed patterns of order and various practices in accordance with its nature as "a people brought into unity from the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit"' (Chieti, 2; quoting St Cyprian, De orat. dom. 23; PL 4, 536).

0.2 The bond of unity was evident in 'the multiple gatherings of bishops in councils or synods to discuss in common issues of doctrine (dogma, didaskalia) and practice' (Chieti, 11). At the universal level, communion was fostered by cooperation among the five patriarchal sees, ordered according to a taxis (cf. Chieti, 15). Despite many crises, the unity of faith and love was maintained through the practice of synodality and primacy (cf. Chieti, 20).

0.3 The present document considers the troubled history of the second millennium in four periods. It strives to give as far as possible a common reading of that history, and it gives Orthodox and Roman Catholics a welcome opportunity to explain themselves to one another at various points along the way, so as to further the mutual understanding and trust that are essential prerequisites for reconciliation at the start of the third millennium. The document concludes by drawing lessons from the history that has been surveyed.

1. From 1054 to the Council of Florence (1438-1439)

1.1 At the beginning of the second millennium, difficulties and disagreements between East and West were exacerbated by cultural and political factors. The acts of excommunication in 1054 aggravated the estrangement between East and West. The eastern and western Churches made efforts to reestablish their unity. However, as a result of the crusades, and in particular the conquest of Constantinople by the fourth crusade (1204), the rupture of 1054 was sadly deepened.

1.2 The so-called Gregorian Reform, named after Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085), succeeded in putting an end to the systematic appointment of bishops and abbots by secular powers. Canonical elections were re-established, so that cathedral chapters would elect their diocesan bishops and monasteries would elect their abbot. At the same time, the reform intended to fight against moral abuses in the Church and in society in the West. This process of reform was led by the papacy through the traditional Roman local synods. Meanwhile, the power of the pope increasingly extended to the temporal sphere, as Gregory even succeeded in deposing Emperor Henry IV. There was a heightened stress on the responsibility of the Roman See to preserve the western Church from alien interference and inner abuses.

1.3 Consequently, a more juridical ecclesiology was developed. The 'False Decretals' (9th cent.) and the false Donation of Constantine (prob. 8th cent.), which were mistakenly supposed to be authentic, stressed the central figure of the pope in the Latin Church. The new mendicant orders in the 13th century, such as the Franciscans and Dominicans, exempted from episcopal authority, promoted a conception of the papacy as being entrusted with the pastoral care of the whole Church.

1.4 After the Investiture Controversy of the late 11th and early 12th centuries, the Church engaged in another great struggle with temporal powers for the direction of the western Christian world. Innocent III (1198-1216) consolidated the view of the pope as the head governing the whole ecclesial body. As the successor of Peter, the pope had the fulness of power (plenitudo potestatis) and a concern for all the churches (sollicitudo omnium ecclesiarum). Individual bishops were called to share in his solicitude (in partem sollicitudinis), by caring for their own dioceses.

1.5 At that time, despite the doctrinal development of Roman primacy, synodality was still evident. Popes continued to govern the Latin Church with the Roman synod, gathering the bishops of the Roman province and those present in Rome. The synod normally met twice a year. Problems were addressed and freely discussed

by all participants. The pope as primus made the final decision. There is no evidence that the pope was bound by a vote, but there is no evidence either that the pope took any final decision contrary to the advice of his synod.

1.6 During the 12th century, the role of the Roman synod was gradually replaced by the consistory, the meeting of the cardinals. Cardinals were members of the Roman clergy, seven of them being bishops of the suburbicarian sees of the province of Rome. The pope consulted the consistory on a regular basis. With the decrees of 1059 and 1179, the college of cardinals gained the exclusive right to elect the pope. The fact that cardinals were suburbicarian bishops or endowed with a Roman presbyteral or diaconal title stressed the fact that the Church of Rome and not any other body is entitled to elect her bishop.

1.7 In the West, there were provincial synods, but the popes also convoked general councils, like the four Lateran Councils (1123, 1139, 1179, 1215) which continued the reform of the Church in the West. Constitution 5 of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) stated that 'the Roman Church … through the Lord's disposition has a primacy of ordinary power over all other churches inasmuch as she is the mother and teacher [mater et magistra] of all Christ's faithful'. The same council called on the Greeks to 'conform themselves like obedient sons to the holy Roman Church, their mother, so that there may be one flock and one shepherd' (Const. 4). This call was not accepted.

1.8 This period of papal predominance coincided with the crusades, which were initially prompted by an appeal of the Byzantine emperor in his conflict with the Seljuk Turks, but which developed into violent antagonism between Latins and Greeks. As a result of the first crusade (1095-1099), a Latin patriarch and Latin hierarchy were established in Antioch (1098) and in Jerusalem (1099), instead of or parallel to the Greek patriarchates. The third crusade (1189-1192) established a Latin hierarchy in Cyprus (1191), and, contrary to the canons, abolished the autocephaly of the Church of Cyprus. The Greek bishops, reduced in number from 15 to only four, were forced to be obedient to the Roman Church and to swear an oath to the respective Latin bishops.

1.9 The fourth crusade (1204) resulted in the plundering of Constantinople and the establishment of parallel Latin hierarchies in the remaining ancient sees of the Greek Church. Though he discouraged the Venetians from conquering Constantinople, Pope Innocent III subsequently appointed a Latin patriarch in Constantinople as well as in Alexandria. The decisions of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) were imposed particularly on the Churches of Jerusalem and Cyprus. The principle whereby the 'Greeks' could keep their liturgical rituals but had to accept the bishop of Rome as their head and commemorate him, was practised especially in Cyprus (cf. the Latin synods of Limassol, 1220, and of Famagusta, 1222, and the Bulla Cypria of Pope Alexander IV, 1260). In many cases, the Greek clergy, considered from now on as belonging to the Latin Church, were forced to participate in Latin liturgical acts. The atmosphere worsened with the polemical attitude of theologians denouncing eastern usages as 'errors of the Greeks', or even 'errors of the schismatic Greeks'.

1.10 In spite of these trials, there were still those in the East who cultivated good ecclesial relations and worked for the restoration of unity. Great patriarchs with deep theological understanding, such as Philotheos Kokkinos (c.1300-1379), a disciple of Gregory Palamas, examined the possibility of convoking an ecumenical council that would provide a solution for the divisions.

1.11 During the second millennium in the East, the conciliar institution functioned according to the canonical principles of Apostolic Canon 34, where the Patriarch of Constantinople as the protos and the bishops present in Constantinople participated in sessions of the Endemousa Synod. Through the Endemousa Synod, the Church expressed a form of permanent synodality in which the patriarchs of the East, present in Constantinople, or their representatives, and other bishops were convoked by the Patriarch of Constantinople to make synodal decisions.

1.12 After the restoration of the Byzantine empire in Constantinople in 1261, it was possible to rebuild mutual relations. In fact, the Second Council of Lyon (1274) proclaimed an act of union which contained the profession of faith requested formerly by Pope Clement IV (1267) and signed by Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos (in February 1274), accepting Latin claims on the procession of the Holy Spirit, papal primacy, and other disputed points (e.g., purgatory, the azymes). It was affirmed that the Roman Church had 'summum plenumque principatum [the highest and full primacy]' over the whole Church and that the successor of Peter had received 'plenam potestatem [fulness of power]' to govern it, the other bishops being called to share his solicitude. This profession was rejected by the Church of Constantinople in 1285.

1.13 During the 14th century, the Hesychast controversy, provoked by Barlaam, a monk of Calabria, arose in the East. The monks of Mount Athos delegated St Gregory Palamas to answer the challenges of Barlaam. During the 14th century, four synods in Constantinople (1341, 1347, 1351, and 1368) defended the distinction between the essence and the uncreated energy of God, developed by St Gregory Palamas on the basis of Fathers of the Church such as St Basil of Caesarea and St Maximus the Confessor. These events indicate the continuing practice of synodality in the East.

1.14 The 14th and 15th centuries witnessed a radical change in the political sphere, putting an end to papal temporal predominance. The attempt of Pope Boniface VIII (1294-1303) to reaffirm papal supremacy in the temporal order in the bull Unam Sanctam (1302) was violently opposed by the king of France, so putting an end to the papal pretension to rule the world politically. This episode was followed a few years later by the

exile of the papacy in the French city of Avignon, where the popes lived for seventy years under the control of the French monarchy.

1.15 The chaos resulting from the election of two and then three popes provoked a deep trauma in the western Church. To resolve the crisis, a general council was convoked in Constance (1414-1418). This council, attended not only by bishops and abbots but also by representatives of political bodies, developed in its decree, Haec sancta (1415), the thesis that the highest authority in the Church belongs to a general council, understood as an assembly of bishops and secular powers, in contradistinction to the authority of the pope. This thesis is known as 'conciliarism'. Conciliarism subverted the canonical role of the primate in the synod and jeopardised the freedom of the Church. It stressed the new idea that a council should 'represent' all the categories of Christian society, and that such a council, meeting every ten years, with the pope executing its decisions, would govern the Church. The ecclesial practice of synodality was thus challenged by the secular notion of corporate representation, a concept drawn from secular Roman law bestowing legal personality on collective bodies.

1.16 The weakening of papal authority provided the opportunity for states to increase their control over the Church in the West. The Roman see was compelled to sign concordats which recognized the right of political powers to participate in the appointment of bishops. Such an agreement is exemplified in the Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges (1438), which endorsed conciliarism and prepared the ground for Gallicanism (see below, 2.3). Conciliarism was condemned at the Fifth Lateran Council (1512-1517) and definitively excluded by the teaching of the First Vatican Council (1869-1870).

1.17 The council of Ferrara-Florence (1438-1439) met while the conciliarist assembly of Basel (1431-1449), rejected by Pope Eugenius IV (1431-1447), was still in session. Both western parties invited the emperor and the patriarch of Constantinople, but in accordance with the pentarchy the emperor and the patriarch decided to go not to Basel but to Ferrara and then to Florence where the pope was present. It was also true that, under pressure from the Ottomans and needing western military assistance, the emperor and the patriarch recognized that the pope was in a position to generate western help in favour of Constantinople. The council addressed the points of disagreement which had arisen between the two Churches, mainly: the Filioque, the use of azymes for the Eucharist, purgatory, the beatific vision after death, and papal primacy. The bull of union, Laetentur coeli (1439), with a strong biblical introduction, praised Christ as the head and cornerstone of the reunited Church.

1.18 The primary goal of the strong statements of Florence on papal primacy was the rejection of the conciliarist thesis of Basel. The council proceeded with three affirmations: 'the holy Apostolic See [Rome] and the Roman pontiff have the primacy over the whole world'; 'the same Roman pontiff is the successor of blessed Peter, … the head of the whole Church, the father and teacher of all Christians'; 'to him, in the person of blessed Peter, was given by our Lord Jesus Christ the full power [plenam potestatem] of feeding, ruling, and governing [pascendi, regendi ac gubernandi] the whole Church'. These affirmations were accepted by the Greeks on three conditions, which were included in the decree: a) addition of the clause, 'as is also contained in the acts of the ecumenical councils and in the sacred canons'; b) mention of the other patriarchal sees of the Pentarchy; and c) the maintenance of the privileges and the rights of the patriarchs (Denzinger-Schönmetzer, Enchiridion symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum, DS, 1307-1308).

1.19 With regard to all of the disputed issues, the council stated that the differences in doctrinal formulation or canonical practice did not affect the unity of faith. The union was signed by the Greeks under the pressure of circumstances, and was subsequently not received by the Greek Church. It was officially rejected by the Council of Constantinople in 1484, with the participation of the four eastern patriarchates: 'through this present synodal tomos, we overturn the council which was convened in Florence, along with its definition [the bull of union] and the propositions contained within it, and we declare by this tomos that the council of Florence is null and void' (Melloni-Paschalidis, Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Generaliumque Decreta, IV/1, 227).

2. From the Reformation to the 18th Century

2.1 Two major new developments affected the relationship between synodality and primacy in the 16th-18th centuries: the Protestant Reformation, and the unions established between Rome and various eastern Churches. The rise of Protestantism led to contacts with the East and even hopes for union, at least during the preliminary phase of their encounter, though it further divided the West. Synodality was still practised in the East during this difficult period, and the decisions of several synods held at that time show what were the theological issues separating Roman Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestants. The phenomenon of unions was experienced by the Orthodox as a wound and a threat, as causing further divisions in the East, and as a form of proselytism.

2.2 The objections of the Reformers were taken up by the Council of Trent (1545-1563), but the council gave no definition of primacy. A consensus on the meaning of primacy and the rights of the primate was unattainable; episcopal counter-tendencies proved too strong, especially in France. While in some parts of the Latin Church the election of bishops by cathedral chapters continued to be practised, it was prescribed that provincial synods should be set up and should send a list of three names to Rome, so that the pope could choose and appoint bishops (session XXIV; Decretum de Reformatione, can.1). After Trent, the papacy took the lead in the Tridentine reforms and the Roman Catholic Church became increasingly centralized with regard to doctrine,

liturgy, and missionary activity. The papacy was an important focus in the controversy with Protestantism about the true faith, and in the long run papal authority was strengthened in the post-Tridentine period. The papacy and commitment to it became a marker of Roman Catholic confessional identity against Protestantism. The efforts of both old and new religious orders (e.g. the Jesuits) for the Tridentine reform and in the counter-reformation in humanistic education and mission added to the authority of the papacy.

2.3 Provincial synods, aimed at implementing the Tridentine reforms, took place in Italy (e.g., Milan, 1566), in the German Empire (e.g. Salzburg, 1569), in France (from 1581), and in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Piotrków, 1589). Under political pressure, the Roman Catholic bishops of many kingdoms sought greater autonomy with regard to papal primacy. These episcopalist tendencies (e.g. Gallicanism in France, Febronianism in Germany) continued to advocate for conciliarism. The French Revolution finally led to the downfall of the Ancien Régime and the destruction of the state Church, which ultimately strengthened ties between the Church in France and Rome, since after the collapse of the old order only the papacy had the authority to reorganise the Church (cf. the Concordat with France in 1801 and the Congress of Vienna in 1814-1815).

2.4 The juridical Millet system assigned all Orthodox living in the Ottoman Empire, irrespective of ethnic considerations, to the Rum-Millet, dependent upon the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople in ecclesiastical and civil matters. This emphasized the latter's central position within the Orthodox Church, known already from the canonical order, and enhanced its importance vis-à-vis the other ancient patriarchates. Despite this new situation, the spirit of synodality was nevertheless preserved. Councils were convoked by the ecumenical patriarch to resolve issues in a synodal way, such as the Council of Constantinople (1593), to confirm the title of patriarch granted earlier to the metropolitan of Moscow; the Council of Iasi (1642), to adjudicate the confession of faith of the Metropolitan of Kyiv, Peter Mohyla; and the two great Councils of Constantinople (1638, 1642). Further synods were convoked in Constantinople (1672, 1691), and by Patriarch Dositheus in Jerusalem (1672), which condemned the Confession of Faith attributed to the ecumenical patriarch, Cyril Loukaris.

2.5 Beginning in the late 16th century, polemical works appeared by both eastern and western authors, particularly on the topic of papal supremacy. Subsequently, the question of papal primacy was addressed either polemically or apologetically in Eastern synodical decisions, confessions of faith, and canonical commentaries.

2.6 Various unions between eastern Churches and Rome were established between the 16th and 18th centuries. The motives for these unions have always been contested. Genuine desire for the unity of the Church cannot be excluded from consideration. Religious and political factors frequently intertwined. The unions often appear as attempts to flee from unfortunate local situations. Some Ruthenians at the time of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth joined Rome at the Synod of Brest (1596). Other unions happened in Croatia (1611), Uzhorod (1646), Transylvania (1700-1701), and Serbia (1777). Albanian-speaking Orthodox who had fled at the end of the 15th century to southern Italy after the Turkish conquest, subsequently entered into communion with Rome. In 1724, at a time of vacancy of the patriarchal see of Antioch, the community in Damascus elected a pro-Catholic patriarch, who took the name of Cyril VI and was recognised by the pope in 1729, thereby forming the Melkite Catholic Church. Unions were also effected with other Churches.

2.7 At the beginning of the 18th century, Tsar Peter I (1689-1725) introduced reforms in Russia at large and in the Church. The patriarchate was abolished (until 1917), and a Holy Synod under the leadership of a state official, the Oberprokuror, governed the Church. In restructuring the Church administration, Peter followed Protestant models. Synodal structures prevailed, but strongly under the influence of the state.

3. 19th Century Developments

3.1 After the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, the situation of the Roman Catholic Church in Europe was precarious. The new political regimes, even the restored monarchies, were secular states which claimed to maintain control of the Church, just as the former regimes had done. An example was the French concordat of 1801. Later on, to avoid state interference in ecclesiastical affairs, the papacy adopted the doctrine of the Church as a 'perfect society', meaning that the Church was an independent, autonomous, and sovereign society in her own sphere of competence, just as the state was sovereign in temporal affairs. The Church claimed to be invested with an original legal system, i.e. not derived from or bestowed by the state.

3.2 Pope Pius IX's encyclical letter, In Suprema Petri Apostoli Sede (1848), emphasized that 'the supreme authority of the Roman Pontiffs' was always recognised in the East and called the Orthodox to return to communion with the See of Peter. The Orthodox patriarchs of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem reacted and issued their patriarchal and synodical encyclical letter of 1848, in which, among other issues, they argued against papal supremacy.

3.3 In 1868, Pope Pius IX issued a letter inviting all of the Orthodox bishops to the First Vatican Council, an invitation that was declined. Ecumenical Patriarch Gregory VI told the papal delegation which delivered the letter that the attendance of Orthodox bishops at the Council 'would mean a renewal of old theological

disputes that would accentuate disagreement and reopen old wounds'. For Patriarch Gregory, the main source of disagreement was the nature of the pope's authority.

3.4 In the 19th century, the Orthodox Church was confronted with an exacerbation of nationalism, and even with the intention of integrating this into the structure of Church organisation. The Great Council held in Constantinople in 1872 condemned ethnophyletism, on the occasion of the Bulgarian schism. At the breakup of the Ottoman Empire, national emancipation movements led to the formation of nation states in the Balkans. In order to express and foster the eucharistic unity of the Church in this new situation, the Ecumenical Patriarchate granted a tomos of autocephaly to the Churches of Greece (1850), Serbia (1879), and Romania (1885), according to the canonical tradition, and these Churches were included in the diptychs.

3.5 The First Vatican Council was held in 1869-1870, and it produced two documents: Pastor Aeternus (1870) on the Church, which defined papal primacy and infallibility, and Dei Filius (1870) on the Catholic faith. Much tension has arisen between Roman Catholics and Orthodox with regard to the council's teaching on the papacy. Two points should be noted: first, Vatican I called Pastor Aeternus its 'first' dogmatic constitution on the Church of Christ, because it was intended to be followed by another, Tametsi Deus, dealing more fully with the bishops and with the Church as a whole. However, the council was adjourned because of the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war and the draft of that second document was never discussed. The council thus left its ecclesiology unbalanced; its dogmatic teaching on the papacy was not complemented by teaching on the episcopacy nor contextualized by broader teaching on the Church. Second, the teaching of Pastor Aeternus was strongly influenced by the circumstances of the Church in 18th and 19th century western Europe, where there had been a resurgence of conciliarism in the form of Gallicanism and Febronianism (see above, 2.3), which promoted the autonomy of national Churches, and an accompanying tendency on the part of states to subordinate the Church to them. The council's teaching on the primacy and universal jurisdiction of the pope was a response to the perceived threat to the unity and independence of the Church.

3.6 Although Pastor Aeternus taught that the pope has ordinary and immediate episcopal jurisdiction over the Church as a whole, it nevertheless stressed that the power of each bishop is 'asserted, confirmed and vindicated' by the pope, and affirmed that the Church's 'bond of unity' is one of 'communion and of profession of the same faith' (DS 3060-3061). Moreover, the subsequent declaration of the German bishops in 1875, which was solemnly approved by Pope Pius IX, insisted, against certain interpretations of the council's teaching, that the papacy and the episcopate are both 'of divine institution' (DS 3115).

3.7 With regard to infallibility, the council defined not the personal infallibility of the pope, but his ability under certain conditions to proclaim infallibly the faith of the Church (DS 3074), and when it said that such ex cathedra definitions are 'irreformable of themselves, not because of the consent of the Church [ex sese, non autem ex consensu ecclesiae]' it was not separating the pope from the communion and faith of the Church but declaring that such definitions do not need further ratification. That was a specific response to the 4th Gallican article of 1682, which stated that the pope's judgment 'is not irreformable, at least pending the consent of the Church'.

3.8 Vatican I reinforced the prevalent tendency in Western ecclesiology following Lateran IV, which held that the universal Church had priority over the local Churches and possessed its own structure above the latter. The pope was not simply the bishop of the local Church of Rome, but pastor of the whole Church. The pope had jurisdiction over the whole Church, while the bishops had jurisdiction over their particular flock.

3.9 The teaching of Vatican I on the papal primacy of jurisdiction and infallibility was rejected by some Roman Catholics, who subsequently formed the Old Catholic Church. The teaching also provoked some reaction from the Catholic Eastern Churches, though they ultimately accepted it.

3.10 Vatican I's teaching on the papal primacy of jurisdiction over the whole Church and papal infallibility was considered unacceptable by the Orthodox Church. Such an ecclesiology is for the Orthodox a serious departure from the canonical tradition of the Fathers and the ecumenical councils, because it obscures the catholicity of each local Church. In the wake of Vatican I, arguments deployed by the Orthodox included, among others: that the head of the whole Church is not a mortal, sinful man, but the sinless and immortal God-man Christ; that St Peter himself was not a monarch nor mighty, but first among the apostles; that the jurisdiction of each patriarch is geographically determined by the sacred canons, and that none has jurisdiction over the Church as a whole. On the specific matter of infallibility, the Orthodox Church also considered that infallibility belongs to the Church as a whole, as expressed by councils received by the entire people of God. It must be admitted that these arguments were often invoked in a polemical way, and not in a historical-critical manner.

3.11 Pope Leo XIII's apostolic letter, Orientalium Dignitas (1894), recognised the distinct rights of all the Catholic Eastern Churches and showed a respectful approach to Eastern traditions. His encyclical letter Praeclara Gratulationis (1895) invited all the Orthodox to union with the Church of Rome on the condition that they recognize the papal primacy of jurisdiction. Ecumenical Patriarch Anthimus VII and the synod assembled around him wrote a patriarchal and synodical letter in 1895 to express their strongly negative opinion of uniatism as a method of proselytizing Orthodox Christians. They also rejected Pope Leo's invitation.

4. The 20th and 21st Centuries: Ressourcement and Rapprochement

4.1 In the 20th century, the biblical, patristic and liturgical movements resulted in greater attention being paid to the teaching of the Bible and the Fathers, and also to the liturgy. Roman Catholic-Orthodox relations have benefited from this common return to the sources (ressourcement).

4.2 The concept of sobornost' was developed in 19th century Russia by a group of Orthodox thinkers called slavophiles as a reaction to the state-controlled Holy Synod established by Tsar Peter I in 1721 (cf. 2.7, above). The term derives from sobor, which in Church Slavonic means an ecclesial 'gathering' or 'assembly' or 'synod'. In the symbol of faith, the Greek word katholikèn is translated in Church Slavonic as sobornuyu. The slavophiles intended by sobornost' an intrinsic quality of the whole Church: its catholicity, and the participation of all the baptised in the life of the Church. The idea of sobornost' is apparent in the preparation, composition, and decision-making processes of the Council of Moscow (1917-1918), which involved all the components of the Church. Although it has been criticised, particularly for being too influenced by a collectivist ideal and not giving proper recognition to the Church's hierarchy, sobornost' has had an important influence on ecclesiology, both Orthodox and Roman Catholic, because of its more conciliar understanding of the Church as communion (cf. also Ravenna, 5).

4.3 In the 19th century in the West, the School of Tübingen promoted the concept of the Church as communion (communio) through a retrieval of the patristic tradition. This idea expresses the conviction that the life of the Church comes from above, and that the Church is an icon of the Holy Trinity (ecclesia de Trinitate), by the grace of the Holy Spirit. It was a basis for the renewal of ecclesiological reflection particularly in the 20th century. In such an understanding of the Church, there is both unity and diversity, as in the Holy Trinity, and this applies to the Church in various ways. The Church as a whole is the body of Christ in which each member is gifted by the Spirit for the benefit of the body and all are bound together by the bond of love (cf. 1Cor 12-13). The communion of saints (sancti) comes about through the communion in the holy gifts (sancta) (cf. 1Cor 10:16-17). Also, the one Church takes the form of a communion of local Churches, in each of which the one universal Church is present, such that there is a mutual indwelling between the local and the universal and among the local Churches themselves.

4.4 One of the most important results of the 20th century ressourcement is 'eucharistic ecclesiology', which sees the local Church gathered around its bishop for the celebration of the Eucharist as a manifestation of the whole Church (cf. Ignatius, Smyrn. 8), and as the starting point and central focus of ecclesiological reflection. The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) taught that such a gathering is 'the principal manifestation of the Church' (Sacrosanctum Concilium, 41), and that the eucharistic sacrifice is 'the source and summit of the whole Christian life' (Lumen Gentium, 11; cf. Sacrosanctum Concilium, 10). It further highlighted the significance of the local Church when it said that 'a bishop marked with the fullness of the sacrament of Orders, is "the steward of the grace of the supreme priesthood", especially in the Eucharist, which he offers or causes to be offered, and by which the Church continually lives and grows' (Lumen Gentium, 26). The Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church in Crete (2016) stated that 'the tradition of the Apostles and Fathers' always emphasised 'the indissoluble relation both between the entire mystery of the divine Economy in Christ and the mystery of the Church, and also between the mystery of the Church and the mystery of the holy Eucharist, which is continually confirmed in the sacramental life of the Church through the operation of the Holy Spirit' (Encyclical, I, 2). It likewise stated that 'each local Church as she offers the holy Eucharist is the local presence and manifestation of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church' (Message, 1). These two major councils need close consideration.

4.5 At the turn of the 20th century, the Orthodox Church was facing many challenges—for instance, with regard to relationships with other Christians, proselytism, secularization, and ethnophyletism—that led the Ecumenical Patriarchate to seek closer collaboration between the autocephalous Orthodox Churches. In 1902, Ecumenical Patriarch Joachim III sent a patriarchal and synodical encyclical to the autocephalous Orthodox Churches asking their opinion on a variety of topics, seeking to promote panorthodox unity. The Churches responded positively. In 1920, the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate issued an encyclical letter entitled 'Unto the Churches of Christ Everywhere', calling for closer inter-Christian communication and collaboration. The Ecumenical Patriarchate also convoked a panorthodox conference in Constantinople in 1923, and subsequently organised a panorthodox meeting in the Vatopedi monastery on Mount Athos (1930), which already listed themes to be included in the agenda of the Holy and Great Council. These efforts were interrupted mainly by the Second World War.

4.6 Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras convoked panorthodox conferences (Rhodes 1961, 1963 and 1964; Chambésy, Geneva 1968) that established the agenda of the Holy and Great Council. A series of pre-conciliar conferences was held at Chambésy to prepare the related documents. In this context, four Synaxes of the primates of the autocephalous Orthodox Churches (Constantinople 2008 and 2014, Chambésy 2016, and Crete 2016) led to the convocation of the Holy and Great Council by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew with the unanimous consent of the primates of the Orthodox Churches in Crete from 19-27 June, 2016. The gathering of the Holy and Great Council shows that 'The Orthodox Church expresses her unity and catholicity

"in Council". Conciliarity [i.e. synodality] pervades her organisation, the way decisions are taken and determines her path' (Message, 1).

4.7 Among other ecclesiological matters, the Second Vatican Council treated the question of how the episcopate is understood and how it is related to the papal ministry, which had remained open at Vatican I. Vatican II integrated and completed the teaching of Vatican I that the pope had supreme and full authority over the Church and that in certain circumstances he could infallibly proclaim the faith of the Church by saying that the body of bishops ('college of bishops') in union with its head, the pope, also exercises both of these prerogatives (Lumen Gentium, 22, 25, respectively). A greater balance was thus established between the bishops and the pope. The council reaffirmed the responsibility of bishops not just for their own local Churches but for the Church as a whole (Lumen Gentium, 23), and it particularly highlighted the significance of an ecumenical council, when the bishops act together with the pope as 'teachers and judges of faith and morals for the universal Church' (Lumen Gentium, 25). In 1965, Pope Paul VI instituted the Synod of Bishops as a 'permanent Council of bishops for the universal Church', representative of 'the whole Catholic episcopate', which would assist the pope in an advisory and consultative capacity (Apostolic Letter, Apostolica Sollicitudo).

4.8 In January 1964, Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras met on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. On 7 December 1965, the penultimate day of Vatican II, they lifted the mutual anathemas of 1054 in a simultaneous ceremony at the Vatican and the Phanar. In their exchanges during the 1960s, Patriarch Athenagoras and Pope Paul VI started to use the terminology of 'sister Churches' with regard to the Church of Rome and the Church of Constantinople. Vatican II recognised that the Eastern Churches 'possess true sacraments, above all by apostolic succession, the priesthood and the Eucharist' (Unitatis Redintegratio, 15), and urged dialogue with these Churches, paying attention to the relations that existed between them and the Roman See 'before the separation' (Unitatis Redintegratio, 14).

4.9 In 1995, Pope John Paul II said: 'If those who want to be first are called to become the servants of all, then the primacy of love will be seen to grow from the courage of this charity. I pray the Lord to inspire, first of all in myself, and in the bishops of the Catholic Church, concrete actions as a witness to this inner certitude' (Orientale Lumen, 19). He also expressed a readiness 'to find a way of exercising the primacy which, while in no way renouncing what is essential to its mission, is nonetheless open to a new situation', and he proposed a discussion, particularly between Roman Catholic and Orthodox bishops and theologians, on the exercise of the primacy 'that we may seek—together, of course—the forms in which this ministry may accomplish a service of love recognized by all concerned' (Ut Unum Sint, 95). Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis have regularly repeated this invitation, and both have often invoked St Ignatius of Antioch's description of the Church of Rome as 'presiding in love [agape]' (Ad Romanos, Proemium).

4.10 Pope Francis has emphasized that synodality is 'a constitutive element of the Church'. His desire for 'an entirely synodal Church' (Address on the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops, 17 October 2015) strongly encourages the search for a more effective synodality in the Roman Catholic Church. He has said that, 'in the dialogue with our Orthodox brothers and sisters, we Catholics have the opportunity to learn more about the meaning of episcopal collegiality and their experience of synodality' (Encyclical Letter, Evangelii Gaudium, 2013, 246).

Conclusion

5.1 Major issues complicate an authentic understanding of synodality and primacy in the Church. The Church is not properly understood as a pyramid, with a primate governing from the top, but neither is it properly understood as a federation of self-sufficient Churches. Our historical study of synodality and primacy in the second millennium has shown the inadequacy of both of these views. Similarly, it is clear that for Roman Catholics synodality is not merely consultative, and for Orthodox primacy is not merely honorific. In 1979, Pope John Paul II and Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios said: 'The dialogue of charity … has opened up the way to better understanding of our respective theological positions and thereby to new approaches to theological work, and to a new attitude with regard to the common past of our Churches. This purification of the collective memory of our Churches is an important outcome of the dialogue of charity and an indispensable condition for future progress' (Joint Declaration, 30 November 1979). Roman Catholics and Orthodox need to continue along that path so as to embrace an authentic understanding of synodality and primacy in light of the 'theological principles, canonical provisions and liturgical practices' (Chieti, 21) of the undivided Church of the first millennium.

5.2 The Second Vatican Council opened new perspectives by fundamentally interpreting the mystery of the Church as one of communion. Today, there is an increasing effort to promote synodality at all levels in the Roman Catholic Church. There is also a willingness to distinguish what might be termed the patriarchal ministry of the pope within the Western or Latin Church from his primatial service with regard to the communion of all the Churches, offering new opportunities for the future. In the Orthodox Church, synodality and primacy are practised at the panorthodox level, according to the canonical tradition, by the holding of holy and great councils.

5.3 Synodality and primacy need to be seen as 'interrelated, complementary and inseparable realities' (Chieti, 5) from a theological point of view (Chieti, 4, 17). Purely historical discussions are not enough. The Church is deeply rooted in the mystery of the Holy Trinity, and a eucharistic ecclesiology of communion is the key to articulating a sound theology of synodality and primacy.

5.4 The interdependence of synodality and primacy is a fundamental principle in the life of the Church. It is intrinsically related to the service of the unity of the Church at the local, regional and universal levels. However, principles must be applied in specific historical settings, and the first millennium offers valuable guidance for the application of the principle just mentioned (Chieti, 21). What is required in new circumstances is a new and proper application of the same governing principle.

5.5 Our Lord prayed that his disciples 'may all be one' (Jn 17:21). The principle of synodality-primacy in the service of unity should be invoked to meet the needs and requirements of the Church in our time. Orthodox and Roman Catholics are committed to finding ways to overcome the alienation and separation that occurred during the second millennium.

5.6 Having reflected together on the history of the second millennium, we acknowledge that a common reading of the sources can inspire the practice of synodality and primacy in the future. Observing the mandate of our Lord to love one another as he has loved us (Jn 13:34), it is our Christian duty to strive for unity in faith and life.