



PONTIFICIO CONSIGLIO
PER LA PROMOZIONE
DELL'UNITÀ DEI CRISTIANI

JOINT INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION
FOR THE THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN
THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

7th PLENARY SESSION

Balamand School of Theology, Lebanon, July 17-24, 1993

The seventh plenary session of the Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church took place from June 17th to 24th, 1993, within the magnificent framework of Balamand, close to the monastery dating from the XIIth century and in the buildings of the School of Orthodox Theology "St John Damascene" and of the new Orthodox University which is in full development. His Beatitude Ignatius IV Hazim by his personal presence was a living sign of the generous and cordial hospitality shown to all the participants by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch. The Eucharist was celebrated by the Catholic delegation on Saturday afternoon and by the Orthodox delegation on Sunday morning, each ceremony taking place in the historic church of the monastery with the assistance of a great number of faithful. On Monday, June 21st, all the Patriarchs of the territory of Antioch, both Orthodox and Catholic, were guests of His Beatitude Ignatius IV for lunch. An official delegation representing the commission made a courtesy visit to Their Excellencies, the President of the Republic, Mr. Elias Hraoui, and the President of the Parliament, Mr. Nabeh Berri on Tuesday, June 22nd. The entire Commission then toured the historical centre of Beirut and the members were guests at lunch hosted by the Orthodox Archbishop of the capital. Representatives of nine autocephalous and autonomous Orthodox Churches were present for this plenary session of the Joint International Commission for dialogue. From the Catholic side, twenty four members of the Commission took part in the meeting. The theme of the seventh plenary session was entirely centred on the theological and practical questions presented by the existence and pastoral activity of the Oriental Catholic Churches. The profound changes which have taken place in Central and Eastern Europe, involving the rebirth of religious liberty and the resumption of open pastoral activity by the Oriental Catholic Churches, have made these questions the touchstone of the quality of the relations between the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches. At Balamand, the Commission had before it a working paper, developed by the coordinating committee of the Commission during its meeting at Ariccia (Rome) in June 1991 which bears the title: "Uniatism, method of union of the past, and the present search for full communion This text was studied and reworked in common, in a frank and brotherly spirit, accompanied by a deep concern for the continuation of the work of fostering the restoration of full communion between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches. The text finally adopted at Balamand is composed of two parts: 1) Ecclesiological Principles and 2) Practical Rules. In the spirit of the ecclesiology of communion and because of the fact that the Catholic and Orthodox Churches recognize each other as Sister Churches, it was observed that, in the effort to re-establish unity, what is involved is achieving together the will of Christ for those who are His disciples and the design of God for His Church, by means of a common search for full agreement in faith. It is not a question of seeking the conversion of persons from one Church to the other. This latter type of missionary activity, which has been called "uniatism cannot be accepted either as a method to follow or as a model for the unity which is being sought by our Churches. Conscious of the fact that the history of divisions has deeply wounded the memories of the Churches, Catholics and Orthodox are determined to look to the future, with mutual recognition of the necessity for transparent consultation and cooperation at all levels of Church life. The Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue will now submit the document adopted at Balamand to the authorities of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches for approval and application.

Balamand, June 23rd, 1993

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