



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

TENTH PLENARY SESSION
Ravenna, Italy, 08-14 October 2007

The tenth meeting of the Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church met in Ravenna, Italy, a city marked by its historical and artistic monuments many from the Byzantine era. The meeting took place from 8-14 October 2007, generously hosted by the Archdiocese of Ravenna-Cervia. Twenty seven of the thirty Catholic members (Cardinals, Archbishops, Bishops, Priests and Lay Theologians) were present. The Orthodox members (Metropolitans, Bishops; Priests and Lay Theologians) represented the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Patriarchate of Alexandria, the Patriarchate of Antioch, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the Patriarchate of Moscow, the Patriarchate of Serbia, the Patriarchate of Romania, the Patriarchate of Georgia, the Church of Cyprus, the Church of Greece, the Church of Poland, the Church of Albania, the Church of Czech Lands and Slovakia, the Church of Finland and the Apostolic Church of Estonia. The representatives of the Patriarchate of Bulgaria were unable to attend. The Commission worked under the direction of the two co-presidents, Cardinal Walter Kasper and Metropolitan John of Pergamon, helped by the two co-secretaries, Metropolitan Gennadios of Sassima, (Ecumenical Patriarchate) and Monsignor Eleuterio Fortino from the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. The session began in the Basilica of Sant'Apollinare in Classe on the evening of 8 October, with the celebration of Vespers, presided over by the Archbishop of Ravenna, the Most Reverend Giuseppe Verucchi, and with a prayer on the part of the Orthodox members. In addressing those present, the Archbishop of Ravenna stated: "We are happy that you are here. You have the prayers of our two contemplative communities, of the religious men and women, the priests and the parish communities. While you are busy with the dialogue, searching for the path that will lead us closer to full communion, we will not disturb you, but we will embrace you with our affection and prayer". The Commission was welcomed in the prefecture by the Prefect, Her Excellency Floriana De Sanctis, who expressed the hope that "the desire for dialogue, to understand and to be understood, which characterizes the Joint Commission might be a sign copied by all of us in our daily lives". Also present at this meeting were the Mayor of the city, the President of the region and the President of the province, together with other civil authorities. The Commission has been working on the theme of "The Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences of the Sacramental Nature of the Church: Ecclesial Communion, Conciliarity and Authority in the Church". This study had already begun in the previous session in Belgrade, from 18-25 September 2006, on the basis of a draft elaborated by the Joint Coordinating Committee in Moscow in 1990, but which had not yet been discussed in plenary session. At this meeting this study has been completed and an agreed common document was approved. The document offers a solid basis for the future work of the Commission. On the first day of the meeting, as is customary in this Commission, the Roman Catholic and Orthodox members met separately to coordinate their work. At the Orthodox meeting the delegate of the Moscow Patriarchate presented a decision of that Church to withdraw from the meeting because of the presence of delegates from the Church of Estonia, declared "autonomous" by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, a status not recognized by the Patriarchate of Moscow, and in spite of the fact that the Ecumenical Patriarchate with the agreement of all the Orthodox members offered a compromise that would have acknowledged the Moscow Patriarchate's non-recognition of the Autonomous Church of Estonia. The theme for the next plenary session will be: "The role of the Bishop of Rome in the communion of the Church in the first millennium". The place and time for the next Coordinating Committee will be decided at a later date. The tenth plenary session ended with prayer. On Saturday, 13 October, the Catholic members celebrated the Eucharist in the Cathedral of Ravenna, in the presence of the Orthodox members. On Sunday, 14 October, the Orthodox members celebrated the Divine Liturgy in the Basilica of Saint Vitalis, in the presence of the Catholic members. On both of these occasions the Archbishop of Ravenna and members of the clergy and laity of Ravenna attended. The meeting of the Joint Commission was marked by a spirit of friendship and trustful collaboration. The members of the Commission greatly appreciated the generous hospitality of the Archdiocese of Ravenna, and they strongly commend the continuing work of the dialogue to the prayers of the faithful.

Ravenna, Italy, 14 October 2007

[Information Service 125 (2007/III) 109]