



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

Crete, Greece, May 30 - June 8, 1984

From 30 May to 8 June 1984, fifty-six members, of the Joint International Commission for theological dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church met for their third Plenary Session at the Orthodox Church Academy of Crete and drew up a common document on: Faith, sacraments and the unity of the Church.

A lack of time prevented the final redaction of the document from being submitted to the Plenary Session. The document has been sent back to the coordination committee of the Commission which will publish it at the appropriate time.

Under the co-presidency of Their Eminences Cardinal Jean Willebrands, President of the Secretariat for Christian Unity, and Archbishop Stylianos of Australia, the Commission studied the documents prepared during the last two years, since its meeting in Munich in 1982, and the meetings of the three joint sub-commissions and of the coordinating committee.

The International Commission was established in 1979 by the common announcement of Pope John Paul II and Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I, on the occasion of the Pope's visit to the Patriarch at Istanbul for the Feast of Saint Andrew, 30 November. The Orthodox delegation includes metropolitans, bishops, theologians and other experts representing nine patriarchates and five other Orthodox Churches. On the Roman Catholic side, the delegation, nominated by the Pope, likewise includes cardinals, bishops, theologians and other experts. At the time of their first meeting on the islands of Patmos and Rhodes, in May 1980, the Commission had adopted a Plan for theological dialogue, beginning with what the two Churches have in common and moving on from there to take up the questions on which agreement has not yet been reached at this time. The theme of the meeting in Crete is the fruit of a lengthy document drawn up by the Commission at the time of its meeting in Munich, in July 1982, on: The Mystery of the Church and the Eucharist in the light of the Mystery of the Blessed Trinity. In the course of the meeting, the members of the Commission prayed together and assisted at liturgical services of the two Churches. Saturday evening, 2 June, Cardinal Willebrands presided at the celebration of the Mass of Sunday in the Catholic Church of the Assumption at Chania; the Catholic clergy concelebrated and the Orthodox members were present. The following morning, the Roman Catholic delegation assisted at the Liturgy celebrated by Archbishop Stylianos and by the Orthodox bishops and priests in the Church of Saint Nicholas at Chania.

The co-presidents of the Commission expressed sentiments of profound gratitude for the very generous hospitality offered by the authorities of the Church, of the dioceses, of the metropolitans and the other authorities of Chania, Kastelli and Heraklion in the churches, the monasteries and the parishes and most especially by the orthodox Academy of Crete (Kolymbari). It goes without saying that theological discussion can make better progress in an atmosphere of charity and peace, which is itself a sign foreshadowing the full communion between the two Churches so ardently desired.

At the end of the meeting, it was announced that the next plenary meeting of the Joint International Commission would take place in the summer of 1986 in the Archdiocese of Bari, in Italy. The theme that will meanwhile be studied by the sub-commissions is the following: The Sacrament of Orders (Ordination) in the sacramental structure of the Church, in particular, the importance of the apostolic succession for the sanctification and the unity of the People of God.

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