INTERNATIONAL JOINT COMMISSION FOR THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE ORIENTAL ORTHODOX CHURCHES REPORT

REPORT
Ninth Meeting
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, January 17 to 21, 2012

The ninth meeting of the International Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from January 17 to 21, 2012. The meeting was hosted by His Holiness Abuna Paulos I, Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. It was chaired jointly by His Eminence Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and by His Eminence Metropolitan Bishoy of Damiette, General Secretary of the Holy Synod of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

Joining delegates from the Catholic Church were representatives of the following Oriental Orthodox Churches: the Antiochian Syrian Orthodox Church, the Armenian Apostolic Church (Catholicosate of All Armenians), the Armenian Apostolic Church (Holy See of Cilicia), the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church. No representative of the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahdo Church was able to attend.

The two delegations met separately on the morning of January 17. In the afternoon, the Catholic members attended a prayer service with the local Catholic hierarchy, clergy, religious and faithful, at the Cathedral of the Nativity of Our Lady. They were greeted with an address by Abune Berhaneyesus D. Souraphiel, CM, Metropolitan Archbishop of Addis Ababa and President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Ethiopia. Cardinal Koch was also invited to speak to the assembly. That same evening, all the members of the commission accepted a gracious invitation from His Excellency Archbishop George Panikulam, Apostolic Nuncio in Ethiopia, to attend a friendship dinner at the Apostolic Nunciature in honor of His Holiness Patriarch Paulos, who also attended the meal.

The Joint Commission held plenary sessions on January 18, 19, and 21. Each day began with Morning Prayer. At the beginning of the meeting Metropolitan Bishoy congratulated one of the Catholic members, Rev. Fr. Paul Rouhana, on his recent election as General Secretary of the Middle East Council of Churches.

The meeting was formally opened on the morning of January 18 by His Holiness Patriarch Paulos. In his address to the members, the Patriarch said, "It is with great pleasure and gratitude we welcome you, the Co-chairs, co-secretaries and members of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches. And let our spiritual greetings reach to our most venerable brothers, the Heads of our churches, through you. The history of the church tells us that division between the ancient Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Catholic Church can be traced back to the years after the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD, whose Christological teaching was not accepted by the Oriental Orthodox Churches. Henceforth, no dialogue or even trial was made to bring these churches into their original unified status before 451 AD and no attempt and activity resulted in settling an irreversible solution to the division. Obviously the 20th century has brought about new horizons in which relations began to be developed through the Pro Oriente Foundation in Vienna. This process of relations led to the establishment of an official dialogue between the Catholic and Oriental Orthodox Churches in 2003, under the title "International Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches." In accordance with the formally prescribed setups of the commission in Rome, we could say the Joint Commission has developed a few articles related to fundamental aspects of ecclesiology. The issue of communion and communication among our ancient churches in the first five centuries, currently undertaken by the commission since January 2010, is perhaps expected to establish good historical understanding of our churches. We think such technical and scholarly selection of items for discussion will bring many more outstanding results beyond the initially expected purpose of the Joint Commission. Therefore, this theological and spiritual contemplation will not only unveil the historical and theological facts that exist in common but also will show us the direction for the future. The ninth meeting of the Joint Commission in Addis Ababa is expected to bring much more progress in your theological examinations of enormous ecclesiastical issues. And we hope that the agendas chosen to be discussed here will be exhausted with utmost attention. To this end we would like to encourage your skilful monitoring of agendas in the Joint commission. As we all know, this is the season of Epiphany, the celebration of the baptism of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church celebrates this liturgical, highly spiritual, and unifying feast colorfully and with magnificent numbers of believers. The theological meaning of this feast is highly significant which reflects the mystery of baptism, making all of

us children of God, which is on the other hand inspiring. As I officially open the Ninth meeting of the Catholic-Oriental Orthodox International Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue, I wish all success and the grace of God to be with you. May it be a blessed and fruitful meeting to the Glory our Lord, Our God and Savior Jesus Christ. I pray to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, that His Divine guidance be in your midst during this meeting. May Almighty God Bless us all, bless our world and give us His everlasting Peace! Amen."

The papers presented at this meeting included "Martyrdom as an Element of Communion and Communication" by Metropolitan Bishoy, "Martyrdom: An Element of Christian Communio," by Bishop Paul-Werner Scheele, "Exercise of Ecclesial Communion in the New Testament" by Rev. Fr. Matthew Vellanickal, "The Exercise of Communion as Reflected in the New Testament Writings" by Dr. Kuriakose Theophilose Metropolitan, "Prayer and Liturgy in Religious Life as a Means of Communion and Communication" by Rev. Fr. Columba Stewart, OSB, and "Prayer and Liturgy in the Religious Life: Their Significance for Communion and Communication," by Rev. Fr. Daniel Seife Michael Feleke.

In these studies, the members noted that, even in the New Testament, there were various expressions of the koinonia of the apostolic churches in their diversity. The understanding of martyrdom was essential to the early Christian experience both in terms of witness to the faith and sacrificial self-offering. The veneration of martyrs emerged early as a point of unity among the churches. Both personal and liturgical prayer of early Christians was rooted in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. The Eucharistic liturgy particularly manifested a common structure and also a variety of traditions that were mutually enriching.

With these studies, the members continued their examination of the ways in which the Catholic and Oriental Orthodox Churches expressed their communion with one another in the period before their division in the middle of the fifth century. Over the course of the next year, a drafting committee will meet to examine the papers presented in the present phase of the dialogue with the intention of producing a draft text to be examined at the 2013 meeting of the Commission. At that meeting, the members will also examine the themes, "The Saints as an Element in the Communion and Communication in the Early Church," and "The Process of Recognition/ Canonization of Saints in History and Today."

His Holiness the Ethiopian Patriarch invited the members to attend the celebration of Timkat, the Ethiopian Orthodox liturgical commemoration of Epiphany, on January 20. This joyful festival took place outdoors at Jan Meda at the side of a large pool of water and was attended by hundreds of thousands of faithful. Both Metropolitan Bishoy and Cardinal Koch were invited to address the gathering. On that same evening, the Patriarch invited the members to dinner in his residence. On January 21 the Joint Commission met with students and staff from Holy Trinity Orthodox Seminary in Addis Ababa.

The tenth meeting of the International Joint Commission will take place in Rome in January 2013. The members will arrive on Tuesday January 22, have separate meetings on the morning of January 23, plenaries on the afternoon of January 23, as well as the full days of January 24, 25, and 26, and plan to depart on Monday, January 28.

The members concluded with joyful thanks to God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, for what has been accomplished at this meeting.

The members of the Commission are:

Representatives of the Oriental Orthodox Churches (in alphabetical order)

Antiochian Syrian Orthodox Church: H.E. Mor Theophilus George Saliba, Archbishop of Mount Lebanon, Secretary of the Holy Synod of the Syrian Orthodox Church, Beirut, Lebanon; H.E. Kuriakose Theophilose, Metropolitan of the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Theological Seminary and President of the Ecumenical Secretariat of the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church in India, Ernakulam, India;

Armenian Apostolic Church: Catholicosate of all Armenians: H.E. Khajag Barsamian, Archbishop of the Eastern Diocese of the USA, New York (unable to attend, represented by H.G. Bishop Armash Nalbandian of the Armenian Diocese of Damascus); H.E. Archbishop Yeznik Petrossian, General Secretary of Bible Society of Armenia, Etchmiadzin, Armenia (unable to attend);

Armenian Apostolic Church: Holy See of Cilicia: H.E. Archbishop Oshagan Choloyan, Prelate of the Eastern Prelacy in the USA, New York; H.G. Archbishop Nareg Alemezian, Ecumenical Officer of the Holy See of Cilicia, Antelias, Lebanon;

Coptic Orthodox Church: H.E. Anba Bishoy (co-chair), Metropolitan of Damiette, Egypt, General Secretary of the Holy Synod of the Coptic Orthodox Church; Rev. Fr. Shenouda Maher Ishak, West Henrietta, New York, USA; H.G. Bishop Daniel of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Sydney, Australia (observer); Priest Monk Cedrack Amba Bishoy, Representative of the Coptic Orthodox Church to the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (observer);

Eritrean Orthodox Tewahdo Church: Rev. Fr. Kaleab Gebreselassie Gebru, Eritrean Orthodox Tewahdo Patriarchate, Asmara, Eritrea (unable to attend);

Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church: Rev. Fr. Daniel Seife Michael Feleke of Holy Trinity Theological University College in Addis Ababa; Mr. Lique Hiruyan Getachew Guadie (unable to attend); Abba Dr. Hailemariam Melese, Vice Dean of the Holy Trinity Theological College, Addis Ababa (observer);
Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church: H.E. Metropolitan Dr. Gabriel Mar Gregorios, President of the Department of Ecumenical Relations, Diocese of Trivandrum, India; H. E. Metropolitan Dr. Youhanon Mar Demetrios, Bishop of Delhi (co-secretary), Delhi, India; Rev. Dr. Jossi Jacob, Director of the Post Graduate Department and member of the faculty of the Holy Trinity Theological College of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (observer).

Representatives of the Catholic Church
His Eminence Cardinal Kurt Koch (co-chair), President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity;
Most Reverend Paul-Werner Scheele, Bishop Emeritus of Würzburg, Germany;
Most Reverend Youhanna Golta, Patriarchal Auxiliary Bishop of the Coptic Catholic Patriarchate, Cairo, Egypt (unable to attend);
Most Reverend Jules Mikhael Al-Jamil, Procurator of the Syrian Catholic Patriarchate to the Holy See and Apostolic Visitator in Europe, Rome (unable to attend);
Most Reverend Peter Marayati, Armenian Catholic Archbishop of Aleppo, Syria;
Most Reverend Woldetensae Ghebreghiorghis, Apostolic Vicar of Harar, Ethiopia, President of the Ecumenical Commission of the Catholic Church in Ethiopia and Eritrea;
Rev. Fr. Frans Bouwen M.Afr., Consultant to the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity; Jerusalem;
Rev. Fr. Columba Stewart, OSB, Executive Director, Hill Museum and Manuscript Library, St. John's Abbey and University, Collegeville, Minnesota, USA;
Rev. Fr. Ronald G. Roberson, CSP, Associate Director of the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, US Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, DC, USA;
Rev. Fr. Paul Rouhana, OLM, Université Saint-Esprit, Kaslik, Jounieh, Lebanon, and General Secretary of the Middle East Council of Churches;
Rev. Fr. Mark Sheridan, OSB, Pontificio Ateneo S. Anselmo, Rome;
Rev. Fr. Mathew Vellanickal, Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Changanacherry, India;
Rev. Fr. Boghos Levon Zekiyan, Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome;
Prof. Dietmar W. Winkler, Consultant to the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Salzburg, Austria;
Rev. Fr. Gabriel Quicke, Official of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Rome (co-secretary);
Abune Musié Ghebreghiorghis, Eparch of Emdibir (observer);
Abba Petros Berga Sorballa, Executive Secretary of the Assembly of the Catholic Bishops of Ethiopia (observer).