

## **The Communiqué of Theological Commission**

The eleventh meeting of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church took place in Paphos, Cyprus, a city with a rich history, having received three Apostles, Paul, Barnabas and Mark. The meeting took place from 16-23 October 2009, generously and fraternally hosted by the Orthodox Church of Cyprus.

Twenty Catholic members were present; several more were unable to attend. All the Orthodox Churches, with the exception of the Patriarchate of Bulgaria, were represented, namely 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 and the Church of Czech Lands and Slovakia.

The Commission worked under the direction of its 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 F. Fortino (Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity).

At the opening session on Saturday, 17 October, the Commission was welcomed very warmly by the host, Metropolitan Georgios of Paphos, who emphasized the importance of holding the meeting in this apostolic city, famous in the history not only of this island but of the whole of Christianity.

On Saturday, 17 October, the Catholic members celebrated the Eucharist in the Roman Catholic Church of the Holy Cross, Nicosia, presided over by Cardinal Walter Kasper, in the presence of the Orthodox members. In his homily he expressed the gratitude of the Catholic Delegation to the Church of Cyprus and especially to Metropolitan Georgios of Paphos for his warm hospitality, and stressed that the spirit of humility and love should prevail in the work of our Joint Commission, emphasizing the words of the Lord: (Whoever would be first among you shall make himself slave of all) (Mark 10:44). On Sunday, 18 October, the Orthodox members celebrated the Divine Liturgy in the Church of Phaneromeni, Nicosia, presided over by His Beatitude the Archbishop of Cyprus, Chrysostomos, in the presence of the Catholic members. In addressing those present, Archbishop Chrysostomos stated: (Together with all the other Orthodox Churches, we underline our firm insistence on the established basic poles of the ecclesiastical conscience of the first thousand years of the historical life of the Church. The

Ecumenical Councils and the great Fathers of the first millennium are a guarantee of the authentic theological interpretation of the sacrament of the divine economy in Christ, and of its genuine experience by the faithful in the sacrament of the Church, which, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, extends the continuous and living presence of Jesus Christ in the world, until the end of time.)

Afterwards, the co-presidents, Cardinal Walter Kasper and Metropolitan John of Pergamon, together with Metropolitan Gennadios of Sassima, Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, Metropolitan Vasilios of Constantia-Famagusta and Archbishop Roland Minnerath, were welcomed at the Presidential Palace by the President of Cyprus, His Excellency Dimitris Christofias, who expressed his hope for the continuation of this important dialogue in a world still divided, like Cyprus itself, and expressed his good wishes for progress towards communion between the two Churches in the future.

The members of the Commission visited the Byzantine Museum, and had an official lunch at the Archbishopric, offered by H. B. Archbishop Chrysostomos.

During the afternoon, the members paid a visit to the Metochion of Kykkos Monastery and were welcomed very warmly by the Abbot, Metropolitan Nikiphoros of Kykkos and Tylliria, and by Metropolitan Isaias of Tamassos and

Orini. Later in the evening, Metropolitan Vasilios of Constantia-Famagusta hosted an official dinner at his Metropolitanate in Paralimni. During the course of the week, the members also visited the Monastery of St. Neophytos and the archaeological sites of St. Paul in Paphos.

On the first day of the meeting, as is customary, the Roman Catholic and Orthodox members met separately to coordinate their work. The Orthodox meeting discussed among other things the negative reactions to the Dialogue by certain Orthodox circles, and unanimously considered them as totally unfounded and unacceptable, providing false and misleading information. All Orthodox members of the Commission reaffirmed that the Dialogue continues with the decision of all the Orthodox Churches and is pursued with faithfulness to the Truth and the Tradition of the Church. The Catholic meeting considered the draft text as a good basis for our work and confirmed the intention to continue the Dialogue with confidence and reciprocal trust, in obedience to the will of the Lord.

As was decided at the last plenary session in Ravenna, 2007, the Commission studied the theme (The Role of the Bishop of Rome in the Communion of the Church in the First Millennium), on the basis of a draft text prepared by the Joint Coordinating Committee, which met in Elounda, Crete, Greece last year. During

this plenary meeting, the Commission carefully considered and amended the draft text of the Joint Coordinating Committee, and decided to complete its work on the text next year, by convening a further meeting of the Joint Commission. No final text has been decided upon, and any text that may be circulated is not valid.

It was decided that the 12th plenary meeting will be hosted by Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, in Vienna, Austria, from 20-27 September 2010.

The eleventh plenary session ended with Orthodox Vespers at St. Theodoros Cathedral in Paphos, followed by a reception offered by Metropolitan Georgios.

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 Church of Cyprus, and they strongly commend the continuing work of the dialogue to the prayers of the faithful.

**Paphos, Cyprus, 22 October 2009.**