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Editor: VLADIMIRO CAROLI, OP

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POPE BENEDICT XVI AND ECUMENISM

December 2009 – February 2010

TO THE BISHOPS OF BELARUS ON 'AD LIMINA' VISIT

17 December 2009

On Thursday 17 December 2009, in his Private Library, the Holy Father received the Bishops of Belarus at the end of their "ad limina" visit to Rome. The following are extracts of the Pope's Address.

(...) In the face of these challenges, an urgent task of Pastors is to emphasize the power of faith, a faith rooted in a solid tradition, to contribute to preserving the profound Christian identity of the nation in respectful dialogue with other cultures and religions. To achieve this objective, accepting the invitation in the Psalm: "Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!" (Ps 133[132]: 1) (...).

This renewed testimony of unity, in addition to favouring the proclamation of the Gospel, will also facilitate relations with the civil Authorities and, especially, ecumenical relations (...).

Dear Brothers, may you recognize every appropriate opportunity to proclaim and spread the Kingdom of God, witnessing with practical actions to brotherhood that generates peace (...).

Fraternal collaboration with the Orthodox Church of Belarus also fits into this context. Her Pastors share with you the search for and commitment to the good of the faithful. The Orthodox Churches too, like the Catholic Church, are deeply committed to reflecting on how to respond to the challenges of our time in order to transmit Christ's Message faithfully. Accepting the invitation issued at the recent Catholic-Orthodox Meeting in Cyprus, we must intensify our common journey in this direction (...).

ORE, 6 January 2010

TO THE CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH
ON THE OCCASION OF THE PLENARY ASSEMBLY

15 January 2010

On Friday 15 January, the Holy Father addressed the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith of which

* Sources of the texts are designated as follows: OR: *L'Osservatore Romano*, daily edition in Italian; ORE: *L'Osservatore Romano*, weekly edition in English. If texts come from sources other than *Osservatore Romano*, this will be noted. When translation is made by the *Information Service* it is indicated by the abbreviation: *IS*.

he was formerly Prefect. His successor, Cardinal William Joseph Levada, opened the meeting at the end of the Congregation's four-day Plenary Assembly with a tribute to the Pope.

We publish here below an excerpt of the Holy Father's Address which was given in Italian.

(...) First of all I wish to emphasize that your Congregation participates in the *ministry of unity* that is entrusted to the Roman Pontiff in a special way, through his commitment to doctrinal fidelity. This unity, in fact, is primarily a *unity of faith*, supported by the sacred deposit whose main custodian and defender is the Successor of Peter. Strengthening brothers and sisters in the faith, keeping them united in the confession of the Crucified and Risen Christ, is the first and fundamental task that Jesus conferred upon the one seated on the Chair of Peter. It is a binding service on which depends the effectiveness of the Church's evangelizing action to the end of time.

The Bishop of Rome, in whose *potestas docendi* your Congregation participates, is bound to proclaim ceaselessly: "*Dominus Iesus*" "Jesus is Lord". The *potestas docendi*, in fact, entails obedience to the faith so that the Truth which is Christ may continue to shine out in its grandeur and resonate in its integrity and purity for all humankind, and thus that there may be one flock gathered round the one Pastor.

The achievement of the common witness to faith of all Christians therefore constitutes the priority of the Church of all time, in order to lead all people to the encounter with God. In this spirit I trust in particular in the Dicastery's commitment to overcome doctrinal problems that are still an obstacle to the achievement of full communion with the Church on the part of the *Society of St Pius X*.

I would also like to congratulate you on your commitment to fully integrating formerly Anglican groups and individual members of the faithful into the Church's life, in accordance with what is stipulated in the Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum Coetibus*. The faithful adherence of these groups to the truth received from Christ and presented by the Magisterium of the Church is in no way contrary to the ecumenical movement but rather shows its ultimate purpose, which consists in the achievement of the full and visible communion of the Lord's disciples (...).

ORE, 20 January 2010

17 January 2010

At noon on Sunday, 17 January, prior to praying the Angelus with the pilgrims gathered in St Peter's Square, the Holy Father commented on the care that should be given to refugees who are minors. He then referred to his impending visit that very afternoon to the Rome Synagogue, and spoke of the meaning of the week of prayer for Christian Unity. The following is an excerpt of the Pope's Reflection, which was given in Italian.

(...) While I warmly encourage Christian communities and the organizations committed to serving minor migrants and refugees, I urge everyone to keep alive an educational and cultural sensitivity to them, in accordance with the authentic spirit of the Gospel.

This afternoon, almost 24 years after the Venerable John Paul II's historic Visit, I shall be going to the Great Synagogue of Rome, known as the "Tempio Maggiore" (Major Temple), to meet the Jewish Community of the city and take a further step on the journey of harmony and friendship between Catholics and Jews. In fact, in spite of the problems and difficulties, there is a climate of deep respect and dialogue among the believers of both religions that testifies to how our relations have developed and to the common commitment to recognize what unites us: faith in the one God, first of all, but also the safeguard of life and of the family, and the aspiration to social justice and peace.

Lastly, I recall that the traditional Week of Prayer for Christian Unity will begin tomorrow. Every year it constitutes for all who believe in Christ a propitious time for reviving the ecumenical spirit, meeting, getting to know one another, praying and reflecting together. The biblical theme, from St Luke's Gospel, echoes the words of the Risen Jesus to the Apostles: "You are witnesses of these things" (Lk 24: 48). Our proclamation of Christ's Gospel will be all the more credible and effective the more closely we are united in his love, like true brothers. I therefore invite parishes, religious communities, associations and ecclesial movements to pray ceaselessly, especially during the Eucharistic celebrations, for the full unity of Christians (...).

ORE, 20 January 2010

TO AN ECUMENICAL DELEGATION FROM FINLAND FOR
THE FEAST OF ST HENRIK

18 January 2010

On Monday 18 January, the Holy Father met in the Vatican's Private Library with members of an Ecumenical Delegation from Finland, to celebrate the Feast of their Patron, St Henrik.

The following is the Pope's Address on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Finnish Ecumenical Pilgrimage to Rome.

Distinguished friends,

With affection I greet all the members of your ecumenical delegation who have come to Rome for the celebration of the feast of Saint Henrik. This occasion marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of your annual visits to Rome. It is therefore with gratitude that I recall how these meetings have contributed significantly to strengthening the relations among the Christians in your country.

The Second Vatican Council committed the Catholic Church "irrevocably to following the path of the ecumenical venture, thus heeding the Spirit of the Lord who teaches us to interpret carefully the 'signs of the times'" (*Ut Unum Sint*, 3). This is the path that the Catholic Church has wholeheartedly embraced since that time. The Churches of East and West, both of whose traditions are present in your country, share a real, if still imperfect, communion. This is a motive to regret the troubles of the past, but it is surely also a motive which spurs us to ever greater efforts at understanding and reconciliation, so that our brotherly friendship and dialogue may yet blossom into a perfect, visible unity in Christ Jesus.

You mentioned in your address the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, now ten years old, which is a concrete sign of the brotherhood rediscovered between Lutherans and Catholics. In this context, I am pleased to note the recent work of the Nordic Lutheran-Catholic dialogue in Finland and Sweden on questions deriving from the Joint Declaration. It is greatly to be hoped that the text resulting from the dialogue will contribute positively to the path which leads to the restoration of our lost unity.

Once again, I am pleased to express my gratitude for your perseverance for these twenty-five years of pilgrimage together. They demonstrate your respect for the Successor of Peter as well as your good faith and desire for unity through fraternal dialogue. It is my fervent prayer that the various Christian Churches and ecclesial communities which you represent may build on this sense of brotherhood as we persevere in our pilgrimage together. Upon you and all those in your pastoral care I am pleased to invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

ORE, 20 January 2010

TO THE BISHOPS OF THE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE
OF SCOTLAND ON THEIR 'AD LIMINA' VISIT

5 February 2010

Pope Benedict XVI spoke to the members of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Scotland on Friday 5 February, at the conclusion of their 'ad limina' visit to Rome.

The following is an excerpt of his discourse to the Bishops for the occasion.

(...) The Church in your country, like many in Northern Europe, has suffered the tragedy of divi-

sion. It is sobering to recall the great rupture with Scotland's Catholic past that occurred four hundred and fifty years ago. I give thanks to God for the progress that has been made in healing the wounds that were the legacy of that period, especially the sectarianism that has continued to rear its head even in recent times. Through your participation in *Action of Churches Together in Scotland*, see that the work of rebuilding unity among the followers of Christ is carried forward with constancy and commitment. While resisting any pressure to dilute the Christian message, set your sights on the goal of full, visible unity, for nothing less can respond to the will of Christ (...).

ORE, 10 February 2010

TO THE BISHOPS OF THE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE
OF ROMANIA ON THEIR 'AD LIMINA' VISIT

12 February 2010

On Friday 12 February, in his private library, the Holy Father met with Prelates of the Bishops' Conference of Romania at the end of their visit 'ad limina Apostolorum'.

The following is the Pope's discourse.

Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate,

It gives me great joy to meet you during your *ad limina* visit, to listen to you and to reflect together on the journey of the People of God entrusted to you. I greet each one of you with affection and thank in particular Archbishop Ioan Robu for his cordial words on behalf of you all.

I address a special thought to H.B. Lucian Mureșan, Major Archbishop of the Greek Catholic Church in Romania. You are Pastors of communities of various rites, who place the riches of your long tradition at the service of communion, for the good of all. In you I greet the Christian communities of Romania and of the Republic of Moldova, so harshly tried in the past, and I pay homage to those Bishops and innumerable priests, men and women religious and faithful who, in the time of persecution showed indomitable loyalty to Christ and to his Church and kept their faith intact.

I would like to express my thanks to you, dear Brothers in the Episcopate, for your generous commitment to serving the rebirth and development of the Catholic community in your countries, and I urge you to continue to be zealous Pastors of Christ's flock, as members of the one Church and with respect for the different ritual traditions. Preserving and passing on the patrimony of the faith is a task for the whole Church, but particularly for Bishops (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 25). The field of your ministry is vast and challenging: indeed, it is a question of proposing a mature and responsible journey of faith to the faithful, especially through religious education, catechesis also of adults and preparation for the sacraments. In this context it is necessary to foster a greater knowledge of Sacred Scripture, of the *Cate-*

chism of the Catholic Church and of the Magisterial Documents, especially those of the Second Vatican Council and the Papal Encyclicals. It is a demanding programme which requires you to draft joint pastoral plans, aimed at the *bonum animarum* of all Catholics of the different rites and ethnicities. This requires a witness of unity, sincere dialogue and effective collaboration, without forgetting that unity is primarily the fruit of the Holy Spirit (cf. Gal 5: 22) who guides the Church.

In this Year for Priests I exhort you always to be fathers to your priests, your first, precious collaborators in the Lord's vineyard (cf. *Christus Dominus*, n. 16, n. 28); with them exists a primarily sacramental bond which makes them share uniquely in the pastoral mission entrusted to Bishops. Strive to tend to the communion between you and your priests in an atmosphere of affection, attention and respectful fraternal dialogue; be concerned with their spiritual and material conditions and with their necessary theological and pastoral development. In your dioceses there is no shortage of religious institutes engaged in pastoral work. May it be your special task to give them due attention and provide them with all the help possible to ensure that their presence is increasingly more important and that consecrated people can carry out their apostolate in accordance with their charisms and in full communion with the local Church.

God does not fail to call men and women to his service. We must be grateful to the Lord for this, intensifying our prayers that he may continue to send workers to his harvest (cf. Mt 9: 37). A primary task of Bishops is the pastoral care of vocations and the human, spiritual and intellectual formation of candidates to the priesthood in seminaries and other formative institutes (cf. *Optatam Totius*, nn. 2, 4). This formation must guarantee them the possibility of acquiring deep spirituality and rigorous philosophical, theological and pastoral preparation, also through the careful choice of educators and lecturers. Similar attention should be paid to the formation of the members of the Institutes of Consecrated Life, especially for women.

The flourishing of priestly and religious vocations largely depends on the moral and religious health of Christian families. Unfortunately, today there are many pitfalls for the family institution in our secularized and disoriented society. Catholic families in your country which during the time of trial, gave witness of faithfulness to the Gospel sometimes paying dearly for it are not immune to the scourges of abortion, corruption, alcoholism, and drugs, as well as birth control using methods contrary to the dignity of the human person. To combat these challenges, it is necessary to promote parish counsellors who can assure an adequate preparation for conjugal and family life, and who can better organize the pastoral care of youth. More necessary than anything else is a decisive commitment to encouraging the presence of the Christian values in society, developing centres for formation where young people may learn the authentic values, enriched by the genius of your countries' cul-

ture, so as to be able to witness to these values in the areas in which they live. The Church wants to make her crucial contribution to building a reconciled and supportive society, able to confront the process of secularization that is under way. The transformation of the industrial and agricultural system, the financial crisis and emigration abroad have not encouraged the preservation of traditional values; these must therefore be proposed anew and reinforced.

In this context it is particularly important to witness to brotherhood between Catholics and Orthodox. This witness must prevail over division and dissent and open hearts to reconciliation.

I am aware of the difficulties that the Catholic communities have to face in this sphere; I hope they will be able to find adequate solutions in that spirit of justice and charity which will animate relations between brothers and sisters in Christ. In May 2009, you commemorated the 10th anniversary of Venerable Pope John Paul II's historic visit to Romania. On that occasion Divine Providence gave the Successor of Peter the chance to make an Apostolic visit to a nation with an Orthodox majority, where an important Catholic community has been present for centuries. May the desire for unity inspired by that visit

nourish prayer as well as the commitment to dialogue in charity and truth and to the promotion of common initiatives. An area of collaboration between Orthodox and Catholics that is particularly important today concerns the defence of the Christian roots of Europe and of the Christian values as well as the common testimony on issues such as the family, bioethics, human rights, honesty in public life and ecology. A joint commitment to these subjects will make an important contribution to society's moral and civil development. A constructive dialogue between Orthodox and Catholics will not fail to be a leaven of unity and harmony not only for your countries but also for the whole of Europe.

At the end of our Meeting, my thoughts turn to your Communities. Please convey to your priests, men and women religious and to all the faithful of Romania and of the Republic of Moldova, my greetings and encouragement, assuring them of my affection and my prayers. As I invoke the intercession of the Mother of God and of the Saints of your lands, I cordially impart my blessing to you and to all the members of the People of God entrusted to your pastoral care.

ORE, 17 February 2010

VISIT TO ROME OF HIS BEATITUDE ANASTASIOS ARCHBISHOP OF TIRANA, DURRES AND ALL ALBANIA

3-8 December 2009

On Friday 4 December, in his private library, the Holy Father received His Beatitude Anastasios, Archbishop of Tirana, Durres and all Albania, with his entourage.

We publish here below the Pope's Address to His Beatitude and the accompanying representatives of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Albania and excerpts from His Beatitude's discourse delivered afterwards.

ADDRESS OF POPE BENEDICT XVI

Your Beatitude,

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess 1:2). I am pleased to extend a fraternal welcome to Your Beatitude and to the other distinguished representatives of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Albania accompanying you today. I recall with gratitude, in spite of the sad circumstances, our meeting at the funeral of the late Pope John Paul II. I also remember with satisfaction how my same venerable Predecessor had the occasion to greet you in Tirana during his Apostolic Visit to Albania.

As is well known, Illyricum received the Gospel in Apostolic times (cf. Acts 17:1; Rom 15:19). Since then, Christ's saving message has borne fruit in your country down to our own day. As the very earliest writings of your culture bear witness, through the survival of an ancient Latin baptismal formula along with a Byzantine hymn about the Lord's Resurrection, the faith of our Christian forefathers left wonderful and indelible traces in the first lines of the history, literature and arts of your people.

Yet the most impressive witness is surely always found in life itself. During the latter half of the past century, the Christians in Albania, both Orthodox and Catholic, kept the faith alive there in spite of an extremely repressive and hostile atheistic regime; and, as is well known, many Christians paid cruelly for that faith with their lives. The fall of that regime has happily given way to the reconstruction of the Catholic and Orthodox communities in Albania. The missionary activity of Your Beatitude is recognized, particularly in the reconstruction of places of worship, the formation of the clergy and the catechetical work now being done, a movement of renewal which Your Beatitude has rightly described as Ngjallja (Resurrection).

Since it acquired its freedom, the Orthodox Church of Albania has been able to participate fruitfully in the international theological dialogue between Catholics and Orthodox. Your commitment in this regard happily mirrors the fraternal relations between Catholics and Orthodox in your country and

offers inspiration to the entire Albanian people, demonstrating how it is possible for fellow Christians to live in harmony.

In this light, we would do well to emphasize the elements of faith which our Churches share: a common profession of the Nicene–Constantinopolitan creed; a common baptism for the remission of sins and for incorporation into Christ and the Church; the legacy of the first Ecumenical Councils; the real if imperfect communion which we already share, and the common desire and collaborative efforts to build upon what already exists. I am reminded here of two important initiatives in Albania, the establishment of the Interconfessional Biblical Society and the creation of the Committee for Interreligious Relations. These are timely efforts to promote mutual understanding and tangible cooperation, not only between Catholics and Orthodox, but also among Christians, Muslims and Bektashi.

I rejoice with Your Beatitude and with all the Albanian people in this spiritual renewal. At the same time, it is with gratitude to Almighty God that I reflect on your own service to your country and on your personal contribution to fostering fraternal relations with the Catholic Church. Be assured that we, for our part, will do all that we can to offer a common witness of brotherhood and peace, and to pursue with you a renewed commitment to the unity of our Churches in obedience to the New Commandment of our Lord.

Your Beatitude, it is in this spirit of communion that I am pleased to welcome you to the city of the Apostles Peter and Paul.

ORE, December 9, 2009

ADDRESS OF HIS BEATITUDE ANASTASIOS

Your Holiness Benedict,
Pope of Rome,

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pt 1:3). Today is a historic day for the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Alba-

nia. It is the first time that an official delegation from our Church has visited the Church of Rome and has the honour and joy of personal communication with Your Holiness; Whom we know as a profound thinker, an outstanding theologian, defender of peace and justice, a champion of solidarity between peoples and a creative ecclesiastical leader.

In the 20th century, the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Albania was subjected to one of the most terrible persecutions. From 1944 until 1967, this took the familiar form of the pressures that all the Churches in Eastern Europe suffered. But from 1967 until 1990, the Church in Albania was literally brought to “the gates of Hell”. The Constitution banned all religious expression and, together with relentless persecution, brought about the Church’s complete dissolution.

By the grace and power of God, our Church has been built afresh, and has brought together all the Orthodox Christians in Albania, irrespective of ethnic background. She has grown systematically: by fostering the liturgical life, preaching, catechism and the translation and publication of Christian literature; by training and ordaining more than 140 Albanian clergymen; by the construction of 145 new churches; by the restoration of 70 more and the repair of another 160 churches and ecclesiastical centres; and, above all, by intense efforts to bring the younger generation to Christ. At the same time, she is making an active contribution to the progress of Albanian society, with significant initiatives in the areas of health, education, social welfare, agricultural development and culture. (...)

We entirely share the emphasis You placed in Your first Encyclical Letter *Deus caritas est* on the

fact that “everything has its origins in God’s love, everything is shaped by it, everything is directed towards it”. And also the declaration in Your last Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate*, that “God gives us the strength to fight and to suffer for love of the common good, because He is our All, our greatest hope”. Certainly, the outstanding mission and responsibility of every local Church is to offer love, thus linking people to the source of love. No other social structure or institution is in a position to replace it. “Speaking the truth in love” we are called to “grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ” (Eph 4:15).

Let us not be troubled over the future. Because we see that the future belongs to Christ. That He is the One, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty” (Rev 1:8). And He is coming again; from the future!

We know, Your Holiness, that, throughout Your long academic and ecclesiastical service, You have supported, as You still do, faith in this unique assurance, with Your profound thought, Your unfailing generosity of spirit, Your prophetic foresight. From the Church in Albania, which has suffered so much, please accept our warm thanks for the honour of today’s audience, our cordial and sincere best wishes. From the bottom of our hearts we entreat that the Lord God, through the prayers of the All-Holy Theotokos, guides the thoughts and actions of Your Holiness, so that You may, through Your life and work, radiate the light of Christ onto the contemporary world, which is thirsting for love, peace and hope. May Your works be abundant and gloriously bountiful!

ORE, 9 December 2009

ELECTION OF THE NEW SERBIAN ORTHODOX PATRIARCH IRINEJ

22 January 2010

On Friday 22 January, the Holy Father sent a telegram to His Holiness Irinej, recently elected Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church, succeeding Patriarch Pavle. The Pope expressed his congratulations to the new Patriarch and assured him of his remembrance in prayer.

His Eminence Cardinal Walter Kasper, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity also sent a letter of congratulations to the new Patriarch.

We publish here below both messages.

To His HOLINESS IRINEJ
Patriarch of Serbia

I was glad to learn of your election as Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church and I pray that the Lord may grant you abundant gifts of grace and wisdom for the fulfilment of your high responsibilities in the service of the Church and the people entrusted to you.

You succeed Patriarch Pavle, our brother of happy memory, who was a Pastor both fervent and esteemed, and who bequeathed to you a spiritual inheritance that is rich and profound. As a great pastor and spiritual father, he effectively guided the Church and maintained its unity in the face of many challenges. I feel bound to express my appreciation of his example of fidelity to the Lord and of his many gestures of openness towards the Catholic Church.

I therefore pray that the Lord will grant Your Holiness the inner strength to consolidate the unity and spiritual growth of the Serbian Orthodox Church, as well as to build up the fraternal bonds with other Churches and ecclesial communities. Let me assure you of the closeness of the Catholic Church and of her commitment to the promotion of fraternal relations and theological dialogue, in order that those obstacles which still impede full communion between us may be overcome. May the Lord bless our common efforts in this regard, so that the disciples of Christ may again be united witnesses before the whole world to his salvific love.

From the Vatican, 22 January 2010

BENEDICTUS XVI

ORE, 27 January 2010

HIS HOLINESS IRINEJ
*Archbishop of Peč
Metropolitan of Belgrade and Karlovci
Patriarch of Serbia*

22 January 2010

Your Holiness,

It is with great joy that I express my spiritual closeness in prayer upon your election as Patriarch of Serbia. May the Lord grant you the fullness of spiritual gifts, wisdom, strength and discernment in serving the Church of Christ in His same love.

I recall with gratitude my meetings with Your Holiness and my many encounters with Serbian bishops in your homeland and elsewhere, at the same time looking forward in hope to the future relationship between the Catholic Church and the Serbian Orthodox Church. Beyond the bond of friendship and shared action in the social, cultural and academic fields in giving witness to Christian values in the modern world, it is my hope that progress will also be achieved in the theological dialogue aimed at the full communion of all the disciples of Christ, to which our Lord himself has called us.

In the full awareness that unity is not the fruit of our human efforts, I join Your Holiness in prayer that the Lord may grant you an abundance of grace and that His Holy Spirit may sustain your new ministry as the head of the Serbian Orthodox Church and in the service of communion among Christians.

In joyful anticipation of our meeting in Belgrade, I extend my warmest fraternal greetings in the Lord.

Yours sincerely,

WALTER Cardinal KASPER
President

Translation IS

CLOSING CEREMONY OF THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY IN ROME

25 January 2010

ANGELUS

24 January 2010

At noon on Sunday, 24 January, the Feast of St Francis de Sales, prior to praying the Angelus with the faithful gathered in St Peter's Square, the Holy Father commented on the unity of the Church as one body in Christ. The following is an excerpt of the Pope's Reflection, which was given in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Among the biblical readings in today's Liturgy is the famous text from the *First Letters to the Corinthians*, in which St Paul compares the Church to a human body. The Apostle writes: "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body Jews or Greeks, slaves or free and all were made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor 12: 12-13). The Church is perceived as a body, of which Christ is the head, and with him she forms a whole. Yet what the Apostle is eager to communicate is the idea of unity among the multiplicity of charisms, which are the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Thanks to these, the Church appears as a rich and vital organism not uniform fruit of the one Spirit who leads everyone to profound unity, because she welcomes differences without eliminating them and thus bringing about a harmonious unity. She extends the presence of the Risen Lord throughout history, specifically through the Sacraments, the word of God and the charisms and ministries distributed among the community. Therefore, it is in Christ and in the Spirit that the Church is one and holy, that is, that she partakes in an intimate communion that transcends and sustains human intelligence.

I wish to emphasize this aspect as we are currently observing the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, which will conclude tomorrow, the Feast of the Conversion of St Paul. In keeping with tradition, I will celebrate Vespers tomorrow afternoon in the Basilica of St Paul Outside-the-Walls, at which representatives of other Churches and ecclesial Communities present in Rome will participate. We will ask God for the gift of full unity for all the disciples of Christ and, in particular, in keeping with this year's theme, we will renew our commitment to be witnesses together of the crucified and Risen Lord (cf. Lk 24: 48). The communion of Christians, in fact, makes the proclamation of the Gospel more credible and effective, just as Jesus himself affirmed while praying to

the Father on the eve of his death: "That they may all be one... so that the world may believe" (Jn 17: 21) (...).

ORE, 27 January 2010

HOMILY OF POPE BENEDICT XVI AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

25 January 2010

On Monday, 25 January, the Holy Father celebrated Second Vespers for the Feast of the Conversion of St Paul in the Basilica of St Paul Outside-the-Walls, with which he concluded the Week of prayer for Christian Unity. Benedict XVI noted in his Homily that this year also marks the 100th anniversary of the Edinburgh Missionary Conference, an historic ecumenical event. The following is a translation of his Homily, which was given in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Gathered together in this fraternal liturgical assembly, on the Feast of the Conversion of St Paul, today we conclude the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. I greet all of you warmly, in particular Cardinal Walter Kasper, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and the Archpriest of this Basilica, Archbishop Francesco Monterisi, along with the Abbot and the Community of monks whose guests we are. I also extend my cordial thoughts to the Cardinals here present, to the Bishops and to all who represent the Churches and ecclesial Communities of this City who are here today.

Only a few months have passed since the conclusion of the Year dedicated to St Paul, which gave us an opportunity to deepen our awareness of his extraordinary work as a preacher of the Gospel and also of our call to be missionaries of the Gospel, as the theme of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity reminds us "You are witnesses of these things" (Lk 24: 48). Paul, although he retained an intense memory of his own past as a persecutor of Christians, did not hesitate to call himself an Apostle. For him, the basis of that title lay in his encounter with the Risen One on the road to Damascus, which also became the beginning of his tireless missionary activity. In this he was to spend every ounce of his energy, proclaiming to all the peoples the Christ whom he had met personally. Thus Paul, from being a persecutor of the Church, was in his turn to become a victim of persecution for the sake of the Gospel to which he wit-

nessed: "Five times I have received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I have been beaten with rods; once I was stoned... On frequent journeys, in danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brethren; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure upon me of my anxiety for all the churches" (2 Cor 11: 24-25, 26-28). Paul's witness reached its culmination in his martyrdom when, not so far from here, he was to give proof of his faith in Christ who conquers death.

The dynamic of Paul's experience is clearly expressed in the pages of the Gospel that we have just heard. The disciples of Emmaus, after having recognized the Risen Lord, return to Jerusalem and find the Eleven gathered together with the others. The Risen Christ appears to them, comforts them, overcomes their fear and doubts, and eats with them. Thus he opens their hearts to the intelligence of the Scriptures, recalling what had to happen, which would constitute the nucleus of the Christian proclamation. Jesus affirms: "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Lk 24: 46-47). These are the events to which the disciples of the first hour were to bear witness, followed by believers in Christ of all times and places. It is important, however, to emphasize that this witness, then just as now, is born from the encounter with the Risen One, is fed by a constant relationship with him and animated by a profound love for him. One can only be his witness if one has had the experience of feeling Christ alive and present "See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself" (Lk 24: 39) of sitting at table with him, of listening as he sets one's heart aflame! For this, Jesus promises his disciples and each of us a powerful aid from on high, a new presence, that of the Holy Spirit, gift of the Risen Christ, who guides us to the whole truth: "And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you" (Lk 24: 49). The Eleven were to spend their whole lives proclaiming the Good News of the death and Resurrection of the Lord. Almost all of them were to seal their witness with the blood of martyrdom, a fertile seed that has produced an abundant harvest.

The choice of the theme of this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity the invitation, that is, to a common witness of the Risen Christ in accordance with the mandate he entrusted to his disciples is linked to the memory of the 100th anniversary of the Edinburgh Missionary Conference, in Scotland, widely considered a crucial event in the birth of the modern ecumenical movement. In the summer of 1910, in the Scottish capital, over 1,000 missionaries from diverse branches of Protestantism and Anglicanism, who were joined by one Orthodox guest, met to reflect together on the necessity of achieving unity

in order to be credible in preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In fact, it is precisely this desire to proclaim Christ to others and to carry his message of reconciliation throughout the world that makes one realize the contradiction posed by division among Christians. Indeed, how can non-believers accept the Gospel proclamation if Christians even if they all call on the same Christ are divided among themselves? Moreover, as we know, the same Teacher, at the end of the Last Supper, had prayed to the Father for his disciples: "That they may all be one... so that the world may believe" (Jn 17: 21). The communion and unity of Christ's disciples is therefore a particularly important condition to enhance the credibility and efficacy of their witness.

Now a century after the Edinburgh event, the intuition of those courageous precursors is still very timely. In a world marked by religious indifference, and even by a growing aversion to the Christian faith, it is necessary to discover a new, intense method of evangelization, not only among the peoples who have never known the Gospel but also among those where Christianity has spread and is part of their history. Unfortunately, the issues that separate us from each other are many, and we hope that they can be resolved through prayer and dialogue. There is, however, a core of the Christian message that we can all proclaim together: the fatherhood of God, the victory of Christ over sin and death with his Cross and Resurrection, and faith in the transforming action of the Spirit. While we journey toward full communion, we are called to offer a common witness in the face of the ever increasingly complex challenges of our time, such as secularization and indifference, relativism and hedonism, the delicate ethical issues concerning the beginning and end of life, the limits of science and technology, the dialogue with other religious traditions. There are also other areas in which we must from now on give a common witness: the safeguard of Creation, the promotion of the common good and of peace, the defense of the centrality of the human person, the commitment to overcome the shortcomings of our time, such as hunger, poverty, illiteracy, and the unequal distribution of goods.

The commitment to unity among Christians is not the work of a few only, nor is it an incidental undertaking for the life of the Church. Each one of us is called to make his or her contribution towards the completion of those steps that lead to full communion among the disciples of Christ, without ever forgetting that this unity is above all a gift from God to be constantly invoked. In fact, the force that supports both unity and the mission flows from the fruitful encounter with the Risen One, just as was the case for St Paul on the road to Damascus, and for the Eleven and the other disciples gathered at Jerusalem. May the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, grant that her Son's desire may be fulfilled as soon as possible: "That they may all be one... so that the world may believe" (Jn 17: 21).

SYMPOSIUM ON “HARVESTING THE FRUITS: BASIC ASPECTS OF CHRISTIAN FAITH IN ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE”

8-10 February 2010

A Symposium was held at the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) from 8 to 10 February, dedicated to an overview of the last forty years of ecumenical dialogue with the main Protestant traditions: Lutherans, Reformed, Anglicans and Methodists. Representatives of these four confessions participated in the Symposium.

The proceedings of the Symposium focused on Cardinal Walter Kasper's book, 'Harvesting the Fruits', published by the Continuum International Publishing Group (London 2009), which summarizes the achievements of the past decades of dialogues conducted by the Catholic Church with the abovementioned confessions and seeks to identify the open questions which still need to be taken up in the dialogues.

We publish here below the responses to the Cardinal's book, presented at the Symposium by high-ranking representatives of the ecumenical partners engaged in these dialogues.

FIRST RESPONSES: A LUTHERAN PERSPECTIVE

KATHRYN L. JOHNSON

To speak of harvest is to use an image of abundance and of thanksgiving, and so it is fitting first of all simply to celebrate this ingathering of ecumenical fruits-harvests nurtured in scattered fields and tended by different hands, crops of different sizes and species but each of them the fruit both of the earth of God's bounty and of human hands. This symposium invites us first to stop to express our gratitude. But, like many of you, I am not that far removed from farming forebears, and we know that harvest time offers celebration but not completion, a sense of repletion but not the cessation of labor. Some crops continue to grow even as others are gathered in, and wise farmers know that harvest is the time to select the most promising seeds for the next cycle of crops.

I am very aware that I have come to this discussion relatively as a newcomer, one who reads the *Harvest* volume rather like the *acta* of the councils, while for many of you the stories behind this book could be your memoirs. Yet to mention the councils reminds us that the meaning and significance of any important theological agreement — from the Nicene Creed or the Chalcedonian Definition to a decree of Vatican II or a statement from our own dialogues — become clear not only as it is written but in the decades of interpretation, contestation, elaboration and reception which follow. In the case of our dialogues, it has been only about 40 years, only the span of one long working lifetime, which has produced this remarkable assembly of agreements — agreements which reflect the shared reaffirmation of the central traditions of the church and which forge new common language where, not so long ago, mutual recrimination and condemnation stood. Yet the task is of course not yet complete, and even the significance of what has been accomplished is often not

claimed in the lives of our churches. (An anecdote illustrates that point: last 31 October, worship in the cathedral at Augsburg, Germany, concluded the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*. Behind Cardinal Kasper and Bishop Klaiber, who were among those leading worship, the choir was filled with people, Catholics on one side and Protestants and others on the other. When it came time for a festive greeting of peace, most of us did what it is so unreflectively easy to do - we exchanged greetings with those closest to us, who also happened to be most like us. It took some moments to realize that crossing the choir to the other side was a simple gesture not impeded at all by our remaining disagreements but only by our constrained imaginations.) It is very appropriate, then, that the purpose of the *Harvest* volume, and of our discussions here is to “initiate, to promote and to facilitate forms of reception” of dialogue results in our churches. (p. 3)

It is an achievement of this volume to demonstrate a feature of ecumenical agreement so fundamental that it is easy to take for granted. The more important the subject, the more central to our identity as Christians, the more complete our agreement. On those topics which most directly touch on God, most directly on the divine mystery — on the Trinity, on Christ and salvation — there is great, one can even say remarkable, agreement. As the book says at one point, in a cautionary tone, agreement is “only on basic truths”. But this can be put also the other way: on the most basic truths, there is agreement.

It is also part of the achievement of this volume to bring together in a concise and accessible form texts which have quite distinct histories. While some diachronic dimensions are obscured by this approach, to see together in a concentrated space the statements on a single subject from these four dialogues allows them to resonate with one other, to complement each another as well as to stand more clearly in their distinctiveness and difference.

Of course the angle of vision is deliberately a Roman Catholic one; this is the standpoint of comparison and evaluation. But this project participates in the commendable synoptic movement toward the bilateral dialogues which is encouraged also by the Bilateral Forums of the Faith and Order Commission, whose 2008 meeting in Breklum encouraged bilateral processes to be more intentionally attentive to the parallel processes of others. This volume not only invites each dialogue partner to evaluate the current status of the questions and the relationships for itself; it also invites all of us together to look for the ways in which the dialogue statements *taken together* have moved the questions forward, and where the challenges remain most urgent. (pp. 4-5) As we all move into closer relationship with one another, this opportunity to seek for progress across the dialogues is too good to pass by.

Another conversation invited by this book and by this assemblage here surrounds the questions of sharing of gifts — a topic taken up but not much elaborated in the volume. (Cf. e.g. p. 5) There are a number of places where the quotations have a tone of mutual reservation or mutual admonition, but the themes of possible complementarity, of creative and even corrective interaction among the churches could be more fully explored among the partners as well as in the bilateral contexts. (Cf. e.g. p. 69 for the Reformed)

Most striking in the *Harvest* volume is the great focus on the Church: it is 110 of just over 200 pages, about 55% of the whole. Here indeed is a great present challenge to further ecumenical progress. Despite important advances, on the issues and on the healing of memories which is also frequently required (p. 51), the issues raised here are known for their intractability, which has helped to prompt some to go around rather than through the hard work of theological dialogue to reach new forms of Christian communion. And yet, even in the absence of a fully agreed ecclesiology, perhaps there is one presupposition of this discussion which deserves to be underlined. All of our churches agree on the importance of the life of the Church; none imagines the possibility of an individual Christian life, lived apart from the worship, especially the sacramental life, from the formation and instruction, from the *communion*, of the Church. And all of our traditions believe that the Church through which God works is more than the local assembly of believers. Yet in the larger Christian family, particularly in some of the rapidly growing communities which are so transforming the Christian world, this is perhaps not so to be taken for granted.

To articulate the role of the Church forcefully and winsomely in our context is an urgent and a common task. Moreover, within each of our churches there are persons who do not in practice perceive the necessity of the Church or appreciate its role in salvation. On this important point the traditions we represent have an agreement that is important for their witness in the world. Moreover, for all the difficulties which surround the subject of teaching authority — difficulties

outlined in the book — all of our traditions are in important ways teaching churches, with expectations of educated clergy, honored roles for teaching theologians, and close associations with universities and other settings for transmitting, exploring, and articulating the faith. Again, these are not characteristics simply to be taken for granted. An important dimension of the reception we seek will be through pastoral formation and cooperative theological work. An example of this, which I mention in part because its scope is truncated in Note 11, is the Symposium of Biblical Scholars to work on the doctrine of justification — a group which includes not only Roman Catholics and Lutherans but also Reformed and Methodist members. Their work is a good example of the ways in which research conducted for reasons other than ecumenical usefulness has so often come to the assistance of the articulation of common positions among our churches.

Giving witness to the importance of the Church does not grow less important, but only more so, in the context of our world of global perspectives and increasing multifaith awareness. As Trinitarian theology has been revitalized in recent years, precisely at the same time as Christians were becoming more engaged with other faith communities, so also the Church requires now a wideangled presentation of its role in the care of God for all humanity and for all creation. Moreover, this is a place where the importance of the Church's mission for the sake of the world — a subject treated in the dialogues but easily deemphasized in the face of attention to more internal aspects of the church's life — could assume greater prominence in our attention.

Let me say a few words about this *Harvest* project also as a Lutheran. Since this project was directed to the consequences of the major split within the Western Church, Lutherans stand in some ways at the beginning of that divergence and can be given perhaps a special responsibility. If I read carefully enough, only Martin Luther among the formative theological voices of the dialogue partners is quoted in the editorial voice rather than from a citation in a dialogue — quoted exactly to introduce and illustrate the neuralgic problems of authority. (p. 138) On the other side, the signature achievement of Lutheran-Catholic dialogue, the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, has been recognized not only for its overcoming of a legacy of condemnations on an issue central to the gospel but also for its method and its status in the churches. (See e.g. Note 2.) But what I want to suggest here is that the ecumenical dialogues themselves have helped to inspire among Lutherans some of the growth in accountability and relationship to which these dialogues have urged them. Ecumenical engagement is among the factors which have helped to deepen the relations of communion among Lutheran churches. The general secretary of The Lutheran World Federation is fond of reminding member churches that they were unable on their own to reach an agreed understanding of the meanings of justification. Only, he says, when the question was taken up in rigorous conversation with

the Catholic Church, long seen as the opponent on this issue, was it possible for the LWF to make a statement on justification. At the LWF Assembly this summer, there will be an action to ask forgiveness, of God and of Mennonite brothers and sisters, for the legacy of violent persecution against Anabaptists from Reformation times — an action which we hope will have significance for the whole Body of Christ. It can be wondered if this communion building movement of repentance and reconciliation could have been contemplated or would have proved possible for Lutherans without the example of the process toward the *Joint Declaration*.

The *Harvest* document invites us into a shared process of looking backwards and forwards. Behind are 'old controversies which have virtually lost their importance as living issues — sharply opposing scripture and tradition, for example, or contrasting the church of the word with the church of the sacraments. Ahead are new issues appearing, some unknown a few decades ago and others still to be identified. But we are reminded afresh in this document that the context has been permanently altered by the achievements of the last decades. Now we know what it is to move closer to one another. To use Cardinal Kasper's powerful word, we see that the courage to take certain risks for the sake of greater unity can bring positive results to our communities at all levels. There can be no going back to the mutual suspicions and misrepresentations which all of us can remember from our own histories.

Finally, amid the rich agricultural imagery, the deeper metaphor in this *Harvest* book is one of journey, of pilgrimage. It is a dynamic vision which is conveyed here, in which there are yet roads to travel. The harvest of fruits is finally food for the journey — a journey undertaken at God's call and with God's help.

PRESENTATION AT THE HARVEST SYMPOSIUM

DOUWE VISSER

REFORMED

It is with great pleasure that we have received the invitation for this symposium. It is also with pleasure that we received the document *Harvesting the Fruits*. It gives an interesting and helpful oversight of the results of so many years of inter-confessional dialogues. Most interesting are the conclusions and reflections. Of course the average reader will be tempted to jump immediately to the final section *Some Preliminary Conclusions*. I noticed the careful wording in the title of the two words 'some' and 'preliminary'. Indeed we have not yet reached the stage where we can draw all final conclusions or — according to the hope expressed in the document — where we can draw the only real final conclusion: we have reached the overall stage of full communion. I have been asked, also as representative of the Reformed community, to give comments on the document. I

will do so but, in good Reformed tradition, I will mostly give — from a Reformed perspective — self-critical remarks. I do this however from deep gratitude for the tradition that I come from.

A document like this makes one very much aware of the fact that how much of the outcome of a dialogue depends on the group of people from around the table. This looks like a redundant statement but looking at the Reformed community I have to say that one could hardly imagine a more diverse group, except the Pentecostal and Charismatic community. The document rightly states that for the Reformed there is hardly anymore an overall binding confession. We have the 16th century confessions like the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism. We also have new confessions such as the Barmer Declaration or the Belhar Confession. I don't think that the document can rightly say that these new confessions have the same authority. Some within the Reformed community criticise even the word 'confession' in these documents, as is certainly done with the Accra Confession, adopted at WARC's last General Council in 2004 in Accra. However it is true, that not one confessional document has an overall binding authority in the Reformed community. Some of the Reformed Churches regard themselves as post-confessional. We noticed this when at WARC we received a comment on the draft constitution of the new organisation we hope to form this coming June, the World Communion of Reformed Churches. The constitution starts with: "The basis of the WCRC shall be the Word of the Triune God..." Some from within our community objected to the word 'triune' as it is regarded as a 'confessional' word and they regard themselves as post-confessional. This is not general thinking but it says something about how some within the Reformed community think about 'confession and confessing'. Documents like 'Harvesting the Fruits' help us in our already very much started process of rethinking the notion of being a confessing communion.

In our community there is some criticism on the whole process of the inter-confessional dialogues. Comments come, mainly but not only, from the global South that we are wasting our time with 16th century discussions. We are not focussing on today's problems. Matters of interfaith are far more pressing than the inter-confessional disagreements. Within WARC it is clear that the focus on matters of economic and ecological justice has become dominant. The theological concentration is for a substantial part also focused on these matters of justice. In light of this some see the dialogue process as obsolete. 'Harvesting the Fruits' makes us aware of the fact that our commitment to justice should be embedded in the theological basis of justification and sanctification. I see in this respect as a very important sentence the quote from page 46: "The Church as a communion of those who are reconciled with God can, and should, be a sign and instrument of reconciliation and peace, an agent of justice and compassion in the face of sin and the structures of sin in society." I would add to this that those who make a contradic-

tion between reflection on justification and the commitment to justice are clearly missing a very important contribution theological reflection can make. Having said this I think it will be helpful if WARC or the WCRC continues to ask for room to ask the relevant questions Churches struggle with in their context. There is after all a risk that an inter-confessional dialogue becomes a goal in its own.

The largest part, by far, of the document is chapter 3 on the Church. From a Reformed perspective I see the traditional difference, noted in the document, between a church as an institution and a church as an event. We have to be aware that for the Reformed community it is of vital importance to know that “the Church is not defined in terms of doctrine or structure, but of the activity of God in Word and sacraments”.¹ This however could lead to a lack of sense of being to a ‘Church’ and this exposes the Reformed community to a risk. The risk is that Reformed Churches are tempted to look for a structure that works in other organisations but is not part of the Reformed tradition. Reformed churches eye strong Roman-Catholic, Orthodox, or Lutheran church structures and think they want the same. Worldwide, they also want to be a communion because that makes them stronger. If this is behind the idea of our new organisation, the World Communion of Churches, to be a communion, it will not work. Being a communion in order to have a stronger position within the ecumenical world will not work if the only driving force behind it is the wish to be like others. Our dialogue with you of having such a strong institutional sense of being a Church, is helpful in a self-critical process whereby we can again see how from that important awareness of the activity of God in Word and sacraments we can also define the Church in an institutional sense. For a Communion of Reformed churches it works more or less in the same way. We can only see communion as a gift of God. By not accepting this gracious gift we will put an obstacle to the work of the Holy Spirit.

Two matters are very important in the document and can be read several times. The first is that we should look more at what binds us than what divides us. The second is that the ultimate goal can only be full communion. We can only agree with this. But there have been times when we wondered whether the results of a dialogue in seeing how much binds us shows the way we live together as Churches and Christians in the world. The question for all of us is what is the importance of a dialogue for the totality of the life of our Churches. We may all know that in daily church life Christians are sometimes so close to each other, that matters at stake in a dialogue do seem to belong to a different era. We know that at the level of inter-confessional dialogues we are in a different process but we should not isolate ourselves too much from the daily context our Church members live in.

¹ See DAVID CORNICK, *Letting God be God, the Reformed Tradition* (London: DLT, 2008), p. 153.

Coming to the end of my presentation I want to thank you once again, on behalf of the others of the Reformed group present here, for this opportunity to be fellow harvesters and we look forward to the coming days of meeting here.

HARVESTING THE FRUITS:
AN ANGLICAN PERSPECTIVE

N. T. WRIGHT, BISHOP OF DURHAM

INTRODUCTION

It is an exciting privilege to be invited to contribute some reflections on *Harvesting the Fruits* [HF]. The forty or so years of the present ecumenical dialogues has coincided with my adult life, and the contrast between then and now is striking. We have come a very long way — not only in these agreements, but in the much wider process of friendship, shared mission, partnership in theological and biblical study, and the respect and affection we associate with companionship in Christ and on the Way. The published agreements are thus the tip of a much larger iceberg — though ‘ice’ is the wrong metaphor for our increasingly warm relationships.

I write from an Anglican perspective, while aware that at the moment there is no one single ‘Anglican perspective’. Indeed, describing Anglican views on anything at the moment is tricky, to say the least. I assume what I take to be a classic Anglican perspective in terms (a) of the 16th Century insistence on unity around scripture and (b) of the church’s vocation, evident in some formative Anglican theology, to witness to and work for effective signs of God’s kingdom on earth as in heaven. At the same time, we are all aware that the remarkable agreements displayed in HF are agreements within the specifically *Western* tradition; that most of us are also involved in discussions with the Orthodox; and that the Western preoccupation with the precise mechanisms of personal salvation has not always allowed a fully scriptural, or fully ecumenical, balance and perspective to be maintained. However, HF shows what can be done in the face of long-standing problems, and should be seen as a sign of hope in wider spheres as well.

METHOD

The method of the ARCIC dialogues, especially the earlier ones, remains in my view a model, not always (it seems) easy to imitate. The agreement on the Eucharist is the classic: by going back behind polarised technical terms and trying to state afresh what was really meant (Newman’s distinction between ‘words and things’ comes to mind) there was achieved what one might call, appropriately enough, ‘real and substantial’ agreement on the presence of the living Christ in the sacrament, and even on the still vexed notion of Eucharistic sacrifice. The adject-

tive 'sacramental', used frequently in HF, seems to function as a shorthand to point to a complex nest of questions which demand further explication, indicating that the matter cannot be reduced to simplistic terms. But it shows at least that we are no longer attributing to one another extreme and polarized views which do not represent where most of us now stand. In a sense, then, the early ARCIC dialogues represent a kind of return *ad fontes*, not always in the Renaissance sense of going back to the earliest sources, but at least in the sense of going back to primary *ideas*, behind the later development of sharp disagreements. There is, in Anglican circles, a widespread sense that this method has not been consistently used in the more recent work, especially that on Mary (not discussed in HF, but important as part of our fuller picture).

Early ARCIC thus uncovered, I believe, some genuine signs of a phenomenon to which HF draws repeated attention, namely 'complementarity' [e.g. 69, 78]. The question, though, which is raised implicitly throughout HF, is: what counts as 'complementarity'? How can it be assessed, by whom, and on what grounds? The word assumes that we do not need to use the same technical terms, or perhaps even the same conceptual framework, in order to recognise one another as fellow Christians, equally members of Christ's body. And this in turn raises, in an Anglican mind at least, the Pauline question of *adiaphora*: can we grant that some 'differences' do not 'make a difference' to our *koinonia*, and if so how can we tell what they are and what their limits might be?

The question of *adiaphora* is central to our own internal Anglican disputes, in which some assert that a different sexual ethic should be *adiaphoron*, while others deny it. *Absit omen*. But it was also central to the formative discussions in the English Reformation. Then, in the interests of a wished-for national religious unity, many urged liberty of conscience on the mode of Christ's Eucharistic presence. This was designed to avoid not only the Catholic/Protestant split itself, but also internal divisions between Protestant views, e.g. those of Luther and Zwingli. (This liberty of conscience in particular areas is a completely different thing from the doctrinal indifferentism that some have recently, and absurdly, claimed for the Elizabethan settlement; that period was, after all, the time of the careful writing of the Articles, and a rather strict doctrinal, not to mention ethical, framework.) This proposal to regard Eucharistic theology as *adiaphora* was, of course, anathema (literally) to our (then) Catholic interlocutors. But it has remained an important principle, part of the attempt to sustain a reformation which might keep most people on board. This failed, of course, with Recusants and Puritans remaining outside. But it evoked in principle the all-important biblical point stressed by St Paul in Galatians, 1 Corinthians and Romans: that some things previously considered essential were now to be considered *adiaphora*, so that, in Paul's case, circumcision (or lack of it), food taboos (including commensality) and Sabbath-keeping (or not) were no bar to full fellowship.

Indeed, in Galatians 2 Paul stresses the point that *all who believe in Jesus belong at the same table*, no matter what their ethnic background. I regard this, in what is arguably the earliest writing in the NT, as a key foundation principle in all ecumenical work. It is noteworthy that in the splendid Agreements on Justification this point is never quite made. 'Justification', I suggest, is not only something on which we can now agree. 'Justification' is in fact *the ultimate ecumenical doctrine*, the doctrine which affirms that the only qualification for participation at the common Christian table is belief in Jesus as crucified Messiah and risen Lord.

The principle of *adiaphora* thus plays into another vital notion: that of the hierarchy of truth [e.g. HF 45f.]. Traditionally, Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox theologies have tended to see all Christian truth as a single whole, so tightly interconnected and mutually reinforcing that to deny one element is tantamount to denying the very foundations themselves. But, as the Archbishop of Canterbury asked in his lecture last November, is it not the case that the agreements now before us, particularly those on the Trinity, the nature of salvation, the very heart of the gospel, and indeed the notion of God's kingdom, indicate that it is indeed possible to agree on 'the essentials' while still disagreeing on various other matters that some traditions deem important? This raises, of course, the question: how can we tell which matters are 'essential' and which others, though 'very important', may not be quite at that level — and which other matters (like the colour of flowers on the Communion Table, or the choice of hymns) may be deemed completely 'indifferent', a matter of local decision or even taste? This is the question raised for me by the very important early paragraph in HF p.6, which stresses that 'full communion . . . exists alongside cultural diversity, liturgical cultural rites, different forms of piety, different but complementary emphases and perspectives, etc.' This urges upon us the question: how can we tell which 'differences' make a 'difference'? Which ones can be welcomed as 'complementary'? Which ones will still cause us problems? What are the criteria?

MARY AND PETER

The question of what counts as *adiaphora*, of what doctrines and practices can be seen as complementary and mutually compatible, and which, on the contrary, are to be seen as mutually exclusive, emerges with particular force in the doctrines of Mary and of the Papacy. HF deals, of course, with the latter in the context of quite broad agreement on the church, when it appears that the dialogue partners who, up till then, have matched one another stride for stride, quite suddenly part company. On the topic of the Papacy, we find participants willing to continue the conversation but without any apparent confidence that solid ground has been detected (as in ARCIC on the Eucharist) some way behind the sharp doctrinal formulae. This was predictable in dialogue

with non-episcopal churches. But even episcopal churches such as my own have registered severe difficulties, not only with the particular primacy of the Bishop of Rome, but also with the notion of primacy itself. Some Anglicans prefer something more like the role of the Ecumenical Patriarch, holding together a communion of autocephalous national churches. That model has been explored in relation to the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury within the Anglican Communion.

But the double-edged question of the papacy then comes to us in the form: first, granted the substantial agreements already reached, what is to prevent Roman Catholics from recognising other Western Christians as full members of the family even if they do not acknowledge the Pope? [See HF 135, where this seems to be implied.] Second, what is to stop Protestants from recognising Roman Catholics as full members of the family even if the latter *do* still hold to papal dogmas which are ‘anathema’ to many Protestants? Would both ‘sides’ be prepared to accept that primacy in general, and the papacy in particular, is an *adiaphoron*? If not (and I presume the answer for the moment is ‘No’), on what grounds? It would be good to have that spelled out from both ends.

So too with Mary (going beyond HF into an area which shows how far we have, and have not, come). Informal and anecdotal information tends to suggest that many Roman Catholics do not see the dogmas of Immaculate Conception and Assumption as central either to their theology or their devotion, while for others they are near the very essence of their faith. Within Protestantism there is a larger spectrum still. Some are happy to go along with the dogmas (not least in their demythologized form where ‘Immaculate Conception’ is a parable for the primacy of grace, and ‘Assumption’ a mythical way of speaking of our final hope). Others don’t much mind. But others again — perhaps not the people who show up on ecumenical discussion groups, but in significant numbers — see these dogmas as indicating a major and even blasphemous flaw in both theology and devotion. Should we still be working for full agreement on Mary, perhaps even as a partial condition of eventual reunion? Or might it be possible at least to allow beliefs and practices in this area to be treated as *adiaphora* by all sides? If not, is this because both sides see Marian beliefs as an index of deeper and more foundational matters?

Then there is the matter of women priests and bishops — another question raised by the Archbishop last November. We Anglicans have struggled, in our own internal life, to see this question as *adiaphora*, with limited success: in some provinces, ordinands are now required to recognise the priesthood of women, while in England many clergy and laity claim the right to go on not recognising it. This creates tensions, with neither party regarding women’s ordination as *adiaphora*: for some it is mandatory, for others it is forbidden. It may be unrealistic to ask our ecumenical partners to accept the *adiaphoric* status of something which is not so regarded by many within our own church. However, once again the

notion of central truths, of a hierarchy of truth, of the possibility at least of some things being *adiaphora*, must be considered. At least, if this possibility is to be rejected, it would be good to hear the grounds for such refusal.

One of the features of an *adiaphora* position is that it enables us to allow for local variations which may say more about culture than theology. Traditionalists, of course, suspect that women’s ordination is the result of modern western culture trumping Christian norms. Equally, many Protestants believe that some features of Catholic piety, which gradually developed their own apparently theological rationale, grew not from the inherent Spirit-given impetus of genuine Christian tradition, but from cultural factors in post-pagan southern Europe.

At this point we reach two of the most important themes of our dialogue: Scripture and Tradition (discussed frequently, not least in HF) and Nature and Grace (more often implicit, but equally important).

SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION

HF frequently refers to the question of Scripture and Tradition [particularly at 89-98, 150f., 197-202]. The issue was central in the Synod of Bishops in October 2008, at which I was privileged to be an observer. It is easy to show, and HF does this repeatedly, that the old, polarized either/or between scripture and tradition is misleading. Scripture itself grew out of the life of the people of God, so one can detect a movement from (a) very early ‘tradition’ to (b) ‘scripture’ as the codification of that early tradition, and then from scripture on to (c) later ‘tradition’ (or perhaps Tradition), which consists of the subsequent church’s reflections on scripture itself. However, two modifying reflections are in order.

First, it is actually, if perhaps paradoxically, one of the features of Tradition that Tradition and scripture are not the same thing. This can be seen supremely in the fact that, however much Tradition is valued, it is scripture itself that is read out in the church’s liturgy. However much we value traditions and Tradition, we do not read official dogmas (except for the Creeds) or the works of hallowed theologians within the liturgy, whereas we do read sacred scripture. This is, if you like, an ‘argument from Tradition’ for ‘the priority of scripture’.

Second, it is not in fact sufficient to say that scripture ‘emerges from the church’s life’, as though it is simply the codification of a very early ‘tradition’. [Here I want to take issue with some aspects of HF 197f.] Of course scripture includes such material (e.g. 1 Corinthians 11.23-26; 15.3-11). But a good part of the NT — most of Paul’s letters certainly, the gospels arguably — was written not in order to *articulate* the growing tradition and life within the church but to *confront* and *correct* it — just as much of the OT was written not to reflect the life of Israel but to rebuke and reform it. Paul’s opponents might well have appealed here and there to an early ‘tradition’ in the church — of separate tables for Jewish and Gentile

believers, for instance, or of a 'freedom in the Spirit' which was leading to moral and liturgical chaos (as in Corinth). Paul wrote, under (he believed) fresh commissioning from God and equipping by the Spirit, to challenge, rebuke and transform existing 'tradition'.

While this is a long way from being a complete account of what scripture was and is, it alerts us to the danger of simply assuming that 'scripture' can be as it were subsumed under 'tradition', or corralled within 'the church'. That latter position is open to abuse from either end. 'Traditionalist' Christians sometimes say that God's Word is contained in scripture, tradition and perhaps even magisterium, thus preventing scripture ever challenging things the church has subsequently said. Radical Christians have been known to declare that since the church wrote the Bible the church can now re-write it. Neither of these suggestions, I think, would command much assent across the ecumenical spectrum; neither commends itself historically or theologically to me, or I suspect most Anglicans. It is important to hold on to the principle enunciated in HF 198, namely 'the primacy of scripture within [the] historical interpretative process' — while recognising that this in turn raises several important further questions we cannot pursue here.

Where this comes to the fore in our present discussions is, not least, in the question of implicit theological method and approach. Characteristically, Roman Catholic theologians often begin a discussion by locating themselves within a network of sources such as Vatican II and recent Papal pronouncements. We non-Romans have our own history of recent gatherings, pronouncements and statements, but we do not normally begin there. We tend, rather, to come at topics from an initially scriptural base, not of course imagining naively that we read scripture without relation to the large echo-chamber of subsequent traditions and developments, but as a way of acknowledging (I think) the primacy of the Son of God over the work which, albeit energised by the Spirit, is mediated through the diverse and fallible thought-processes of the church. Part of the point of scripture is that Jesus Christ is its centre (not merely in a dogmatic sense but also in what we might call an aesthetic sense, with the gospels as the climax of the single great canonical narrative), so that loyalty to scripture is seen as the epistemological mode proper to our loyalty to Jesus. That is why we begin there, and only then work forward once more through relevant subsequent traditions and discussions, trusting that the Spirit will continue to guide the church, not by mere accumulation of unchallengable insights but by fresh and critical debates with other Christians across space and time. The discussion of scripture and tradition might then be located within the Trinitarian relationship between the Son and the Spirit.

This emerges in particular in places like ARCIC's *Mary: Grace and Hope*. It has been pointed out elsewhere that, if one began with the testimony of scripture and worked forwards, one would scarcely reach the conclusion either of the Immaculate Conception

or of the Assumption, or indeed of the kind of 'motherhood' which is often ascribed to Mary. (An example: 'son, behold your mother' in John 19.27 will hardly bear the weight of the kind of theology it is sometimes used to 'illustrate'.) It depends where you *start*: do you begin with the developed devotion and dogma and then, retrospectively, seek scriptural 'support'? Or do you work forwards from scripture and allow it to set, and limit, the terms of discussion? This question of method emerges as vital for the next phase of our discussions.

Here a further historical note may help, linking this discussion to the earlier one on *adiaphora*. In the sixteenth century, when Protestants insisted on the sufficiency of scripture, they said things like 'Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation' (Article VI). Some have taken this in a maximal sense, i.e. *only* that is to be believed which can be so proved. But, at least for the early English reformers and the Anglican settlement as a whole, this was a way of *limiting* the things which *had to be believed*, allowing latitude of opinion on plenty of other matters, such as transubstantiation. By no means all subsequent Protestants have made *this* point when they have spoken of the sufficiency, or indeed the authority, of scripture. But it is possible that by returning to this principle we might find ways forward in our fresh ecumenical endeavour. It would enable us to do justice to the distinction which Tradition itself supplies, between scripture as the spoken heart of the liturgy and tradition as the result, under the leading of the Spirit but mediated through fallible humans, of what the church has said as it has reflected on scripture. This, of course, may itself be seen as a characteristically Anglican viewpoint, and thus itself part of the tradition in which I myself stand. There is no neutral ground here, no epistemological Switzerland from which one may take a detached viewpoint.

NATURE AND GRACE

At this and other points, though, we encounter the theme which underlies so much perplexity in our dialogues. Protestants have regularly supposed that Catholics envisage grace as merely 'supplementing' nature, and Catholics have supposed that Protestants envisage grace abolishing or replacing nature. It would be good to map our regular discussions on to this larger set of issues, and to be more explicit across the board about the doctrines of creation, eschatology and redemption which are implied at every point. The goodness of creation is, of course, foundational for Christianity as for Judaism. But the variability of the understanding of eschatology (where the Bible stresses the renewal and marriage of heaven and earth, not the abolition of 'earth' and a rescue simply in 'heaven'), and of the redemption which rescues the created order for that ultimate

future, depends not least on the varied perception of the way(s) in which creation has been spoiled or flawed by sin, and hence the extent to which redemption must rescue creation. This affects everything from the eucharist (in which many Anglicans would now be happy to see a mysterious 'transformation' in the elements, anticipating the eventual transformation of all creation) to justification (in which the emphasis on what happens *extra nos* and what happens *within* the believer is correlated with this larger perception of 'what's wrong' and 'what's the solution', as well as with the relationship between the work of the Son and the work of the Spirit). But without acknowledging the larger nature/grace framework I doubt if we can move much further.

The nature/grace question is particularly relevant to the discussion of the church, which is of course the heart of HF. It would really help, I believe, if we could begin to see the traditional protestant suspicions of a high ecclesiology as rooted in a sense that the church as an all-too-fallen-human organisation has been too easily credited with an automatic legitimacy. This relates directly to the previous issue: a high view of 'nature' belongs with a high view of 'tradition', resulting eventually in a high view of the church's leadership, not least the papacy. Protestants then wonder — even without going so far as Barth in his famous 'Nein!' — whether a church with that view could ever really reform, could ever retract. Speaking of 'going beyond' previous positions is one thing (HF 112); what many Protestants still hope for, with respect and affection, is a 'going back' from some positions, the cheerful admission of the principle of *semper reformanda*. That, it seems, is precluded by the high view of tradition, based apparently on a high view of nature and perhaps also of the Spirit at work in the church. This, of course, is of considerable interest to Anglicans who perceive a strange tension between the warm friendship and mutual respect we enjoy with our Roman partners and the official position taken in *Apostolicae Curae*. Even if one draws back from 'maximizing interpretations' of 'infallibility' (HF 144), it is not clear (to me at least) how a 'reappraisal' of that statement could occur (HF 88).

This is the context in which we need to raise the ironic fact that the closer we come in agreements on church and ministry — and we have come gloriously close in these Agreements — the more the point is highlighted that we seem to be living in, as it were, parallel universes. We can each affirm that the other's doctrine of church and ministry is very like our own. But we cannot then say, without undermining the ground each of us is standing on, that we are in fact all part of the one body of Christ, with our ministries all possessing some sort of 'validity' (whatever we might mean by that). This then correlates once more with the other questions we raised before: what might it take for us to say to one another that, since we so clearly agree on the inner substance of the faith, we should be able to agree to differ *within* a single family, to work from within a single framework — a framework characterized by full table-fellowship — on the issues that remain.

The whole discussion of nature and grace, then, ought I believe to be brought back into the centre of our reflections, and allowed to grow directly out of our shared Christology. The death and resurrection of Jesus is, after all, the great event which shapes all our understanding of God, God's purposes and God's people. The cross indicates that 'nature' cannot simply be affirmed as it stands or merely 'topped up' by the addition of grace. If even the sinless humanity of God's son was given up to death, nothing else in 'nature' can escape the same fate. But if the resurrection reaffirms the goodness of that humanity, we should expect that reaffirmation to be followed through into ecclesiology and most other areas as well. It is a matter of good theological method, as well as of specific content, that the gospel picture of Jesus, his kingdom, his cross and his resurrection be allowed to function as the foundation and ground-plan of everything else. And this brings us back to the primacy of scripture over tradition.

CONCLUSION

There are many other points I could have picked up, and no doubt other Anglicans would have highlighted quite different issues. I think particularly of the whole notion of the 'kingdom of God', which occurs from time to time in HF but is never explored in detail. But I hope this has at least brought into focus some pressing and significant questions, particularly those to do with *adiaphora*, with scripture and tradition, and with nature and grace. I want to stress once more my gratitude to the generation that has worked so hard on all the present Agreements, and my hope that these documents will indeed encourage us to move forward to a new time in which, please God, we can and will celebrate in new ways, in the power of the Spirit, the unity in Christ of which we are already aware.

A FIRST METHODIST RESPONDE TO "HARVESTING THE FRUITS"

GEOFFREY WAINWRIGHT

After forty years of sustained and strenuous theological work in the bilateral dialogues between the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutherans, the Reformed, the Anglicans, and the Methodists respectively, the survey offered in "Harvesting the Fruits" is able to cite very few cases of anything like an official and solemn endorsement of the resultant texts by either or both of the parties in each dialogue. One possible case concerns the series of texts between Catholics and Anglicans (ARCIC) on the Eucharist and on Ministry, which the Lambeth Conference of 1988 recognized as "consonant in substance with the faith of Anglicans" and as offering "a sufficient basis for taking the next step forward towards the reconciliation of our Churches grounded in agreement in faith". After further "clarifications", these texts of

ARCIC were re-examined by “the appropriate dicasteries of the Holy See”, so that Cardinal Edward Cassidy (then president of the PCPCU) could announce, with apparent positive intent, that “no further study would seem to be required at this stage” (see “Harvesting the Fruits”, p. 156, n. 25). So, then, it can at least now be stated that “the Catholic Church has given a certain degree of recognition to ARCIC I on Eucharist and Ministry” (“Harvesting the Fruits”, p. 9, n.2; cf. pp. 108-109 for the qualifications). A more decisive case, perhaps, may be found in the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification and its formulation of “basic truths”, which was ceremonially signed by representatives of the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation at Augsburg on 31st October 1999, and with which the World Methodist Council and its member churches became “associated” through a tripartite signing at Seoul, Korea, in August 2006. In my judgment, the time is now ripe for the present results of each of the four bilateral dialogues under consideration to be consolidated through an official reception — albeit nuanced according to cases — by the engaged parties.

I have a proposal as to the practical method by which this might be achieved, and I will suggest a theological perspective in which the procedure can be justified.

As to method: I note, first of all, that almost all the dialogue reports distinguish among several levels of agreement between the partners. The most solid level is that of “consensus”, where the doctrinal accord is deemed complete. Next comes “convergence”, where historically separated parties have come to see that the differences between them were not as grave as controversy had made them, so that the respective positions might perhaps be accommodated in what has come to be called a “reconciled diversity” (although the Catholic preference would speak rather of “convergence in significant elements”; so “Harvesting the Fruits”, p. 155, n. 21). The third and perhaps fourth levels might be called those of “continuing difficulties” and even “persistent divergence”. I wish to propose that all parties should find ways of formally and officially “enacting” the results so far of each of the dialogues in which they are engaged. In line with the distinctions just made, each party — “at the highest appropriate level of authority” (to use a phrase that gained currency at the time of the Lima document on “Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry”) — should, in terms as identical as possible, (a) fully affirm, in agreed words, joint statements on those topics where consensus is judged to exist; (b) should joyfully recognize those places in which substantial convergence has been detected, and solemnly commit themselves to working together to strengthen and complete the convergence where full consensus may be judged necessary beyond a reconciled diversity; (c) state as accurately as possible the issues over which each finds resolution difficult, though not inconceivable; and (d) list as irenically as possible those matters in which the ways continue to diverge, while also praying for guidance towards a meeting of minds.

To speak only from the dialogue between the World Methodist Council (WMC) and the Roman Catholic Church, I can report that in its current round the Joint Commission has been able to draft a statement that “synthesizes” in a theologically systematic way the utterances of the first eight rounds of dialogue, while clearly distinguishing among the three or four levels of agreement just rehearsed. It is my hope that such a document, after perhaps further refinement, might be presented for approval by both the World Methodist Council and the Holy See. Up to now, all reports from the Joint Commission have simply been “submitted” to the sponsoring bodies. The practice of the WMC has typically been to “receive with gratitude” the report and authorize a further round of the dialogue. On the Roman side, the practice has been for the CDF to examine the report, which would then be published in the “Information Service” of the PCPCU, accompanied by a commentary from a respected Catholic theologian which would underline the strengths and weaknesses of the Commission’s report from a responsible Roman point of view.

Now for the theological perspective in which I suggest my proposed method could be justified. A notable feature in all four sets of bilateral dialogues has been the recognition of the eschatological direction in which “the Church” moves while it is “in via”. This comes out most clearly in the treatments of baptism and, especially perhaps, the Eucharist, as well as the ecclesiological characterization of the Church as “Sacrament of the Kingdom” (“Harvesting the Fruits”, 32-35, on pp. 62-71; and 74, on p. 149). My suggestion is that such a perspective allows all four “notes” of the Church — unity, holiness, catholicity, apostolicity — to be viewed as vocations, in which varying degrees of present reality can be recognized and, moreover indeed, advanced or progressed in. I can draw here upon the presentation of the “*notae Ecclesiae*” found in the Seoul Report of 2006: “The Grace Given You in Christ: Catholics and Methodist Reflect Further on the Church”, which especially in paragraph 137, hints how all four notes might be enhanced in both parties in the event of an “exchange of gifts” between the parties.

Allow me as a Methodist to begin with holiness, since that is what John Wesley believed himself chiefly raised up to promote even to the point of “perfection”. Within the framework of the “universal call to holiness” in *Lumen Gentium* (39-42), the Second Vatican Council’s decree on ecumenism declares that “all Catholics must aim at Christian perfection and, each according to their situation, play their part, that the Church, bearing in her own body the humility and dying of Jesus, may daily be more purified and renewed, against the day when Christ will present her to himself in all her glory without spot or wrinkle” (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 4). The Seoul Report reads: “The emphasis upon holiness which Methodists and Catholics already share means that we would give each other great solidarity and encouragement in our living of this mark of the Church and in our striving for an ever fuller realization of it. We

would also have the joy of sharing the inspiring example of our saints” (137, b). It may be remarked that we have provisionally entitled our comprehensive theological synthesis — so far — of the Catholic / Methodist dialogue “Together to Holiness”.

Then with regard to catholicity: the Seoul Report quotes again from the same section of *Unitatis Redintegratio*: “Christian divisions prevent the Church from realizing the fullness of catholicity proper to her” (*UR*, 4). The firm commitment of Methodists and Catholics to ecumenism is indicative of our shared desire for greater catholicity by our unity. In accordance with its twofold meaning, the catholicity both of Catholics and also of Methodists would be enhanced by our unity: by an increased depth and balance of belief, and by increased vigour and scope of outreach” (Seoul Report, 137 c).

What then of unity? Could not the “eschatological emphasis” that in varied ways characterized both the Catholic and the Methodist vision allow that “unity is also a *vocation* that must inspire and challenge us each day towards an ever greater attainment of it” (Seoul Report, 137 b; italics in the original).

In pushing for the “*notae Ecclesiae*” to be regarded vocationally, it is certainly none of my intention to dismiss unity, any more than holiness or catholicity, into invisibility, or postpone it into an indefinite future (such as the CDF’s *Dominus Iesus* of 2000 warns against). With the PCPCU I stand by “full visible communion” as “the final goal” of the ecumenical dialogues (“Harvesting the Fruits”, 106; p. 201). I wish, in fact, to suggest that a genuinely eschatological tension allows all the notes of the Church to be confessed in a dynamic sense that fosters their perfect and tangible attainment, albeit within the limits of a pilgrim existence. That is the perspective in which the parties in ecumenical dialogues might properly pursue consensus, convergence, and resolution in doctrine such as indicated above. The framework may be set by taking into consideration the notion of “degrees of communion” with the Catholic Church that *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 3 allowed for both “separated brothers and sisters” and also their liturgical services (as recalled in “Harvesting the Fruits”, 36-40; pp. 72-78). Apply now the “vocational” perspective, and at rhythms no doubt variable according to the respective partners in dialogue with the Catholic Church, it should then become possible — for other authentically trinitarian churches and ecclesial communities — marked by the Gospel, the Scriptures, baptism, the Lord’s Sup-

per, and active faith (cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 20-23) to be regarded as already *part of* the “one holy, catholic Church”, while praying and working towards the greater fullness that would come to them — and to the Roman Church — on the establishment of eucharistic communion with the apostolic Petrine see in structures that still demand elaboration.

Ay, there’s the rub. To revert to the Seoul Report, which declares: “Methodists can receive a vital sign of *apostolicity* from Catholics, namely the apostolic succession of bishops. However, Catholics have much to gain from the commitment to apostolic mission which is an explicit part of Methodist identity” (Seoul Report, 137, d). In the current round of our Methodist / Catholic dialogue, the chief themes are sacraments, sacramentality, and the nature of ordained ministries, including the question of episcopal succession, which according to Catholic teaching, must always take the form of collegiality in communion with the Bishop of Rome and under his rule.

Meanwhile, we may already take heart from the Seoul Report: “The mutual enhancement of each other’s oneness, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity through Catholic-Methodist unity would be the fullest possible realisation of John Wesley’s famous appeal that Protestants and Catholics should ‘help each other on in whatever we are agreed leads to the Kingdom’” (Seoul Report 137d, quoting from John Wesley’s “Letter to a Roman Catholic”, written at Dublin in 1749).

For the moment we have to take into account the qualification which “Harvesting the Fruits” introduces when it declares that “Together we confess that there is one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, *to which in different ways we belong*, so that even in our differences we are brothers and sisters in the one Lord and in the one Spirit of Christ” (101, emphasis added; p. 197). Earlier, “Harvesting the Fruits” has justly declared that the fundamental ecumenical question is not only “*What is the Church?*” but also “*Where is the Church and where is she realised in her fullness?*” (78, emphasis in original; p. 153).

I hope I may conclude my response with what may be perhaps an informal but striking recommendation from the Seoul Report: “It is time now to return to the concrete reality of one another, to look one another in the eye, and with love and esteem to acknowledge what we see to be truly of Christ and of the Gospel, and thereby *of the Church*, in one another” (Seoul Report, 97, italics in original).

VISIT TO ROME OF AN OFFICIAL DELEGATION OF THE EVANGELICAL-LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

9-14 February 2010

An official delegation from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) visited the Holy See 9-14 February 2010. It was led by Bishop Mark Hanson, President of the Lutheran Church in America and President of the Lutheran World Federation. The delegation consisted of Bishop Donald McCoid, Ecumenical and Inter-religious Relations, Bishops Michael Burk, Callon Holloway, Claire Burkat, Elizabeth Eaton, Robert Hofstad, Reverends Susan Langhauser, Steve Loy, Dr Rocky Piro, Ms Ione Hanson, Ms Saundra McCoid, Ms Myrna Sheie, Mr John Brooks, Dr Mitze Budde and Ms Deborah Chenoweth.

The delegation met the Holy Father on the 10th of February, and on February 12th it visited the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, where it had an encounter with the President Cardinal Walter Kasper, the Council's Secretary Bishop Brian Farrell and Monsignor Matthias Türk and Reverend Gregory Fairbanks, Officials of the dicastery. On the same day the delegation was also received at the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue where it met with Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran. During its stay in Rome it also visited the Congregation for Bishops, the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith and the Community of St Egidio.

The programme of the delegation included visits to the Basilica of St Bartholomew on Tiber Island and the Basilicas of St Paul Outside-the-Walls, St Mary Major, St John in Lateran, St Peter's and the excavations below as well as the Catacombs of St Domitilla, the Vatican Museums and the Sistine Chapel.

We publish here below the Pope's Address to the delegation followed by the Message of Bishop Hanson.

ADDRESS OF POPE BENEDICT XVI

10 February 2010

Distinguished Friends,

I am pleased to greet Bishop Mark Hanson and all of you present here today for this ecumenical visit.

Since the beginning of my Pontificate, I have been encouraged that relations between Catholics and Lutherans have continued to grow, especially at the level of practical collaboration in the service of the Gospel. In his Encyclical Letter *Ut Unum Sint*, my beloved predecessor Pope John Paul II described our relationship as "brotherhood rediscovered" (No. 41). I deeply hope that the continuing Lutheran-Catholic dialogue both in the United States of America and at the international level will help to build upon the agreements reached so far. An important remaining task will be to harvest the results of the Lutheran-Catholic dialogue that so promisingly started after the Second Vatican Council. To build on what has been achieved together since that time, a spiritual ecumenism should be grounded in ardent prayer and in conversion to Christ, the source of grace and truth. May the Lord help us to treasure what has been accomplished so far, to guard it with care, and to foster its development.

I conclude by renewing the wish expressed by my predecessor, during whose Pontificate so much was accomplished on the road to full visible unity among Christians, when he said to a similar delegation from the Lutheran Church in America: "You are most wel-

come here. Let us rejoice that an encounter such as this can take place. Let us resolve to be open to the Lord so that he can use this meeting for his purposes, to bring about the unity that he desires. Thank you for the efforts you are making for full unity in faith and charity" (*Address to the Bishops of the Lutheran Church in America*, 26 September 1985).

Upon you and all those entrusted to your pastoral care, I cordially invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

ORE, 17 February 2010

MESSAGE OF BISHOP MARK S. HANSON

10 February 2010

Your Holiness,

I greet you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ on behalf of the Lutheran World Federation — A Communion of Churches and the members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). I also bring you very warm greetings from your friends, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, and His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.

Our ecumenical journey is testimony to Jesus' prayer that we might be one as He and the Father are one so that the world may believe. We are confident that the Holy Spirit will continue to inspire us to make visible our unity in Christ and make powerful our witness to the world. Let us be known for the faith that unites us rather than the issues that separate us.

We were deeply moved as you greeted the Church of Finland in January for their twenty-fifth annual visit and said to them that it is your prayer “that our efforts and understanding and reconciliation would blossom into perfect, visible unity in Christ Jesus.”

In living out Jesus’ prayer in John 17, the ELCA’s ecumenical statement, *Ecumenism: The Vision of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, affirms that we seek in our faith and life “to manifest the unity given to the people of God by living together in the love of Christ and by joining with other Christians in prayer and action to express and preserve the unity which the Spirit gives.”

As Catholics and Lutherans, we have a renewed commitment to unity in Christ. We are thankful for the signs of unity between us that reflect this renewed commitment. The celebrations we shared for the tenth anniversary of the signing of the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (JDDJ) have been joyful occasions of hope. The JDDJ gives us a very strong foundation for moving toward one another in future dialogue. I thanked God when we gathered as Lutheran bishops in Chicago with Archbishop Gregory and Cardinal George. Archbishop Gregory said in his sermon that these times call us to deeper dialogue so that we might make visible our unity in Christ.

Our current international Lutheran-Catholic dialogue focusing on the theme “Baptism and Growth in Communion” and the very rich U.S. Catholic-Lutheran dialogue focusing on “The Hope of Eternal Life” are very important for our relationship and for our hope for unity in Christ. We realize with you that we have great challenges before us as we address concerns in the areas of ethics, morality, and theology. We pray for the Spirit’s guidance in our biblical and theological conversations and as we grow in faith and life.

With you, we pray for peace. In your leadership you have called for peace throughout the world and particularly in the Middle East. As Lutherans, we share this call and commitment with you and the leaders of the Abrahamic faiths. This time calls for Jews, Christians, and Muslims to deepen our understanding of one another and our resolve to work together to build a world of peace with justice.

The Lutheran World Federation’s Eleventh Assembly in Stuttgart, Germany in July 2010 is under the theme, “Give Us Today Our Daily Bread.” In that theme we affirm our care for God’s creation and our commitment to serve all God’s people, especially those who live in poverty. This theme also reflects our conviction that God sends us as followers of Jesus Christ to respond to the hungry: those who hunger for the Bread of Life, for daily bread, and for justice and peace.

As we continue on the journey toward unity in Christ, it is our hope and prayer that we may make a united witness to the world as we approach 2017. That was the topic of our conversation during my last visit with you. Dr. Ishmael Noko, General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, has said,

“We cannot choose the challenges which are presented to faithful Christian witness in our own lifetimes. But in the Lutheran World Federation, we look to the future with hope that we will continue to grow in communion with one another and in unity with the whole Church of Jesus Christ.” Dr. Noko also shared with members of the ELCA that the “yearning for unity has made it possible for the Lutheran World Federation to speak and act on behalf of the majority of world Lutherans in the areas of international diakonia and advocacy. It has urged us toward deeper relationships with other Christians, including the landmark ecumenical accomplishment of the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*”.

Together we mourn the loss of life and the destruction that has fallen upon God’s people in Haiti. We extend our sympathy on the death of Haitian Archbishop Joseph Serge Miot, a servant leader who was known for his closeness to the poor. As we are deeply moved by the cries and testimony coming from the Haitian people, we know that God calls us to accompany those living in poverty so that together we may work to eliminate poverty wherever it exists.

In our weekly liturgy, Lutherans pray in the Kyrie “for the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God, and for the unity of all.” Your words for peace in God’s world have provided guidance for all Christians. As Lutherans, we welcome your spiritual counsel linking peace and justice, poverty, and the environment. We are grateful that you and Pope John Paul II have so powerfully challenged Christians to confront poverty in order to build peace.

We received with gratitude your 2010 New Year’s greeting of peace. Your theme, “If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation,” is a priority for the Lutheran World Federation and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. As stewards of God’s creation, we have a shared responsibility to protect earth, water, and air as gifts that God the Creator intends for everyone.

It is our fervent hope that we will find ways to join Catholics in responding more fully to address poverty and human need. We join in your prayer that in order to cultivate peace, we must protect creation. As stewards of God’s creation, it is essential that we work to preserve life and creation for future generations.

Your holiness, we look forward to opportunities for greater sharing and serving in the name of our Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. With profound respect and admiration for you and your ministry of oversight, we pray for the well-being of the Catholic Church. We also ask that you remember in your prayers the Lutheran World Federation and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, even as we promise to remember you in our petitions to our gracious God. Thank you for receiving me and for your prayers.

ECUMENICAL NEWS

FAITH AND ORDER PLENARY COMMISSION MEETING

Crete, Greece
7-13 October 2009

The Faith and Order Plenary Commission meeting, which took place in Kolympari, Crete, 7-13 October 2009, has come to an end. Participants noted an emerging coherence between the three current studies on Nature and Mission of the Church, Sources of Authority and Moral Discernment in the Churches. A tendency to give more space to an “ecclesiology from below” based on the concrete experience of “being church in a particular context”, rather than describing the church theoretically “from above”, was encouraged.

Reporting from their group work, commissioners reaffirmed the central importance of The Nature and Mission of the Church, the attempt to formulate an understanding of the church that may be widely accepted by the churches. This 2005 document has been distributed to all the commission’s member churches, and Faith and Order is still gathering responses. For most of the commissioners, more work is needed before this document can become a “convergence document”.

Among the comments that received most attention was Metropolitan Geevarghese Coorilos’s suggestion to look at the reality of the church not only “from above”, but also “from below”, taking into account the daily experience of “being church” in particular contexts, citing the example of his Dalit church in Kerala, India.

As deliberations moved forward, the connection between this reflection on “the church” and the other studies became clearer. When it comes to making decisions, particularly in the area of Moral Discernment, the church is informed by its Sources of Authority.

Among these sources, Faith and Order concentrated its attention on how “Fathers and Mothers of the Church” can be perceived ecumenically. The study Sources of Authority: Tradition and traditions will open new perspectives both for churches familiar with patristic studies and for churches that are now rediscovering the teaching of our predecessors in faith.

By looking at case studies in the divisive area of Moral Discernment in the Churches, many group participants identified other sources of authority that churches were in fact also referring to, such as the sciences, as well as contextual understandings of the role that the church should play in society. Results from group work by the Plenary Commission will become part of this study, which is still in an early

stage. It is hoped that a better understanding of how decisions are made will create an atmosphere in which dialogue is more likely than division.

The meeting was closed by prayer, during which the Rev. Dr Susan Durber invited the audience to look at Jesus as a guest, a stranger visiting us. “In some of our contexts, and in different ways, the church now seems more to be in the ‘guest’ than the ‘host’ position”, she observed. “We are learning now how to be those who are dependent on the hospitality of others. Hospitality is not simply the generous gift of the wealthy and powerful, it is also the skill and grace of the weaker ones”, she said.

BAPTIST-CATHOLIC CONVERSATIONS

Rome, Italy
13-18 December 2009

The fourth round in the second series of conversations between the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) and the Catholic Church took place 13-18 December 2009 in Rome, Italy. The first round in this series was held at Beeson Divinity School, Samford University, in Birmingham, Alabama (USA), from 10-15 December 2006. The second round was held 2-8 December 2007 in Rome, Italy. The third round was held 14-20 December 2008 in Durham, North Carolina (United States) at the Duke Divinity School. A first phase of international conversations had taken place in 1984-1988, resulting in a report in 1990 entitled “Summons to Witness to Christ in Today’s World”.

The overall theme of this phase, from 2006-2010, is “The Word of God in the Life of the Church: Scripture, Tradition and Koinonia”. Bishop Arthur Serratelli, Bishop of Paterson, New Jersey, USA, and Rev. Dr. Paul Fiddes, Professor of Systematic Theology in the University of Oxford, England, UK, co-chair these conversations on behalf of the Catholic Church and Baptist World Alliance respectively. The secretaries for the co-chairs were Dr. Fausto Vasconcelos of the Study and Research Division of the BWA and Rev. Gregory J. Fairbanks of the Vatican’s Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

The Baptist team consists of permanent members, and persons specially invited as “esteemed guests.” Permanent members participating in this round of conversations include Drs. Fred Deegbe from Ghana, Tadeusz Zielinski from Poland, Tomas Mackey of Argentina, Rachael Tan of Taiwan, Rev. Tony Peck of the Czech Republic and Drs. Curtis Freeman, Timothy George, Steven Harmon, Nora Lozano and Elizabeth Newman of the United States.

Rev. Massimo Aprile of Italy was the esteemed guest for this round of conversations.

The Catholic team consists of permanent members and consultants. Participating Catholic members included Drs. Peter Casarella and Susan K. Wood, SCL of the USA, Dr. Krzysztof Mielcarek from Poland, Rev. William Henn, ofm cap. and Dr. Teresa Francesca Rossi of Italy, and Rev. Jorge Scampini, O.P. of Argentina. Sr. Sara Butler, M.S.B.T. participated as a consultant.

The topic of this round was "Oversight and Primacy in the Ministry of the Church". Papers delivered for the Catholic delegation were *Contemporary Developments of the Petrine Office Including the Ministry of Unity as Outlined in Ut unum sint* by Rev. William Henn, OFM Cap., *The Episcopal Ministry at the service of Unity in the Church* by Rev. Jorge A. Scampini, O.P. and *Continuity and Development in Roman Catholic Ecclesiology* by Dr. Susan K. Wood, SCL. Baptist papers delivered were *Where Two or Three Are Gathered: Toward a Baptist Understanding of the Church* by Dr. Curtis W. Freeman; *Episkopè in Scripture and Tradition — A Baptist Perspective* by Rev. Anthony Peck and *The Papal Office in Traditional and Ecumenical Baptist Perspectives* by Dr. Tadeusz Zelinski.

The group will convene for its fifth and final round of these conversations in 2010.

JOINT COMMISSION FOR DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE
CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE MALANKARA SYRIAN ORTHODOX
CHURCH

Puthencruz, India
15 December 2009

The Joint Commission for Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church held its 12th meeting at the Patriarchal Centre, Puthencruz, on 15 December 2009. Three issues figured on the agenda: (1) Sharing of sacred places and funerals; (2) Evaluation of agreements regarding mixed marriages and related pastoral guidelines; (3) Common witness with regard to 'charismatic' Pentecostal groups.

Firstly, the Joint commission discussed sharing of sacred places and funerals. The problem is that people do not always find a priest or a cemetery of their own Church for the funerals. Is there a possibility to create some common facilities? There is a real need in Kerala, but especially in the diaspora. The Commission suggested that a committee might prepare a draft document in which to include the jurisdictional and the practical aspects. This draft document can be finalized in the Commission and then presented to the respective Synods.

Thereafter a mainly positive evaluation was made of the practical application of the "Agreement between the Catholic Church and the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church on Inter-Church Marriages" (IS 84, 1993, 159-160). Nevertheless, so as to promote a larger acquaintance and better understanding of this

Agreement, the decision was made to publish the full text of this Agreement in English and Malayalam, accompanied by a short commentary, in local Church publications or in a separate pamphlet.

Regarding common witness, the Joint Commission members presented the problems being experienced with Charismatic, Pentecostal groups. It is not easy to dialogue with the 'evangelical groups' because they are not in an 'ecumenical forum' and they have no hierarchy. The Joint Commission decided to prepare a paper on Pentecostals and Evangelicals.

The Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church delegation comprised: Metropolitan Kuriakose Mar Theophilose (co-chair); Metropolitan Thomas Mar Themotheos; Metropolitan Joseph Gregoriose; Metropolitan Mathew Aphrem; Rev. Dr. Adai Jacob (co-secretary); Fr. Shibu Cherian. The members of the Catholic delegation were: Bishop Brian Farrell (co-chair); Archbishop Mar Joseph Powathil; Archbishop Mar Mathew Moolakatt; Archbishop Thomas Mar Koorilos; Fr. Xavier Koodapuzha; Fr. Mathew Vellanickal; Fr. Jacob Thekkeparampil; Fr. Philip Nelpura; Fr. Gabriel Quicke (co-secretary).

The next meeting is to be held at the Spirituality Centre in Kottayam on 7 December 2010. Three major issues will be on the agenda: a study on Pentecostals and Evangelicals in India; the document on sharing of sacred places and funerals; a series of studies on the issue of "Episcopacy and Petrine Ministry".

The delegation members also had a meeting with His Beatitude Mor Baselios Thomas I, who hosted the delegations in the Patriarchal Centre of Puthencruz.

JOINT COMMISSION FOR DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC
CHURCH AND THE MALANKARA ORTHODOX SYRIAN CHURCH

Kottayam, India
16-17 December 2009

The Joint Commission for Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church held its 19th meeting at the Sophia Centre, Kottayam, from 16-17 December 2009. Five major issues were discussed: 1) Sharing of sacred places especially Churches and Cemeteries; 2) Administration of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick in certain circumstances; 3) Marriage between Catholic and Orthodox faithful; 4) Some projects for Common Witness were presented: a conference for Monks and Sisters; cooperation between Seminaries and a conference on family issues; 5) Primacy of Peter in the writings of the Fathers and the ancient liturgical texts.

The first issue dealt with *sharing of sacred places especially Churches and Cemeteries*. A sub-commission prepared a draft document to present a concrete proposal on sharing of Churches and Cemeteries to the respective Synods. Secondly Father Baby Varghese presented some reflections on *Anointing of the Sick and its Administration to non-orthodox*. Theologically

and canonically it is difficult for the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church to administer a sacrament to one who is not in communion with the Orthodox Church. The Joint Commission agreed to look for a common understanding for exceptional cases for Anointing of the sick. The Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church agreed that the Anointing of the sick is possible in exceptional situations (the principle of 'pastoral oeconomia'). The Synod can determine the circumstances and will discuss how they will inform the priests. With regard to *Common Witness* some projects were presented: a conference for Monks and Sisters; cooperation between Seminaries and a conference on family issues. A sub-commission will prepare the programs in detail. Fourthly, Father Pauly Maniyattu from the Saint Thomas Apostolic Seminary presented a paper on *Roman Primacy according to the Fathers of the Church and the Ancient Syriac Liturgical texts*. After the presentation of the paper an interesting discussion took place on the role of Peter, Paul and James in the New Testament. Authority is a ministry of faith and must be exercised in a context of 'authority and synodality, primacy and conciliarity'. Finally, the Joint Commission discussed a draft statement on inter-Church marriages. The commission agreed that some passages of the text had to be clarified.

The delegation members also had a meeting with His Holiness Baselios Marthoma Didymos I, the Catholicos of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, who offered a dinner for the members of the Joint Commission.

The Malankara Orthodox Syrian delegation comprised: Metropolitan Gabriel Mar Gregorios (co-chair); Metropolitan Thomas Mar Athanasius; Fr. Baby Varghese; Fr. Johns Abraham Konat; Fr. Sabu Kuriakose; Fr. Abraham Thomas; Fr. O. Thomas; Fr. John Mathews (co-secretary). The members of the Catholic delegation were: Bishop Brian Farrell (co-chair); Archbishop Mar Joseph Powathil; Archbishop Mar Mathew Moolakatt; Archbishop Thomas Mar Koorilos; Fr. Xavier Koodapuzha; Fr. Mathew Vellanickal; Fr. Jacob Thekkeparampil; Fr. Philip Nelpura; Fr. Gabriel Quicke (co-secretary).

The next meeting is to be held at the Spirituality Centre of Kottayam from 8 to 9 December 2010. The following issues will be on the agenda: the agreements of the Synod on sharing of sacred places especially Churches and Cemeteries and on inter-Church marriages. Further elaboration of the administration of the Anointing of the Sick in certain circumstances. The Orthodox members will prepare a paper on '*Primacy and Conciliarity*'.

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

Antelias, Lebanon
27-31 January 2010

The seventh meeting of the International Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the

Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches took place at the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia in Antelias, Lebanon, from 27 to 31 January 2010. The meeting was graciously hosted by His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of the Holy See of Cilicia. It was chaired jointly by His Eminence Cardinal Walter Kasper, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and His Eminence Metropolitan Bishop 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 Coptic Orthodox Church, the Syrian Orthodox Church, the Armenian Apostolic Church (Catholicosate of All Armenians), the Armenian Apostolic Church (Holy See of Cilicia), the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido 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 January 27, and held plenary sessions each day from January 28 to January 30. Each day of the plenary sessions began with a common celebration of Morning Prayer. At its initial session, the members of the Joint Commission considered reactions to and evaluations of the agreed statement that it had issued one year earlier, "Nature, Constitution and Mission of the Church." This document had been approved for publication by the Joint Commission and is now being considered by the authorities of their churches.

The studies prepared for this session focused on two topics: the ways in which the churches expressed their communion with one another in the first five centuries and the reception of councils. The papers presented included "Ecclesial Communion in Armenia and Surrounding Regions" by Rev. Fr. Boghos Levon Zekiyan, "The Order of Reception of the Ecumenical Councils in the Armenian Church and their Relation to the Other Local Councils" by Archbishop Yeznik Petrossian, "How Churches Understood the Reception of the Ecumenical Councils, How Churches Expressed their Communion in the First Five Centuries, and Whether Rome Was Given Any Special Role. From the Perspective of the Coptic Orthodox Church" by Metropolitan Bishop of Damiette, "Communion and Councils: The Persian Church in the First Five Centuries" by Professor Dietmar W. Winkler, "Exercise of Communion in the Church of St. Thomas Christians in India" by Rev. Fr. Matthew Vellanickal, and "The Reception of the Three Ecumenical Councils by the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church" by Rev. Fr. John Matthews.

During the course of the meeting, which took place in a friendly and cordial atmosphere, the members carefully examined the papers presented and reached a number of conclusions. It was noted that until the middle of the fifth century, the churches did not exist in isolation, but were in communion with one other. Signs of this communion included the exchange of synodical letters and letters of enthronement, the veneration of common saints, the exchange of visits and, above all, sharing in the sacraments,

especially the Holy Eucharist. This communion was based on an understanding that the churches shared the same faith, and willingness to defend it together against heresies and other threats. They also saw themselves as engaged in the same mission of evangelizing the nations. This was often a “horizontal communion” where churches were most intensely in relation to neighboring churches in the same region, but also with other churches throughout the world.

On the morning of January 27, the members of the Joint Commission, together with His Holiness Catholicos Aram I, paid a visit to His Excellency Michel Sleiman, the President of Lebanon, in the Presidential Palace at Baabda. The President welcomed the delegation to his country and presented his condolences to the representatives of the Ethiopian Church over the crash of an Ethiopian airplane near Beirut on Monday, January 25. In his remarks, the President observed that recent events had illustrated the importance of including minorities in the political life of nations. He said that Lebanon is an example of this political inclusiveness since the constitution gives all the country’s ethnic and religious communities a political role whatever their numerical size. He also emphasized the need to organize capitalism in democratic countries in a way that protects the interests of minorities, especially the poor and the vulnerable.

On the evening of the same day, the Joint Commission members were received by His Beatitude and Eminence Cardinal Mar Nasrallah Butros Sfeir, Patriarch of the Maronite Church, at the patriarchate in Bkerké. During an ecumenical prayer service in the patriarchal chapel, the Patriarch extended a warm welcome to his guests, and spoke highly of the agreed statement finalized by the Joint Commission in January 2009. This text, the Patriarch stated, “presents the ecclesiological tradition common to all those churches, a tradition which remained plentiful and sound, in spite of 1500 years of separation.” He also spoke of the positive ecumenical relations that exist among the churches of Lebanon, and wished the members great success in their meeting, which he saw as a sign of encouragement and hope. After the prayer service, His Beatitude hosted a dinner for the Joint Commission members and the spiritual heads of Christian communities in Lebanon.

On the morning of January 28, His Holiness Catholicos Aram I received the members of the Joint Commission. In his remarks, the Catholicos offered his views on the present state of ecumenism, and said that he has come to a renewed appreciation of the work of the bilateral dialogues. He had studied the 2009 agreed statement carefully and appreciated it very much. His Holiness said that in the dialogues the members must never lose sight of the many things we have in common, and not focus exclusively on our differences. He was critical of a tendency of some ecumenical circles to divert their attention to more social issues. He expressed the hope that the Joint International Commission would endeavor to bring about visible unity of the Church, an objective that he as Moderator of the World Council of

Churches had worked to achieve. After meeting the Catholicos, the group prayed at the memorial to the Armenian genocide of 1915 on the grounds of the Catholicosate. On the evening of the same day, the Catholicos hosted an official dinner at the Catholicosate that was attended by the spiritual heads of Christian communities in Lebanon, Armenian members of the Lebanese government and parliament, and Brotherhood and Central Executive Council members of the Holy See of Cilicia.

On January 29, the co-chairmen held a press conference at the invitation of Bishop Beshara Raï, the President of the Episcopal Commission for Social Communications. It took place at the Catholic Information Center, which is under the direction of the Assembly of Catholic Patriarchs and Bishops of Lebanon. Bishop Nareg Alemezian, Ecumenical Officer of the Holy See of Cilicia, introduced the co-chairmen, and highlighted that “the presence in Lebanon of our brothers from the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches is an occasion of spiritual joy and a sign of solidarity with our churches in the Middle East.” Cardinal Kasper spoke of the importance of the participation of the faithful in the dialogue because the unity of the Church concerns the whole people of God and not theologians alone. Metropolitan Bishoy described the history of the composition of the Joint Commission from the preparatory meeting in 2003 until this seventh meeting. He added that the Commission meets alternatively in Rome and in countries where Oriental Orthodox are present. On the evening of the same day, the members of the Joint Commission attended a dinner hosted by Metropolitan George Saliba.

On Sunday January 31, the members of the Joint Commission attended the Holy Eucharist in the Cathedral of the Catholicosate of Cilicia presided over by His Holiness Catholicos Aram I. Cardinal Kasper preached the homily.

The eighth meeting of the International Commission will take place in Rome at the invitation of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. Arrivals will be on January 24, 2011. The two delegations will meet separately on January 25, and participate in the conclusion of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. This will be followed by plenary sessions on January 26, 27 and 28, with departures on January 29. At the eighth plenary meeting, the members of the Commission will deepen their study of the communion and communication that existed between our churches until the mid-fifth century of Christian history, as well as the role played by monasticism.

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 (Represented by H.G. Armash Nalbandian, Armenian Orthodox Church Diocese of Damascus); H.E. Archbishop Yeznik Petrossian, General Secretary of Inter-Church Affairs of the Holy See of Etchmiadzin, Armenia.

ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCH: HOLY SEE OF CILICIA: H.E. Archbishop Oshagan Choloyan, Prelate of the Eastern Prelacy in the USA, New York; H.G. Bishop 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).

ERITREAN ORTHODOX TEWAHDO CHURCH: Rev. Fr. Kaleab Gebreselassie Gebre, Eritrean Orthodox Tewahdo Patriarchate, Asmara, Eritrea (unable to attend).

ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHIDO CHURCH: Rev. Fr. Megabe Biluy Seife Selassie Yohannes, Ethiopian Orthodox Patriarchate, Addis Ababa (unable to attend). The Ethiopian Church was represented at this meeting by H.E. Archbishop Demetrios of the United Arab Emirates and Lebanon; Rev. Fr. Abba Gebre Kidan of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church of Lebanon.

MALANKARA ORTHODOX SYRIAN CHURCH: H.E. Metropolitan Dr. Gabriel Mar Gregorios, President of the Department of Ecumenical Relations, Diocese of Trivandrum, India; Rev. Dr. John Mathews (co-secretary), Secretary of the Department of Ecumenical Relations, Kottayam, India.

Representatives of the Catholic Church

His Eminence Cardinal Walter Kasper (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;

Most Reverend Jules Mikhael Al-Jamil, Procurator of the Syrian Catholic Patriarchate to the Holy See and Apostolic Visitor in Europe, Rome;

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 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;

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 Zekiyian, 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).

Antelias, Lebanon, January 31, 2010

COMMISSION FOR RELIGIOUS RELATIONS WITH THE JEWS

VISIT OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI TO THE SYNAGOGUE
OF ROME

17 January 2010

On Sunday, 17 January, the Holy Father visited the Jewish Community at the Great Synagogue of Rome. After delivering his Discourse in the Synagogue, the Holy Father, accompanied by Dr Riccardo Di Segni, the Chief Rabbi, walked through the gardens of the Synagogue to the Jewish Museum below it, where he inaugurated the exhibition "Et Ecce Gaudium: The Jews of Rome and the Investiture Ceremony of the Popes". He then met with representatives of the Jewish Community in the Spanish Synagogue next to the Museum. The following is a translation of the Pope's discourse which was given in Italian.

"What marvels the Lord worked for them!
What marvels the Lord worked for us:
Indeed we were glad" (Ps 126)
"How good and how pleasant it is
when brothers live in unity" (Ps 133)

*Dear Chief Rabbi
of the Jewish Community of Rome,
President of the Union of Italian
Jewish Communities,
President of the Jewish Community
of Rome,
Rabbis,
Distinguished Authorities,
Friends, Brothers and Sisters,*

1. At the beginning of this encounter in the Great Synagogue of the Jews of Rome, the Psalms which we have heard suggest to us the right spiritual attitude in which to experience this particular and happy moment of grace: the praise of the Lord, who has worked marvels for us and has gathered us in his *Hèsed*, his merciful love, and thanksgiving to him for granting us this opportunity to come together to strengthen the bonds which unite us and to continue to travel together along the path of reconciliation and fraternity. I wish to express first of all my sincere gratitude to you, Chief Rabbi, Dr Riccardo Di Segni, for your invitation and for the thoughtful words which you have addressed to me. I wish to thank also the President of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities, Mr Renzo Gattegna, and the President of the Jewish Community of Rome, Mr Riccardo Pacifici, for their courteous greetings. My thoughts go to the Authorities and to all present, and they extend in a special way to the entire Jewish Community of Rome and to all who have worked to bring about this moment of encounter and friendship which we now share.

When he came among you for the first time, as a Christian and as Pope, my Venerable Predecessor John Paul II, almost 24 years ago, wanted to make a decisive contribution to strengthening the good relations between our two communities, so as to overcome every misconception and prejudice. My visit forms a part of the journey already begun, to confirm and deepen it. With sentiments of heartfelt appreciation, I come among you to express to you the esteem and the affection which the Bishop and the Church of Rome, as well as the entire Catholic Church, have towards this Community and all Jewish communities around the world.

2. The teaching of the Second Vatican Council has represented for Catholics a clear landmark to which constant reference is made in our attitude and our relations with the Jewish people, marking a new and significant stage. The Council gave a strong impetus to our irrevocable commitment to pursue the path of dialogue, fraternity and friendship, a journey which has been deepened and developed in the last forty years, through important steps and significant gestures. Among them, I should mention once again the historic visit by my Venerable Predecessor to this Synagogue on 13 April 1986, the numerous meetings he had with Jewish representatives, both here in Rome and during his Apostolic Visits throughout the world, the Jubilee Pilgrimage which he made to the Holy Land in the year 2000, the various documents of the Holy See which, following the Second Vatican Council's Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, have made helpful contributions to the increasingly close relations between Catholics and Jews. I too, in the course of my Pontificate, have wanted to demonstrate my closeness to and my affection for the people of the Covenant. I cherish in my heart each moment of the pilgrimage that I had the joy of making to the Holy Land in May of last year, along with the memories of numerous meetings with Jewish Communities and Organizations, in particular my visits to the Synagogues of Cologne and New York.

Furthermore, the Church has not failed to deplore the failings of her sons and daughters, begging forgiveness for all that could in any way have contributed to the scourge of anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism (cf. Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah*, 16 March 1998). May these wounds be healed forever! The heartfelt prayer which Pope John Paul II offered at the Western Wall on 26 March 2000 comes back to my mind, and it calls forth a profound echo in our hearts: "God of our Fathers, you chose Abraham and his descendants to bring your Name to the nations: we are deeply saddened by the behaviour of those who in the course of history have caused these

children of yours to suffer, and asking your forgiveness we wish to commit ourselves to genuine brotherhood with the people of the Covenant”.

3. The passage of time allows us to recognize in the Twentieth Century a truly tragic period for humanity: ferocious wars that sowed destruction, death and suffering like never before; frightening ideologies, rooted in the idolatry of man, of race, and of the State, which led to brother killing brother. The singular and deeply disturbing drama of the *Shoah* represents, as it were, the most extreme point on the path of hatred that begins when man forgets his Creator and places himself at the centre of the universe. As I noted during my visit of 28 May 2006 to the Auschwitz Concentration camp, which is still profoundly impressed upon my memory, “the rulers of the Third Reich wanted to crush the entire Jewish people”, and, essentially, “by wiping out this people, they intended to kill the God who called Abraham, who spoke on Sinai and laid down principles to serve as a guide for mankind, principles that remain eternally valid” (Discourse at Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp: The Teachings of Pope Benedict XVI, II, 1 [2006], p. 727).

Here in this place, how could we not remember the Roman Jews who were snatched from their homes, before these very walls, and who with tremendous brutality were killed at Auschwitz? How could one ever forget their faces, their names, their tears, the desperation faced by these men, women and children? The extermination of the people of the Covenant of Moses, at first announced, then systematically programmed and put into practice in Europe under the Nazi regime, on that day tragically reached as far as Rome. Unfortunately, many remained indifferent, but many, including Italian Catholics, sustained by their faith and by Christian teaching, reacted with courage, often at risk of their lives, opening their arms to assist the Jewish fugitives who were being hunted down, and earning perennial gratitude. The Apostolic See itself provided assistance, often in a hidden and discreet way.

The memory of these events compels us to strengthen the bonds that unite us so that our mutual understanding, respect and acceptance may always increase.

4. Our closeness and spiritual fraternity find in the Holy Bible in Hebrew *Sifre Qodesh* or “Book of Holiness” their most stable and lasting foundation, which constantly reminds us of our common roots, our history and the rich spiritual patrimony that we share. It is in pondering her own mystery that the Church, the People of God of the New Covenant, discovers her own profound bond with the Jews, who were chosen by the Lord before all others to receive his word (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 839). “The Jewish faith, unlike other non-Christian religions, is already a response to God’s revelation in the Old Covenant. To the Jews “belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs

and of their race, according to the flesh is the Christ’ (*Rom* 9: 4-5), “for the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable!’ (*Rom* 11: 29)” (*Ibid.*).

5. Many lessons may be learnt from our common heritage derived from the Law and the Prophets. I would like to recall some of them: first of all, the solidarity which binds the Church to the Jewish people “at the level of their spiritual identity”, which offers Christians the opportunity to promote “a renewed respect for the Jewish interpretation of the Old Testament” (cf. Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Jewish people and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible*, 2001, pp. 12 and 55); the centrality of the Decalogue as a common ethical message of permanent value for Israel, for the Church, for non-believers and for all of humanity; the task of preparing or ushering in the Kingdom of the Most High in the “care for creation” entrusted by God to man for him to cultivate and to care for responsibly (cf. *Gen* 2: 15).

6. In particular, the Decalogue the “Ten Words” or Ten Commandments (cf. *Ex* 20: 1-17; *Dt* 5: 1-21) which comes from the *Torah* of Moses, is a shining light for ethical principles, hope and dialogue, a guiding star of faith and morals for the people of God, and it also enlightens and guides the path of Christians. It constitutes a beacon and a norm of life in justice and love, a “great ethical code” for all humanity. The “Ten Commandments” shed light on good and evil, on truth and falsehood, on justice and injustice, and they match the criteria of every human person’s right conscience. Jesus himself recalled this frequently, underlining the need for active commitment in living the way of the Commandments: “If you wish to enter into life, observe the Commandments” (*Mt* 19: 17). From this perspective, there are several possible areas of cooperation and witness. I would like to recall three that are especially important for our time.

The “Ten Commandments” require that we recognize the one Lord, against the temptation to construct other idols, to make golden calves. In our world there are many who do not know God or who consider him superfluous, without relevance for their lives; hence, other new gods have been fabricated to whom man bows down. Reawakening in our society openness to the transcendent dimension, witnessing to the one God, is a precious service which Jews and Christians can and must offer together.

The “Ten Commandments” call us to respect life and to protect it against every injustice and abuse, recognizing the worth of each human person, created in the image and likeness of God. How often, in every part of the world, near and far, the dignity, the freedom and the rights of human beings are trampled upon! Bearing witness together to the supreme value of life against all selfishness, is an important contribution to a new world where justice and peace reign, a world marked by that “shalom” which the lawgivers, the prophets and the sages of Israel longed to see.

The “Ten Commandments” call us to preserve

and to promote the sanctity of the family, in which the personal and reciprocal, faithful and definitive “Yes” of man and woman makes room for the future, for the authentic humanity of each, and makes them open, at the same time, to the gift of new life. To witness that the family continues to be the essential cell of society and the basic environment in which human virtues are learned and practised is a precious service offered in the construction of a world with a more human face.

7. As Moses taught in the *Shema* (cf. *Dt* 6: 5; *Lev* 19: 34) and as Jesus reaffirms in the Gospel (cf. *Mk* 12: 19-31), all of the Commandments are summed up in the love of God and loving-kindness towards one's neighbour. This Rule urges Jews and Christians to exercise, in our time, a special generosity towards the poor, towards women and children, strangers, the sick, the weak and the needy. In the Jewish tradition there is a wonderful saying of the Fathers of Israel: “Simon the Just often said: The world is founded on three things: the *Torah*, worship, and acts of mercy” (*Avoth* 1: 2). In exercising justice and mercy, Jews and Christians are called to announce and to bear witness to the coming Kingdom of the Most High, for which we pray and work in hope each day.

8. On this path we can walk together, aware of the differences that exist between us, but also aware of the fact that when we succeed in uniting our hearts and our hands in response to the Lord's call, his light comes closer and shines on all the peoples of the world. The progress made in the last forty years by the International Committee for Catholic-Jewish Relations and, in more recent years, by the Mixed Commission of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and of the Holy See, is a sign of our common will to continue an open and sincere dialogue. Tomorrow here in Rome, in fact, the Mixed Commission will hold its ninth meeting, on “Catholic and Jewish Teaching on Creation and the Environment”; we wish them a profitable dialogue on such a timely and important theme.

9. Christians and Jews share to a great extent a common spiritual patrimony, they pray to the same Lord, they have the same roots, and yet they often remain unknown to each other. It is our duty, in response to God's call, to strive to keep open the space for dialogue, for reciprocal respect, for growth in friendship, for a common witness in the face of the challenges of our time, which invite us to cooperate for the good of humanity in this world created by God, the Omnipotent and Merciful.

10. Finally, I offer a particular reflection on this, our city of Rome, where, for nearly two millennia, as Pope John Paul II said, the Catholic Community with its Bishop and the Jewish Community with its Chief Rabbi have lived side by side. May this proximity be animated by a growing fraternal love, expressed also in closer cooperation, so that we may offer a valid contribution to solving the problems and difficulties that we still face.

I beg from the Lord the precious gift of peace in the world, above all in the Holy Land. During my pilgrimage there last May, at the Western Wall in Jerusalem, I prayed to Him who can do all things, asking: “Send your peace upon this Holy Land, upon the Middle East, upon the entire human family; stir the hearts of those who call upon your name, to walk humbly in the path of justice and compassion” (*Prayer at the Western Wall of Jerusalem*, 12 May 2009).

I give thanks and praise to God once again for this encounter, asking him to strengthen our fraternal bonds and to deepen our mutual understanding.

הַלְלוּ אֱתֵי ה' כָּל-גּוֹיִם / שִׁבְחוּהוּ כָּל-הָאֲמִיּוֹת :¹
 כִּי גָבַר עָלֵינוּ חַסְדּוֹ וְאַמְתֵי יִדְוָה לְעוֹלָם
 הַלְלוּ יְיָ :

[“ O praise the Lord, all you nations,
 acclaim him, all you peoples.
 Strong is his love for us,
 He is faithful forever.
 Alleluia ” (*Ps* 117)]

ORE, 20 January 2010

IX BILATERAL COMMISSION MEETING OF THE HOLY SEE
 AND THE CHIEF RABBINATE OF ISRAEL

Rome, 17-20 January 2010, *Shvat*, 2-5, 5790

The Bilateral Commission of the Holy See and the Chief Rabbinate of Israel held its ninth meeting from 17-20 January ('Shvat', 2-5, 5790), following its members' participation in the historic visit of Pope Benedict XVI to the Great Synagogue in Rome. At that event the Pope categorically reaffirmed the commitment of the Catholic Church to dialogue and brotherhood with the Jewish People, as well as unequivocally condemning anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism. He also highlighted the significance of the work of the Bilateral Commission itself, about to hold its meeting on the subject of Catholic and Jewish teaching on Creation and the Environment, wishing it a “profitable dialogue on such a timely and important theme”. Similarly Rabbi Riccardo Di Segni, Chief Rabbi of Rome, in his words on this occasion emphasized the mutual obligation of Christians and Jews to work together to protect the environment in keeping with the Biblical charge (Gen 2:15).

However, the meeting also took place in the shadow of the catastrophic tragedy in Haiti. Indeed, the aforementioned gathering in the Synagogue, opened with a minute of silence in solidarity with the victims. The members of the Commission expressed their prayers for the victims and for the recovery of the survivors and applauded the international rescue and aid for the reconstruction of Haiti.

During the course of the meeting the members attended the moving presentation of Fr Patrick Desbois at the Pontifical Gregorian University that highlighted

the work of 'Yachad in Unum' to locate and memorialize the unidentified sides in Eastern Europe of mass murder during the Shoah. The Commission urged the respective religious communities to support and publicize this very important work, in order to learn from the tragedies of the past to protect and respect the sanctity of human life everywhere so that atrocities will never reoccur.

Published below is the press release issued by the Bilateral Commission.

1. The ninth meeting of the above Commission, was held in Rome, following the historic visit of Pope Benedict XVI to the Great Synagogue which had been attended also by the members of the Commission and at which the Pope categorically confirmed the commitment of the Catholic Church and its will to deepen dialogue and fraternity with Judaism and the Jewish People in accordance with *Nostra Aetate*, the subsequent teachings of the Magisterium and in particular of his predecessor John Paul II. "On this path we can walk together aware of the differences that exist between us, but also aware of the fact that when we succeed in uniting our hearts and our hands in response to the Lord's call, His light comes closer and shines on all the peoples of the world" (Papal Address at the Synagogue of Rome, 17 January 2010, sect. 8). The Pope specifically praised the work, significance and achievements of the Bilateral Commission about to hold its meeting on the subject of Catholic and Jewish teaching on Creation and the Environment and wished the Commission a "profitable dialogue on such a timely and important theme".

2. The meeting was opened by the chairmen Cardinal Jorge Mejía and Chief Rabbi Shear Yashuv Cohen who paid tribute to the late Ambassador Shmuel Hadas whose contribution was so instrumental in the establishment of the commission.

3. The opening presentations focused on the tensions between secular environmentalist movements and religious perspectives and emphasized that biblical teaching views nature as being endowed with sanctity that flows from the Creator. It is He who has charged humanity as the summit of his inherently good Creation (cf. *Gen 1:31*) with the obligation of responsible custodianship (cf. *Gen 2:15*). Accordingly while freedom and autonomy are given to humanity to develop and advance the natural resources, as it is written "the Heavens are the Heavens of the Lord and earth has been given to humankind" (*Ps 115:16*), these must always be expressed in a manner that respects Divine sovereignty of the Universe, as it is written "the earth is the Lord's and all that is in it" (*Ps 24:1*).

4. Humankind today faces a unique environmental crisis which is substantially the product of unbridled material and technological exploitation. While this challenge must obviously be addressed through the necessary technical means as well as self restraint, humility and discipline, the participants

emphasized the essential need for society to recognize the transcendent dimension of Creation that is critical to ensure sustainable development and progress in an ethically responsible manner. Not everything that is technically feasible is morally acceptable. It is this consciousness that ensures that every aspect of human advancement promotes the wellbeing of future generations and sanctifies the Divine Name, just as its absence leads to destructive consequences for humanity and environment and profanes the Divine Name.

5. The Biblical Tradition that gives unique dignity to the human person must not be understood in terms of domination but in terms of respect and solidarity. This requires of us a sense of a "human ecology" in which our responsibility for the eco-system is bound up with and reflective of our obligations to one another and in particular "a special generosity towards the poor, towards women and children, strangers, the sick, the weak and the needy" (Papal Address at the Synagogue of Rome, 17 January 2010, sect. 7).

6. The ethical aspect of human intervention in the natural order lies in the limitation on the power of science and its claim to absoluteness, and in the expression of human solidarity and moral responsibility towards all. To that end the Bilateral Commission strongly urges that all scientific innovation and development work in close consultation with religious ethical guidance. Similarly States and international bodies should engage in close consultation with religious ethical leadership in order to ensure that progress be a blessing rather than a curse. A genuine environmental ethic is a key condition for world peace and harmony.

7. Above all, the critical importance of a moral religious education at all levels was highlighted in order to guarantee responsible scientific and social development.

Rome, 19 January 2010 – 4 Shvat 5790

Chief Rabbi Shear Yashuv Cohen
(Chairman of the Jewish Delegation)

Chief Rabbi Ratson Arussi
Chief Rabbi David Brodman
Chief Rabbi Joseph Levi
Chief Rabbi David Rosen
Rabbi Prof. Daniel Sperber
Mr. Oded Wiener

Jorge Cardinal Mejía
(Chairman of the Catholic Delegation)

Patriarch Fouad Twal
Archbishop Elias Chacour
Archbishop Antonio Franco
Archbishop Bruno Forte
Bishop Giacinto-Boulos Marcuzzo
Mgr. Pier Francesco Fumagalli
Rev. Pierbattista Pizzaballa O.F.M.
Rev. Norbert J. Hofmann S.D.B.

