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## MIXED OLD CATHOLIC - ORTHODOX COMMISSION

### SACRAMENTAL TEACHING

Kavala, Greece, 17 October 1987

## THE SACRAMENTS OR MYSTERIES OF THE CHURCH

### PENANCE

1. In the sacrament of penance the sins committed by those believers who sincerely repent and confess them to a priest are forgiven. "The manifold mercy of God reaches out to a fallen mankind not only in the grace of baptism, but the healing remedy of penance also restores the hope of eternal life" (Leo I of Rome, *Ep.* 108 - *PL* 54.1011).

2. The Lord promised the authority to forgive sins to the apostles (Matt. 16:19; 18:18) and invested them with this authority after the resurrection: "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (John 20:23). This authority was passed on by the apostles to their successors. On the basis of this authority, the sacrament of penance developed as a God-given, permanent institution in the life of the church, as is attested to by the writings of the fathers and the liturgical and canonical tradition of the church.

3. Administrators (liturgists) of the sacrament of penance are the bishop and those priests authorized by him.

4. Sincere hearty repentance and confession to a priest are indispensable for the forgiveness of sins. The original form of public penance was later replaced by a form of private confession before a priest.

5. God offers forgiveness of sins to the penitent through the priest: "What is done below by priests, God makes into a reality above; and so the Lord confirms the judgment of his servants" (John Chrysostom, *Sac.* 3.5 - *PG* 48.643) "Whatever has been loosed by these keys (of the church) on earth, has every promise of also being loosed in heaven" (Augustine, *Sermo* 351.5/12 - *PL* 39.1549).

6. The priest who dispenses the sacrament of penance may, in his pastoral judgment, impose an act of penance not only on those on whom forgiveness of sins has not yet been pronounced, but also on those who have already been forgiven. The imposition of an act of penance, as attested to in scripture and Tradition (cf. 2 Cor. 2:6-8; Apostolic Constitutions 2.16,18,41 - *PG* 1.625ff., 629ff., 696ff.), aims at the spiritual improvement of the sinner and is designed to help guard against a repetition of the same sin. Penance, therefore, does not have the character of punishment but rather of a means of grace (Basil the Great, *Can.* 65 - *PG* 32.797).

7. The sacrament of penance was instituted for all baptized who, after baptism, committed venial or mortal sins and then demonstrated remorse for their failings. There are no sins or failings which, after repentance has been expressed, cannot be forgiven through the sacrament of penance. "For the Lord who forgave all sins did not exclude any transgression" (Ambrose of Milan, *Paen.* 1.2/5 - *PL* 16.467).

*In the view of the joint Orthodox-Old Catholic theological commission, the above text on "Penance" represents the teaching of the Orthodox and Old Catholic churches.*

Kavala, 17 October 1987

### UNCTION

1. During his redeeming ministry on earth our Saviour healed those who suffered from diseases of body and soul. He commissioned his disciples to do the same (cf. Mark 6:7,13; 9:35). Following the example of the Lord and of the apostles, the church performs the sacrament of unction [anointing the sick], in which the faithful are prayed for and anointed with oil for the healing of body and soul: "We pray to you, Lord of all might and power, send forth the

healing power of the only-begotten from heaven on this oil, so that it may be to those who are anointed with it the means for driving out every form of sickness and weakness... every form of fever and suffering, for healing grace and the forgiveness of sins, as the medicine of life and salvation for the healing and wholeness of soul, body and spirit, and for complete and total strengthening" (Serapion of Thumis, *Euch.* 29[17].1; cf. Innocence I of Rome, *Ep.* 25.8/11 – PL 20.560).

2. The apostle James affirms: "Is any among you sick? Let him call for the presbyters of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven" (James 5:14-16).

3. Anointing the sick with oil consecrated for this purpose, and prayer, are required for the performance of this sacrament. The administrators of this sacrament are the leaders of the church, i.e. the bishop and the priests. If possible there should be, as James suggests, more than one administrator participating, although one will suffice if no more are available.

4. The fruits of this sacrament are the healing of diseases and the forgiveness of sins. Due to this twofold healing effect, the Orthodox church also makes this sacrament available to its people in good health preparing themselves for holy communion; however, this does not serve as a substitute for the sacrament of penance.

5. The sacrament of unction is to be received by all baptized, not only those suffering from terminal conditions.

*In the view of the joint Orthodox-Old Catholic theological commission, the above text on "Unction" represents the teaching of the Orthodox and Old Catholic churches.*

Kavala, 17 October 1987

## ORDINATION

1. The ordained ministry (*ordo*) is a fundamental institution in the life of the church and has its origin and continuing basis in the commissioning of the apostles by the resurrected Lord who bestowed on them the Holy Spirit for the fulfilment of their mission. This ministry must be understood in connection with apostolic succession (cf. Commission Text III/7), through which the saving work of Christ in the church continues. The New Testament witnesses that through prayer and the laying-on of hands the apostles transmitted to other men the authority conferred on them and that through this prayer and laying-on of hands the latter were granted by God the gifts of grace necessary for the spiritual office (1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6-14; 2:2; Acts 14:23; 20:28-32).

2. That special apostolic characteristic, namely the apostolic ministry itself as a service to the entire church which the apostles embody as universal shepherds of the church, is not part of the authority of the office of bishop received from the apostles in the consecration as bishop. No single bishop has received this apostolic office for himself on the basis of [apostolic] succession, but rather, all bishops share in the apostolicity in and through the church.

3. In spite of a certain degree of unclarity in the vocabulary used, the ordained ministry as a special spiritual function appears quite early in the form of bishop, priest (presbyter) and deacon. The bishop as teacher, liturgist and shepherd of the local church under his guidance, guards and preserves its unity and the truth of its teaching. Since he possesses the fullness of ordained ministry, he also performs all sacramental acts and other liturgical functions, and exercises the work of shepherd in all its fullness. The priests (presbyters) support the bishop by performing the sacraments (with some specific exceptions) and other liturgical functions and participate in the proclamation of the gospel and the spiritual instruction of the faithful. The deacons assist the bishop and the priests (presbyters) in the performance of sacraments, participate in social ministries and assist in the work of the church in general.

4. Except for the as-yet-not-fully-understood arrangement of deaconesses, the undivided church did not permit the ordination of women.

5. The candidate who has been determined to be worthy for ordained ministry is ordained by the bishop, with prayer and the laying-on of hands, in a eucharistic gathering of the church, whereby the bishop prays, together with the clergy and the faithful gathered, that the grace of the Holy Spirit who heals what is sick and supplies what is lacking may descend on the ordinand. The practice attested to in the "Apostolic Tradition" of Hippolytus (c. 7f) and known only in the West that the priests (presbyters) present lay their hands on the head of the ordinand together with the bishop is a sign of their union with the bishop and their approbation of the admission of the ordinand to their collegium. This is not intended to raise any doubt about the full and exclusive authority of the bishop in matters of ordination. The prayer of the entire congregation and the approbation expressed in this prayer also demonstrates the cooperation and participation of all the people.

6. The divine grace received in ordination grants the authority for a particular service in the proclamation of the gospel, in the liturgical sacramental life of the church and in the gathering and upbuilding of the faithful. This service has a differing form and purpose depending on whether it is performed by a bishop, a priest (presbyter) or a deacon. The gift of ordained ministry granted in the grace of ordination has a three-fold purpose because it continues the threefold ministry of the Lord in the church: the kingly, the sacerdotal and the prophetic.

7. The efficacy of the sacraments administered by those in ordained ministry is not dependent on their personal

holiness or unworthiness, "for it is God who sanctifies us in his mysteries" (John Chrysostom, *Hom.* 8.1 in 1 Cor. – PG 61.69).

*In the view of the joint Orthodox-Old Catholic theological commission, the above text on "Ordination" represents the teaching of the Orthodox and Old Catholic churches.*

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## MARRIAGE

1. Marriage is an institution given by God. It was founded by God at creation as a fellowship of love and for the mutual support of husband and wife (Gen. 2:18), then reaffirmed by the Lord (Matt. 19:4-6) and blessed by his presence at the wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11). God created man as male and female (Gen. 1:27) and placed their common life under his special protection and blessing. Already under the old covenant the marital union represents a characteristic image of the union between God and his people. Under the new covenant marriage, in which union man and woman are bound together in mutual love and in faith, represents as an image the great mystery of the love and unity which exists between Christ and the church be founded (cf. Eph. 5:32).

2. In his blessing of the first human couple God has associated the propagation of children with marriage: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (Gen. 1:28). In bringing children into the world and raising them in the "discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4), man has become a partner of God in continuing God's work of creation. Through children, man experiences the gift of fatherhood and motherhood and, together, spouses and children form a family which is a kind of small church, the house church.

Marriage is the mystery of love par excellence (cf. John Chrysostom, *Laud. Max.* 3 – PG 51.230). It fulfills its purpose as a fellowship of love of spouses, not only by bearing children and sharing life (cf. Eph. 5:25, 1 Sam. 1:8). This love and unity between spouses as the principal purpose of marriage is achieved when they remain in the grace of the Holy Spirit.

3. The church, which has blessed marriage since ancient times, "so that it responds to the Lord and not to lust" (Ignatius of Antioch, *Polyc.* 5.2 – PG 5.724), is not simply giving its blessing to the natural union of man and woman, but rather is uniting the new couple in the eucharistic fellowship and thereby placing the marriage in the context of the mystery of the church. The consent of the bridal couple is indispensable for marriage which is concluded as a sacrament by the blessing of a lawfully ordained minister.

4. The sanctity of marriage and the spiritual character of the union and fellowship of persons in a marriage blessed according to the pattern of the union between Christ and his church is the basis for the church's conviction that marriage is a life-long union and indissoluble. The Lord proclaimed the sanctity and indissolubility of marriage (Matt. 19:6), but admitted the possibility of its dissolution for reasons of adultery (Matt. 5:32; 19:9). The apostle Paul says that a second marriage after the death of a spouse is permissible, although he expresses his preference that widowed persons not marry again (1 Cor. 7:39).

In the strict sense, therefore, a marriage cannot be dissolved for reasons other than adultery or the death of one of the spouses; but the church, out of forbearance and love for people, acknowledges other, analogous reasons. In its pastoral care the church is guided by divine commandment and the divine disposition to forgive as it deals with marriages which have failed due to human shortcomings.

5. In its pastoral care the church emphasizes the fact that husband and wife are equally (cf. 1 Cor. 7:3f.; Eph. 5:21-33; 1 Pet. 3:1-7) responsible for the grace which is theirs in marriage as well as in their vocation to glorify God also in their bodies (1 Cor. 6:12-20; cf. also Heb. 13:4).

6. Marriage and ordination are not mutually exclusive. The ancient church allowed the ordinand a free choice between marriage and celibacy and forbade only widowed persons from marrying after ordination. With regard to marriage after ordination, the tradition of the ancient church held the "promise of celibacy" at ordination as an impediment to marriage. Marriage and celibacy are not placed in opposition to each other nor do they abrogate each other. They represent parallel paths of Christian perfection.

*In the view of the joint Orthodox-Old Catholic theological commission, the above text on "Marriage" represents the teaching of the Orthodox and Old Catholic churches.*

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