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JOINT COMMISSION FOR THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUE  
BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE ASSYRIAN CHURCH OF THE EAST

**CATHOLIC-ASSYRIAN COMMISSION ESTABLISHED**

On 11 November 1994, His Holiness Pope John Paul II and His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV, Catholicos-Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East, signed a Common Christological Declaration which, among other things, stated: "In thanking God for having made us rediscover what already unites us in the faith and the sacraments, we pledge ourselves to do everything possible to dispel the obstacles of the past which still prevent the attainment of full communion between our Churches, so that we can better respond to the Lord's call to the unity of his own, a unity which has of course to be expressed visibly. To overcome these obstacles, we now establish a Mixed Committee for theological dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East" (*L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 16 November 1994, p. 4).

Following this decision, both parties began the process of appointing members to the Mixed Committee, whose names are listed as follows:

*For the Assyrian Church of the East:*

Archbishop MAR NARSAI DE BAZ, Patriarchal Vicar, Metropolitan of Lebanon, Syria and Europe; Lebanon (Co-Chairman of the Committee);

Bishop MAR BAWAI SORO, General Secretary of the Commission on Inter-Church Relations and Education Development, Bishop of Seattle, Washington, USA;

Bishop MAR MEELIS ZAIA, Secretary of the Holy Synod, Bishop of Australia and New Zealand, Fairfield, Australia;

Fr GEWARGIS TOOMA, Rector of the parish of the Assyrian Church of the East, New Britain, Connecticut, USA;

Fr WILLIAM YAKOB, Rector of the parish of the Assyrian Church of the East, Gothenburg, Sweden.

*For the Catholic Church:*

Bishop PIERRE DUPREY, M. Afr., Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Vatican, (Co-Chairman of the Committee);

Archbishop CYRILLE SALIM BUSTROS, M.S.S.P. of Baalbek for Greek Melkites, Lebanon;

Bishop ANTOINE AUDO, S.J. of Aleppo for Chaldeans, Syria;

Mons. SARHAD JAMMO, Vicar General, Chaldean Catholic Diocese of the United States, Troy, Michigan, USA;

Fr MATTHEW VELLANICKAL, President, Pontifical Oriental Institute of Religious Studies, Kottayam, India;

*Secretary of the Committee:*

Fr BERNARD DUBASQUE.

The first meeting of the Mixed Committee for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East will be held in Rome on 22-24 November next.

FIRST SESSION OF DIALOGUE  
PRESS RELEASE  
Rome, 22-24 November 1995

The Common Christological Declaration signed on 11 November 1994 by Pope John Paul II and the Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV, provided for the creation of a Mixed Committee for theological dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East, in order to "dispel the obstacles of the past which still prevent the attainment of full communion between our Churches". This Committee met for the first time in Rome, from 22 to 24 November 1995. All its members were present.

1. In an atmosphere of warm fraternity and mutual understanding, the Committee approached the subject of the sacraments in general and of the Eucharist in particular. Two papers were presented:

The sacraments and the Church (Bishop Audo) and The sacrament of the Eucharist (Msgr. Jammo). The Assyrian delegation answered in writing to the two papers which were discussed later.

Even though, for historical reasons, the formulation of sacramental theology has developed differently in each of our Churches, the members of the Committee could note only the unanimity of the two Churches in their understanding of the sacraments, and very specially, the central place of the Eucharist in the life of both Churches.

2. The Committee next set an agenda for theological reflection and for joint pastoral activities in the future, with a view to gradual reestablishment of full visible communion between our two Churches. In the immediate future, the possibility was considered of creating a sub-commission for the drafting of catechetical texts.

3. The members of the Committee also exchanged information concerning the developments following from the Common Christological Declaration. It was with great joy that they learned of its favourable reception by both the Assyrian and the Catholic faithful and on the part of leaders of the other Churches; it had even made possible the admission of the Assyrian Church of the East as full member of the Middle East Council of Churches. The Committee can therefore only give still greater encouragement to the development of these links and of practical collaboration, especially where the faithful of our two Churches are living side by side. It is convinced that serious theological reflection must be accompanied at one and the same time by genuinely fraternal relations, by fervent prayer and by sincere and disinterested cooperation.

4. On the occasion of this first meeting, His Holiness Pope John Paul II desired to receive the members of the Committee in audience. In his Address, the Holy Father first asked the Assyrian delegates "to transmit to His Holiness the Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV, as well as to the other members of the Holy Synod and to the priests, his fraternal greetings and his warmest wishes for their delicate pastoral mission to the faithful scattered throughout the whole world". He then added: "May the Holy Spirit guide your labours, so that they may bring closer the day when together we shall be able to celebrate the Eucharist" (cf. *"L'Osservatore Romano"*, 25.11.1995).

5. The second meeting of the Mixed Committee has been set to be held from 3 to 5 October 1996 in Beirut (Lebanon). Continuing the rediscovery of our profound communion in faith and sacraments, it was decided to undertake at this next meeting the study of marriage and the anointing of the sick.

24 November 1995

[<http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-orientale/chiesa-assira-dell-oriente/commissione-internazionale-di-dialogo-tra-la-chiesa-cattolica-e-/sessione-plenarie---rapporti/en10.html>]