

AC - RC

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

PRESS RELEASE

Adma, Lebanon, 12 October 1996

1. The Mixed Committee for the Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East, created as a consequence of the Common Christological Declaration signed by Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV on 11 November 1994, held its second meeting from 10 to 12 October 1996, at the Centre of Our Lady of the Mountain, Adma, Lebanon. This meeting was hosted by His Excellency Mar Narsai De Baz, Assyrian Archbishop of Lebanon, Syria and Europe and Patriarchal Vicar.

2. In an atmosphere of fraternal confidence and deep mutual understanding, the Committee continued the study of the sacraments undertaken at its first meeting in November 1995. This time the discussions concentrated on the theological meaning and the celebration of marriage and the anointing of the sick. From the Assyrian side, a paper by Mar Aprem of Trichur on The Seven Sacraments of the Church of the East was read. Two papers were presented from the Catholic side: The Sacrament of Matrimony in the Catholic Church, by Archbishop Cyrille S. Bustros (Baalbeck, Lebanon) and The Sacrament of the Sick: the Catholic Perspective, by Fr. Matthew Vellanickal (Kottayam, India).

3. Although marriage and the anointing of the sick are not included in the list of sacraments that can be found in the Church of the East tradition, the members of the Mixed Committee were able to reach a profound agreement on the theological content and significance of these ecclesial acts.

4. Marriage and family life, as signified in the liturgical celebrations of both churches, show a great similarity in biblical foundation and theological content. As for the requirements of marriage, its unity and indissolubility, the fidelity of conjugal love and the openness to fertility are firmly stressed in both traditions.

5. In the biblical tradition, illness and suffering are closely associated with sin, while God's forgiveness is likewise linked with healing. Christ has the power both to forgive sins and to heal the sick as signs of the coming of God's Kingdom. The Church is called to continue this healing ministry of Christ. The liturgical traditions of both churches contain the rite of anointing the sick associated with forgiveness of sin. The efficacy is attributed to Jesus' healing presence and power.

6. The third meeting of the Mixed Committee for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East will be held in Rome, from 23 to 27 October 1997. The purpose is to deepen further the study of the meaning of the sacraments and sacramentals, to explore the significance of the malka. (holy leaven) and the sign of the Cross, which are enumerated among the sacraments of the Church of the East, also to study the Nicean-Constantinopolitan Creed and the Catholic Doctrine on the Immaculate Conception and the Heavenly Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

7. The members of the Committee also sent a telegram to His Holiness Pope John Paul II, expressing their best wishes and offering their prayers for his well-being and speedy recovery. At the end of the meeting, on 12 October, the Apostolic Nuntius in Lebanon, His Excellency Monsignor Puente, offered a lunch to the members of the Committee.

[*Information Service* 93 (1996/IV) 163-164]

[<http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-orientale/chiesa-assira-dell-orientale/commissione-internazionale-di-dialogo-tra-la-chiesa-cattolica-e-/sessione-plenarie---rapporti/en9.html>]