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

COMMUNIQUÉ
Rome, November 24, 2017

A plenary session of the Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East took place from November 21-24, 2017 at the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity in Rome. This session begins the third phase of the dialogue which will consider issues of ecclesiology. The Commission is headed by His Beatitude Mar Meelis Zaia, Metropolitan of Australia, New Zealand and Lebanon and Most Reverend Johan Bonny, Bishop of Antwerp. The Assyrian delegation included His Grace, Mar Awa Royel, Bishop of California, His Grace, Mar Yohannan Yoseph, Auxiliary Bishop of India, Archdeacon William Toma, and Chorbishop George Toma. The Catholic delegation included Most Reverend Antoine Audo, Bishop of Aleppo for the Chaldeans, Very Reverend Thomas A. Baima, Vice Rector for Academic Affairs of the University of Saint Mary of the Lake, Professor Theresia Hainthaler, Honorary Professor of Sankt Georgen Graduate School of Philosophy and Theology, and Reverend Msgr. Gabriel Quicke, Official of the Pontifical Council.

On Friday, November 24, 2017, His Eminence Cardinal Kurt Koch and His Beatitude Mar Meelis Zaia, officially signed a Common Statement on Sacramental Life on behalf of the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East. The Statement notes: "As one and the same mystery is celebrated in these respective traditions, their different characteristics and features can be considered as a remarkable element of complementarity within the Church of Christ." The Commission was able to affirm that "Sacraments being sacraments of faith, the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East are now able to declare themselves also united in celebrating the same faith 'in the Son of God who became man so that we might become children of God by his grace,' and in dispensing the same salvific mystery, through their respective sacramental and liturgical traditions."

The Commission presented the Common Statement on Sacramental Life to His Holiness Pope Francis, when he received the Commission in audience at the Apostolic Palace on Friday, November 24, 2017. The Statement will be presented to His Holiness Mar Gewargis III, Catholicos-Patriarch, through the Assyrian delegation. Pope Francis welcomed the Statement saying "I join you in thanking the Lord for today's signing of the Joint Declaration which brings to a happy conclusion the phase regarding sacramental life. We can now look to the future with even greater confidence and I ask the Lord that your continued work may help bring about that blessed and long-awaited day when we will have the joy of celebrating, at the same altar, our full communion in Christ's Church." The signing of the document brings to completion the second phase in the dialogue for restoring full communion.

The Commission also approved a schema for the third phase of the dialogue on issues of ecclesiology. This phase will seek to discover agreements on the nature and mission of the Church, the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church and the constitution of the Church. The Commission will re-convene in Rome in November 2018.

On this occasion, while experiencing joy at the progress of the dialogue, the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East both feel pain over the suffering of Christians in Iraq and Syria and throughout the Middle East. The Commission calls on all people of good will to pray for the end of the violence and strife which affects the lands which first received the revelation of Jesus Christ, and to work through the means at their disposal for the support and care of refugees and those displaced by violence, whatever their religious confession.

Given at Rome, November 24, 2017

[<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/en.html>]