

AC - RC

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

COMMUNIQUÉ
Vatican City, November 9, 2018

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 5-9, 2018 at the Domus Sanctae Marthae in Vatican City. This session continues the third phase of the dialogue which is considering the Mystery of the Church and issues of ecclesiology. The Commission was co-chaired by Most Reverend Johan Bonny, Bishop of Antwerp, and His Grace Mar Awa Royel, Bishop of California.

The Commission discussed five papers on the Mystery of the Church, considering the four marks of the Church one, holy, catholic and apostolic found in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed of AD 381. The four marks were considered from the liturgical, biblical, patristic patrimony of the Church of the East. Additionally the Catholic-Orthodox Dialogue's Munich Document (1982) on ecclesiology was studied along with a consideration of the marks in the Latin Tradition.

The Commission also attended the conference at the Pontifical Oriental Institute "Syriac Christianity at the Crossroads of Cultures" commemorating the 700th anniversary of 'Abdisho of Nisibis. His Holiness, Mar Gewargis III, Catholicos-Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East, addressed the opening of the conference.

On Friday, November 9, His Holiness Pope Francis met with His Holiness Mar Gewargis III, and received the Commission in audience at the Apostolic Palace. Together the Pope and Catholicos-Patriarch issued a Common Statement on the situation of Christians in the Middle East, affirming in particular that "the Middle East without Christians would no longer be the Middle East". The Pope and the Patriarch then led a common prayer imploring God for an end of the violence and strife, for the support and care of refugees and those displaced, and for a renewed spirit of solidarity and reconciliation in all sectors of society.

The Commission plans to re-convene in one year's time, in Fall of 2019, for the continuation of the third round of the dialogue.

As well as the co-chairs, the members of the Commission from the Assyrian delegation were Mar Yohannan Yoseph, Auxiliary Bishop of India, and Chorbishop George Toma. Unable to attend were His Beatitude Mar Meelis Zaia, Metropolitan of Australia, New Zealand and Lebanon, His Grace Mar Afram Athniel, Bishop of Syria, and Archdeacon William Toma. The Catholic delegation included Most Reverend Francis Kalabat, Bishop of Saint Thomas the Apostle in Detroit for 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 Hyacinthe Destivelle, O.P., Official of the Pontifical Council. Unable to be present was Most Reverend Antoine Audo, Bishop of Aleppo for the Chaldeans.

Given in Vatican City, November 9, 2018

[<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/2018-rome.html>]