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

PRESS RELEASE

Arezzo (Italy), 14 October 2000

The Joint Committee for Theological Dialogue (JCTD) between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East held its 6th annual meeting from 12 to 14 October 2000, in Arezzo (Italy). H.E. Msgr. Gualtiero Bassetti, Bishop of Arezzo-Cortona-Sansepolcro, hosted the stay and the meeting place for the JCTD members. The members of the JCTD wish to express their sincere gratitude to H.E. Msgr. Bassetti for his generous hospitality and fraternal support.

As the first part of their work agenda, the members finished off the final draft of the "*Common Statement on Sacramental life*". And, by doing so, the JCTD has thus concluded the second phase of its work, a phase which was carried out since 1995, after signing the "*Common Theological Declaration*" on 11 November 1994 by Pope John-Paul II and Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV. This final draft of the said common statement will now respectively be submitted for approval to the competent authorities of both Churches.

The third phase of the JCTD program deals with questions related to the constitution of the Church. As an initial approach to this phase, two papers were presented and discussed: (i) "*The Concept of Communion: A Biblical Perspective*", (ii) "*The Council of Florence and its Ecumenical Significance to JCTD Dialogue*". To clarify some doctrinal questions related to the first ecumenical councils, a third paper was also presented and discussed on the question of "*The 'Three Chapters Controversy' and its relationship to the condemnation of Nestorius*". Concerning the on-going pastoral collaboration between both sides, a report was presented on the status of the present rapprochement process between both branches of the historically one Church of the East, namely, the Assyrian Church of the East and the Chaldean Church.

On Thursday the 12th of October, four students of the Assyrian Church, who study and live in Rome, met for lunch the members of the JCTD. In the evening of the same day, JCTD members were invited for supper in the "Rondine Cittadella della Pace" and met with some board members of this foundation. On Friday the 13th of October, the members of the JCTD took part in an ecumenical prayer service, presided by H.E. Msgr. Gualtiero Bassetti, H.E. Metropolitan Mar Aprem and H.E. Msgr. Walter Kasper, in the Cathedral of Arezzo. In the evening of the same day, they attended a luncheon, hosted by the Assyrian Church delegation.

The next meeting of the JCTD is planned to be held in Rome, from the 7th to the 10th of November 2001. Two major themes are on the agenda. The first theme continues to be in regard to the constitution of the Church, on which subject three papers shall be prepared; (i) "*The Petrine Tradition in the New Testament*"; (ii) "*The Petrine Ministry in the Liturgical, Canonical and Patristic traditions of the Church of the East*"; (iii) "*The Petrine Ministry in the Church of the West, during the first millennium*". The second theme will once more focus on certain doctrinal questions related to the first ecumenical councils. Two papers shall be prepared on this subject: (i) "*Theodore of Mopsuestia and the 'Three Chapters controversy'*", (ii) "*The context and content of the condemnation of Nestorius.*"

In this 6th annual meeting, the participants from the Catholic Church were: H.E. Bishop Walter Kasper (co-president), H.E. Archbishop Cyrille Selim Boustros, Reverend Father Sarhad Jammo, Reverend Father Matthew Vellanickal and Reverend Father Johan Bonny. The participants from the Assyrian Church of the East were Metropolitan H.E. Mar Aprem (co-president), H.E. Bishop Mar Bawai Soro, Reverend Archdeacon Yonan Y. Yonan, Reverend Father George Toma and Reverend Father William Yakob. Archbishop Antoine Audo was unable to attend this meeting because the Synod of the Chaldean Church was held in Lebanon during the same days.

Arezzo, Italy,

14 October 2000

[<http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-orientale/chiesa-assira-dell-orient/commissione-internazionale-di-dialogo-tra-la-chiesa-cattolica-e/sessione-plenarie---rapporti/en5.html>]