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

PRESS RELEASE  
Rome, 9 November 2002

The Joint Committee for Theological Dialogue (JCTD) between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East held its 8<sup>th</sup> annual meeting on 5-9 November 2002, at the Domus Pastor Bonus in Rome.

The members of the JCTD first discussed the proposed "*Common Statement on Sacramental Life*", which was submitted for approval to the competent authorities of both the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East after the annual meeting of 2000. Since the amendments of the Holy Synod of the Assyrian Church of the East were inserted during the annual meeting of 2001, those of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith were studied and inserted during this meeting. The members of the JCTD look forward to the official ratification of this *Common Statement on Sacramental Life*, which might take place before the next annual JCTD meeting.

In continuation of the third phase of the JCTD program, dealing with questions related to the constitution of the Church, three papers were discussed on « Petrine Ministry in the canonical tradition of both the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East »: *Exercise of the Roman Primacy today: The Pope in Canon Law* (Rev. Prof. George Nedungatt s.j.), *Some Reflections on the Primacy of the Roman Pontiff in the two Codes of Canon Law of the Catholic Church* (Rev. Prof. Dimitri Salachas) and *A Few Canonical Perspectives on the Petrine Ministry* (Rev. Dr. George Toma). Both the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East acknowledge the particular role given to the « successor of Peter » in their respective canonical traditions. The JCTD members insisted on the need to develop a new 'ecumenical code', that could help restore full communion between the Orthodox patriarchates and the Church of Rome.

With regard to Christology, the JCTD initiated the preparation of a comprehensive document on the Christological tradition of the Church of the East. Based on the existing achievements, reached by theologians and academic colloquia, this document should show the particular contribution of the Church of the East to the global development of Christology. In defending Orthodoxy against local heresies, the Church of the East developed indeed a particular Christological terminology and reflection, which still holds its own place besides both the Greek and the Latin traditions. This Christological reflection was carried out by many theologians, belonging to the Mesopotamian area; it is also reflected in the liturgical and canonical tradition of the Church of the East. Greek authors as Diodore of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia and Nestorius of Constantinople, who gained the esteem of the Church of the East, are to be read and understood in the light of this particular Christological tradition. A first outline of a possible future document on *Understanding the Christological Patrimony of the Church of the East*, presented by Prof. Theresia Hainthaler, was discussed by the JCTD members. This first outline should be completed and improved during the forthcoming JCTD meetings.

On Saturday, November 9<sup>th</sup>, Holy Qurbana was celebrated by H.G. Mar Sarhad Jammo at Santa Maria degli Angeli, the parish church of the Chaldean community in Rome. This solemn liturgy was attended by the Catholic and Assyrian bishops members of the JCTD. It was also attended by the priests of both the Chaldean Church and the Assyrian Church of the East, who study or live in Rome, and by the local Chaldean community.

The next meeting of the Joint Committee is planned to be held in San Diego and San Jose (USA), from October 26<sup>th</sup> to November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2003. Two major themes will be on the agenda. Firstly, regarding Petrine Ministry, two papers will be prepared, one by a member of the Catholic delegation on the relation between the local Church and the universal Church, and another one by a member of the Assyrian delegation on how the Fathers of the Church of the East understood the biblical passages on Peter and Petrine Ministry. Secondly, regarding the Christological patrimony of

the Church of the East, two documents will be prepared: one on the writings of about ten major theologians of the Mesopotamian tradition, and another one on Christological formulations in the liturgical and canonical sources of the Church of the East.

The participants from the Catholic Church were: Bishop Marc Ouellet (co-chair), Archbishop Cyrille Selim Boustros, Bishop Antoine Audo, Bishop Sarhad Jammo, Rev. Father Matthew Vellanickal and Mons. Johan Bonny (co-secretary). The participants from the Assyrian Church of the East were Metropolitan Mar Aprem (co-chair), Bishop Mar Bawai Soro (co-secretary), Reverend Archdeacon Yonan Y. Yonan, Rev. Father George Toma and Rev. Father William Yakob.

[<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/en3.html>]