

13th Session of the Lutheran-Orthodox Joint Commission
2-9 November 2006
Bratislava, Slovak Republic

Communiqué

1. The 13th meeting of the international Joint Commission of the theological dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Lutheran World Federation – A Communion of Churches (LWF) - was held in Bratislava, Slovak Republic, from 2-9 November 2006. It was generously hosted, on behalf of the LWF, by the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in the Slovak Republic. Co-presidents of the Joint Commission are H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr Gennadios of Sassima (The Ecumenical Patriarchate) and Bishop Donald McCoid (LWF).
2. Orthodox participants were delegates from the following churches: The Ecumenical Patriarchate, Patriarchate of Alexandria, Patriarchate of Antioch, Patriarchate of Jerusalem, Patriarchate of Moscow, Patriarchate of Serbia, Patriarchate of Romania, Church of Cyprus, Church of Greece, Church of Poland, Church of Albania, Church of Czech Lands and Slovakia, Church of Finland and Church of Estonia.
3. The twelve Lutheran participants, by appointment of the Council of the LWF, came from LWF member churches.
4. Contacts between Orthodox theologians from the Ecumenical Patriarchate and Lutheran professors of the University of Tübingen, Germany began already at the time of the 16th century Reformation in Europe. Thus the dialogue has precedence in history. Present official conversations began in 1981 in Espoo, Finland, after three years of preparatory meetings. The present meeting therefore marks the 25th anniversary of the Joint Commission.
5. This 13th Joint Commission discussed the fourth sub-theme of the dialogue: “The Holy Eucharist in the Life of the Church.” For this purpose the Preparatory Meeting took place 8-13 October 2005 in Erlangen, Germany, which heard Orthodox and Lutheran theological papers on the theme and prepared a Draft Statement. From the Lutheran side a paper was presented by Prof. Dr Karl Christian Felmy and Dr Jennifer Wasmuth on “The Lutheran Understanding of the Eucharist” and by Bishop Esbjörn Hagberg on “The Spirituality of the Eucharist and its practical implications in Evangelical Lutheran church life.” From the Orthodox side Prof. Dr Viorel Ionita presented the Orthodox paper on “The Holy Sacrament (Mysterion) of the Eucharist: An Orthodox Perspective.” An Orthodox response paper was submitted by Me Albert Laham. In Bratislava, the Draft Statement, together with the theological papers, supplemented by a paper by Prof. Dr Alexej Osipov, were presented as a basis for the deliberations of the Plenary Meeting and the elaboration of a Common Statement.
6. The Joint Commission expressed once again its strong affirmation of the continuation of the dialogue between the two traditions. It experiences a genuine growth in mutual ecumenical understanding and appreciation. The Commission adopted a Common

Statement on the theme of the meeting. According to this statement, Orthodox and Lutherans both confess that Christ's body and blood are united with bread and wine, to be consumed by communicants, uniting them with Christ and with each other. The statement explored the two traditions' differing, but often converging reflections on the mystery of how the sacramental union takes place and on the sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist. Together they underscored the Eucharist's eschatological dimension and stressed its significance for ecology and social action.

7. Discussions of the Joint Commission are accompanied and supported by daily prayers. On Saturday, 4 November, the Commission celebrated the 25th anniversary with a celebration at the Theological Faculty of the Comenius University in Bratislava in the presence of local church leaders and ecumenical guests. An Orthodox presentation on the topic "Lutheran-Orthodox dialogue – past, present and future" was presented by H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr Gennadios of Sassima. A Lutheran presentation on the same topic was written by Prof. Dr Risto Saarinen, which was read in his absence due to illness, by Bishop Donald McCoid. Ecumenical greetings were also presented and a festive dinner was given by the local Lutheran church.
8. During the meeting messages with blessings and prayers were received from His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and a message of greetings with assurances of prayers from Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko, General Secretary of the LWF.
9. On Sunday, 5 November, the Commission attended the Lutheran worship in the (English-speaking) International Congregation at the "Small Church" in Bratislava, followed by a welcome by the congregation of the Lutheran "Big Church" and a presentation of this church by its pastor. In the afternoon participants went on an excursion to Cerveny Kamen Castle.
10. On Tuesday, 7 November the Joint Commission members were invited to attend an Orthodox Liturgy at the Orthodox Church in Bratislava.
11. The 13th Joint Commission meeting concluded with prayers and mutual words of thanks by the Co-Presidents. For its next meeting, the Commission agreed to extend its reflection on *The Holy Eucharist in the Life of the Church* and to work on the following topics: *Preparation and Celebration of the Eucharist; Eucharist and Ecology (including Human Society)*.
12. The next Preparatory Meeting is scheduled from 3-8 October 2007 in Joensuu, Finland.

Bratislava, 9 November 2006