

Pope Receives Members of Orthodox-Catholic Commission

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Today in the Vatican, the Holy Father received thirty members of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches.



The commission was founded in 2003 as the result of an initiative by the ecclesial authorities of the family of Eastern Orthodox Churches and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

The first phase of dialogue, between 2003 and 2009, "resulted in the common text entitled 'Nature, Constitution and Mission of the Church'", said the Holy Father. "The document outlined aspects of fundamental ecclesiological principles that we share and identified issues requiring deeper reflection in successive phases of the dialogue. We can only be grateful that after almost fifteen hundred years of separation we still find agreement about the sacramental nature of the Church, about apostolic succession in priestly service and about the impelling need to bear witness to the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in the world.

"In the second phase, the Commission has reflected from an historical perspective on the ways in which the Churches expressed their communion down the ages", the Pope added continuing his English-language remarks to the group. "During the meeting this week you are deepening your study of the communion and communication that existed between the Churches until the mid-fifth century of Christian history, as well as the role played by monasticism in the life of the early Church.

"We must be confident that your theological reflection will lead our Churches not only to understand each other more deeply, but resolutely to continue our journey decisively towards the full communion to which we are called by the will of Christ", he said.

"Many of you come from regions where Christian individuals and communities face trials and difficulties that are a cause of deep concern for us all", Benedict XVI concluded. "All Christians need to work together in mutual acceptance and trust in order to serve the cause of peace and justice. May the intercession and example of the many martyrs and saints, who have given courageous witness to Christ in all our Churches, sustain and strengthen you and your Christian communities".

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