



# NEWS

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## STATEMENTS ON PASTORAL MINISTRY, 'ECONOMY' MADE BY ORTHODOX/ROMAN CATHOLIC CONSULTATION

WASHINGTON--Both Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions agree that only bishops and priests can preside at the Eucharist and that ordination is necessary for bestowing pastoral office, according to a study document released by the Orthodox-Roman Catholic Bilateral Consultation in the United States.

The study document on The Pastoral Office and another on The Principle of Economy--a theological term originally signifying God's plan in history--were released here by the Roman Catholic Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (BCEIA), and in New York by the Orthodox Church.

The Orthodox-Roman Catholic Consultation in the United States has been meeting since 1965 to examine a wide spectrum of theological questions judged to be crucial for mutual understanding. Archbishop Iakovos, primate of the Greek Orthodox Church in the Americas is the Orthodox Chairman of the Consultation while William

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2/Statements

Cardinal Baum of Washington is the Roman Catholic Chairman.

Father J. Peter Sheehan, associate director of the BCEIA secretariat, said "These study documents are a significant step forward in the search for ecumenical unity between the Church of the East and the Church of the West as they were undivided before the Great Schism."

"They represent theological and pastoral advances being made by scholars directed toward reconciliation and restoration of Christian unity, as well as much common understanding that exists between the two Churches on many issues of theology and practice," he stated.

The documents will be presented for study by clergy and laity of both churches, according to Father Sheehan.

The study paper on the pastoral office singled out the following among elements of common understanding of the pastoral office in the Orthodox and Roman Catholic traditions:

--"In the rites of ordination of bishop and presbyter (priest) a commission is bestowed by the Holy Spirit to build up the Church (Eph. 4:12) on the cornerstone of Christ and the foundation of the Apostles (Eph. 2:20)."

--"Presiding at the Eucharist belongs to those ordained to the pastoral office: bishops and presbyters. This exclusive connection between ordination to the pastoral office and the celebration of the Eucharist affirms that the pastoral office is realized most directly in this celebration of the faith."

/more

### 3/Statements

--"The offices of bishop and presbyter are different realizations of the sacrament of order."

--"While both bishop and presbyter share the one ministry of Christ, the bishop exercises authoritative leadership over the whole community. The presbyter shares in the pastoral office under the bishop."

--"Ordination in apostolic succession is required for the bestowal of pastoral office because pastoral office is an essential element of the sacramental reality of the Church: Ordination effectively proclaims that pastoral office is founded on Christ and the Spirit who gives the grace to accomplish the task of exercising the ministry of the apostles."

--The ordained is claimed permanently for the service of the Church and cannot be reordained, is distinct but not separated from the community in the exercise of office, and is not dependent solely on subjective capabilities for the exercise of service since the special bestowal of the Spirit comes with ordination.

Discussing recent trends and disputed questions in both churches, the paper said "The traditional exclusion of women from ordination to the pastoral office affects both Catholic and Orthodox theologians, but in a differing way." It said Catholic theologians have not reached a consensus but "Some Catholic theologians share the position of those Orthodox theologians who reaffirm the traditional practice of excluding women from the

/more

#### 4/Statements

pastoral office and base this on the necessity of the iconic (pictorial) representation of Christ in the person of bishops and presbyters."

The document noted that questions are raised in both traditions about the practice of celibacy and the compatibility of ordination with occupations not directly part of the pastoral office.

"Both Catholic and Orthodox theologians see a long tradition of ordained persons exercising certain occupations compatible with the pastoral office which are also seen to serve the sanctification of society," the document said.

"In the Orthodox Church questions are raised concerning a married episcopate and marriage after ordination. Among Catholics of the Latin rite the celibacy issue focuses on the possibility of also committing the pastoral office to a married clergy." In the Orthodox Churches, and in the Eastern-rite Catholic Churches, married men may be ordained to the priesthood, but a bachelor ordained a priest may not later marry. Only celibates, either single men or widowers, may be ordained bishops.

The other document discussed Oikonomia, or ecclesiastical economy, which has been particularly important to the Orthodox.

"At the most basic level, the Greek word oikonomia means management, arrangement, or determination in the

/more

5/Statements

strictly literal sense," the document said. It traced scriptural use of the word to refer to God's plan to unite all things in Christ and to the ministry of making known the word of God.

The Fathers of the Church expanded the usage of economy, the document said. "God is seen as arranging all for the purpose of man's salvation and eternal well-being; and man, fashioned in the image and likeness of God, is viewed as being called to imitate this divine activity."

The word was later used to refer to the administration of penance, to the reception of those returning to the church from heresy or schism and to the restoration of repentant clergy and the reception of heretical or schismatic clergy as ordained.

The document did not accept an interpretation according to which the Orthodox Church can, by the principle of economy, treat as valid non-Orthodox sacraments, which it considers, strictly speaking, null and void.

"The Church of Christ is not a legalistic system whereby every prescription has identical importance, especially when ancient canons do not directly address contemporary issues," the document said.

"Nor can the application of economy make something invalid to be valid, or what is valid to be invalid. Because the risen Christ has entrusted to the church a stewardship of prudence and freedom to listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit about today's problems

/more

6/Statements

of church unity, a proper understanding of economy involves  
the exercise of spiritual discernment."

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