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QUESTIONS OF UNITY, PRIMACY DISCUSSED BY POLISH NATIONAL CATHOLIC-ROMAN CATHOLIC DIALOGUE

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WASHINGTON (April 24, 1998) -- Questions pertaining to issues of unity and primacy were discussed at the spring meeting of the Polish National Catholic-Roman Catholic dialogue.

The meeting, hosted by the Polish National Catholic Church (PNCC), took place at the National Church Center in Scranton, Pennsylvania, April 20-21.

The members of the dialogue examined the degree of autonomy currently enjoyed by the Eastern Catholic Churches as a way of exploring modes of unity that already exist within the Catholic communion of Churches.

The Very Rev. Marcell W. Pytlarz presented a paper entitled, "Unity with Autonomy and Identity" in which he outlined the kind of unity the PNCC seeks with the Roman Catholic Church. In the discussion that followed it became clear that while the PNCC has a certain openness to the Roman primacy, it believes that serious questions remain to be resolved regarding the way in which that primacy has been exercised within the Church. The members recalled the dialogue's earlier statement that what is sought is not "return" or "submission," but recognition of one another as sister churches in full communion, united in the same faith and sacraments, with full respect for one another's identity.

Prime Bishop Swantek reported on recent developments within the Union of Utrecht, including the continuing tensions within the Union that stem from the decision of the Churches in Germany and Austria to proceed to the ordination of women.

There was also discussion about further steps that might be taken to symbolize the growing unity, especially in connection with the participation of the faithful of one of the churches in the sacramental and ecclesial life of the other. Bishop Timlin reported on his recent discussion about the dialogue with officials of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity during his recent ad limina visit to Rome.

Members attending from the Polish National Catholic Church included Bishop Anthony M. Rysz (co-chairman), Bishop Thaddeus Peplowski, Bishop Robert Nemkovich, Very Rev. Stanley Skrzypek, Very Rev. Sigmund Peplowski, and Very Rev. Marcell Pytlarz. His Grace John F. Swantek, Prime Bishop of the Polish National Catholic Church, also attended the meeting. Roman Catholic participants included Bishop James C. Timlin (co-chairman), Bishop Edward U. Kmiec, Msgr. Thomas Green, Rev. Joseph F. Mytych, Msgr. John Strykowski, and Rev. Ronald G. Roberson, CSP. Most Rev. John M. Dougherty, Auxiliary Bishop of Scranton, and Rev. Philip Altavilla, Director of Ecumenism and Interfaith Affairs of the Diocese of Scranton, were also present.

The dialogue between the Roman Catholic and Polish National Catholic Churches has been in progress since 1984. In 1990 it produced a report on the results of their efforts entitled, *Journeying Together in Christ*.

