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ROMAN CATHOLIC, POLISH NATIONAL CATHOLIC CHURCHES MEET AGAIN

April 19, 1999

WASHINGTON (April 19, 1999) -- The spring session of the dialogue between the Polish National Catholic Church (PNCC) and the Roman Catholic Church took place in Scranton, PA, April 14-15, 1999. Hosted by the PNCC, the meeting was held at the National Church Center. The co-chairmen of the dialogue are the Most Rev. James C. Timlin, Roman Catholic Bishop of Scranton, and the Right Rev. Anthony Rysz, Bishop of the PNCC Central Diocese in Scranton. As Bishop Rysz had recently undergone surgery and was unable to attend the meeting, this particular session was co-chaired by the Right Rev. Thaddeus Peplowski, PNCC Bishop of Buffalo-Pittsburgh. The Most Rev. John F. Swantek, Prime Bishop of the PNCC, also attended the meeting.

The dialogue continued its examination of models of unity that already exist within the Roman Catholic communion. Along these lines, the Rev. Chorbishop John Faris of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association made a presentation on the status of the Eastern Catholic Churches and their relationship to Rome. Most Rev. Edward M. Grosz, Auxiliary Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Buffalo, and Bishop Peplowski spoke on Polish ecclesiastical traditions that are shared by Polish communities of both churches.

The members continued their reflection on the meaning of the petrine ministry in the Church. Bishop Swantek presented a paper which examined the 1889 Declaration of Utrecht and the 1970 Pastoral Letter on the Primacy in the Church of the Dutch Old Catholic Bishops. The Rev. Ronald G. Roberson, CSP, of the Secretariat of the Roman Catholic Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, offered a synopsis of the reflections on the primacy of the successor of Peter in the mystery of the Church issued by the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith in November, 1998. Responses to these two statements will be presented at the next meeting.

The members of the dialogue discussed at length the present discipline of their churches regarding Eucharistic sharing. They recalled that both churches asked their faithful to receive communion in their own church as the norm. The restrictions that exist on both sides correspond to the absence at the present time of full ecclesial communion between the two churches. Yet, given the fact that both churches recognize the presence of Christ in each other's Eucharist, they allow their faithful to receive in the other church under some circumstances when there is a spiritual advantage. The members wished to affirm once again that both the Roman Catholic Church and the Polish National Catholic Church recognize the validity and fullness of the Eucharist celebrated in both churches. In the future they intend to explore this matter further, and to consider the drafting of more ample guidelines for the benefit of the faithful.

The next meeting is scheduled to take place on November 3 and 4, 1999, hosted by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Scranton. The dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Polish National Catholic Church began in 1984. In 1990 it produced a report on the results of the dialogue entitled *Journeying Together in Christ* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing).

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