



UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

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COMMUNIQUÉ ON EASTERN EUROPE

The members of the Joint Committee of Orthodox and Roman Catholic bishops gathered for their eleventh meeting, September 30 - October 2, 1992, in Tenafly, New Jersey. They reaffirmed their commitment to these annual dialogues and their conviction that through dialogue, mutual understanding, good will and trust, they are following the teachings of the Lord. The theological dialogue at all levels is under severe strain because of recent events in eastern Europe. The Roman Catholic bishops listened with concern as the Orthodox bishops expressed their deepest reservations with the recent letter of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion." In their view, the letter is a sign that the Roman Catholic Church is changing its mind in regard to basic presuppositions upon which the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church meet as equal churches, manifesting the fullness of catholicity of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

As the bishop members of this dialogue committee study the history of the relationship between the two churches since the schism, they recognize that iniquities have been perpetrated by both churches (for example, the problems associated with Brest and Lviv). In this context it is important to study the recent developments in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Having recognized that transgressions and deceptions have been committed, leaders and faithful of both churches must repent and express mutual forgiveness. In this spirit, the example of Patriarch Athenagoras and Pope Paul VI, whose vision continues to inspire Catholics and Orthodox alike, must not be surrendered.

With the arrival of His Holiness Patriarch Pavle of Serbia in the United States, the bishops turned their thoughts to the tragic events occurring in the territory of the former Yugoslavia. They condemn the past and present manipulation of religion for advancing geopolitical and ethnic interests, which have rekindled so many deep prejudices and enmities. The bishops appealed to all in the United States to pray for the reconciliation of the peoples of that troubled region. As winter approaches, thousands of lives are endangered. The bishops expressed their support for urgent humanitarian effort in meeting the needs of all who suffer there. They applauded the actions of Orthodox and Catholic leaders, and other religious leaders, toward terminating the terrible carnage taking place in these areas.

Tenafly, New Jersey
October 2, 1992

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