03/06/2024

Work for Dialogue between Orthodox and Lutherans in Cairo was successfully completed



The third and final meeting of the 18th Plenary Session of the International Joint Commission on the Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Lutheran World Federation took place between 24 and 31 May 2024 in Cairo, Egypt. The meeting was hosted by the Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa, and its proceedings took place at the historic Patriarchal Monastery of St. George the Great Martyr in Old Cairo.

The meeting was co-chaired by Metropolitan Kirill of Krini (Ecumenical Patriarchate) on behalf of the Orthodox Church and Bishop Dr. Johann Schneider (Evangelical Church in Central Germany) on behalf of the Lutheran World Federation. The plenary session focused on the theme: “The Holy Spirit, the Church, and the World: Creation, Humanity, and Salvation.” It concluded its discussions and work on the subject of Pneumatology and the work of the Holy Spirit, which began in 2023.

The Orthodox Church was represented by: Metropolitan Kirillos of Krini (Ecumenical Patriarchate), Deacon Ecumenius Amanitidis, Under-Secretary of the Holy and Sacred Synod (Co-Secretary, Ecumenical Patriarchate), Metropolitan Petros of Axum (Patriarchate of Alexandria), Archimandrite Philip Hall (Patriarchate of Antioch), Dr. Rade Kisić (Patriarchate of Serbia), Protopr. Dr. Georgios Zviadadze (Patriarchate of Georgia), Metropolitan Isaiah of Tamasos and Oreini (Church of Cyprus), Metropolitan Gregorios of Peristeri (Church of Greece), Jerzy Betlejko (Church of Poland), Dr. Nathan Hoppe (Church of Albania), Ambassador Dr. Václav Ježek (Church of Czechia and Slovakia) and Counsellors Protopresbyter Stefanos Chrysanthos (Church of Cyprus) and Protopresbyter Dr. Dimitrios Bathrellos (Church of Greece).

The World Lutheran Federation was represented by: Bishop Dr. Johann Schneider (Co-President), Prof. Dirk G. Lange (Co-Secretary, World Lutheran Federation in Geneva), Prof. Stephanie Dietrich (Church of Norway), Dr. Lalissa D Gemechis (Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus), Dr. Maria Munkholt Christensen (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark), Dr. Heta Hurskainen (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland), Prof. Kenneth Appold (Evangelical Lutheran Church of America) and consultants Prof. Jennifer Wasmuth (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hanover, Germany) and Prof. Bernd Oberdorfer (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria, Germany).

On the morning of Monday, May 27, the members of the Committee dealt with the issue of the Filioque. Following the recommendation of Protopresbyter Professor Dimitrios Bathrellos on the history and development of the issue, the draft Joint Declaration on the Filioque was presented. This draft had been prepared during the Preparatory Meeting in Tallinn in November 2023. After extensive discussion and consultation, the plenary approved the draft Declaration with additions and improvements. The final form of the joint Declaration on the Filioque will be published by the end of the year. The text is the fruit of over forty years of creative dialogue between Lutherans and Orthodox. It will serve as the joint contribution of the Dialogue to the 1700th anniversary of the convening of the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea (325).

The work of the Dialogue focused on two themes, continuing from previous meetings: a) The invocation outside the Divine Eucharist and b) Exclusivity and Inclusiveness in the action of the Holy Spirit. On these two issues, two presentations were presented by Dr. Kenneth Appold and Presbyter Dr. Václav Ježek, on the presence of invocative prayers in services outside the eucharist and Dr. Maria Munkholt Christensen and Prof. Nathan Hoppe respectively, on the

exclusive and inclusive action of the Holy Spirit within and outside the boundaries of Christianity.

Discussions on the contributions resulted in the presentation of a joint text on the basis of a draft prepared by the Commission at the meeting in Wittenberg in 2023. The final text of the Joint Statement consists of five sections: a) The Holy Spirit in Creation; b) The Holy Spirit in the Economy and the Preaching of the Gospel; c) The Holy Spirit in the World; d) The Holy Spirit, the Liturgy and the Church; e) The Invocation of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church outside the Divine Eucharist; f) the joint statement on the Filioque (to be published separately); and g) proposals.

At the start of the proceedings on Sunday, May 26, the Committee participated in the Divine Liturgy, which was presided over by Metropolitan Kirill of Krini at the Church of Saints Constantine and Helen in Ilioupolis, Cairo. The Ambassador of the Hellenic Republic to Egypt, Nikolaos Papageorgiou, and a representative of the Embassy of Cyprus and members of the Greek Community of Cairo attended the service. A festive meal was then hosted at the Cairo Nautical Club near the Nile River.

The members of the Dialogue Committee visited historical monuments in the city of Cairo, including the Museum of Egyptian Culture and the Pyramids. They toured the Museum, the Roman Tower, the chapels of the Monastery of St. George, and the tombs of the Patriarchs of Alexandria, where Metropolitan Gregorios of Peristeri performed a Trisagion. Then they visited the Hanging Church, where they were welcomed by the Protosyncellus of the Bishop in Old Cairo of the Coptic Church.

On Thursday, May 30, the final day of the work, messages were read from Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and the Secretary General of the World Lutheran Federation, Dr. Anne Burghardt. Metropolitan Kyrillos of Krini expressed his gratitude and hope for the continuation of the Dialogue’s work, while Bishop Johann Schneider noted the openness of the discussions.

The Committee conveyed its profound appreciation and gratitude to Patriarch Theodore of Alexandria and All Africa, Metropolitan Nikodimos of Memphis, Patriarchal Commissioner of Cairo, Metropolitan Panteleimon of Ptolemais, Chief Secretary of the Holy Synod, and Archimandrite Dr. Damaskinon Alazrai, Abbot of the Patriarchal Monastery of Saint George, for their generous hospitality in the historic capital of Egypt.

The Committee decided that the 1st Preparatory Meeting for the 19th Plenary Session will take place between November 11th and 14th, 2024, at Hellenic College

of the Holy Cross in Boston, USA. The event will be hosted by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and the Huffington Ecumenical Institute.

goarch.org