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Dialogue between Orthodox Church and Oriental Churches resumes after 31 years in Cairo



Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches resumed in Cairo this week after a 31-year hiatus.

The joint dialogue commission's meetings took place on September 16-17 at the Monastery of Abba Bishoy in Cairo, a monastic settlement belonging to the Coptic Church. His Eminence Metropolitan Emmanuel of Chalcedon of the Ecumenical Patriarchate co-chaired the meetings on behalf of the Orthodox Church.

The meetings aimed to present how the documents issued during the preliminary meetings in 1964, 1971, and the official meetings in 1985 and 1993 were and are perceived, as well as to present reports on identifying viable perspectives to contribute to the development and consolidation of inter-Christian relations.

The Romanian Patriarchate delegation consisted of His Grace Bishop Benedict of Bistrița, assistant bishop of the Archdiocese of Vad, Feleac, and Cluj, and Fr. Viorel Ioniță, honorary patriarchal counsellor.

"The actual work began with the presentation of a report from each delegation on the current state of the dialogue, especially from a practical perspective, in the community represented," said His Grace Bishop Benedict of Bistrița for Trinitas TV.

"On the margins of these reports, certain clarifications were requested, or certain elements were added so that the dialogue could move forward and directions could be identified through which not only to update what has happened over more than 60 years of dialogue but also to contribute to a fruitful future of this necessary rapprochement in a divided world."

On the second day of the meeting, the contemporary world's main ethical problems were discussed, and shared strategies for solving them were identified.

“We hope that the meeting will be a plus not only theologically but also practically, in the sense of the need to have a common voice regarding contemporary realities in all aspects that they can propose to us,” added the hierarch.

Also, at the end of the working sessions, a joint declaration was published regarding the current state of the dialogue.

The Purpose of the Meetings
In an interview for the newspaper Lumina, Fr. Viorel Ioniță, honorary patriarchal counsellor, discussed the history of the dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Ancient Oriental Churches and the work of the dialogue commission.

“The official theological dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Ancient Oriental Churches was prepared by holding four unofficial meetings between 1964 and 1971, followed by four official meetings between 1985 and 1993.”

“On behalf of the Romanian Orthodox Church, how the results of this dialogue were received at the level of the Holy Synod of our Church will be presented first, then how the respective results were made known in extensive circles within this Church through studies and books published by various Romanian theologians,” added Fr. Professor.

Also, Fr. Viorel Ioniță mentioned that St Dumitru Stăniloae participated in 1971 in a meeting to evaluate the dialogue in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Following this, he published four studies on the prospects for rapprochement between the Orthodox Church and the Ancient Oriental Churches.

Photo: Coptic Church

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