



OCT 06 2015

PONTIFICIUM CONSILIUM
AD CHRISTIANORUM UNITATEM FOVENDAM

E Civitate Vaticana, die

24 September 2015

PROT. N. 1345 /2015/e

Dear Archbishop Tobin,

It is with pleasure that I write with regard to the forthcoming meeting of the North American Orthodox–Catholic Theological Consultation, promoted by the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States, the Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, to take place in Worcester, Massachusetts (USA), from 22–24 October 2015, and to express my warmest greetings to Metropolitan Methodios of Boston and you personally, the Co–Chairmen of the Consultation, as well as to all the participants.

During the course of your meeting you will undoubtedly commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Consultation itself, which was established in 1965 and which has met uninterruptedly since then. It is particularly worthy of mention that this anniversary coincides with that of the cancellation from the memory of the Churches of the reciprocal excommunications between Rome and Constantinople in 1054, which Blessed Pope Paul VI and the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras proclaimed during the simultaneous liturgical celebrations held in Rome and the Phanar on 7 December 1965. This was an extraordinary event that opened the path towards dialogue, renewed fraternity and reconciliation. The anniversary is a particularly significant coincidence that highlights the underlying premises, methodology and aim of the Consultation.

Over the last fifty years, the Consultation has issued an impressive 29 joint documents on various themes. These texts have most certainly fostered mutual understanding between Catholics and Orthodox in North America, helping to create a climate of mutual friendship and productive cooperation. Moreover, in its responses to the documents of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, the Consultation has offered a constructive contribution to the journey undertaken by the official theological dialogue. It is admirably notable that in relation to some theological questions, which remain an obstacle to the re–establishment of full communion, the Consultation has indicated possible solutions worthy of attentive consideration.

On my own behalf and on behalf of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, I express my heartfelt best wishes that, mindful of its rich history, the North American Orthodox–Catholic Theological Consultation may continue its fruitful work for the good of the Churches and in the service of the cause of Christian unity. To this end, I assure you of my prayer for the successful outcome of the meeting, asking for the Lord's abundant blessings upon you all.

Yours sincerely,

Kurt Cardinal Koch
President

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