

## **On the Occasion of the Eighty-fifth Anniversary of the Promulgation of the decree Cum data fuerit**

*Statement of the North American Orthodox/Catholic Theological Consultation On the Occasion  
of the Eighty-fifth Anniversary of the Promulgation of the decree Cum data fuerit*

The year 2014 marks the eighty-fifth anniversary of the promulgation of the decree Cum data fuerit. In 1929, the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental [Eastern Catholic] Churches issued this document, which stated that “priests of the Greek-Ruthenian Rite who wish to go to the United States of North America [sic] and stay there must be celibates” (Article 12). This statement led to a general prohibition of the ordination of married Eastern Catholics to the priesthood in North America. This resulted in divisions in Eastern Catholic communities and even in families.

The Second Vatican Council spoke of the importance of preserving the legitimate traditions of the Eastern Churches. In the decree, *Orientalium ecclesiarum*, the Council emphasized the need to preserve the “legitimate liturgical rite and ... established way of life” of Eastern Catholics. The Council continued, stating that Eastern Catholics “should attain to an even greater knowledge and a more exact use of [this rite and way of life] and if in their regard they have fallen short owing to contingencies of times and persons, they should take steps to return to their ancestral traditions” (par. 6). Furthermore, the decree *Presbyterorum ordinis* states, “This holy synod, while it commends ecclesiastical celibacy, in no way intends to alter that different discipline which legitimately flourishes in the Eastern Churches. It permanently exhorts all those who have received the priesthood and marriage to persevere in their holy vocation” (sec. 16). Nevertheless, until recently, very few married Eastern Catholic men have been allowed to be ordained to the priesthood in North America.

With these things in mind, the North American Orthodox/Catholic Theological Consultation encourages the lifting of the restrictions regarding the ordination of married men to the priesthood in the Eastern Catholic Churches of North America. This action would affirm the ancient and legitimate Eastern Christian tradition, and would assure the Orthodox that, in the event of the restoration of full communion between the two Churches, the traditions of the Orthodox Church would not be questioned. We are convinced that this action would enhance the spiritual lives of Eastern Catholics and would encourage the restoration of unity between Catholic and Orthodox Christians.