

Roman-Orthodox Union Seen Drawing Nearer

Vatican City — Relations between the Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodoxy may never have been better.

This was the view of some observers when Pope Paul VI received this note from Ecumenical Patriarch Demitrios which said:

"The Orthodox Church is ready to break down all the barriers separating the Catholic and Orthodox Churches with the aim of being able to share the body and blood of the Lord together in the same Holy Eucharist."

Earlier, in a conversation with Metropolitan Meliton of Chalcedon, dean of the Sacred Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Pope Paul had said that "slowly but surely our communities are advancing toward complete union."

And, the pope told the patriarch's aide, that the Catholic-Orthodox dialogue has a solid foundation, one that "makes us hope that we shall overcome the difficulties which as yet do not

allow us to concelebrate the Eucharist."

The views of the patriarch were made in a letter delivered to the pope by Metropolitan Meliton.

The patriarch noted that on Nov. 30 Cardinal Jan Willebrands, the Dutch prelate who heads the Vatican Secretariat for Christian Unity, accompanied by Vatican aides, had called at the Patriarchate to return a visit made by Orthodox leaders to the Vatican.

Patriarch Demitrios expressed great satisfaction with the visit of Cardinal Willebrands and the Vatican delegation.

"This visit," he told Pope Paul, "was inspired and directed by the desire of the holy Roman Catholic Church for Christian unity in general and in particular for your desire and your wish that the great cause of Christian unity should be based on the solid ecclesiological unity of the Eastern and Western Churches."

The Patriarch then expressed joy over a message sent to him by the pope and emphasized his gratitude for the continuation of dialogue "conducted with fraternal sincerity in preparation for theological dialogue between the two Churches."

At that point, the Orthodox leader expressed his Church's desire to "break down all barriers" to intercommunion.

Metropolitan Meliton also brought with him to Rome a gift for Pope Paul VI sent by the patriarch, a lamp from Demitrios' private chapel. Demitrios suggested that the pope use it in his own chapel as a sign of the light of Christ.

The visit of Metropolitan Meliton to Vatican City coincided with the 12th anniversary of the end of mutual excommunications directed long ago by the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches.

What had been a centuries-old defacto rift between the East and the West was formalized in 1042 by Michael Cerularius, patriarch of Constantinople.

Pope Addresses Justice, Peace Delegation

Vatican City (RNS) — Pope Paul urged participants in the first general assembly of the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace to cultivate a "sense of prayer" and a "truly pastoral mentality" in dealing with such crucial world problems as human rights, violence and the denial of religious freedom.

He said that such an approach would provide them with a unified view of the "one concern of the Church, which is to guarantee every man his dignity in this world and open up the kingdom of God" to everyone.

The Pope made his remarks during a special audience with those attending the justice and peace meeting. The participants were led by Cardinal Bernardin Gantin, president of the pontifical commission.

He declared that such an ecclesiastical service must place its knowledge of the present-day world at the service of the Vatican and of the universal Church. And he noted that the bishops of the world are keys to the commission's work because they are "well-qualified in transmitting to the commission the aspirations noted among the peoples entrusted to them."

The Pope, in recalling the importance of the social apostolate, said the Church's tasks in this area are many and varied "but are not always known or sufficiently utilized." He said the principles of the social doctrine of the Church are "always valid" and must be applied according to current situations in the world and the information available.

Referring to the document that gave definitive status to the commission only a year ago, Pope Paul noted that he had

wished to establish within the Roman Curia an organization dedicated to the study of problems of justice and peace "with a view toward action in this field."

In pointing to the importance of problems "concerning human rights, violence and religious freedom which is not sufficiently guaranteed everywhere," the pontiff said the service of the justice and peace commission "demands particular orientations of the spiritual order—a deep knowledge of the Church's doctrine and the demands of the Gospel, and a sense of prayer that will lead to a truly pastoral ministry."

He said this mentality will keep those who are active in efforts on behalf of justice and peace from being isolated and enable them to find a unity of concern for the problems of mankind which focus on a denial of human dignity and God's plan for all men.

Kolping Sets Annual Mass

A touch of old Germany will be evident on Sunday, Jan. 8, in St. Anne's Church, when the Catholic Kolping Society sponsors its annual German Christmas Mass. The service will begin at 3 p.m. and will all be celebrated in German. A number of German-speaking priests will concelebrate with Msgr. Charles V. Boyle the major celebrant. Father Frederick Eismann will preach the homily.

A feature of the Mass music will be zither playing under the direction of William P. Kares.

Leo P. Saeum, president of local Kolping, noted that a Christmas party and German dinner will follow the Mass. He said that it is necessary to make reservations for the party through Mrs. German Sperr, 342-0923, or Henry Heister, 865-4847.

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