

WORLD & NATION

Summit fails to solidify East-West 'uniatism'

By Jerry Filteau
Catholic News Service

EMMITSBURG, Md. (CNS) — At times the world's 17 million Eastern Catholics must feel like the children in a custody battle, with Catholic and Orthodox churches alike saying, "They're mine."

At a historic international Catholic-Orthodox meeting in Emmitsburg this July, the dispute continued to occupy center stage — and remained unresolved.

"Since agreement was not reached on the basic theological concept of uniatism, it was decided not to have a common statement at this time," said a communique July 19.

The communique marked the end of the eighth plenary session of the Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, an 11-day dialogue held at Mount St. Mary's College and Seminary.

The commission — the largest and highest-level international ecumenical dialogue either church is engaged in — was formed in 1979 by Pope John Paul II and Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I of Constantinople. Its goal is restoration of the unity of the churches of East and West, ending a division that goes back nearly 1,000 years.

Co-chairing the Emmitsburg meeting, the first session held in the Western Hemisphere, were Cardinal Edward I. Cassidy, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and Greek Orthodox Archbishop Stylianos of Australia, representing the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

In addition to their discussions, the 14 Orthodox and 22 Catholic dialogue participants prayed together on several occasions — exercising that spiritual ecumenism recognized by all as an essential element of any progress toward Christian unity.

All their dialogue sessions took place in the presence of an icon especially commissioned for the occasion. It featured St. Andrew, representing the East, and St. Peter, representing the West, approaching each other with Mary and Jesus watching over them.

While the commission could not reach an agreed statement on a theological and canonical understanding of the Eastern



CNS photo courtesy Archdiocese of Baltimore
This icon was commissioned for talks between Catholic and Orthodox leaders July 9-19 in Maryland. Created by Peter Pearson, the icon shows the devotion to the Christ Child and his mother, which both churches share, and St. Peter, left, and St. Andrew, right. The saints representing the Western and Eastern churches respectively, stand with bowed heads moving toward one another to symbolize the goal of dialogue.

Catholic churches, at a concluding press conference the two chairmen described the meeting positively.

"We have made a lot of progress in the sense of helping each other to understand the two ways of looking at this," Cardinal Cassidy said.

Archbishop Stylianos called the dia-

logue "quite fruitful" and praised its "brotherly atmosphere."

The final communique said, "The commission sees the need for further study of the theological, pastoral, historical and canonical questions related to this issue."

"Uniatism" is the term used especially by the Orthodox to characterize the

restoration of full communion with Rome reached on a piecemeal basis by some Orthodox churches, or portions of them, during the past several centuries.

When the international commission held its first organizational meeting in 1980, uniatism was not among the initial themes chosen for discussion.

At its second plenary in 1982 the commission issued an agreed statement on the relationship between the Eucharist and the Trinity, the church and the Eucharist and the local church and universal church.

Following discussions in 1984 and at a partially boycotted meeting in 1986, at a special second session of its fourth plenary in 1987, it completed a second agreed statement, "Faith, Sacraments and the Unity of the Church."

Meeting in Finland in 1988, the fifth plenary adopted an agreed statement on ordained ministry and apostolic succession. It also formed a subcommission to begin studying uniatism and the status of the Eastern Catholic churches.

By the time the commission met again in 1990 for its sixth plenary, the collapse of communism and recovery of religious freedom in Eastern Europe had brought out a host of tensions and practical conflicts in places where Eastern Catholicism and Orthodoxy lived side-by-side.

Rebuilding efforts by Eastern Catholic churches — some of which had been forcibly suppressed by communist authorities and their institutions expropriated or turned over to the Orthodox — were viewed with alarm by Orthodox authorities, who saw such efforts as a revival of proselytism and territorial infringement by Catholics.

At the request of the Orthodox side, the prepared topic of conciliarity and authority in the church was set aside at the 1990 meeting to take up the issue of uniatism.

The seventh plenary in 1993, held in Balamand, Lebanon, issued an agreed statement, "Uniatism, Method of Union of the Past, and the Present Search for Full Communion."

The statement said the Eastern Catholic churches clearly "have the right to exist and to act in answer to the spiritual needs of their faithful."

But it said the initiatives of the past which resulted in "partial unions with the see of Rome" also brought "the breaking of their communion with their mother churches of the East" and did not restore the desired full unity of the churches of East and West.

The Balamand statement was not the last word, however. It has been criticized in some Catholic and Orthodox circles and was formally rejected by the Greek Catholic Church of Romania and the Orthodox Church of Greece.

As a result, the Emmitsburg meeting — originally scheduled in 1996, then rescheduled for 1999, then delayed another year because of the NATO bombardment of Serbia earlier that year — continued the discussion.

Infant protection proponents appeal to House

WASHINGTON (CNS) — An abortion survivor, a Princeton professor and a nurse who has comforted infants born after botched abortions testified before a House subcommittee July 20 about a bill that would entitle those infants to medical care.

The testimony on H.R. 4292, the proposed Born Alive Infants Protection Act of 2000, came before the House Judiciary Committee's subcommittee on the Constitution, chaired by Rep. Charles Canady, R-Fla., chief sponsor of the legislation.

"If a child born alive after a botched abortion does not receive the protection of the law, what is to prevent an abortionist from simply delivering a child and killing it?" Canady asked at the hearing.

Witnesses included Gianna Jessen, a 23-year-old survivor of a late-term saline abortion; Robert P. George, a professor of jurisprudence in the department of politics at Princeton; and Jill L. Stanek, a registered nurse who works in the labor and delivery department at Christ Hospital in Oak Lawn, Ill.

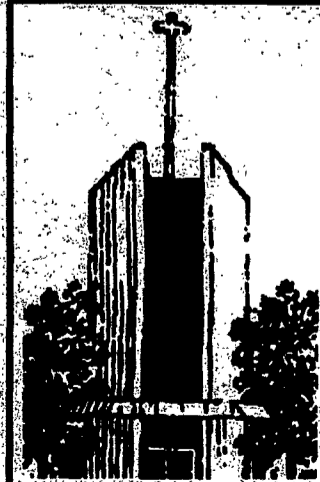
All three spoke in favor of the legislation, but the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League said in a statement at the hearing that the bill "attempts to inject Congress into what should be personal and private decisions about medical treatment."

Helen Alvare, director of planning and information for the U.S. bishops' Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities, said the NARAL comment demonstrated "a

"frightening opinion" that "the decision to kill a fully born infant at any stage of development, is a personal and private medical decision."

The Born Alive Infants Protection Act states that any infant "who is completely expelled or extracted from her mother and who is alive" is a person under federal law, regardless of the child's lung development, his or her expected chances of survival or whether the baby survived an abortion.

YOUTH MINISTER WANTED



Saint Amelia Parish, Tonawanda, is seeking a full time youth minister, to begin September 2000. The youth minister works with high school youth, directing the Lifeteen program, offering overnight retreats, providing spiritual direction and counseling and overseeing a range of social and athletic activities. A background in Catholic theology and a talent for relating to young people are essential. Salary commensurate with education and experience.

Send resume to: Search Committee, Saint Amelia Rectory, 210 Saint Amelia Drive, Tonawanda, NY 14150 before August 12.

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