

Catholic-Orthodox Pastoral Consultation in England, 2014

29 September 2014

After almost two years of careful preparation, the first meeting of a new pastoral consultation between Orthodox and Catholics in England took place in Oxford in February 2014. It is jointly sponsored by the Fellowship of St Alban & St Sergius and the Society of St John Chrysostom, the sister societies for East-West unity founded within a year of each other in the 1920s. The initiative has the blessing of the chairman of the Department for Dialogue and Unity of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England & Wales, Archbishop Bernard Longley of Birmingham, and of Archbishop Gregorios of the Greek Orthodox archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain, and Archbishop Elisey of the Russian Orthodox diocese of Sourozh.

Consultation will involve common pastoral concerns, and promote mutual understanding, contact and exchange, including theological dialogue that can contribute to greater unity among the two Churches in the setting of contemporary society in the UK and also disseminate in this country the work of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church.

At the first meeting, the Consultation looked at the place and education of Orthodox children in Roman Catholic schools, as well as present developments in the international dialogue. The second meeting in London on 29 September 2014 reviewed these discussions, and also began to examine questions of marriage and family life with a view to the forthcoming Synod of Bishops of the Catholic Church.

The lifetime of the Consultation is five years in the first instance and will conclude with a final report. Reports and statements may also be issued along the way.

At the end of their September meeting, the Consultation issued a message of solidarity and support for the Christians and their Churches in Iraq and Syria at the present moment of their suffering, dispersal and witness for the sake of faithfulness to Christ.

The members are:

For the Fellowship of St Alban & St Sergius

- Metropolitan Kallistos of Diokleia (Orthodox Co-Chairman and Patron of the Fellowship)
- Archpriest Stephen Platt (Orthodox Co-Secretary and General Secretary of the Fellowship)
- Protopresbyter Ian Graham, rector of the Orthodox Parish of the Holy Trinity, Oxford
- Dr Julia Konstantinovskiy, University of Oxford (Sister Seraphima, Monastery of St John Baptist, Tolleshunt Knights)
- Dr Brandon Gallaher (Lecturer in Theology, University of Exeter)

For the Society of St John Chrysostom

- Archbishop Bernard Longley of Birmingham (Catholic Co-Chairman and Patron of the Society)
- Father Mark Woodruff (Catholic Co-Secretary and Vice-Chairman of the Society)
- Bishop Robert Byrne CO (Auxiliary Bishop of Birmingham)
- Sister Benedict Gaughan osb (Convenor of the East-West Monastic Meetings at St Mildred's Priory, Minster Abbey)
- Anthony O'Mahony (Director of the Centre for Eastern Christianity, Heythrop College University of London)

Co-Secretaries

- Archpriest Stephen Platt
- Fr Mark Woodruff

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