

A Joint Communique on Current Tensions between our Churches in Eastern Europe

1. During its 41st meeting, held in Brighton, Massachusetts, October 18-20, 1990, the Orthodox/Roman Catholic Consultation in the United States took note of recent developments in Eastern Europe which have manifold and immediate implications for relations between our churches. The consultation also took note of the Statement issued on this subject by the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, meeting in Munich- Freising, June 6-15, 1990.
2. In the past months a new atmosphere of political freedom in Eastern Europe has given our churches unexpected and indeed unprecedented opportunities for cooperation, common witness and deeper unity. At the same time rapid political and social changes have been accompanied by serious tensions which, many fear, may threaten our churches' continued progress to unity.
3. With the Joint Commission we deplore all forms of violence, intimidation and coercion in violation of the religious liberty of persons, communities and churches. We also encourage continued efforts by the appropriate ecclesiastical authorities to develop adequate and effective procedures for dealing with specific points of tension.
4. Above all, we call attention to the need for deeper exploration of basic ecclesiological issues and of their practical implications. Especially since the Pan-Orthodox conferences (1961-68), the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) and the mutual lifting of anathemas (1965), our churches have come to recognize that some of the methods and models of union employed by both sides in the past in fact have deepened disagreement and division. Inspired by the example of the first millennium, our churches have begun to meet and work together as sister churches, on the basis of an ecclesiology of communion. Our consultation believes that further reflection on ecclesiological principles and continued practical efforts, in a spirit of Christian love and forgiveness, to overcome past hostility are of vital importance at this critical point in relations between our churches.
5. It is difficult for us in North America living in circumstances very different from those in Eastern Europe, fully to appreciate the complexity of the religious, cultural, political and social situation there. Yet our experience in this consultation leads us to believe that genuine theological dialogue, in a spirit of mutual respect and love, is in fact possible, and that such dialogue can help our churches respond effectively to the many painful practical issues that still divide us. Our Christian hope --indeed the prayer of Jesus "that all may be one"-- demands that we continue, on a sound theological basis, our work together for Christian unity.

Brighton, MA

October 20, 1990
41st Meeting