

MULTI-LATERAL CONSULTATION ON CONCILIARITY AND COMMUNION

"Seeking the unity in Christ that already exists"

The largest Christian Communion in the world – the Catholics, the Orthodox Church, the Lutheran and the Anglicans seek to hold an ecumenical conference of bishops.

The ecumenical consultation seeks to address the following

1. "The Theology of being the church catholic,"
2. "A Creedal Vision of Christian Unity,"
3. "Building on What Unites, Overcoming What Divides" according to our ecclesiological and sacramental theologies.
4. "Future Steps for to develop a Trilateral Communion of the church catholic

It is hoped that the participants embarked on a common search for practical ways to work for Christian unity in the East and West as each faces liberalization from within and outside the church as well as the threat of secularism and militant Islam. The bishops involved and their advisers committed themselves to a careful study of the possible conciliar solutions each body can offer in fostering Christian unity. The bodies seek to establish "**The Multi-lateral Conference on catholicity and communion**" as a structure for developing proposals to share information, cooperate on issues of mission and social justice, and provide ecumenical formation.

By beginning to form a new era on Christian unity amidst the catholic communion of churches, this conference seeks to overcome a long history of mutual indifference, prejudice, and hostility, an inadequate understanding of ecumenism and catholicity, and a lack of continuity in creating structures to carry out a catholic vision for the future that will allow us to address unresolved doctrinal, moral and canonical issues that breach our catholic vocation.

A JOURNEY OF RESTORATION AND HOPE

There are visions and understandings of ecumenism which continue to challenge and inspire us. We know that our ecumenical vocation is not merely a matter of activities and discussions; it is a way of restoring church. Unity is ours through Christ our Lord. In our all too catholic worship and witness, it is time to make visible the unity we have; and strive to remove those obstacles that stand in the way of manifesting and celebrating the unity that is ours in Christ. Thus, the unity of the church catholic is both a gift and a goal. This conference is intended to be a new sign and a sacrament of the unity which God wills for all humanity and all creation. The catholic identity we seek does not come as a denial of individual ecclesiastical identities or histories that have shaped our heritages but as a call to move beyond them to their fullness in Christ and learning from others. The call to a

renewed conciliarism and catholic identity compels us in these difficult times to move forward with Christ, at the center.

In our journey towards that visible unity in Christ, we have encountered many obstacles engendered by the long history of mutual misunderstanding, alienation and provincialism. The sad condition of separation has built walls of prejudices, biases that block the avenues of mutual understanding that have created a compromise in the witness of the three most significant catholic communion on the earth. Ecumenical initiatives have not been lacking in statements and resolutions in workshops and meetings; but structures to support their implementation have been inconsistent. What better model than a church rooted on the call of Christ and the oversight of the apostles and their successors gathered and taking council to forge a new path forward?

Challenges for these churches in an ecumenical conference and consultation

- to foster ecumenical sensitivity, openness and vision, nationally and in each communion;
- to ensure that church leaders in each communion gather regularly for prayer, study and fellowship, to enhance mutual understanding;
- to address the conciliar and creedal questions by all churches in a way that is not limited to national ecumenical bodies;
- to deepen our common identity and spirituality, grounded in Word and Sacrament, as a clear path for visible unity;
- to develop, together, a deeper openness as sister communions with whom we live, and a more profound interaction with the cultures in which we live;
- to enter, together, into a deeper commitment to those who struggle for justice, freedom and identity;
- to prepare ourselves so that catholic churches East and West churches may again make a major contribution to the advance of peace and good will in the 21st Century .

The formation of the The Multi-lateral Conference on Conciliarity and Communion

We consider it significant that the bishops of these churches have committed themselves to form a standing conference that ultimately will lead to the convening of an international ecumenical council of the church to promote and monitor the implementation of the recommendations regarding catholic identity and mission in the world. Finally we invite the churches to join in a prayer offered during our gathering:

*O Loving God, make us people of Hope.
Teach us to be united in the variety of the many gifts*

*with which you have blessed us,
to be a sign in our world
of your universal and eternal ministry with humankind
through the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.
We make our prayer, as always, in the name and
in the Spirit of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen*