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CATHOLIC-ORTHODOX THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUE

Before starting this presentation, since I do not know many of you, attending this conference, I will go through the main developments in the field of Ecumenism from the beginning of the 20th century. Then, once I reach the years of St. Pope John XXIII (1958-1963), I intend to analyze the most important events to our present day.

First, I wish to tell you what Ecumenism is. I am quite sure that many of us, first of all, consult *Wikipedia*. Therefore I will literally quote what *Wikipedia* says about Ecumenism:

Ecumenism, also spelt ***Oecumenism***, is the concept and principle in which Christians who belong to different Christian denominations work together to develop closer relationships among their churches and promote Christian unity. The adjective *ecumenical* is thus applied to any ***interdenominational*** initiative and encourages greater cooperation between Christians and their churches. The fact that all Christians belonging to mainstream Christian denominations profess faith in Jesus Christ and receive baptism according to the Trinitarian formula is seen as being a basis for Ecumenism and its goal of Christian unity. Ecumenists cite John 17: 20-23 as the Biblical grounds of striving for church unity, in which Jesus prays that Christians "may all be one" in order "that the world may know" and believe the Gospel message.¹

It is generally accepted that the so called Great Schism between East and West took place in 1054, although we know that several ruptures came along, especially under Patriarch Photius (810-1893.² However, despite controversies and difficulties, unity was preserved until mid 11th century.

However, I am quite convinced that when Patriarch Michael I Celularius (1043-59)³ and Cardinal Humbert of Silva Candida (1006 [10] – 1061)⁴ excommunicated one another and the Church they represented, they most probably were not aware of the consequences this act carried in itself for more than a millennium. In fact, it was considered yet one more strife, or more profound divergence, between the Church of Rome and that of Constantinople. In Kyiv, for example, the Celularius / Silva Candida act did not change its attitude because when in 1089, pope Urban II (1088-1099) proclaimed as a feast day the transfer of the relics of St. Nicholas from Myra to Bari to be celebrated on 9th May every year⁵, the Church of Constantinople was appalled, whereas in Kyiv it was endorsed by the metropolitan and his synod.⁶ Since then, 9th May is celebrated as a feast day by the Russian Orthodox and the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Churches.

¹ www. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecumenism>. - First two paragraphs.

² Francis Dvornik, *The Photian Schism* – Cambridge. University Press Library 1948 – Reprinted 1970.

³ Franz Tinnefeld, Michael I. Kerullarios, Patriarch von Konstantinopel (1043-1058), in: *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik*, 39 (Wien, 1989), pp. 95-127.

⁴ Rudolf Hüls, *Klerus und Kirchen Roms: 1049–1130*. Tübingen, 1977, pp. 133–34.

⁵ Cfr. *An anonymous Greek account of the transfer of the Body of Saint Nicholas from Myra in Lycia to Bari in Italy*. – Translated by J. McGinley and H. Musurillo, *Bolletino di San Nicola*, N° 10, Studi e testi, October 1980, pp. 3-17.

⁶ Cfr. *Christian Raffensperger*, *The Kingdom of Rus'*. Kalamazoo and Bradford, Adelaide, 2017 – *passim*

After the sad events of 1054, a considerable number of bishops, priests and hieromonks continued to commemorate the Bishop of Rome in the diptychs for about 70 years, or even further.⁷

Historians generally agree that the *Massacre of the Latins* in 1182⁸ and notably the *Sack of Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade* in 1204 sealed the schism between the two Churches.⁹ Pope Innocent III (1198–1216), until recently considered by some Catholics to be one of the prominent popes in the Catholic Church, bears a great deal of responsibility regarding the State of affairs in the Church in the early 13th century.¹⁰

At the first Council of Lyon (1245), which took place during the pontificate of Innocent IV (1243–1254), history reports the presence of the metropolitan of Kyiv, Peter (Akerovyč),¹¹ a sign that he considered himself in communion with the Bishop of Rome. However, the question of restoration of unity between the Churches was not on the agenda during that Council. This Council was poorly prepared and attended.

Unity of Churches certainly was on the agenda during the Second Council of Lyon (1272–74), when Gregory X (1272–1276) was the Pope. Moreover, it was convoked upon request of the Byzantine emperor Michael Palaiologos (1259–1284), and the Union of Churches was proclaimed. It failed because the Latin Church deprived the Eastern Churches of their self-government. The Council's decisions were destined to rejection because of the mistrust the Christian West manifested to the Greeks and Eastern Christians. For the Latins, the "Greeks were stubborn schismatics and heretics".¹² No bishop from the Church of Kyiv attended that Council.

The following participation of the Metropolitan of Kyiv at a general council in the West was that of Gregory Tsamblak (1413–20) at Constance (1414–18), during which Martin V (1417–31) was elected Pope in 1417.¹³ This Council was less interested in the unity of Churches and primarily aimed towards condemning conciliarism and the great Western Schism with its anti-popes. Nevertheless, the invitation, a cceptance and attendance at this Council of the metropolitan of Kyiv clearly prove that communion and mutual recognition did exist between the Church of Rome and that of Kyiv, although he was still considered by the rulers of the Polish-Lithuanian Kingdom as the orthodox metropolitan of Kyiv.¹⁴

⁷ Friedrich Heiler, *Die Ostkirchen*. Ernst Reinhardt Verlag, München / Basel, 1971, pp. 26-31.

⁸ Sophia Senyk, *A History of the Church in Ukraine – To the End of the Thirteenth Century*. Vol. I, Pontificio Istituto Orientale, Roma 1993, pp. 108-18.

⁹ Ibidem

¹⁰ Robert Fossier, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the Middle Ages: 950 – 1250*. Cambridge University Press, 1980, pp. 506-508.

¹¹ Sophia Senyk, o. c., pp. 429-31.

¹² Wilhelm de Vries, *Orthodoxie und Katholizismus – Gegensatz oder Ergänzung?* – Freiburg im Breisgau. Verlag Herder KG 1965, p. 93 – “Der schließliche Fehlschlag der Union von Lyon vertiefte im Westen das Mißtrauen gegenüber den Griechen, die man immer mehr als verhärtete Schismatiker und Häretiker betrachtete”.

¹³ Микола Чубатий (*Mykola Chubatyj*), *Історія Християнства на Русі-Україні* (History of Christianity in Rus'-Ukraine), vol. 2, Rome – New York, 1976, pp. 111-165.

¹⁴ Chubatyj, ibidem. Pp. 120-136 argues that: “...For Metropolitan Tsamblak “the Church of Kyiv wishes to live in harmony with the Church of Rome and recognize the primacy of the Pope in the universal Church of Christ, while spreserving the self-government of the Church of Kyiv in its prime authority: (p. 132).

The Council of Florence (1439) and its Legacy

Twenty-one years later, however, the Council of Ferrara and Florence (1438-44)¹⁵ had as its main objective the restoration of total unity and communion between the Churches of East and West. This was the time of the pontificate of Pope Eugene IV (1431-47), the successor of Martin V. The emperor of Byzantium, John VIII Palaiologos (1425-48), the ecumenical patriarch Joseph II (1416-39, who died during the Council on 10 June 1439 and was buried on Florence). He headed a delegation of 700 members - metropolitans, bishops, archimandrites, monastics, theologians and laypeople. The Western Church was also numerically equally present, with a large number of Church and civil dignitaries. Furthermore, a few years later, the Armenians, Copts (Ethiopians), Syrians, Jacobites, Chaldeans, and the Maronites of Cyprus also attended. The metropolitan of Kyiv, Isidore (1433-58)¹⁶, and Avraam (Avramiy), bishop of Suzdal, and "many clergymen and laymen"¹⁷ represented the Church of Kyivan Rus'.

Full unity and communion was re-established (now the term *unio – uniya* was added). Pope Eugene's IV decree *Laetentur Caeli – Bulla Unionis Graecorum* (6 June 1439) was co-signed by all the conciliar fathers, with the exception of metropolitan Mark Evgenikos of Ephesos (1392 [metropolitan since 1436] - 1444) in Florence. Therefore, this Council acted according to all the prerequisites of an ecumenical council. Full unity and communion were re-established (now the term *unio – uniya* was added). Pope Eugene's IV decree *Laetentur Caeli – Bulla Unionis Graecorum* (6 June 1439) was co-signed by all the conciliar fathers, except for metropolitan Mark Evgenikos of Ephesos (1392 [metropolitan since 1436] - 1444) in Florence. Therefore, this Council acted according to all the prerequisites of an ecumenical council.

Only briefly we state that the later lack of acceptance, or rejection of this Council's decision, was due to the following reasons:

- Lasting ill-memory of the Fourth Crusade of 1204 with its sacking of Constantinople and imposition of a Latin Patriarch in the sphere of the Byzantine empire;
- Lack of preparation on behalf of monastics and faithful;
- General opinion of the political leadership and Church higher dignitaries that Union, followed by a Western crusade against the Ottomans, would save the fall of Constantinople.

¹⁵ *Joseph Gill, SJ, The Council of Florence. Cambridge University Press, 1959 (re-edited in 2011). Cfr. also: Concilium Florentinum – Documenta et Scriptores. Editum consilio et impensis Pontificii Instituti Orientalium Studiorum. Romae 1940-64, 13 volumes.*

¹⁶ Cfr. - *Giovanni Mercati, Scritti d'Isidoro il Cardinale Ruteno, e codici a lui appartenuti. (Studi e testi 46). Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana (BAV), Rome, 1926.*

- *Otto Kresten, Eine Sammlung von Konzilsakten aus dem Besitze des Kardinals Isidors von Kiew. Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse. Denkschriften, Band 123). Wien, 1976.*

- *Karin Groll, Isidoros von Kiew. In: Biographische-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon (BBKL). Band 2, Hamm 1990, pp. 1382-83.*

- *Joseph Gill, Personalities of the Council of Florence and other essays. Oxford, 1964, pp. 64-78.*

- *Peter Schreiner, Ein byzantinischer Gelehrter zwischen Ost und West. Zur Biographie des Isidor von Kiew und seinem Besuch in Lviv (1436). In: Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata. III, 3, 2006, pp. 215-228.*

- *Adolf Ziegler, Die Union des Konzils von Florenz in der russischen Kirche. In: Das östliche Christentum, 4/5, München 2016*

¹⁷ Cfr. *Joseph Gill, o.c. pp. 89, 125, 291, 358, 359, 360, 361. It should be noted that Bishop Avraam (Avramiy), although he co-signed the decree of the council of Florence, was not a partisan of the union.*

- General anti-Latin sentiments rooted deeply within the people of Byzantium as of 1204.

A few years later, the capital city Constantinople fell to Ottoman rule on 29th May 1453, and its last emperor, Constantine XI Palaiologos (1449-1453), was killed in the battle while defending the imperial capital.

Four decades later, the decrees of the Council of Florence were condemned by the Synod in Constantinople in 1484, summoned by Patriarch Symeon (1472-75, 1482-85). This Synod, as a preliminary remark, stated that "the Council of Florence had been not canonically summoned or composed, and so its decrees were null and void"¹⁸. Accordingly, the patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem endorsed this act.¹⁹

Beyond doubt, all these important historical events, to a greater or lesser extent, took place within the synodal and conciliar structure of the Church, be it of the East or West.

The Rise of Muscovy (Moscow)

Isidore was still officially Metropolitan of Kyiv and all Rus'²⁰, although himself of Greek origin. On his way back from Florence to his metropolitanate, he was favourably, or at least neutrally, received by the local clergy and bishops in that part of the metropolitanate of Kyiv that was within the realm of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In Moscow, however, he was imprisoned and considered a traitor of the orthodox faith.

The Grand Duchy of Muscovy (Moscow) was rising in power and influence, and the acceptance of the decrees of Florence was considered in this grand-duchy as betrayal of orthodoxy. The Fall of Constantinople in 1453 was regarded as God's punishment because of the treachery of orthodox signatories at the Florentine Council's decrees. The theory of the Third Rome, with no alternative of a fourth one, was establishing its firm roots and gaining momentum.²¹

The outlook and mentality of the faithful of the pristine Kyivan metropolitanate, now in the State of the Polish-Lithuanian Kingdom, was simply different than that of the people of Muscovy.

¹⁸ Cfr. *Joseph Gill*, o.c. p. 396, rightly states that "the anti-unionist propaganda was so effective because it was so harmonious with the Greek mentality. Historians write freely of a neglect of a psychological preparation of the Greeks for union. Anti-Latinism had for centuries been part of the Greek outlook. It had reached a climax after the capture of Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1204, and had been rekindled by the Council of Lyons (1274) and brought to new heights by the hesychastic controversy of the fourteenth century, which was hardly dying down when the negotiations that led to the Council of Florence were begun. Yet on the eve of that Council the Greeks were more ready than ever before for the union of the Churches..."

¹⁸ Edward Gibbon (ed. by David Womersley), *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Penguin Books, London 1995. Vol. 7, pp. 142-3, note 7.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁰ Cfr. - *Joseph Gill*, o.c., pp. 349-411.

- *Oscar Halecki*, *From Florence to Brest (1439-1596)*. Second Edition, Archon Books 1968.

- *Ihor Mončak*, *Florentine Ecumenism in the Kyivan Church*. Rome, 1987.

- *Borys A. Gudziak*, *Crisis and Reform. The Kyivan Metropolitanate, the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Genesis of the Union of Brest*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1998.

²¹ Cfr. *Alar Laats*, *The Concept of the Third Rome and its political implications*. In: *Kaitsevāe Ühendatud Õppeasutused*, 12/2009, pp. 98-113. Tallinn 2009.

Consequently, the Grand Duke of Moscow, Vasiliy II (1415-62), who after the death of Metropolitan Photiy in 1431, intended to have his protegé, the bishop of Ryazan and Murom, Jonah (date of birth unknown - +1461),²² metropolitan in Moscow, convoked a Synod of the metropolitanate on 15 December 1448, and its bishops elected Jonah metropolitan of Kyiv. He was the last muscovite hierarch with the title of Kyiv since. After his death, the following heads of the Russian Orthodox Church began to carry the title of Metropolitan of «Moscow and All Rus'». Furthermore, the Autocephaly of the Russian Orthodox Church was proclaimed at that Synod. Accordingly, by announcing its Autocephaly, this act marked the end of dependence of the Russian Church from Byzantium. At the same time, from this moment, the Moscow Metropolitanate became directly dependent on the Grand Duke's (later tsar's) power. This non-canonical status of the Russian Orthodox Church lasted until 1589, when Patriarch Jeremias II [Tranos] (in office: 5 May 1572 – 23 November 1579; August 1580 -22 February 1584, and finally from April 1587 until his death. In September 1595) he recognized the Patriarchate of Moscow. This did not worry the grand duke, or later the tsars of Moscow and of Russia, because the ecumenical patriarchs were weak due to the Ottoman occupation of their See, and Moscow was continuously growing in influence and power.

As long as Metropolitan Jonah and Metropolitan Isidore were alive, the situation was abnormal: two metropolitans of Kyiv and all Rus': one in the Polish-Lithuanian Kingdom and in communion with the Bishop of Rome, and the other in the Grand Duchy of Moscow. Therefore Pope Pius II (1458-64), only 15 days after his election, on 3 September 1458, signed the *Bulla*, already addressed to Isidore's successor, Metropolitan Gregory (1458-72), beginning with the words *Decent reputamus et congruum*,²³ in force of which the metropolitanate of Kyiv was divided in two parts: *pars superior* – the territory of the Grand Duchy of Moscow, and the *pars inferior* – the realm of the Polish-Lithuanian Kingdom, and later Commonwealth.

Obviously, this papal decree was never acknowledged, not to mention recognition by the Russian Orthodox Church. It was, nevertheless, positively accepted, and with gratitude, by the king of Poland and the grand duke of Lithuania. The metropolitan of the *partis inferioris* of Kyiv, from now on Gregory, resided in the territories of today's Ukraine and Belarus', in communion with the Bishop of Rome, and went his own separate way from that of the Russian Orthodox Church in Moscow.

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In the political, cultural and global world, as of the 15th century, we enter the period of significant changes, of humanism and renaissance. In 1491 Christopher Columbus discovered America. From the church point of view, however, this is the time of Reformation, launched in 1517 by Martin Luther (1483-1546). King Henry VIII followed suit in 1534, giving birth to Anglicanism and the Church of England. The following popes [Paul III [1534—49, Julius III (1549-50), Marcellus II (1555-55) and Pius IV [1555-65] convoked the Council of Trent (1545-63). In 1571 the battle of Lepanto took place (1571). In 1582 the new Gregorian Calendar was introduced by

²² Metropolitan Jonah was canonized by Macarius, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, at the Moscow Council of 1547.

²³ *Athanasius G. Welykyj, OSBM, Documenta Pontificum Romanorum Historiam Ucrainae Illustrantia* (1075 - 1953). Vol. I, Rome 1953, pp. 145-147.

Pope Gregory XIII (1572-85), abolished the old Julian Calendar, and introduced the new Gregorian Calendar, which created another serious rift between East and West. In 1618-48 the Thirty-Year War in central Europe (1618-48) the Westphalian Peace (1648) followed. Furthermore, in 1683 the armies of the Turkish sultans were finally defeated in the battle for Vienna (1683); the power of the Turkish sultans was finally defeated. Throughout this tumultuous period, as of the end of the Council of Trent in 1563, the Catholic Church went through a long period (until the French Revolution in 1789), of Counter-Reformation. Regarding the Orthodox Church and the Christian East, it is the beginning of a challenging period of so-called partial unions, within all of its positive and negative aspects, begins.

The Union of Brest (1595/96)

We will now concentrate mainly on the Union of Brest. After all, the Eastern Catholic Church of Ukraine and Belarus' is the largest Church *sui iuris*, and the Union of Brest is the most important one of all the "unions" which took place starting from the 16th century.

The 156 years separating the Council of Florence from the Union of Brest were of growth and expansion for the Russian Church and State. On the other hand, for the metropolitanate of Kyiv, this period was indeed the time of troubles and sorrows.²⁴ After the fall of Constantinople, the Ecumenical Patriarchate was in total disarray due to the Ottoman rule, which was primarily concerned to control a patriarch who would be anti-Catholic, because of the Western states and papacy itself were a threat to its expansion in Europe. The bishops and the entire clergy (the eparchial priests were mostly married with numerous children) were poorly educated and thoroughly dependent on the nobility. Monasticism was also in considerable decline.

As mentioned, in 1517, Martin Luther (1483-1546) launched his Reformation, and in that precise year when Pope Leo X (1513-21) was attending the final sessions of the Fifth Lateran Council (1512-17), which, when dealing with Christian East, treated the Eastern Christians of Ruthenian lands with disdain, contempt and scorn.²⁵ The popes of that era, such as Alexander VI (1492-1503), Julius II (1503-13), or Leo X (1513-21), were no examples of saintly bishops... Moreover, Protestantism, particularly Calvinism, was rapidly expanding among the Polish nobility. Catholic Poland was on the verge of becoming protestant. King Henry VIII (1509-47) in the British Isles broke the ties of the Church in England with the Pope and Catholic Church. Scandinavia, without any major effort, accepted the Protestant Reformation, and one must bear in mind that Sweden in those times was very much interested in the developments within Poland, Lithuania, today's Baltic States, Ukraine, Belarus' and Russia. The Swedes embraced Protestantism, and the influence of the Swedish Kingdom in Eastern Europe in those times was very strong until the battle of Poltava (1709). Even an Ecumenical Patriarch, Cyril Lukaris (October 1612 [locum tenens]; 4 November 1620 – 12 April 1623; 22 September – 4 October 1633; 11 October 1633 – 25 February 1634; April 1634 – March

²⁴ Once again we draw the reader's attention to the monographs of *Oscar Halecki, o.c., Ihor Mončak, o.c.,* and *Borys A. Gudziak, o.c.,* as quoted in footnote 20.

²⁵ The highly elaborate monograph of *Petro B. T. Bilaniuk, The Fifth Lateran Council (1512-1517) and the Eastern Churches,* published in Toronto and Munich in 1975, presents the miserable reality of how Eastern Churches were judged and dealt with in the Christian West.

1635, and finally, from March 1637 – 20 June 1638), who lived after the Union of Brest, fell under the spell of Calvinism.

The Counter-Reformation and the Council of Trent (1546-1564), the birth of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) in (1534), their outstanding work in the field of education and development of Christian culture, gave a halt to many of such threats. Saints, like Filippo Neri (1515-95), Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556), Francis Xavier (1506-52) or Peter Canisius (1521-97) brought with them a new spirit within the Catholic Church of Western Europe.

Many students from the Kingdom, or Commonwealth, of Poland and Lithuania, studied in the West, in such cities as Bologna, Würzburg, Leipzig, Jena, Paris, and later in Rome. Eastern Europeans of those days were susceptible and interested in what was happening in the West.

It was also a time of sorrows and troubles for the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which found itself almost permanently in deep need of money. It had to rely primarily on the generosity of the Orthodox Christians living outside the Ottoman empire. The Patriarchs travelled considerably, particularly Jeremias II (Tranos) [1572-79; 1580-84; 1586-95], a truly admirable figure of his Church. He even went to Moscow since in deep financial need. He arrived in the Russian capital on 11th July 1588. Boris Godunov [regent - (1585-98), later tsar – 1598-1605], during Patriarch Jeremias' II stay was the Regent for Tsar Feodor I (1557-98) of Moscow promised him financial assistance on the condition that he recognizes the Patriarchate of Russia and acknowledges the autocephaly of the Russian Orthodox Church. Jeremias II complied, and on 26 January 1589, Job, metropolitan of Moscow (1587-89), was enthroned by him as first Patriarch of Moscow (1589-1605) and all Russia. Following this act, Jeremias also granted autocephaly to the Russian Orthodox Church.

However, on his way back to Constantinople, Jeremias II went to Ukraine and Belarus', where he acted indeed as a patriarch among the orthodox faithful of Ukraine. He deposed the unworthy Metropolitan of Kyiv, Onysyfor Divochka (1583-89), appointed in his place and consecrated Michael Rahoza (1589-99). Before this consecration, he convened a Synod of all the bishops and archimandrites of the Kyiv metropolitanate and ordered them to hold such synods each year

In fact, as of 1590, the Bishops of the Kyiv metropolitanate, under the leadership of its metropolitan, held synods each year, usually on today's Belorus'ian soil, in the city of Brest. Precisely it was during these Synods that the bishops of the Kyivan metropolitanate decided, in the spirit of the Council of Florence, to restore its unity and communion with the Bishop of Rome.²⁶ This initiative meant that the bishops of Belarus' and Ukraine gave up their inactivity, which characterized their idle life throughout almost the entire 16th century. This rebirth of synodality was an indispensable prerequisite for the reform of the Kyivan Church on the basis of traditional ecclesiological principles of the Christian East. It was at these synods, starting from 1590, that the bishops of the metropolitanate of Kyiv reintroduced the synodal and collegial leadership of their Church.

At the Synod of 1591, four bishops already stated that they would reunite and recognize the supremacy of the Pope. All the bishops believed that the Pope could ensure the sacredness of the 'Ruthenian ecclesiastical order', which, as it said, "has always existed in our holy Church". In doing so, they appealed to the King of Poland with the request "to confirm and secure the episcopal privileges, which were written

²⁶ Cfr. *Borys A. Gudziak, o.c.*, pp. 209-244.

down in detail in separate articles".²⁷ The Synod of Bishops listed 33 articles, dated on 11 June 1595, which they considered as a *conditio sine qua non* to re-instate their communion with the Bishop of Rome. They did not use today's expression "Sister Churches". They knew that the Pope was first among bishops, and they equally were intensely aware that their Church has its own theological, spiritual, liturgical and canonical legacy and ecclesiastical tradition. The bishops of the Kyivan Church acted in a synodal and collegial manner.²⁸ The metropolitan did nothing without having consulted his brothers in the episcopacy.

Furthermore, the bishops understood and comprehended the undertaking of Union as a mutual agreement between two sister Churches - the Kyivan and the Roman - and on this basis, they set out their terms in the 33 articles mentioned above.

Moreover, some thirty-five years later, the bishops of the Kyivan Church, under the leadership of metropolitan Josyf-Veliamyn Ruts'kyj (1613-37), asked Pope Urban VIII (1623-44) for his blessing and approval to convene a joint Synod of the catholic and orthodox bishops of the Byzantine rite in Ukraine, to lay the foundation of one united Church in Ukraine, with one patriarch, the orthodox metropolitan Peter Mohyla (Moghila) (1633-47) in communion with the Bishop of Rome. This was the great vision of the two metropolitans, orthodox and catholic, which they called "Unio universalis Ecclesiae", or "Unity between Rus' (orthodox) and Rus' (catholic)". It did not materialize, first because the Pope did not give his approval for a joint synod.²⁹ The two metropolitans, Ruts'kyj and Mohyla, died prematurely: Ruts'kyj at the age of 62, and Mohyla being only 51 years old.

Regretfully, in the post-Tridentine spirit, the Popes and the Roman Curia never considered an authentic union, or rather communion between two Sister Churches, but a submission of the "dissident metropolitanate of Kyiv" (*ecclesia dissidens*) under the Church of Rome. There were also many, who in the spirit of theological and soteriological exclusivism, dealt with the Union as a straightforward *conversion* of Orthodox faithful to the only true Catholic Church, under the guidance of the Bishop of Rome, outside of which there is no salvation.³⁰ Such was the approach within the Catholic Church until Vatican II.

Furthermore, this was the time of the Counter-Reformation, when the Catholic Church was most adamant on soteriological exclusivism (*'extra Ecclesiam [Romanam] nulla salus'*), which was so strongly emphasized and sustained for three centuries[6].

Exactly this is what the Orthodox clearly saw and attentively observed, i.e. that the bishops of the metropolitanate of Kyiv intended one reality, and the 'Romans' meant submission and exclusivism. Precisely this was, as Waclaw Hryniewicz clearly declared, the "basis of uniatism" [7]. Only after Vatican II did the Catholic Church begin to speak

²⁷ Ісидор Патрило, ЧСВВ, (Isydor Patrylo, OSBM), Артикули Берестейської Унії (Articles of the Union of Brest). In: *Analecta Ordinis sancti Basilii Magni*, vol. 15, Rome 1996, pp. 47-102.

²⁸ Cfr. *Articuli ad Unionem cum Ecclesia Romana Pertinentes*. (in Ukrainian, Polish and Latin) in: *De synodis archiepiscopaliibus episcopatus catholici ucrainorum earumque fundamento iuridico expositiones*. Editiones Litterae Nuntiae Archiepiscopi Maioris, n. 1, Castelgandolfo 1970, pp. 62-68. The first sentence, before the 33 articles are listed, states: "Articuli, quorum cautionem perimus a Dominis Romanis, priusquam accedamus ad unionem Romanae Ecclesiae"

²⁹ Cfr. Іван Хома (Ivan Choma), Ідея Спільного Синоду 1629 р. (The Idea of a Joint Synod). – Ivan Choma, *De conamine synodus fraternae inter unitos et dissidents ucrainos a. 1629 peragenda*. In: *Bohoslovia*, vol. 37, Rome 1973, pp. 21-64.

³⁰ Cfr. Waclaw Hryniewicz, *OMI*, Ecumenical lessons from the past: soteriological exclusivism at the basis of uniatism. In: *Kirchen im Kontext unterschiedlicher Kulturen*. – Göttingen, 1991, pp. 521-533.

in terms of 'Sister Churches', and that salvation also 'subsists' (*subsistit*) in the Churches, not in communion with the Bishop of Rome. In the 17th century, such considerations were out of the question.

With this kind of understanding and under pressure, the approach and mentality towards unity and communion of Churches suddenly changed. *Uniatism* began to mean loss of identity, latinization, completely absorbing and captivating in the Roman and Western Latin Church. So Eastern Catholics started to latinize their liturgical rite, dress as Western clerics did, shave their beards, be as close as possible to the Latins. And when Pope Benedict XIV (1740-58) proclaimed the principle of *Praestantia Ritus Latini*^[8], the liturgical rite of many Eastern Catholics became unrecognizable to their Orthodox brethren. The particular canon law of Eastern Churches was not taken into account. The assurance that synods of bishops can elect, nominate and consecrate bishops (*jus eligendi, nominandi ac consecrandi*) of an Eastern Catholic Church, without informing the Holy See, never materialized. Synods that have, besides consultative, also the deliberative, administrative and executive power (*facultas consultativa, deliberativa, administrativa ac executiva*) were not even considered. Moreover, synodality with its specific structure in the Eastern Catholic Churches was practically was not taken in consideration or made redundant. In the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church, after the Union of Brest, only two synods took place from 1596 until Vatican II: in 1720 in Zamosć and 1891 in L'viv. And the apostolic delegate on those occasions had more power than the metropolitan himself. It is sad to affirm that these Churches and their faithful became hybrids, i.e. they abandoned their heritage and never became fully-fledged Latins or Westerners. For the Orthodox, they were traitors of their faith, and for the Latins, they were second class citizens because of the *praestantia ritus latini*.³¹ Only with Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) did the situation improve,³² with many setbacks, until Vatican II.

The Russian Orthodox Church from 1589 until 1917.

The newly created Patriarchate of Moscow, with the support of the grand dukes and subsequently tsars, grew consistently. There was a major crisis with the liturgical reform of Patriarch Nikon (1652-58; died in 1681) and the division caused by the Old Believers (*Starovyery*) or Old Ritualists (*Staroobryadtsy*) precisely because they did not accept Nikon's reforms. However, the official Orthodox Church until 1917 continuously enjoyed the protection of the tsar – sovereign and autocrat. Although the tsar had a unique position in the governance of this Church, the patriarchs regularly, always with the tsar's approval, convoked synods and councils according to need.

The challenge increased with Peter I, known more as Peter the Great (1682-1725). A great reformer and admirer of the West, officially, he was orthodox, nevertheless with strong pro-protestant inclinations. He made Metropolitan Theophan Prokopovych (1681-1736), of Ukrainian origin, a former Eastern rite catholic who studied in Rome and was true of the highest intelligence, who also underwent protestant influences, his leading ecclesiastical strategist and reformer. Upon the death of Patriarch Adrian (1690-1700) in 1700,³³ Peter I prevented the election of a new

³¹ Cfr. *Wilhelm de Vries*, Rom und die Patriarchate des Ostens. Verlag Karl Alber, Freiburg / München 1963, pp. 210-12 and 258-60.

³² Cfr. *Rosario Esposito*, Leone XIII e l'Oriente Cristiano. Rome 1961.

³³ Hans-Joachim Härtel, *Spiritual Regulation of Peter the Great*. In: *Religion Past and Present*. Brill Publishers, Leiden (Netherlands) 2016.

patriarch and appointed another Ukrainian instead, Stefan Yavorsky (1658-1722), as *locum tenens* to the patriarchal See. Prokopovych was nominated Metropolitan of Pskov, although he resided in St. Petersburg, and there he wrote the *Духовный Регламент - Spiritual Regulation*³⁴ in 1721, i.e. by-laws for the new church structures. In 1721 emperor Peter established the *Ecclesiastical College* to govern the Church ("college", or, "kolleghia", a term borrowed from the Swedish governmental system), soon renamed it the *Holy Synod*, which, as a public body, acted as the general church administration from 1721 to 2 March 1917. The tsar was the supreme Judge, and the Holy Synod was permanently under the supervision of a *Oberprokuror*, always a layman reporting everything faithfully to the sovereign.

Such a structure could hardly correspond to what an Orthodox Church understands as Synodal governance in Eastern Churches. Nevertheless, it survived almost two centuries. However, it was a far-reaching decision of the leadership and laity of the Russian Orthodox Church to re-establish the Patriarchate as it existed until 1700, after the abdication of the last tsar Nicholas II (1894-1917).

In 1917/18, at the Local Council of Moscow, a true and authentic synodal structure of the Russian Orthodox Church was reborn.

Sobornost

A concise definition of the term *Sobornost* could be as a teaching (predominantly in Russia) Orthodox ecclesiology of the dependence of the Church on her Councils. We should not draw a parallel to conciliarism in the Catholic Church of the 14th – 15th centuries. *Sobornost* became a general topic of theological discussion, particularly in 19th century Russia as an alternative to the then official 'synodal' system with submission of the Church to the State, as envisioned by Tsar Peter I. The Local Council of Moscow (1917-18) constitutes a sort of triumph of the teaching on *Sobornost*, and it should not be discarded in the theological and ecumenical dialogue, since it can, in a great extent, serve as a model towards applying the principle of Conciliarity within the future reunited Church.

Furthermore, one should bear in mind that the *Sobornost* concept played a significant role in the ecclesiastical reform discussions in the 19th century in both Russian and other Orthodox Churches. In the 20th century, it gained its primary relevance with efforts to re-establish the doctrine of the Church, becoming the most important concept of Orthodox ecclesiology. Since the beginnings of the Church, the concept included anthropological and social-theoretical aspects, which found their way into theological and philosophical reflection. The essential purpose of the concepts associated with the term *Sobornost* was to synthesize a single Church towards the community of Churches within Christ's universal Church.

Russian Orthodox thinkers such as Wladimir Solovyov (1853-1900), son of the famous historian Sergey (1820-79), Slavophiles, as Ivan Kireyevsky (1806-56) and Aleksey Khomyakov (1804-60), and later metropolitans Anthony Khrapovyts'ky (1863-1936) and Evloghij Gheorghievs'kij (1868-1946) were convinced supporters of *Sobornost*, just as the elected patriarch at the Moscow Council of 1917/18. Tikhon Bellavin (1917-1925). Wladimir Solovyov, in his ecumenical approach, saw no obstacle

³⁴ Once again cfr. *Hans-Joachim Härtel*, *Spiritual Regulation of Peter the Great*. In: *Religion Past and Present*. Brill Publishers, Leiden (The Netherlands) 2016.

in including the Pope, as first of all bishops, in such a *soborna* Church. In his letter to the bishop of Djakovo, Josip Juraj Strossmayer (1815-1905), of 21 September 1886, Solovyov explains very clearly how he sees the inter-connection between the ministry of the Pope, papal primacy, as defined by Vatican I, and the teaching of *Sobornost*.³⁵

The term *Sobornost* derives from *Sobor*, which in Slavic idioms has multiple co-related meanings: a *sobor* is the eparchial bishop's *cathedral church*, and it is also an ecclesial *gathering, assembly, or Council*. Therefore it reflects the concept of the Church, as an *ἐκκλησία*. The Slavophiles intended *Sobornost* as an intrinsic quality of the whole Church; i.e. the participation of all the baptized in the life of the Church, its catholicity, and not only the role as a council of bishops.³⁶

The Catholic Church should not be afraid of the term *Sobornost* because it is somewhat similar to the teachings of Vatican II. Once International Theological Commission between the Catholic Church and Orthodox Churches will finalize its directives regarding conciliarity and synodality, it would be worthwhile to give *Sobornost* an ecumenical dimension, acceptable to the Orthodox and Catholics, and even perhaps to the Protestant Churches.

The Moscow Council (1917-1918)³⁷

One of the most important events in the history of the Russian Orthodox Church is the Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church of 1917/18. One can only admire those bishops, priests and lay people, who in the most adverse circumstances of the two revolutions of 1917, convened and took so many decisions of paramount importance in the life of the Church. It was a response, both to the collapse of the "synodal" system of the tsarist empire and the necessity of reforms, which Russia's Church so badly needed. Synodality is apparent in the long preparation of the Council, which involved all the best forces of the Church. It also manifests itself in the composition (564 members, including 227 from the bishops and clergymen, 299 from the laity) and the decision-making procedures of the Council. In its decrees, the Council developed a pattern of the Church leadership that combined primatial (restoration of the Patriarchate) and synodal elements, theologically founded on the concept of *Sobornost*. According to the conciliar decisions, "the supreme authority – legislative, administrative, judicial, and supervisory – belongs to the Local Council periodically convoked, comprised of bishops, clergymen, and laypeople".³⁸ The government of Church affairs between the Councils "belongs to the All-Russian Patriarch together with the Holy Synod and the Supreme Church

³⁵ Cfr. *Собрание сочинений Владимира Сергеевича Соловьева*. Том XI. Издательство Жизнь с Богом – (*Collection of Works of Wladimir Sergejevich Solovyov*. Volume 11. Publishers *Life with God*). Brussels 1969, pp. 380-86.

³⁶ One of the Slavophiles, Ivan Kireyevsky, defined *Sobornost* as "the sum total of all Christians of all ages, past and present, comprise one indivisible, eternal living assembly of the faithful, held together just as much by the unity of consciousness as through the communion of prayer", in: *Ninian Smart, John Clayton, Patrick Sherry, Steven T. Katz*, *Nineteenth-Century Religious Thought in the West*. Cambridge University Press, 1988. p. 183.

³⁷ The book of *Hyacinthe Destivelle, O.P., Concile de Moscou (1917-1918)* is by all means the best study of this local council. An English translation of this monograph was published by the University of Notre Dame Press in Notre Dame, Indiana, in 2015.

³⁸ Cfr. *Собрание определений и постановлений Священного Собора Православной Российской Церкви 1917-1918 гг.* (*Collection of definitions and decrees of the Holy Council of the Russian Orthodox Church of 1917-18*). В 4-х вып., вып. 1, Moscow 1994, p. 3.

Administration".³⁹ However, because of persecution of the Church by the Bolsheviks, this pattern could not be implemented in the Russian Church.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the Council anticipated the thoughts of the 20th century on Synodality, especially those of the Second Vatican Council. It can still serve as a powerful source of inspiration concerning the relationship between primacy and synodality.

One should also mention Patriarch Tikhon (Belavin) [1917-25], elected during this Council as the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, a saintly man, who with his life fully deserved to be canonized as a saint in 1981, as indeed it was precisely done by the Church of which he was head. He was once again glorified in 1989. Patriarch Tikhon was, by all means, a man of great spirituality and prayer who endured the hardships of persecution and continuous harassment of the atheist communist regime.

It is worth disclosing the personal friendship that developed after the revolution between Patriarch Tikhon and the first Exarch of the Russian Greek-Catholic Church, who also was beatified by Pope John-Paul II in 2001, Leonid Fyodorov (1879-1934).⁴¹ This friendship between two saintly people is a beautiful example of what Ecumenism of martyrs means. Especially in times of persecutions, holy people seek what unites Christians, and not what separates, and are more than usually aware of the fact that they are Christians, followers of Christ, thus seeking accord and unity.

Ecumenism of Martyrs

Precisely the friendship between Patriarch Tikhon and Exarch Fyodorov are one of the most beautiful witnesses of how martyrdom and sufferings unite Christians. After the revolution, the Russian Orthodox Church and its bishops, priests, and faithful carried the cross of martyrdom and grief, for almost 25 years. From a human point of view it was a challenging time for all Christians living in the USSR. However, the suffering and the *martyria* also purified the minds and prejudices of the people.

At the end of World War II, more precisely in September 1943, Stalin's persecution of the Russian Orthodox Church ceased to a certain extent. However, it had been severely discriminated against once more in the time of Nikita Khrushchev's (1953-64) period of his ruling. Then it was the turn of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church to go through 43 years of underground life of a Church living in the catacombs. Cardinal Josyf Slipyj (1944-84) was imprisoned for 18 years, deported and had to work in various Gulags in Jeniseisk, Pečora, Vorkuta, Krasnoyarsky Kraj, Mordovia and other internment camps. While being confined, for obvious reasons, he was very prudent and careful in his contacts with Christians of various denominations. Once in freedom, however, and having undertaken the whole process of Vatican II, he became an outstanding promoter of the ecumenical dialogue. On 28 July 1980, he wrote a report on *The Church of the Martyrs*, in which we read:

³⁹ Cfr. Деяния Священного Собора Православной Российской Церкви 1917-1918 гг. в 11 т., 5. (*Acts of the Holy Council of the Russian Orthodox Church of 1917-1918*). In 11 volumes, vol. 5. Moscow, , Новоспасский монастырь (Novospasskij monastery) 1996, p. 325.

⁴⁰ In the Russian Church itself after 1988 a "patriarchal-synodal" system has established in which the central role belongs to the Council of bishops while the Local Council is convoked only for the elections of a new Patriarch. The Patriarch governs the Church together with the Holy Synod and the Supreme Church Administration between the assemblies of the Council of bishops, summoned by the Patriarch with the regularity once in 2 years.

⁴¹ Cfr. Диакон Василий, ЧСВ – Леонид Фёдоров, Жизнь и деятельность. - *Diaconus Basilius, OSB, Leonidas Fiodoroff. De vita et operibus enarratio*. Edition of "Studion", Рим – Romae 1966.

In 2001 St. Pope John Paul II (1978-2005) went even further. *"Although today the so-called œcumenical dialogue is being carried on with the greatest zeal, it is unfortunately limited to the small circle of the higher clergy and the experts. The people are brought into it very little in the West and not at all in the Soviet Union. But in the Soviet Union the cross of persecution borne together has given rise to a true ecumenism which, purified by uncompromising confession of the faith and the blood of the martyrs, reaches down to the most fundamental principle of the gospel: to seek what is of God and not what is of men. For Catholics and Orthodox, Baptists and other denominations suffer in the same way for Christ's sake. This suffering makes them all in a similar way children of God and of His Church. This is a gain of inestimable value. Modern ecumenists would do well not to lose sight of this new state of affairs.*⁴²

”
In his sermon on 27th June 2001 in L'viv he pronounced these words during the Byzantine rite liturgy:

*Together with these martyrs Christians of other confessions were also persecuted and killed on account of Christ. Their joint martyrdom is an urgent call for reconciliation and unity. This is the Ecumenism of the martyrs and witnesses of faith, which indicates the path of unity to the Christians of the twenty-first century. May their sacrifice be a practical lesson of life for all. This is certainly not an easy task. During the last centuries, too many stereotyped ways of thinking, too much mutual resentment and too much intolerance have accumulated. The only way to clear the path is to forget the past, ask forgiveness of one another and forgive one another for the wounds inflicted and received, and unreservedly trust the renewing action of the Holy Spirit. These martyrs teach us to be faithful to the twofold commandment of love: love of God, love of our brothers and sisters.*⁴³

It is a pity that the Christians, who were so united when they suffered and were persecuted, ceased continuing to do so once freedom was restored. A true challenge for the future.

The Question of Uniatism.

There are two words among ecumenists today, which are pronounced with particular venom: *uniatism* and *proselytism*. Whilst proselytizing is being considered to be in some decline, *uniatism* continues to be applied to all Catholics of Eastern rite.

The paradox consists in the fact that not the Orthodox were first, who criticized *uniatism*. The Catholics were the first aware of its negative consequences. Specifically, Fr. Cyrille Korolevskij, alias Jean François Charon (1878-1959), who 91 years ago wrote the lengthy article with the title *L'Uniatisme*⁴⁴, which today is qualified

⁴² Cfr, *Kirche in Not/Ostpriesterhilfe*, Special number of *The Mirror*, N° 2, Königstein/TS., March 1981, p. 14.

⁴³ Cfr. Homily of Pope John Paul II on 27th June in L'viv (Ukraine). Cfr. *L'Osservatore Romano*, 28 June, p. 1

⁴⁴ Cyrille Korolevskij, *L'Uniatisme*, published in *Irénikon* N° 5-6, in Prieuré d'Amay S/Meuse (Belgium), 1927.

as the best explanation and account on this subject ever written. I strongly suggest that each member of our Commission read this booklet, which I know has been translated into English and Ukrainian. According to my knowledge, no one in the Orthodox Church analyzed so profoundly, criticized and destroyed the concept of *uniatism*, as this Eastern Byzantine rite catholic priest, of French origin, and counselor of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, did.

It is true that there still are people in the Catholic Church that could be considered *uniates*. But since Vatican II, they are in constant decrease, and within another fifty years there will hardly be a trace of *uniatism*, or *uniates*. The reason is simple. Since Vatican II, being an Eastern Rite Catholic in no way means being a *uniate*. St. Pope John Paul II clearly stated in 1987, that the Christian faith St. Volodymyr embraced with his people of Kyivan Rus' in 988, was "orthodox in faith, and catholic in lovie. in unity and communion with the Church of Constantinople and that of Rome, when the entire Church was still one and undivided.

The question or issue on uniatism has been dealt with thoroughly in Balamand on 17th – 24th June 1993. An extensive Declaration *Uniatism, Method of Union of the Past, and the Present Search for Full Communion* of 24 June 1993⁴⁵ was pronounced and published with the belief that it would once and for all put an end to the controversy. Although initially, after its publication, the Eastern Catholics were somewhat hesitant and apprehensive about the *Balamand Declaration*⁴⁶, thanks to the wisdom of their church leaders, who explained that they not only have the right to exist, but shall be respected and listened to as *Ecclesiae particulares sui iuris*, the document was accepted and positively recognized.

I draw the attention to the correspondence of head of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church, Cardinal Myroslav-Ivan Lubachivsky (1984-2000), with Cardinal Edward-Idris Cassidy on this matter published in *dLogos*⁴⁷ In his Pastoral Letter of 7 April 1994 *On the Unity of Holy Churches*⁴⁸ Cardinal Lubachivsky explained in detail the significance of the Document of Balamand. Since this pastoral letter of Cardinal Lubachivsky has been endorsed by the Synod of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in 1994, the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church rejects *uniatism* as a method and model of the past, and I am sure that a substantial majority of Eastern Catholics are unanimous with the Ukrainian Catholics in this regard. Incidentally, the expression *uniat*, or *uniats'kyj* has always been used to offend someone, and Eastern Catholics simply do not want to be addressed in such a manner.

There is an important detail when dealing with the question of *uniatism*. We should not forget that the Holy Spirit speaks and inspires people of all faiths and outlooks. There are bishops, priests, monks, nuns and laywomen and men who, whether they were born Orthodox, Protestant or Anglican, for different reasons want to become Eastern Catholics. It has been a mistake in the past not to accept these people to the Catholic Church because of the objection of *uniatism*. A community, or individuals who arrive at such a significant conclusion nowadays, do not take such a decision because of

⁴⁵ Cfr. Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church (24th June 1993). *Uniatism, method of union of the past, and the present search for full communion*. 7th Plenary Session, June 17th – 24th 1993, Vatican City 1994.

⁴⁶ Cfr. Myroslav Ivan Cardinal Lubachivsky, *Letter to Cardinal Cassidy (3 August 1993)*. In: *Logos: A Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*. Vol. 35 (1994), N^o 1-4, pp. 417-24.

⁴⁷ Cfr. Pastoral Letter of His Beatitude Myroslav Ivan Cardinal Lubachivsky *On the Unity of Holy Churches to the Clergy and Faithful of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church*. L'viv, 7th April 1994.

⁴⁸ Ibidem.

opportunism, or other irrelevant reasons. If a bishop, after meticulous scrutiny, realizes that such a person really wants to be a Catholic of the Eastern rite, that person's wish should not be discarded, or declined, because of fear that it might be presented as *uniatic*, with reference to *proselytism*. *Uniatism*, as a term, should not be used anymore among ecclesiastics and theologians of all nations, especially within the ecumenical dialogue. *Uniatism's* time is over.

There will be the question of what the Catholic Church understands under the concept of *Ecclesia particularis sui iuris*, particularly after the promulgation of the *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches* (1990)⁴⁹. The Catholics still do not adequately know what *Jus Particulare Ecclesiae orientalis sui iuris* means, not to mention the recently more repeated concept *Jus Speciale Ecclesiae sui iuris*, which still lacks adequate clarification. All this is happening when also the Orthodox are endeavouring to find a proper and updated clarification of this the concept of *Autocephaly* – *Autokefalía* represents and denotes. The recent article of Archbishop Job of Telmessos, *The Reasons to Proclaim or to Restore Autocephaly in the 20th and 21st centuries*⁵⁰ is a clear sign of such endeavours. Furthermore, Orthodox and Catholic theologians and canonists should research whether there is a correlation between the understanding and meaning of what they define under *Autokefalía* and *Ecclesia Particularis sui iuris*. Could it not actually mean the one and same thing, but in communion with the Bishop of Rome? This certainly would be a challenging task for our Joint International Mixed Theological Commission between the Catholic Church and Orthodox Churches to find an authentic and truly ecumenical solution to this important question.

Finally, Christians of East and West, Orthodox, Catholics, or Protestant, have shown great solidarity to the Christian East.

This will be possible, if we will truly want, i.e. desire such unity and communion. Because "where there is a will, there is a way". Moreover, let us not forget that "what is impossible for man is possible with God" (Lk. 18,27). And to this I may add: What is impossible for man is made possible with God.

Finally, I wish once again to quote Pope Francis' Sermon in the Church of St. George in Phanar (Istanbul) on 30 November 2014:

I believe that it is important to reaffirm respect for this principle as an essential condition, accepted by both, for the restoration of full communion, which does not signify the submission of one to the other, or assimilation. Rather, it means welcoming all the gifts that God has given to each, thus demonstrating to the entire world the great mystery of salvation accomplished by Christ the Lord through the Holy Spirit. I want to assure each one of you here that, to reach the desired goal of full unity, the Catholic Church does not intend to impose any conditions except that of the shared profession of faith. Further, I would add that we are ready to seek together, in light of Scriptural teaching and the experience of the first millennium, the ways in which we can guarantee the needed unity of

⁴⁹ Cfr. *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches. Latin – English Edition*. Published by the Canon Law Society of America, Washington, D.C. 20064, 1992.

⁵⁰ Cfr. Archbishop Job of Telmessos, *The Reasons to Proclaim or to Restore Autocephaly in the 20th and 21st centuries*. In: <http://www.telmessos.eu/2018/05/03/the-reasons-to-proclaim-or-to-restore-autocephaly-in-the-20th-and-21st-centuries/>.

the Church in the present circumstances. The one thing that the Catholic Church desires, and that I seek as Bishop of Rome, “the Church which presides in charity”, is communion with the Orthodox Churches. Such communion will always be the fruit of that love which “has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (cf. Rom 5:5), a fraternal love which expresses the spiritual and transcendent bond which unites us as disciples of the Lord.⁵¹

L'viv, 12th July 2021.