

**Saint Irenaeus Joint Orthodox-Catholic Working Group - Groupe de travail orthodoxe-catholique Saint-Irénée  
Gemeinsamer orthodox-katholischer Arbeitskreis Sankt Irenäus**

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## **Communiqué – Taizé 2016**

The Saint Irenaeus Joint Orthodox-Catholic Working Group gathered for its thirteenth annual meeting from 2 to 6 November 2016 at Taizé (France), at the invitation of the Taizé Community. The 2016 meeting was chaired by the Orthodox Co-President of the Working Group, Archbishop Job (Getcha) of Telmessos.

At the opening session on Wednesday evening, November 2, the group met with the Prior of Taizé, Frère Alois. In the course of the week, members of the Working Group shared a meal with the monastic community. Throughout the meeting, the members of the group attended the daily prayers of the Community. On Sunday, the participants attended the Divine Liturgy in the old chapel of Taizé, and the Catholic Eucharist in the Church of Reconciliation.

This year's meeting concentrated on developing the hermeneutical, historical, and systematic dimensions of primacy and synodality, with the goal of preparing a common statement, which the Irenaeus Group hopes to complete in the near future. The papers dealt with the hermeneutics of dogmas, with the period of confessionalisation (16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries), and with authority in the Church from a systematic perspective. The reflections of this year's meeting were summarized by the participants in the following theses:

### *Theses on the hermeneutics of dogma*

1. The Church has defined important aspects of her faith in words as borders (*horoi*) in order to clarify controversial points. Although dogmas articulate God's revelation usually with human words, their linguistic forms do not express exhaustively the divine mysteries. This articulation engages the entire human person in a creative way. Therefore a serious recognition of the human aspect – including history, language, culture, diversity of experience – in the hermeneutical explanation of dogmas is necessary.
2. The hermeneutics of dogmas has the task of assessing the various unfoldings (*anaptyxeis*) of the apostolic heritage throughout history, taking into account the respective context, and of discerning the extent to which those unfoldings are legitimate expressions of the faith that is articulated in the sources.
3. Hermeneutical work on the Church's deposit of faith and on dogmatic expressions can lead to new insights. In the life of the Church, these insights are important insofar as they relate to the salvation of human beings.
4. The hermeneutical work on dogmas encompasses not only the theoretical level, but may also help to evaluate Church life and practice.

### *Theses on the period of confessionalisation (16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries)*

5. During the Reformation, Lutherans sought support from the Orthodox, as did the Anglicans later on. Although the Orthodox rejected these overtures, they were inspired by Protestantism in using the model of “confessional books”. These drew not only on traditional Orthodox, but also on Protestant and/or Catholic sources. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Georges Florovsky strongly criticized these developments as a deviation (“pseudomorphosis”) – a point that historians and theologians continue to debate.
6. In the wake of the Protestant Reformation, both Catholics and Orthodox increasingly adopted confessional models of self-understanding. In spite of this problematic reduction of ecclesial identity to confessional formulae, this period also witnessed creative developments in these churches.
7. This period was marked in particular by developments in spirituality and mutual influence between East and West. Ignatius of Loyola, for example, drew heavily on Eastern patristic sources. On the Eastern side, Nicodemus the Hagiorite edited such classics as *The Unseen Warfare* of the Theatine Lorenzo Scupoli. And the *Philocalia*, the work of Nicodemus and Macarius of Corinth, first published in Venice, was soon translated into Slavonic, and still exercises a great influence in the East and the West alike.
8. While theology in this period was largely polemical, nevertheless theologians such as the Orthodox Maximos Margounios and the Catholic Leo Allatius openly expressed the substantial convergence of the two churches. The polemical context in which these churches found themselves led to the development of systems of higher education, such as the Academy of Peter Moghila in Kiev or the Jesuit academies throughout Europe.
9. Orthodox polemicists typically used Catholic arguments against the Protestants, as in the dispute about the Eucharist, and Protestant arguments against the Catholics, as in their arguments against papal primacy. Similarly, Roman Catholics used Orthodox arguments against Protestants; for instance, Nikolaos Cabasilas’ statement on the real presence in the Eucharist was cited by the Council of Trent.

### *Theses on authority within the Church*

10. The notions of authority and power, present in every human society, take a particular meaning within the Church. Power (*dynamis*) appears firstly as an attribute of God. Scriptural texts present his power over all “gods” and over creation. In this sense, his supreme power can be identified with God’s glory. This power is always related to his love for Israel and all humanity, his gift of salvation, his forgiveness and, especially, his mercy. The New Testament regards God’s power as acting in Jesus. The risen Christ, who had received from God full authority (*exousía*), empowered the Apostles in and with his Holy Spirit. Following Jesus’ commandment, authority in the Church must not be understood as domination but as service to God’s people based on the power of the cross.
11. As Christ is the head of the Church, he is the source of all authority within the Church. The authority of a synod and of the one who presides over it is rooted in the mystery of the Church as the body of Christ in the Holy Spirit.
12. Synodality, being an essential dimension of the Church, reflects her mystery, and, as such, is connected to the authority of the whole people of God who, through the *sensus fidelium*, aroused and sustained by the Holy Spirit, are able to discern what is truly of God.

At the end of their meeting the members of the Irenaeus Group expressed warm thanks to the Taizé Community for the hospitality and the spiritual atmosphere which encouraged their work.

The Saint Irenaeus Joint Orthodox-Catholic Working Group is composed of 26 theologians, 13 Orthodox and 13 Catholics, from a number of European countries and the USA. It was established in 2004 at Paderborn (Germany), and has met since then in Athens (Greece), Chevetogne (Belgium), Belgrade (Serbia), Vienna (Austria), Kiev (Ukraine), Magdeburg (Germany), Saint Petersburg (Russia), Bose (Italy), Thessaloniki (Greece), Rabat (Malta), and on Halki near Istanbul (Turkey). It was decided at Taizé to hold the next meeting of the Irenaeus Group in October 2017 at Caraiman Monastery in Romania.

