

**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 – Graz 2018**

The Saint Irenaeus Joint Orthodox-Catholic Working Group gathered for its fifteenth annual meeting from 17 to 21 October 2018 in Graz (Austria), at the invitation of the Diocese of Graz-Seckau and the University of Graz. The 2018 meeting, which took place in the Mariatrost Diocesan House of Formation, was chaired by the Catholic co-president of the Working Group, Bishop Gerhard Feige of Magdeburg, and by its new Orthodox co-president, Romanian Metropolitan Serafim (Joantă) of Germany, Central and Northern Europe.

At the opening session on Wednesday evening, October 17, the Irenaeus Group was warmly welcomed in the town hall by Peter Piffli-Perčević, member of the city council of Graz and chairman of the Graz section of the Pro Oriente Foundation. In their response, the two co-chairs expressed their gratitude for the cordial reception and their hope for a fruitful meeting.

In the course of the meeting, the participants attended morning prayers in both traditions. On Saturday night, Bishop Gerhard Feige presided over a Roman Catholic Eucharist in the pilgrimage church of Mariatrost. On Sunday, the participants attended the Divine Liturgy at the Romanian Orthodox parish in Graz, which was presided over by Metropolitan Serafim.

On October 18, the Working Group unanimously adopted the document “Serving Communion. Re-thinking the Relationship between Primacy and Synodality” on which it had worked for the last several years. The Irenaeus Group hopes that the text will contribute to the theological dialogue between the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches. That evening, a public presentation of the document took place at the Meerscheinschlössl within the University of Graz. After welcoming words by the Roman Catholic bishop of Graz-Seckau, Wilhelm Krautwaschl, and the vice-dean of the Theological Faculty, Rainer Bucher, addresses were delivered by Bishop Andrej (Čilerdžić), head of the Serbian Orthodox diocese of Austria and Switzerland, and by Bishop Gerhard Feige. Following this launch, copies of the study document were distributed to those in attendance. The original English version of the document is available online at:  
[http://www.moehlerinstitut.de/pdf/texte/kommunikues/2018\\_graz\\_serving\\_communion.pdf](http://www.moehlerinstitut.de/pdf/texte/kommunikues/2018_graz_serving_communion.pdf)

During the meeting, the members had the opportunity to encounter colleagues and students at the Theological Faculty and members of the Ecumenical Forum of Christian Churches in Styria. In its internal deliberations, the group discussed means of making the newly-adopted document widely known in the scholarly community and among the Churches. The group decided to make available printed copies of the English, French, and German versions, and to arrange for translation into different languages as soon as possible.

The members discussed two papers which once more addressed the issue of synodality and primacy, aiming at deepening the work done so far. The first was by Nikolaos Loudovikos entitled “Christological or Analogical Primacy: Ecclesial Unity and Universal Primacy in the Orthodox Church”. Loudovikos stressed the unique primacy of Christ and its relationship to the ecclesiological notions of primacy and conciliarity. The second paper, by Thomas Bremer, was entitled “Synodality in the Catholic Church: Reality and Prospects”. Bremer discussed the synodal

structures in the Catholic Church and reflected on the possible impact of the changes introduced by Pope Francis in relation to the Synod of Bishops.

The members also held a discussion on the current crisis in Orthodoxy resulting from the conflict between the Patriarchates of Constantinople and Moscow over the Orthodox Church in Ukraine. This discussion took place in a very warm and fraternal atmosphere. In addition, they extensively discussed possibilities for their future work following the publication of the study. It was decided to concentrate on issues of unity and schism, by examining case studies and patterns of unity, together with an exploration of the relevant terminology.

At the end of their deliberations, the members of the Irenaeus Group expressed warm thanks to the diocese of Graz-Seckau, the Pro Oriente Foundation, and the Theological Faculty of the University of Graz for the hospitality and the spiritual atmosphere which inspired 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, the Middle East, and the Americas. It was established in 2004 at Paderborn (Germany), and has subsequently met in Athens (Greece), Chevetogne (Belgium), Belgrade (Serbia), Vienna (Austria), Kiev (Ukraine), Magdeburg (Germany), Saint Petersburg (Russia), Bose (Italy), Thessaloniki (Greece), Rabat (Malta), on Halki near Istanbul (Turkey), at Taizé (France), and in the Caraman Monastery (Romania). At its meeting in Graz, the group gratefully accepted the invitation of the Serbian Orthodox diocese of Zahum, Herzegovina and the Coastlands to hold its next meeting in October 2019 in Trebinje (Bosnia and Herzegovina).

