

Speech by His Eminence the Metropolitan of Switzerland Jérémie

I participate with a great joy in this important Theological Conference under the title 'Synodality and its implementation', on the one hand, because this subject is at the center of the theme of the Bilateral Dialogue between the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches, and, on the other hand, because the in-depth interlocutions of the renowned speakers will present the theological aspects or propositions that could be used for the elaboration of the common theological texts of this Dialogue.

My joy is even greater because at this Theological Colloquium participate not only reputed professors from the three Theological Institutions, which have been collaborating for more than twenty years (1996-2017), but also other specialists, as well as the students from the tripartite pioneer program of higher studies who will constitute the new generation of theologians facing the challenge of restoring ecclesial communion in the light of the orthodoxy of faith and in the bonds of love.

The Theological Dialogue of the Eastern and Western Churches has always had and constantly has preserved as common denominator the reciprocal struggles for the common defense of the tradition established during the first millennium of the historic life of the Church including the convocation of the seven Ecumenical Councils against the threat of the great triadological, christological, ecclesiological and soteriological heresies, but also for the restoration of ecclesial communion after the tragic consequences of the schism of the eleventh century (1054) having as main objective the unity of the Church.

Thus, it is a common confession that the synodal institution for the two Churches was the only way (via synodica) for the defense not only of the faith established in the face of heretical deviations, but also of the unity of the Church exempted from theological confusions or arbitrary ecclesial acts. In this sense, the synodal consciousness has remained intact in our Churches after the schism both for their internal functioning and for the restoration of ecclesial communion with successive initiatives for the union.

It is also a common observation that a prerequisite (sine qua non) for the functioning of the synodal institution in a manner consistent with the canons and effective on a local, regional or even ecumenical level is the existence of a Prime who convenes a local, regional or ecumenical synod, declares the reason for holding the synod, presides at its meetings, makes proposals for its decisions and takes care of their direct application. Therefore, the institution of the Prime (Primacy) is a constitutive and inalienable element for the canonical constitution and the proper functioning of the synodal system both in the different systems of administrative organization of the Church (metropolitan, exarchal, patriarchal) as well as under an ecumenical aspect (Diptychs), because according to the unanimous canonical tradition and secular ecclesial practice, the very existence of the synod is impossible without reference to the Prime (metropolitan, archbishop, patriarch).

Admittedly, the notion of the Prime is different when it is linked to a specific local or regional system of ecclesial administration (metropolitan, exarchal, patriarchal), as it is also different when, in spite of being linked to a precise administrative jurisdiction, it has ex officio an exceptional collective authority (Singularis auctoritas) in an ecumenical perspective, as is the case of the patriarchal thrones of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem, honored by the Ecumenical Councils by "precedence of honor" (canons 6 and 7 of the 1st; 2nd and 3rd of the 2nd; 9, 17 and 28 of the 4th and 36 of the Quinisextum).

It is therefore obvious that the schism of the eleventh century (1054) between the East and the West inaugurated a new difficult period for relations and communion between the Churches, relating thus to the synodality which was developed over time in East and West. This Colloquium takes an initiative for the renewal at the theological and scientific level of the preponderant role of this condition (Primacy) and for its new functioning according to a good and just interpretation as well as of its highlighting in the Official Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches.

So, I hope that the in-depth interlocutions and constructive proposals of the distinguished guests will contribute positively and constructively to this important perspective.

Good luck!