

**Inter-Orthodox Pre-Assembly Consultation
Cyprus, 9-16 May 2022**

Words of Thanks
Revd Hyacinthe Destivelle OP
15 May 2022

Dear Moderator, Reverend Professor Ioan Sauca,
Your Eminences,
Dear brothers and sisters,

It is as an observer, as an “ecumenical guest”, that I have been invited to this Inter-Orthodox Pre-Assembly Consultation. An observer is expected to observe, to listen, and to learn, rather than to speak. It is not an easy exercise for a Dominican friar, a member of the “Order of Preachers”, used to preaching and teaching! Yet the Dominican motto is “*contemplare et contemplata aliis tradere*”, that is “contemplate and transmit to others what has been contemplated”. In order to preach, we need firstly to listen attentively. And by listening to all of you during these past days, I can assure I have learned a lot.

Three important things I have learned. Firstly, I have witnessed that despite tensions that exist in any family, which external observers often tend to exaggerate and over-interpret, the unity of the Orthodox family is profound. This unity is not primarily of an institutional or juridical nature, but is rooted in your common apostolic faith, liturgical life and fraternal love.

Secondly, I have witnessed the unique role of the World Council of Churches as an open platform for such inter-orthodox meetings, including all Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches. May I suggest that such inter-orthodox consultations be organized more often, on a regular basis? In our times, Christianity and indeed the whole world need the witness of unity of your Orthodox families.

Finally, I have witnessed a kind of synodal experience. Undoubtedly, an inter-orthodox consultation is neither a council nor a synod. Yet I do believe that a certain synodality, a “walking together” among the Churches, is experienced whenever their representatives come together in the name of Jesus Christ to pray and to listen to one another, especially when these meetings include not only bishops, but also priests, deacons, monks, youth, lay men and women, all expressing the conscience of the Church, the *ekklesiastike syneidesis*. From this experience I am sure that, we Catholics, can learn a lot from you, Orthodox, as so often His Holiness Pope Francis points out, especially during the current synodal process of the Catholic Church.

For this threefold experience and for the gift of meeting you personally, I give thanks to the Lord. I will not fail to convey what I have witnessed to my Superiors. I would like to express, on behalf of them, especially of Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and on my own behalf, our deep gratitude to the Reverend Professor Ioan Sauca for his gracious invitation, to His Eminence Metropolitan Vasilios of Constantia for the wonderful hospitality of his diocese, to Professor Octavian Mihoc, to all the staff of the WCC, and to all of you who welcomed me with such brotherly love, not so much as an observer, but as a brother in Christ from the Sister Church of Rome, a Church which, although not a member of the WCC, is nevertheless, I trust, a reliable partner.

Your Eminences, dear brothers and sisters, as I have already shared with some of you, in the nine years of my service at the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, these past days with you in Cyprus have been one of the most moving and enriching experiences I have had. They have been a blessing and have strengthened my faith that, truly, Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity. Thank you! *Christos anesti!*