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Unilateral Documents of the Roman Catholic Church and the Russian Orthodox Church on Relations to Other Christian Confessions and the “Joint Declaration of Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia”

This article is a comparison analysis of relationship between the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Church in the context of the three documents. *Unitatis Redintegratio* shows how the Roman Catholic Church sees the practice of ecumenism. “Basic Principles of the Attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church Toward the Other Christian Confessions” defines the relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church with other Churches, therefore with the Roman Catholic Church as well and religions. “The Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill’s Joint Declaration” demonstrates the most important and significant aspects of bilateral relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church. Therefore, the article shows the perspectives of the relationship between the Churches through these documents and directions of the dialogue.

Keywords: Unilateral Documents, Russian Orthodox Church, heterodox, Pope Francis, Patriarch Cyril, Roman Catholic Church.

The conciliar decree “*Unitatis Redintegratio*” is one of nine decrees of the Second Vatican Council. The decree on ecumenism consists of 3 chapters divided into 24 paragraphs, preceded by an introduction. In the introduction of the document (paragraph 1) it is said that seeking the unity is one of the most important issues for all the Christians nowadays. The first chapter, “Catholic Principles on Ecumenism”, consisting of three paragraphs (paragraphs 2 – 4), is introducing the Catholic attitude to the ecumenism. The document claims that the one Church of Christ is located in the Roman Catholic Church. At the same time it insists on the impossibility to accuse the Christians from other confessions of the sin of division.

The second chapter, “The Practice of Ecumenism”, divided into 8 paragraphs (paragraphs 5–12). It describes how the ecumenical dialogue should be provided for the other Christian confessions. Here *Unitatis Redintegratio* shows how the Roman Catholic Church sees the practice of ecumenism. There are some points that constitute the basis of it:

- 1 The whole Church bears the responsibility of reconciliation of unity.
- 2 The renewal of the Church has an important significance for the perspectives of ecumenism.
- 3 Ecumenism cannot be proclaimed only in words without changing.¹

These ideas turned into life can be understood only through the revision of the Roman Catholic self-understanding and teaching of the Church. Therefore, such attempts should be encouraged in the dialogue between the Churches.

The third chapter, “Churches and Ecclesial Communities Separated from the Roman Apostolic See,” comes to specific Christian confessions and looks into the relationship of the Roman Catholic Church to them. First of all, it is the Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches which come into attention. Next, the decree brings up the attitude of the Roman Catholics towards Protestant confessions.

The third chapter of *Unitatis Redintegratio*, “Churches and Ecclesial Communities Separated from the Roman Apostolic See” relates to the division between the Roman Catholic Church and other Christian confessions in the East and the West. In the 13th paragraph of the document, two types of division are defined. These are the divisions from the III and IV Ecumenical Councils and the Great Schism of 1054.

It is also telling us about the difference in attitude of the Roman Catholic Church to the Orthodox Churches and to the Protestant Communities. A very special respect to the Orthodox Churches, its Tradition and history is, in fact, pointed out. The first subchapter, “The Special Consideration of the Eastern Churches”, is looking into the history of the East and the West. There are some very important common points in *Unitatis Redintegratio* concerning the attitude to the Orthodox Churches:

¹ *Unitatis Redintegratio*, Vatican II, Decree on Ecumenism, paragraphs 5; 6

http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html (access date: 01.09.2019).

- 1 From the first centuries onwards and with consensus, Rome was considered to be in the "appealing authority" for the Eastern Church in difficult situations and disagreements between the Churches.²
- 2 The Eastern Churches always had a great treasure – "*liturgical practice, spiritual tradition and law*"³. These parts of the Tradition enriched the West in many ways.
- 3 "Nor must we undervalue the fact that it was the ecumenical councils held in the East that defined the basic dogmas of the Christian faith, on the Trinity, on the Word of God Who took flesh of the Virgin Mary."⁴
- 4 The Orthodox Churches carry love and great respect to the celebration of the Eucharist as the center of Divine Liturgy.⁵
- 5 The ecumenical Council in Ephesus venerated Virgin Mary as the Mother of God, reality which is one of the most important common points between the East and the West.⁶
- 6 The Orthodox Churches preserved the apostolic succession, true sacraments, the priesthood and the Eucharist.⁷

Therefore, the attitude of the Roman Catholics towards the Orthodox Church was revised. All these achievements were possible due to the reach of a new era in the evolution of the relationship between the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Church, which finds its source in the Second Vatican Council and its Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio*.

"Basic Principles of the Attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church Toward the Other Christian Confessions" defines the relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church with other Churches, therefore with the Roman Catholic Church as well⁸. The document consists of seven chapters, a conclusion and two appendixes. The main body of the text is translated from Russian into English, but the appendixes are not available in English.

The first chapter, "The unity of the Church and the sin of human division" has 20 paragraphs. It presents a definition of the Church and her history. This part of the document looks into the universal character of the Church and the condition of its division.⁹ This chapter makes also multiple references to the authority of

2 *Unitatis Redintegratio*, Vatican II, Decree on Ecumenism, paragraph 14

http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html (access date: 01.09.2019).

3 *Ibid.*

4 *Ibid.*

5 *Ibid.*, paragraph 15.

6 *Unitatis Redintegratio*, Vatican II, Decree on Ecumenism, paragraph 15

http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html (access date: 01.09.2019).

7 *Ibid.*

8 Russian Orthodox Church, "Basic Principles of the Attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church Toward the Other Christian Confessions" <http://orthodoxeurope.org/page/7/5/1.aspx> (access date: 31.08.2019).

9 *Ibid.*, paragraphs 1.13, 1.14.

the Fathers of the Church, such as St Cyprian of Cartage, St Ignatius of Antioch, Irenaeus of Lyon and others.

The second chapter, “The quest for the restoration of unity” consists of 13 paragraphs. It considers the necessity for the restoration of unity of the Church, stating that it is the highest level of vocation of the Orthodox Church.¹⁰ At the same time, paragraphs 2.3 – 2.10 criticize the different models of unity that exist (the ideas of “invisible Church”, “branch theory” etc.) and are unacceptable for the Orthodox Church.

The third chapter, “Orthodox witness before the non-Orthodox world” consists of 2 paragraphs. It shows the main definition of the missionary goal of the Orthodox Church – to witness the faith that is rooted in the Tradition and Sacraments. The fourth chapter, “Dialogue with the non-Orthodox” consists of 11 paragraphs. The term “Russian Orthodox Church” appears here for the first time in the document (paragraphs 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.9, 4.11). This means that this chapter is very important for this Orthodox Autocephalic Church. At the same time this part of the document underlines the universal character of the previous chapters for it.

The fifth chapter, “Multilateral dialogue and participation in the work of inter-Christian organizations” consists of 6 paragraphs and it concerns only the Russian Orthodox Church. It comes to the treatment of the rules and criteria of the participation in the ecumenical work. On the international level these areas are *diakonia*, social service and peace building (5.1). On the regional level the issues stay the same, but an accent is placed on the work with the youth (5.2).

The sixth chapter, “Relations of the Russian Orthodox Church with the non-Orthodox on her canonical territory” consists of 3 paragraphs which also speak only about the Russian Orthodox Church. The main feature of this chapter is the absence of destructive critics of other confessions joined together with addressing critics to proselytism.

The seventh chapter, “Internal tasks in relation to dialogue with non-Orthodox confessions” consists of 3 paragraphs. It is significant because of the positive evaluation of the ecumenical vocation of the Orthodox Church in general. While referring to the pan-Orthodox meeting in Thessaloniki (Greece) in 1998, it condemns the people who are trying to stop the ecumenical work and witness, who don’t respect the Church hierarchy. Strict canonical sanctions should be applied in such situations, according to the document.

In conclusion, I can say that the document “Basic Principles” has different dimensions. These are:

- The theological dimension (paragraph 1.5 about the unity in the Church in the image of the Holy Trinity);
- The ecclesiological dimension (1st chapter);
- The cultural and ecumenical importance (2nd chapter and the appendixes);
- The missionary features (3rd chapter);
- The theological issues in dialogue (4th chapter);
- The international direction of the work in different organizations (5th chapter);

¹⁰ “Basic Principles of the Attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church Toward the Other Christian Confessions,” paragraph 2.1 <http://orthodoxeurope.org/page/7/5/1.aspx> (access date: 29.03.2018).

- The interior direction of the attitude to other confessions in the canonical territory of the Russian Orthodox Church (6th chapter);
- The interior challenges in connection to the Church and theological dialogue (7th chapter).

The first chapter of the "Basic Principles," "The unity of the Church and the sin of human division" talks about one baptism that means the recognition of this sacrament in the Roman Catholic Church as well.¹¹ This article also speaks about the history of the division of the Church in the West.¹²

Another topic concerning the relationship between the Churches is the ecclesiological issue. Paragraph 1.7 specifies that "The Church is universal, but she exists in the world in the form of various Local Churches. This does not diminish the unity of the Church."¹³ It shows the model of unity and universality of the Orthodox Church. Every Local Church is universal Church in the matter of true sacraments, priesthood, Eucharist etc. The "Basic Principles" also proclaims the ecumenical dimension of the Orthodox Church: "[...] genuine unity is possible only in the bosom of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church" (2.3).¹⁴ The term "ecumenical" is understood here as "related to the unity of the Church."

The "Basic Principles" treats the term "Catholic" in the meaning of "Conciliar": *Soborniy* (as an adjective) or *Sobornost* (as a noun) in the Church-Slavonic language.¹⁵ *Soborniy* and *Sobornost* do not mean "synodal" or "synodality". "Synodal" is related more to the administrative pattern of the bishops' councils that make decisions with the inspiration of the work of the Holy Spirit. Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeev treats it as "conciliar"¹⁶. Other modern theologians, as B. Bobrinskoy and J. – C. Larchet, look into the interpretation of "catholicity" as "conciliarity" as "impoverishment of the notion of catholicity understood in the early Church."¹⁷

¹¹ "Basic Principles of the Attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church Toward the Other Christian Confessions," paragraph 1.10 <http://orthodoxeurope.org/page/7/5/1.aspx> (access date: 30.08.2019). See also: "The Joint Declaration of Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia," paragraph 4 https://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/speeches/1965/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19651207_common-declaration.html (access date: 30.09.2019).

¹² "Basic Principles of the Attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church Toward the Other Christian Confessions," paragraph 1.13 <http://orthodoxeurope.org/page/7/5/1.aspx> (access date: 30.08.2019).

¹³ *Ibid.*, paragraph 1.7.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, paragraphs 1.1; 2.3.

¹⁵ "Basic Principles of the Attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church Toward the Other Christian Confessions," paragraph 1.9 <http://orthodoxeurope.org/page/7/5/1.aspx> (access date: 30.08.2019).

¹⁶ Hilarion Alfeyev, *Orthodox Christianity. Vol. II: Doctrine and Teaching of the Orthodox Church*. New York: SVS Press, 2011, 430-435.

¹⁷ Paul Ladouceur, "Three Contemporary Orthodox Visions of the Church," in: *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 58/2 (2014), 221. See also: Boris Bobrinskoy, *The Mystery of the Church* [Le Mystère de l'église, Paris, 2003]. New York: SVS Press, 2012; Jean-Claude Larchet, *L'église, Corps du Christ. Vol. I: Nature et structure*. Paris: Le Cerf, 2012.

Since 1903 the Russian Orthodox Church was involved in the theological dialogue with the Anglicans and Old Catholics.¹⁸ The first appendix of the “Basic Principles” – “The history and description of theological dialogues with other confessions” – is not translated in English. It points out that the development of the teaching basis of the Roman Catholic Church often differed from the Tradition and the spiritual experience of the ancient Church. According to this document, the most difficult topics that still remained in 2000 were the issues of *uniatism* and proselytism.¹⁹ According to the document, the dialogue can be provided on the level of the support of the existing regional connection between the dioceses and the parishes of the Roman Catholic Church. Also it is provided as the development of the connections with the Catholic Bishops’ Conferences.²⁰ The issues of Ecumenism of Martyrdom, of blood and the issues of proselytism and *uniatism* are also addressed in the document.

Since the Second Vatican Council, the Roman Catholic Church improved the relationship with the Orthodox Church in general and particularly with the Russian Orthodox Church in different areas. This short history remains under the sign of the year 1964 when the Churches met for the first time after a truly long period of mistrusts, as Vatican II had opened the possibility of an equal dialogue between the Churches. In 2000, the Russian Orthodox Church published “Basic Principles,” which was not similar document to the Decree on Ecumenism but proved to be a unilateral document concerning the relationship with other confessions. The document demonstrates similar conduct towards all the Churches, without any special consideration for any of them, although the appendices point out the particular relationship with different Churches and define specific fields of communication.

The “Joint Declaration of Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia” was issued after the first meeting in history of these two Primates on the 12th of February in 2016 in Havana, Cuba. The document consists of 30 paragraphs that relate to different topics. The first paragraph of the Joint Declaration defines the three areas of interest concerning to the meeting between Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill:

- 1 To discuss the relationship between the Churches;
- 2 To look into the actual problems of the believers;
- 3 To see the perspectives of human civilization.²¹

¹⁸ “Basic Principles of the Attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church Toward the Other Christian Confessions,” paragraphs 4.1 <http://orthodoxeurope.org/page/7/5/1.aspx> (access date: 30.08.2019).

¹⁹ «Основные принципы отношения Русской Православной Церкви к инославиям» <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/418840.html> (posted online: 07.06.2008) (access date: 29.03.2018). “Basic Principles of the Attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church Toward the Other Christian Confessions,” Appendix 1 <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/418840.html> (posted online: 07.06.2008) (access date: 31.08.2019). (My translation).

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ “Joint Declaration of Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia”, paragraph 1 https://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/speeches/1965/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19651207_common-declaration.html (access date: 15.04.2018).

The "Joint Declaration" itself is based on Trinitarian theology. Right from the first paragraph of the Joint Declaration, the crucial importance of the Trinitarian foundation of the document is revealed: "We give thanks to God, glorified in the Trinity for this meeting, the first in history."²² Its ecumenical dimension is also present here: "...at the crossroads of North and South, East and West [...] we address our words to all the peoples of Latin America and of the other continents."²³ The term "ecumenical" has two directions: relation to the whole world and to the unity of the Churches. Here this term is understood as related to the geographical space.

The document underlines the common understanding of the Roman Catholics and the Orthodox on the family as the way to holiness based on love between a man and a woman.²⁴ The Joint Declaration opens again to such actual and crucial themes of bioethics as abortion, euthanasia and biomedical reproduction technology.²⁵ Catholics and Orthodox call to the respect of right to life, making reference to the Old Testament: "The blood of the unborn cries out to God" (Gen. 4:10).

The "Joint Declaration" pays attention to the Christian youth. It is calling to "not hiding your talent in the ground" (Mt. 25:25) and encouraging to stand for God's truth.²⁶ The document also encourages the common action against persecution of Christians all over the world.²⁷ In different countries of the Middle East and Northern Africa, Christians are being killed.

Paragraph 9 appeals to the action and prevention of the "expulsion of Christians from the Middle East"²⁸. Paragraph 10 speaks about millions of victims in Syria and Iraq. The Churches ask the international community to seek together peace and stop terrorism in that region and furnish humanitarian help to the people who still live there and to the refugees.²⁹

In conclusion, it is important to say that the "Joint Declaration" takes into consideration some significant theological and ecclesiological issues. It invokes Trinity but at the same time it does not address the question about *filioque*. It speaks briefly about the issue of the unity and division between the Churches. The document focuses more on social problems that are common for the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Church. It pays attention to the perspectives of life and of civilization that they can and should face together. These are:

- persecution of Christians;
- terrorism;
- martyrdom in our times;
- interreligious dialogue;

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., paragraph 2.

²⁴ Ibid., paragraphs 19; 20.

²⁵ Ibid., paragraph 21.

²⁶ "Joint Declaration of Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia", paragraph 22 https://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/speeches/1965/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19651207_common-declaration.html (access date: 20.09.2019).

²⁷ Ibid., paragraph 8.

²⁸ Ibid., paragraph 9.

²⁹ Ibid., paragraph 10.

- the importance of religious freedom;
- Christian identity in Europe;
- values of family;
- human life and bioethics.

The issues of Ecumenism of Martyrdom, of blood and the issues of proselytism and *uniatism* are also addressed in the document. They will be analysed in the next subchapter.

After the revolution in Russia in 1917, the first steps in a new stage of the relationship between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Roman Catholic Church were made only with the Second Vatican Council. The USSR and Vatican did not have diplomatic relations.³⁰ In 1961, at the New Delhi Assembly, the Russian Orthodox Church became part of the WCC.³¹ After several negotiations and meetings, in October 1962, Cardinal Bea invited observers of the Moscow Patriarchate to Vatican II.³² Consequently, Archpriest Vitaly Borovoi, a representative in the WCC, and Archimandrite Vladimir Kotliarov from Russian Mission in Jerusalem came to the Second Vatican Council.

On the 16 of December in 1969 the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church adopted the very important statement about the possibility for the Roman Catholics and Old Believers to receive the Sacraments in the Orthodox Church.³³ The chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of Moscow Patriarchate Metropolitan Nikodim Rotov gave the explanation of this decision:

³⁰ Radu Bordeianu, "Orthodox Observers at the Second Vatican Council and Intra-Orthodox Dynamics," in *Theological Studies* 79/1 (2018), 90.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 90.

³² *Ibid.*, 94.

³³ Русская Православная Церковь, «Допущение к Святым Таинствам Православной Церкви старообрядцев и католиков. Определение Священного Синода (16.12.1969)». Журнал Московской Патриархии. 1970. № 1. С. 5. Russian Orthodox Church, "The Approval for the Old Believers and the Roman Catholics to Receive the Sacraments in the Orthodox Church. The Statement of the Holy Synod (16 December 1969)," in *Journal of Moscow Patriarchate* 1 (1970), 5. (My translation).

“Accepting this statement, the Holy Synod took into the consideration the practice of life of the Russian Orthodox Church in Soviet Union when the members of the Old Believers’ Orthodox Church³⁴ that has threefold ministry and also the members of the Roman Catholic Church in case of sickness or other reasons ask the priests of Russian Orthodox Church for receiving the Sacraments (It can possible in the circumstances when they don’t have the possibility to ask the priests of their own confession). In these circumstances the priesthood of the Russian Orthodox Church is to show the pastoral care and give the spiritual solace and the Sacraments to the people in need.”³⁵ (*My translation*).

However, in 1986 the Holy Synod stopped this decision that came up from 1969: “[...] The Synod is reporting that this practice has not been developed and it is decided to postpone the application of the Synodal statement dated 16 December 1969 until the Pan-Orthodox decision.”³⁶

The Moscow Patriarchate took active part in the work of the *Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church* since its foundation in 1979.³⁷ But in the '90 and in the beginning of 3rd millennium, the relationship came to a difficult phase because of issues concerning *uniatism* and proselytism. The meetings between Pope St John Paul II and Patriarch Aleksiy, that were supposed to happen, were cancelled. Only beginning of the pontificate of Pope Benedict XVI changed the situation.

The Pontifical Council for Culture provides common work and organises events where the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Church are involved. In 2015, a working commission for cultural cooperation between the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and Department for External Church Relations was established.³⁸ The common project “Light of Christ Enlightens All” resulted from the work of this commission as a part of Catholic Church’s Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy. It was announced at the end of 2015 and continued till the

³⁴ Old Believers’ Orthodox Church came from the schism in Russia in XVII century and kept the old rite after the Church reforms of Patriarch of Moscow Nikon in XVII century.

³⁵ Русская Православная Церковь, «Разъяснение председателя Отдела внешних церковных сношений Московского Патриархата митрополита Никодима о невозбранном допущении к Святым Таинствам старообрядцев и католиков (17.03.1970). Журнал Московской Патриархии. 1970. № 5. С. 25.” Russian Orthodox Church, “The Explanation of the chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of Moscow Patriarchate Metropolitan Nikodim about the Approval for the Old Believers and the Roman Catholics to Receive the Sacraments (17 March 1970),” in *Journal of Moscow Patriarchate* 5 (1970), 25. (*My translation*).

³⁶ Русская Православная Церковь, Определение Священного Синода. Журнал Московской Патриархии. 1986 № 9. С. 7–8. Russian Orthodox Church, “The Statement of the Holy Synod,” in *Journal of Moscow Patriarchate* 9 (1986), 7–8. (*My translation*).

³⁷ Will T. Cohen, *The Concept of ‘Sister Churches’ in Catholic-Orthodox Relation since Vatican II* (Munster: Aschendorff Verlag GmbH & Co. KG, 2016), 89.

³⁸ Facts and details about the relations between the Russian Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches due to the meeting of Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill <https://sputniknews.com/russia/201602121034657547-orthodox-catholic-christian-church/> (posted online: 12.02.2016) (access date: 20.09.2019).

end of November 2016.³⁹ After the historical event of the meeting between Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, the relations between the Churches came to another level. It was marked by several important events that came afterwards. It is worth mentioning especially the fact that the holy relics of St Nicholas were brought for veneration to Moscow from Bari in 2017.⁴⁰

The “Joint Declaration” sums up along its points some issues in the relationship between the Roman Catholic and the Russian Orthodox Church. Through the reference to the Epistle of John we see how the dialogue of the Churches resulted from a level of local theological dialogue. The personal meeting of the Primate was extended to the entire Church’s level: “We have met like brothers in the Christian faith who encounter one another ‘to speak face to face’ (2 Jn 12), from heart to heart to discuss the mutual relations between the Churches [...]”⁴¹

The document also speaks about “the martyrs of our times” that come from different denominations. A passage conveys the idea of Ecumenism of Martyrdom and Blood that Pope Francis underlined many times in different speeches. It does not matter from what Church tradition the person came if he died for the Christian faith.

The “Joint Declaration” makes, as well, crucial reference to the common points that unite the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Church Tradition: “We share the same spiritual Tradition of the first millennium of Christianity.”⁴² It is witnessed in the veneration of Virgin Mary Mother of God and that of the saints, especially the martyrs of the first centuries of Christianity. The existence of *nestorianism* that rejected the veneration of Virgin Mary as Mother of God and iconoclasm when Byzantium Empire faced the rejection of veneration of icons did not stop the Tradition from it. The III and the VII Ecumenical Councils proclaimed the dogmas about veneration of Virgin Mary and icons.

At the same time the “Joint Declaration” points out the division and the crucial problem in the relationship between the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Church. They are not in the Eucharist communion for almost one thousand years. The document addresses the very important themes that divide the Churches: “We have been divided by wounds caused by old and recent conflicts, by differences inherited from our ancestors, in the understanding and expression of our faith in God, one in three persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”⁴³ The document does not speak about *filioque* directly. But at the same time it addresses the differences in understanding and explaining the faith in Trinitarian God. This is a very important statement on theology of the Western and Eastern tradition that is one of reasons that still divides the Churches.

³⁹ Conclusion of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy – Press Conference <http://www.iubilaeummisericordiae.va/content/gdm/en/news/evidenza/2016-11-21-ppcne.html> (posted online: 21.11.2016) (access date: 20.09.2019).

⁴⁰ Shrine with particle of holy relics of St Nicholas the Wonderworker brought to Russia <https://mospat.ru/en/2017/05/21/news146215/> (posted online: 21.05.2017, access date: 20.09.2019).

⁴¹ “Joint Declaration of Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia”, paragraph 1 https://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/speeches/1965/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19651207_common-declaration.html (access date: 20.09.2019).

⁴² *Ibid.*, paragraph 4.

⁴³ “Joint Declaration of Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia”, paragraph 5 https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/february/documents/papa-francesco_20160212_dichiarazione-comune-kirill.html (access date: 20.09.2019).

The "Joint Declaration" also emphasizes the suffering of the Churches caused by the breaking of unity. Consequences of human weakness and sin state nevertheless the hope in the contribution of the meeting itself to the seeking for this unity.⁴⁴

The 7th paragraph articulates: "We wish to combine our efforts to give witness to the Gospel of Christ and to the shared heritage of the Church of the first millennium, responding together to the challenges of the contemporary world."⁴⁵ How can we respond together to these challenges? There are spheres that document encounters where the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches can and should work together. For example, the next 8 paragraph says about the support of the persecuted Christians: "Our gaze must firstly turn to those regions of the world where Christians are victims of persecution."⁴⁶

Paragraph 24 partly repeats the idea present in paragraph 7: "Orthodox and Catholics are united not only by the shared Tradition of the Church of the first millennium, but also by the mission to preach the Gospel of Christ in the world today."⁴⁷ This passage seems the most important of the Joint Declaration concerning the relationship between Roman Catholic and the Russian Orthodox Church. The document puts an accent on the common Tradition of the first thousand years despite the coexisting differences. It prepares the field for the discussion of the difficulties, challenges that came with the second half of the first millennium.

Paragraph 25 is devoted to the relationship between Greek Catholics and Orthodox. It again condemns *uniatism* after rejection of proselytism as inappropriate methods for re-establishing unity. The paragraph 24 touches this issue as well as related to the whole Catholic Church: "This mission entails mutual respect for members of the Christian communities and excludes any form of proselytism". Paragraph 28 continues with the idea of Christian message in the world in moral issues and social problems.

Therefore, the relationship between the Churches is seen in the document through the witness together the Gospel and human dignity. The "Joint Declaration" generalises the topics that Churches have overcome and are trying to overcome now. It is appealing to peace and to stopping conflicts based on religious grounds. It is the case for the war in the Middle East (paragraphs 8, 9, 10, 11) and for the war and schism in Ukraine (paragraphs 26, 27).

When considering the history of the relationship between the Roman Catholic and the Russian Orthodox Church with the help of these three documents – *Unitatis Redintegratio* (1964), "Basic Principles" (2000), "Joint Declaration" (2016) – we cannot help noticing the manifestation of positive tendencies along these more than fifty years of communication. This short history remains under the sign of the year 1964 when the Churches met for the first time after a truly long period of mistrusts, as Vatican II had opened the possibility of an equal dialogue between the Churches. Still the possibility of having a bilateral document was scarce then. The two Churches worked on and signed one single document only in 2016. A legitimate question is therefore: what happened between these years?

⁴⁴ Ibid., paragraph 6.

⁴⁵ Ibid., paragraph 7.

⁴⁶ Ibid., paragraph 8.

⁴⁷ Ibid., paragraph 24.

Since the Second Vatican Council, the Roman Catholic Church improved the relationship with the Orthodox Church in general and particularly with the Russian Orthodox Church in different areas. As Cardinal Walter Kasper wrote, “In the decree *Unitatis Redintegratio*, the Second Vatican Council recognized that the ecumenical movement is a sign of the Holy Spirit’s action and said that it considered the promotion of this movement to be one of its principal tasks.”⁴⁸ This is a challenge because: “In the absence of a formal ecumenical statement by the Orthodox Churches similar to the Decree on Ecumenism by Vatican II, the Orthodox may well find it extremely difficult, without risking a break up of their own consensus and their own unity [...]”⁴⁹

In 2000, the Russian Orthodox Church published “Basic Principles,” which was not similar document to the Decree on Ecumenism but proved to be a unilateral document concerning the relationship with other confessions. The document demonstrates similar conduct towards all the Churches, without any special consideration for any of them, although the appendices point out the particular relationship with different Churches and define specific fields of communication.

The common points uniting the Churches’ traditions that we have distinguished as being asserted in the text of both documents are in connection with the basic theological topics: Trinitarian basis, apostolic succession, Tradition, Baptism, perception of the sacrament of Eucharist. The Churches in the East and the West seem to agree as well on the dialogue’s criteria, on the importance of cultural diversity of Christianity and on other subjects. They recognize the work of grace in other confessions and in each other. Both of the Churches claim to have the true sacramental life, apostolic succession, ordination and state the possibility of the salvation in the Roman Catholic and in the Orthodox Church, as well. All these points we have mentioned reflect in the bilateral document, the “Joint Declaration” as well, through a very condensed assertion: “We share the same spiritual Tradition of the first millennium.”⁵⁰ The definition “The Orthodox Church is the true Church of Christ established by our Lord and Saviour Himself”⁵¹ does not exclude that the Roman Catholic Church is also a true Church. The following passage from *Unitatis Redintegratio* says the same about the Roman Catholic Church: “[...] Only through Christ’s Catholic Church, which is ‘the all-embracing means of salvation’ that they [‘separated brethren’] can benefit fully from the means of salvation.”⁵²

The paragraph 1.18 of the “Basic Principles” asserts that “The Orthodox Church is the true Church in which the Holy Tradition and the fullness of God’s saving

⁴⁸ Walter Kasper, *That They May All Be One: The Call to Unity* (London, New York: Burns and Oates, A Continuum imprint, 2004), 6.

⁴⁹ Theodore Stylianopoulos, “Orthodoxy and Catholicism: A New Attempt at Dialogue,” in *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, 26 (1981), 163.

⁵⁰ “The Joint Declaration of Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia”, paragraph 4 https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/february/documents/papa-francesco_20160212_dichiarazione-comune-kirill.html (access date: 20.09.2019).

⁵¹ “Basic Principles of the Attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church Toward the Other Christian Confessions,” paragraph 1.1 <http://orthodoxeurope.org/page/7/5/1.aspx> (access date: 20.09.2019).

⁵² Vatican II, Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio*, paragraph 3 http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html (access date: 20.09.2019).

grace are preserved."⁵³ But it does not mean that the Orthodox Church denies the possibility of salvation in other Churches. It stays it to God's judgment (BP 1.17). This is what the Orthodox Church witnesses and believes. The Roman Catholic Church says it less strictly. She speaks that the unity is preserved in her life ("subsists in," UR 4). I don't intend to go into the discussion about which Church – the Roman Catholic or the Orthodox – is the true Church. This issue was largely addressed in the works of different theologians.⁵⁴

These two documents do not speak about disagreements, though they mention the differences between the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches, with the help of a language very similar in many points. *Unitatis Redintegratio* speaks about "separated brethren." The "Basic Principles" uses the term "schism," "divided Churches," "the wounds on the Body of Christ." But the understanding of the nature of division is not the same. The Orthodox Church focuses on the inner reasons of the tragedy of division (as the experience of faith etc.) in the Church ("Basic Principles," 2.8.). "Orthodoxy cannot accept that Christian divisions are caused by the inevitable imperfections of Christian history and that they exist only on the historical surface and can be healed or overcome by compromises between denominations."⁵⁵ The Roman Catholic Church is trying to explain the division between the East and the West and within the Western Church more as a result of historical circumstances, human nature and of different perception of the tradition. "Basic Principles" and *Unitatis Redintegratio* speak about the unity of Christians, not of the Church. Because the Church is one and the Christians are divided.

Therefore, the unilateral documents of the Roman Catholic and the Russian Orthodox Church show the points that unite the Western and Eastern tradition. At the same time there are some that divide the Church. *Unitatis Redintegratio* and "Basic Principles" are reflecting each other at many levels, because it seems that "Basic Principles" relates to some of the most important statements of *Unitatis Redintegratio* after more than thirty years after the Second Vatican Council and since the beginning of the work of the *Joint Theological Commission*.

The relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church improved and led to the first meeting of the heads of the two Churches in 2016. The meeting was marked by the signing of "The Joint Declaration of Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia". According to its contents, the document is a common answer of the Churches to the challenges we face together, like the issue of the persecution of Christians in the Middle East and the neighboring territories. The terrorist attacks and the expansion of so-called "Islamic State" (the terrorist organisation that is trying to take control in the Middle East and other territories in the neighbourhood) united the Churches in the matter of condemnation of its crimes and of helping the Christians there. The

⁵³ "Basic Principles of the Attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church Toward the Other Christian Confessions," paragraph 1.18 <http://orthodoxeurope.org/page/7/5/1.aspx> (access date: 20.09.2019).

⁵⁴ Paul Ladouceur, "Three contemporary Orthodox Visions of the Church," in St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly 58/2 (2014), 217-234; George Florovsky, "The Boundaries of the Church," in G. Florovsky, The Collected Works, Vol. XIII, Ecumenism I: A Doctrinal Approach (Liechtenstein, Vaduz, 1989), 36-45; Alexander Schmemmann, Church, World, Mission: Reflections on Orthodoxy in the West (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1979).

⁵⁵ "Basic Principles of the Attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church Toward the Other Christian Confessions," paragraph 2.6 <http://orthodoxeurope.org/page/7/5/1.aspx> (access date: 20.09.2019).

meeting of the Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill addressed most of the spheres where the common witness should be proclaimed.

Very anchored in present times, the document also goes to the difficult contemporary issues in Ukraine. *Uniatism* and schism were always very essential topics to Christians there. The Pope and the Patriarch call the Roman Catholics and the Orthodox living there, to solidarity and harmony in social life. The document also speaks about the Catholic and the Russian Orthodox Church's contribution that "the Christian brotherhood may become increasingly evident."⁵⁶

This historical event in 2016 showed new perspectives of the relationship between the two Churches. But as it is proclaimed in the document, "Notwithstanding this shared Tradition of the first ten centuries, for nearly one thousand years Catholics and Orthodox have been deprived of communion in the Eucharist."⁵⁷ The dogmatic issues have not been addressed in the documents [*filioque*, theory of dogmatic development of the Catholic Church (infallibility of the Pope, Immaculate Conception, Assumption, Primacy etc.)]. The "Joint Declaration" just mentions the different heritage of understanding of Trinitarian theology in the West and in the East. The documents avoid speaking about controversies and difficulties in relationship that Churches have. Why weren't these issues addressed? Intentionally or unintentionally, the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Church are not ready to discuss the most difficult doctrinal and dogmatic issues that divide them. The ecclesiological, doctrinal, historical, cultural reasons that led to the schism between the East and the West still prevent the restoration of the unity.

The division between the Catholic and Orthodox Church happened in the history and "grew" new roots from the moment of its appearance. In the journey of seeking unity the Catholic Church cannot and do not want to simply deny and get rid of the almost thousand years of history to come to the full communion with the Orthodox Church. Therefore, the issue of the primacy of the Pope is not the only one to be addressed. If the Pope one day agrees just on the "primacy of honour" it will not heal the schism and division between the Churches. To overcome this division, the Catholic Church needs to reconsider the ecumenical character of the councils that took place after 1054 (the Orthodox Church counts seven Ecumenical Councils; the Catholic Church has twenty-one). In this case the Orthodox Church should revise her history as well with the particular reference concerning the intra-Orthodox relations between the Local Orthodox Churches. Therefore, we see how the areas of the relationship between the Churches are bound to the common witness in the contemporary world, for better answers in the ethical issues.

Unitatis Redintegratio has a specific chapter concerning the Eastern Churches. It never says the "Orthodox Churches" but only mentions the geographical position of them. Therefore, here one can see the self-understanding of the Roman Catholic Church as the universal Church in the West in relation to the Church that is in the East.

The Orthodox Church differentiates "universality" and "ecumenicity" from "catholicity". For her the "catholicity" is more interior dimension. In Church-

⁵⁶ "The Joint Declaration of Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia", paragraph 26; 27 https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/february/documents/papa-francesco_20160212_dichiarazione-comune-kirill.html (access date: 20.09.2019).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, paragraph 5.

Slavonic language it is *Sobornost*, which is rooted in the Eucharist, in the communion ecclesiology. The ecumenicity is the consequence of the catholicity and relates to it, as an exterior definition of catholicity⁵⁸. The "Basic Principles" speak about the different levels of ex-communication from this sacramental reality. It is the personal level when one person does not have the communion with the Church. Also, there is the Church's level when whole communities break the relationship with her.

The "Basic Principles" states: "The theological dialogue should be developed at the same time with the discussion of the most current problems of bilateral relationship; the most important topic of dialogue today remains the theme of *uniatism* and proselytism [*my translation*]."⁵⁹ This reflects in the "Joint Declaration" as a bilateral document as well. It took more than a half of the century after the Second Vatican Council to have the meeting between the leaders of the Russian Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Church. Only in 2016 it became possible to sign a bilateral document at the highest level of authority in the Church and underline the common condemnation of *uniatism*.

The Roman Catholic has ecclesiological self-understanding as being a universal Church. "The word 'catholic' means 'universal' in the sense of 'according to the totality' or 'in keeping with the whole'. First, the Church is catholic because Christ is present in her. [...] Secondly, the Church is catholic because she has been sent out by Christ on a mission to the whole human race [...]."⁶⁰ The universality of the Catholic Church comes from the extensive way of understanding this universality that covers the whole world, the whole "oikoumene".

The universality in Orthodox ecclesiology reveals itself in different Local Churches. "The Church is universal, but she exists in the world in the form of various Local Churches."⁶¹ This reality is also recognized in *Unitatis Redintegratio* (UR 14 and 16).

The characteristic of the Church as "Orthodox" is also the interior understanding rooted in the Tradition. "Orthodoxy is not a national or cultural attribute of the Eastern Church. Orthodoxy is an inner quality of the Church. It is the preservation of the doctrinal truth, the liturgical and hierarchical order and the principles of spiritual life which, unchangingly and uninterruptedly, have been present in the Church since apostolic times."⁶² That refers to the intensification of the self-understanding, of the rediscovering the common treasures and at the same time to the particular cultural diversity of the Orthodox Church.

⁵⁸ «Основные принципы отношения Русской Православной Церкви к инославию» <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/418840.html> (posted online: 07.06.2008, access date: 20.09.2019). "Basic Principles of the Attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church Toward the Other Christian Confessions," Appendix 2, <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/418840.html> (posted online: 07.06.2008, access date: 20.09.2019), *my translation*.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Appendix 1.

⁶⁰ Catechism of the Catholic Church, part one, section two, chapter three, article 9, paragraph 3.830; 3.831 http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p123a9p3.htm#III (access date: 20.09.2019).

⁶¹ "Basic Principles of the Attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church Toward the Other Christian Confessions," paragraph 1.7 <http://orthodoxeurope.org/page/7/5/1.aspx> (access date: 20.09.2019).

⁶² "Basic Principles of the Attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church Toward the Other Christian Confessions," paragraph 1.19 <http://orthodoxeurope.org/page/7/5/1.aspx> (access date: 20.09.2019).

Although during the period 1964–2016, most of all, secondary themes were addressed, no dogmatic issue appeared in the “Joint Declaration.” There, one can see the common manifestation of social and politically influenced issues. In spite of the differences, the Churches speak together against terrorism, poverty, and ethical issues. Therefore, closer relationship in common witness in the world can be seen, while areas that can be further discussed and where can be done some work remain.

None of the three documents investigate the difficult dogmatic issues that appeared in the second millennium and were mentioned above. They analyse and discuss mostly secondary topics of dialogue. Only the *Joint International Commission* discussed some of the doctrinal and dogmatic issues that divide the Churches. Particularly, it worked on the document “Primacy and Synodality in the 1st millennium.” Future will show if the Churches can address that difficult issues and how they will continue the journey towards unity or if the relationship remains restrained to what the Churches can do together as a common action in the world.

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Основные документы Русской Православной Церкви и Римско-католической церкви в отношении к другим христианским конфессиям и Совместная декларация Папы Римского Франциска и Патриарха Московского и всея Руси Кирилла

Эта статья проводит сравнительный анализ отношений Римско-католической и Православной церквей в контексте трех документов. Документ «*Unitatis Redintegratio*» демонстрирует, как Римско-католическая церковь видит практику экуменического движения. «Основные принципы отношения Русской Православной Церкви к инославию» определяет отношение Русской Православной Церкви с другими христианскими церквями, в том числе Римско-католической церковью, а также другими религиями. Совместная декларация Папы Римского Франциска и Патриарха Московского и всея Руси Кирилла демонстрирует аспекты и важнейшие вехи двусторонних отношений Русской Православной Церкви и Римской кафедры. Поэтому она имеет отношение к Римско-католической церкви. Таким образом, статья демонстрирует перспективы отношений между церквями через эти документы и направления диалога.

Ключевые слова: Unitatis Redintegratio, Русская Православная Церковь, инославие, Папа Франциск, Патриарх Кирилл, Римско-католическая церковь.