

REACTIONS TO THE PAPAL VISIT AT THE PHANAR, CONSTINOPLE, TURKEY ON NOVEMBER 30, 2006.

1- An Open Letter To the Holy Abbots and Representatives of the Sacred Twenty Monasteries of the Mount Athos

An Open Letter to the Holy Abbots and the Holy Representatives of the Sacred Twenty Monasteries in the Holy Community of the Holy Mount Athos.

December 2006

Holy Abbots and Holy Fathers, Bless!

We desire with this present letter to express our deepest concern and sadness for all that is happening to our Holy Orthodoxy for years now: things destructive to the teaching of the Holy Apostles and of the Holy Fathers and contrary to all the Sacred Canons enacted by the Oecumenical and local synods. We wonder if some Oecumenical synod has been assembled and has abolished the Canons which forbid joint prayer with heretics,¹ or if the Pope has repented and renounced the heresies of the Filioque, of primacy, of infallibility, of unleavened bread, of the purifying fire [purgatory, trans.], of created grace, of the immaculate conception of the Most Holy Theotokos, and many others, most of which have been condemned and anathematized repeatedly by Orthodox synods and by the entirety of the Holy Fathers.²

Heaven was angered and the Holy Fathers exceedingly saddened by seeing and hearing all that took place at the Phanar at the feast of the Holy Apostle Andrew on the 30th of November of the current year—unprecedented and unheard of things in the two thousand year history of the Church: "The dogmas of the Fathers are held in contempt, the Apostolic traditions are disdained, the churches are subject to the novelties of innovators,"³ as St. Basil the Great says, regarding the events of his own times.

Everything happened literally upside-down. Instead of the heretical Pope being placed below, as we see the heretics depicted in the icons of the Holy Synods, and being dismissed from the Divine Liturgy, on the basis of the liturgical command, "the doors, the doors, in wisdom let us attend," we elevated him to a high throne, where he sat wearing an omophorion; the Orthodox deacons censured him; the Patriarch exchanged the kiss [of peace] with him at "let us love one another"; as the proestos [the one presiding trans.] he proclaimed the "Our Father"; the choir of sacred cantors chanted "Many Years" to him, as well as a specially composed troparion from an Athonite hymnographer "Lord, have mercy!" if, of course, the news reports are true; he was [also] permitted to give the congregation his blessing, or, rather, his folly according to the Sacred Canons.⁴

We allowed the Church militant on earth to be divided from the Church triumphant of the Saints in heaven, and to be united with churches and assemblies of the cunning heretics. We insulted all of the holy Martyrs and Confessors who struggled to the point of blood against the heresies, because we presented their struggles, their martyrdoms and their confessions as to no avail and unnecessary. Will not the blessed Hagiorite Fathers martyred under [Oecumenical Patriarch John] Vekkou, who refused to accept and to commemorate the Pope, lament, seeing that not only do we reject their example by our silence, but we actually do the opposite? Why then did these and all of the previous Martyrs undergo martyrdom, and why did the Confessors stand fast in their profession of the Faith?

You know, Reverend Fathers, better than we do, the anti-Orthodox and blasphemous actions, declarations, and decisions of the Oecumenical Patriarch, and of the other Primate and Bishops who vociferously and visibly advocate—bare headed⁵—the acceptance and teaching of the chief heresy of Ecumenism, the greatest ecclesiological heresy of all the ages. This heretical teaching disavows the uniqueness of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church

and equates it with the heresies, by accepting their sacraments as having and imparting sanctifying and saving grace. Besides recognition of the baptism of the followers of the Pope and of the Lutherans, we also have participation in the chalice with Monophysites and in many cases with Papists in the Cyclades and in the Diaspora.

We take stock with much greater sadness that over the last few years the spiritual leadership of the Holy Mountain has not confronted these manifestations of apostasy with fortitude and the courage of confession, as did earlier Athonite Fathers. The Patriarch has gauged our responses, and because they are half-hearted, and many times non-existent, he proceeds without hindrance toward union with an unrepentant Pope, who remains enmeshed in heresies. He evaluated us and rejoiced greatly during his last visit to the Holy Mountain, as well, such that one would say that he came in order to take the consent and blessing of the Athonites for all that he had planned to do with the Pope a few days later.

We, lowly hieromonks and monks, confess to you that we have been scandalized by the silence and inaction of our spiritual leaders on Mount Athos, and together with us, the entire assembly of monastic-loving Orthodox Christians, both in Greece and throughout the world. They are all waiting to hear the voice of Mount Athos.

From you, the wiser and more erudite, we learned that when the Faith is endangered we are all held accountable if we are silent and shrink back, as St. Theodore the Studite says.⁶ A monk, in particular, must not allow the slightest innovation in matters of the Faith, according to the [aforementioned] Holy Father and great monastic leader, organizer of monastic life, and the Elder of us all.⁷ He did not fear the threats and the persecutions of the iconoclast emperors and patriarchs, but within Constantinople, within the enclosure of the Great Sacred Monastery of Stoudion, he organized a procession with a thousand torch-bearing monks, who held the forbidden Holy Icons in their hands.

Saints Sabbas the Sanctified and Theodosios the Cenobite, likewise great monastic leaders, assembled ten thousand monks of Palestine long before in Jerusalem, and saved Orthodoxy from the heresy of Monothelitism.

Who will now save the Church from the most terrible heresy of Ecumenism and the deceit of Papism? The letters of protest, which the Holy Community [of Mount Athos] has sent at various times to the Oecumenical Patriarch, have not had any effect. It is no longer time for words, but for actions. We do not want to teach you, we the unlearned and wretched sinners, neither do we want to have ourselves appear as Confessors. Rather, we want to set at ease our monastic and Orthodox conscience; we want to honor and follow the conduct of the Holy Martyrs and Confessors, particularly those martyred under Vekkou. We do not want to shrink back, nor to place the monasteries and our brotherhoods above the purity of the Faith, above God and the Truth.⁸

We believe that after so many written and oral protests and objections, back-peddling [i.e., going back on one's word, trans.], retreats and compromises, the only thing that will gladden the Orthodox and shame the cacodox is to cease commemoration of the patriarch and of all the bishops agreeing with him or remaining in silence

Gather together, Holy Fathers, the monks of the coenobium, the sketes and the kellia into an all-monastic, fighting assembly, either within or outside of the Holy Mountain, and topple the towers of heresy, of Papism and of Ecumenism. Take up the good fight of the Faith. If you fail to act, we will prefer to do that which is God-pleasing, not man-appeasing.

May God enlighten all of us; may the Most Holy Theotokos shelter and bless her Garden; and may They protect the Orthodox Church from defamers of the Theotokos, and from heretics who fight against the Saints, as well as from fainthearted pastors who leave the flock unprotected from attacks of the wolves. ⁹

Asking your prayers for all the foregoing, we, the undersigned, remain respectfully yours,

Hieromonk Ephraim, former abbot [of Philotheou], Elder of the Skete of Apostle Andrew ["Serrai", of the Holy Monastery of Vatopedi] and the brotherhood with me.
Elder Eustratios, Hieromonk, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra.
Elder Poimen, Hieromonk, Holy Monastery of Zographou.
Elder Basileios, Hieromonk, Holy Monastery of Zographou.
Elder Bessarion, Hieromonk, Holy Monastery of Zographou.
Monk Nikodemos (Bilalis), Sacred Cell "of the Presentation" from Kapsala.
Monk Artemios, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra.
Hieromonk Hilarion, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra.
Monk Paisios, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra.
Monk Savvas, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra.
Hierodeacon Chariton, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra.
Monk Chariton, Karoulia, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra.
Monk Athanasios, Karoulia, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra.
Elder Vlasios, Monk, Kserokalyvo Viglas, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra.
Monk Akakios, Sacred Kathisma of the Holy Trinity (Kyr Isaiah) Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra .
Elder Isaiah, Monk, Kellion of the Birth of the Mother of God, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra.
Monk Cherubim, Sacred place of the Archangels, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra.
Hieromonk Damaskinos, Kellion of Holy Trinity at Karyes, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra.
Elder Nektarios, Monk, Kellion of Holy Trinity at Karyes, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra.
Elder Theoklitos, Monk and the fathers with him; Kellion of the Sacred Forerunner, St.Anne's Skete, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra .
Hieromonk Gabriel, Sacred Kellion of St. George (Kartsounaion) Sacred Skete of St. Anne, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra .
Hieromonk Chrysostomos Kartsonas, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra.
Elder Kosmas Monk, Sacred Hut of St. Demetrios, Skete of Saint Anne, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra.
Elder Panteleimon, Monk, Sacred Kellion of St. Panteleimon, Sacred Skete of Holy Trinity, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra .
Elder Sophronios, Monk, Sacred Hut of Entrance of the Theotokos, Sacred Skete of Holy Trinity, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra.
Monk Parthenios, Sacred Hut Entrance of Theotokos, Sacred Skete of Holy Trinity, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra .
Monk Athanasios at Vouleutiria, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra.
Elder Seraphim, Hieromonk, Kellion of All Saints, Skete of Saint Anne, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra .
Elder Daniel, Monk, Saint Anne's, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra.
Elder Gerasimos, Monk of the Sacred Hut of St. George, Katounakia, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra.
Elder Benediktos, Hieromonk, Kellion of Ss. Konstantine and Eleni, Holy Monastery of Vatopedi.
Monk Paisios, Kellion of Archangels (Savvaion) Karyes, Holy Monastery of Hilandar.
Monk Silouanos, Sacred Hut of St. Nicholas, Nea Skete, Holy Monastery of St. Paul.
Monk Gabriel, Kellion of Koutloumousiou of Saint Christodoulos.
Monk Dositheos, Koutloumousiou Monastery Kathisma.
Elder Nektarios, Monk, Sacred Hut of Holy Trinity, Skete of the Holy Monastery of Koutloumousiou.
Monk Paisios, Kellion of Saint Barbara, Holy Monastery of Koutloumousiou.
Elder Moses, Monk, Kellion St. John Chrysostomos, Skete of St. Panteleimonos, Holy Monastery of Koutloumousiou .
Elder Abraham, Hieromonk, Sacred Hut of St. Gerasimos Kefalinias, Skete of St. Panteleimonos, Holy Monastery of Koutloumousiou .
Elder Spyridon, Monk, Kellion of St. Nicholas, Holy Monastery of Koutloumousiou.
Monk Theodoulos, formerly of the Holy Monastery of Koutloumousiou.
Elder Chrysostomos, Hieromonk, Kellion of St. Spyridon of Kerkyra, Holy Monastery of Koutloumousiou.
Monk Hilarion, Sacred Kathisma of the Holy Monastery of Doheiarou (Platon area).
Elder Nikodemos, Monk, Kellion of St. Nektarios Kapsala, Holy Monastery of Pantokratoros.
Hieromonk Gabriel, Kellion of Quick to Hear Mother of God, Holy Monastery of Pantokratoros.
Monk Isaac, Kellion of Birth of Mother of God, Kapsala, Holy Monastery of Pantokratoros.
Elder Athanasios, Monk, Kellion of St. Athanasios, Holy Monastery of Pantokratoros.
Elder Meletios, Monk, Birth of Theotokos, Kapsala, Holy Monastery of Pantokratoros.
Elder Gregory, Monk Kellion of St. Nicholas, Kapsala, Holy Monastery of Pantokratoros.
Elder Onoufrios, Monk, Kellion Dormition of Theotokos, Karyes.
Elder Nicholas, Monk, Kellion of St. Demetrios, Karyes.
Hieromonk Gabriel, Kellion of Holy Archangels (Kombologas) Karyes.

The collection of names continues.

Endnotes:

See, as examples, Canon XLV (45) of the Holy Apostles: "Let any Bishop, or Presbyter, or Deacon that merely joins in prayer with heretics be suspended, but if he has permitted them to perform any service as Clergymen, let him be deposed [from office]." And, Canon VI (6) of the Synod of Laodicea: "Concerning the necessity of not permitting heretics to come into the house of God, so long as they persist in their heresy."

See, among many others: Saint Meletios of Galisiotou, Third Oration, Against the Latins, in V. Laurent- L. Darryzes, Dossier Grex de l' Union de Lyon (1272-1277) Paris 1976, page 554: "The Latins have erred greatly and many times the whole choir of Fathers do condemn them, he who communes with the Latins is grouped with heretics and separated from Christ and the Saints."

Saint Mark of Ephesus, Encyclical Letter, in I. Karamiri, The Dogmatic and Symbolic Books [In Greek], Vol. 1, pg. 425: "We have turned away from them as from heretics and for this reason we have separated from them. For what else? The rules of piety are clear: he who even in the slightest deviates from right faith is a heretic and subject to the laws set against heretics...Thus, they are heretics and as heretics we cut them off." The Synod in Constantinople of 1848: "The Lord has seen fit to allow for heresies to spread to the greater part of the inhabited world, as with Arianism at one time, so, too, today with Papism."

Letter 90, To the Most Holy Brethren and Bishops found in the West, 2, PG 32, 473 [In Greek]. Canon XXXII (32) of Synod of Laodicea: "That one must not accept blessings of heretics, which are rather folly [also could be translated as 'to one's ruin'] rather than blessings."

See Canon 15 of the 1st-2nd Synod in Constantinople (861).

Letter 71, to Pantoleonti Logotheti, PG 99, 1321: "The Commandment of the Lord is not to remain silent in times when the faith is in danger. 'Speak, he said, and do not remain silent.'" And, "if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him" (Heb. 10:38). And, "if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out " (Lk. 19:40). Thus, when it is a matter of faith, one should not say: 'Who am I, a priest or a leader of the people?' In no case should one remain silent."

Letter 79, to Abbot Theophilos, PG 99, 1049. "If there are any monks in our day, they will be proved by their works. The work of a monk is to not tolerate any innovations whatsoever as pertains to the Gospel, that they not become examples to laymen as proposing heresy and communion with heretics, for they will give account for their [the laity's] loss [of salvation]."

Theodore Studite, To Monastics, PG 99, 1120. "Do we prefer the monasteries more than God and happiness here more than hardship for the sake of the good? Where is, "I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed." Where is, "Lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest." Where are the glory and the power of our monastic order? Do you recall how the Blessed Sabbas and Theodosios, when Anastasios the impious emperor decided to turn against the Orthodox, rose up fervently fighting for the faith, on the one hand anathematizing the cacodox in the Church, on the other hand, with the letters they wrote saying to the king that they prefer death rather than to change that which they had received?"

Jn. 10: 11-12: I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is a hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.

2- Announcement by the Sacred Community of the Holy Mount Athos

Karyes, December 30th, 2006

The recent visit of Pope Benedict XVI to the Ecumenical Patriarchate on the occasion of the feast-day of Saint Andrew (30th November 2006) and thereafter the visit by His Beatitude the Archbishop of Athens Christodoulos (14th December 2006) gave rise to a multitude of impressions, evaluations and reactions. We shall bypass those things that the secular Press has evaluated as positive or negative, to focus on those things that pertain to our salvation, for the sake of which we abandoned the world to live in the barrenness of the Holy Mountain.

As Monks of the Holy Mountain, we respect the Ecumenical Patriarchate, under whose jurisdiction we fall. We honor and venerate the Most Holy Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and we rejoice in all that he has achieved and so diligently labored for, in his love of God, for the Church. We particularly commemorate the stolid and untiring defense of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, amid the many unfavorable conditions that exist, as well as the impoverished local Orthodox Churches and the care that is taken to project the message of the Orthodox Church throughout the world. Furthermore, we the Monks of the Holy Mountain honor the Most Holy Church of Greece, from which most of us originate, and we respect His Beatitude the Primate.

However, the events that took place during the recent visits of the Pope to Fanarion and of His Beatitude the Archbishop to the Vatican brought immense sorrow to our hearts.

We desire and we struggle all of our life to safeguard the trust of the Holy Fathers, which was bequeathed to us by the holy Founders of our sacred Monasteries and the blessed reposed fathers before us. We strive to the best of our ability to live the sacrament of the Church and the unblemished Orthodox Faith, according to what we are daily taught by the Divine Services, the sacred readings, and the teachings in general of the Holy Fathers which are set out in their writings and in the decisions of the Ecumenical Synods. We guard our dogmatic awareness "like the apple of our eye", and we reinforce it, by applying ourselves to God-pleasing labors and the meticulous study of the achievements of the holy Confessor Fathers when they confronted the miscellaneous heresies, and especially of our father among the saints, Gregory of Palamas, the Holy Martyrs of the Holy Mountain and the Holy Martyr Kosmas the First, whose sacred relics we venerate with all honor and whose sacred memory we incessantly celebrate. We are afraid to remain silent, whenever issues arise that pertain to the trust that our Fathers left us. Our responsibility, towards the most venerable fathers and brothers of the overall brotherhood of the Holy Mountain and towards the pious faithful of the Church who regard Athonite Monasticism as their non-negotiable guardian of sacred Tradition, weighs heavily upon our conscience.

The visits of the Pope at Fanarion and the Archbishop's visit at the Vatican may have secured certain benefits of a secular nature; however, during those visits, various other events took place which were not according to the customs of Orthodox Ecclesiology, or commitments were made that would neither benefit the Orthodox Church, nor any other heterodox Christians.

First of all, the Pope was received as though he were a canonical (proper) bishop of Rome. During the service, the Pope wore an omophorion; he was addressed by the Ecumenical Patriarch with the greeting "blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord" as though it were Christ the Lord; he blessed the congregation and he was commemorated as "most holy" and "His Beatitude the Bishop of Rome". Furthermore, all of the Pope's officiating clergy wore an omophorion during the Orthodox Divine Liturgy; also, the reciting of the Lord's Prayer, his liturgical embrace with the Patriarch, were displays of something more than common prayer. And all of this, when the papist institution has not budged at all from its heretical teachings and its policy; on the contrary, the Pope is in fact visibly promoting and trying to reinforce Unia along with the Papist dogmas on primacy and infallibility, and is going even further, with inter-faith

common prayers and the pan-religious hegemony of the Pope of Rome that is discerned therein.

As for the reception of the Pope in Fanarion, we are especially grieved by the fact that all of the media kept repeating the same, incorrect information, that the psalms that were (unduly) sung at the time had been composed by Monks of the Holy Mountain. We take this opportunity to responsibly inform all pious Christians that their composer was not, and could never be, a monk of the Holy Mountain.

Then there is the matter of the attempt by His Beatitude the Archbishop of Athens to commence relations with the Vatican on social, cultural and bio-ethical issues, as well as the objective to mutually defend the Christian roots of Europe (positions which are also found in the Common Declaration of the Pope and the Patriarch in Fanarion), both of which may seem innocuous or even positive, given that their aim is to cultivate peaceful human relations. Nevertheless, it is important that all these do not give the impression that the West and Orthodoxy continue to have the same bases, or lead one into forgetting the distance that separates the Orthodox Tradition from that which is usually presented as the "European spirit". (Western) Europe is burdened with a series of anti-Christian institutions and acts, such as the Crusades, the "Holy" Inquisition, slave trading and colonization. It is burdened with the tragic division which took on the form of the schism of Protestantism; the devastating world wars, also the man-centered humanism and its atheist view. All of these are the consequence of Rome's theological deviations from Orthodoxy. One after the other, the Papist and the Protestant heresies gradually removed the humble Christ of Orthodoxy and in His place, they enthroned haughty Man. The holy bishop Nicholas of Ochrid and Zitsa wrote the following from Dahau: «What, then, is Europe? The Pope and Luther.... This is what Europe is, at its core, ontologically and historically». The blessed Elder Justin Popovitch supplements the above: «The 2nd Vatican Synod comprises the rebirth of every kind of European humanism.... because the Synod persistently adhered to the dogma on the Pope's infallibility» and he surmises: «Undoubtedly, the authorities and the powers of (western) European culture and civilization are Christ-expellers». This is why it is so important to project the humble morality of Orthodoxy and to support the truly Christian roots of the united Europe; the roots that Europe had during the first Christian centuries, during the time of the catacombs and of the seven holy Ecumenical Synods. It is advisable for Orthodoxy to not tax itself with foreign sins, and furthermore, the impression should not be given to those who became de-Christianized in reaction to the sidetracking of Western-style Christianity, that Orthodoxy is related to it, thus ceasing to testify that it is the only authentic Faith in Christ, and the only hope of the peoples of Europe.

The Roman Catholics' inability to disentangle themselves from the decisions of their pursuant (and according to them, Ecumenical) Synods, which had legitimized the Filioque, the Primacy, the Infallibility, the secular authority of the Roman Pontiff, 'created Grace', the immaculate conception of the Holy Mother, Unia. Despite all these, we Orthodox continue the so-called traditional exchanges of visits, bestowing honors befitting an Orthodox Bishop on the Pope and totally disregarding a series of Sacred Canons which forbid common prayers, while the theological dialogue repeatedly flounders, and, after being dredged from the depths, it again sinks down.

All indications lead to the conclusion that the Vatican is not orienting itself to discard its heretical teachings, but only to "re-interpret" them—in other words, to veil them.

Roman Catholic ecclesiology varies, from one circular to the other; from the so-called "open" ecclesiology of the Encyclical «Ut Unum Sint», to the ecclesiological exclusivity of the Encyclical «Dominus Jesus». It should be noted that both of the aforementioned views are contrary to Orthodox Ecclesiology. The self-awareness of the holy Orthodox Church as the only One, Holy, Catholic (=overall) and Apostolic Church does not allow for the recognition of other, heterodox churches and confessions as "sister churches". "Sister Churches" are only the local Orthodox Churches of the same faith. No other homonymous reference to "sister churches" other than the Orthodox one is theologically permissible.

The "Filioque" is promoted by the Roman Catholic side as yet another legal expression of the teaching regarding the procession of the Holy Spirit, and theologically equivalent to the Orthodox teaching that procession is "only from the Father"—a view that is unfortunately supported by some of our own theologians. Besides, the Pontiff is maintaining the Primacy as an inalienable privilege, as one can tell from the recent erasure of the title "Patriarch of the West" by the current Pope Benedict XVI; also from his reference to the worldwide mission of the Apostle Peter and his successors during his homily in the Patriarchal Temple, as well as from his also recent speech, which included the following: «...within the society, with the Successors of the Apostles, whose visible unity is guaranteed by the Successor of the Apostle Peter, the Ukrainian Catholic Community managed to preserve the Sacred Tradition alive, in its integrity» (Catholic Newspaper, No.3046/18-4-2006). Unia is being reinforced and reassured in many and various ways, despite the proclamations by the Pope to the contrary. This dishonest stance is witnessed, apart from other instances, by the provocative intervention of the previous Pope, John-Paul II, which led the Orthodox-Roman Catholic dialogue in Baltimore into a disaster, as well as by the letter sent by the current Pope to the Cardinal Ljubomir Husar, the Uniate Archbishop of Ukraine. In this letter dated 22/2/2006, the following is emphatically stressed: «It is imperative to secure the presence of the two great carriers of the only Tradition (the Latin and the Eastern)... The mission that the Greek Catholic Church has undertaken, being in full communion with the Successor of the Apostle Peter, is two-fold: on one side, it must visibly preserve the eastern Tradition inside the Catholic Church; on the other, it must favor the merging of the two traditions, testifying that they not only can coordinate between themselves, but that they also constitute a profound union amid their variety».

Seen in this light, polite exchanges such as the visits of the Pope to Fanarion and the Archbishop of Athens to the Vatican, without the prerequisite of a unity in the Faith, may on the one hand create false impressions of unity and thus turn away the heterodox who could have looked towards Orthodoxy as being the true Church, and on the other hand, blunt the dogmatic sensor of many Orthodox. Even more, they may push some of the faithful and pious Orthodox, who are deeply concerned over what is taking place inopportunistically and against the Sacred Canons, to detach themselves from the corpus of the Church and create new schisms. Thus, out of love for our Orthodoxy, but with pain as regards the unity of the Church, and with a view to preserve the Orthodox Faith free of all innovations, we proclaim in every direction that which was proclaimed by the Extraordinary, Double, Holy Assembly of our Sacred Community of the Holy Mountain on the 9th / 22nd of April 1980:

«We believe that our Holy Orthodox Church is the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ, having the fullness of Grace and the Truth, and for this reason, an uninterrupted Apostolic Succession. On the contrary, the "churches" and the "confessions" of the West, having distorted the faith of the Gospel, the Apostles and the Fathers on many points, are deprived of the hallowing Grace, the true Sacraments and the Apostolic Succession...

Dialogues with the heterodox—if they are intended to inform them about the Orthodox Faith so that when they become receptive of divine enlightenment and their eyes are opened they might return to the Orthodox Faith—are not condemned. In no way should a theological dialogue be accompanied by common prayers, participation in liturgical assemblies and worship by either side and any other activities that might give the impression that our Orthodox Church acknowledges the Roman Catholics as a complete Church and the Pope as a canonical (proper) Bishop of Rome. Such acts mislead the Orthodox as well as the Roman Catholic faithful, who are given a false impression of what Orthodoxy thinks of them.... With the Grace of God, the Holy Mountain remains faithful—as do the Orthodox people of the Lord—to the Faith of the Holy Apostles and the Holy Fathers, and also out of love for the heterodox, who are essentially helped, when the Orthodox with their steadfast Orthodox stance point out the extent of their spiritual ailment and the way they can be cured.

The failed attempts for union during the past teach us that for a permanent union, according to the will of God, within the Truth of the Church, the prerequisite is a different kind of preparation and course, than those which were followed in the past and appear to be followed to this day». *Signed by all of the Representatives and Superiors of the Common Assembly of the twenty Sacred Monasteries of the Holy Mountain Athos.*