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COMMON STATEMENT ON THE FILIOQUE

The Joint International Commission on Theological Dialogue Between the Lutheran World Federation and the Orthodox Church

We, representatives of The Lutheran World Federation and the Orthodox Church, have come together in a spirit of love and Christian communion to discuss the Church-dividing issue of the procession of the Holy Spirit. We both affirm the full divinity and personhood of the Holy Spirit, which was expressed in different ways in the eastern and the western traditions. We know that the Filioque was inserted in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed by the Latin Church in response to the heresy of Arianism centuries after the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed's composition. The Eastern Church has always protested this insertion. As part of the Latin tradition, the reformers inherited the Creed with the Filioque and did not consider it problematic. Valuing this old and most venerable ecumenical Christian text, we suggest that the translation of the Greek original (without the Filioque) be used in the hope that this will contribute to the healing of age-old divisions between our communities and enable us to confess together the faith of the Ecumenical Councils of Nicaea (325) and Constantinople (381).

The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed is a doctrinal statement used in the liturgy. The people of God pray the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed and in that prayer their faith is shaped by the Triune God. Renewed focus on the original wording of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed may encourage renewed theological reflection on the Trinity and the role of the Holy Spirit.

Moreover, we both affirm that in our Trinitarian doctrine the Father is the cause (αἴτιος) of the generation of the Son and of the procession of the Spirit. The Orthodox understand that the Filioque was often meant to underline the relationship between the Son and the Spirit and the Lutherans are aware that in the Orthodox tradition the Spirit is sometimes conceived as proceeding (ἐκπορευόμενον) through the Son. We are also aware that there are other ways to indicate the relationship of the Son and the Spirit. We hope that the exploration of the formula "through the Son" used by Maximus the Confessor, John of Damascus, and Tarasius of Constantinople and relevant views by Gregory of Cyprus and Gregory Palamas, might facilitate our common effort to reach further agreement regarding the procession of the Holy Spirit.

27 May 2024