

Introduction to the 2018 Convocation for Restoration and Renewal of the Undivided Church:

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The Polish National Catholic Church and the Declaration and Union of Scranton

by the Very Rev. Robert M. Nemkovich Jr.

The Polish National Catholic Church promulgated the Declaration of Scranton in 2008 to preserve true and genuine Old Catholicism and allow for a Union of Churches that would be a beacon for and home to people of all nations who aspire to union with the pristine faith of the undivided Church. The Declaration of Scranton “is modeled heavily on the 1889 Declaration of Utrecht of the Old Catholic Churches. This is true not only in its content, but also in the reason for its coming to fruition.”¹ The Polish National Catholic Church to this day holds the Declaration of Utrecht as a normative document of faith.

To understand the origins of the Declaration of Utrecht we must look back not only to the origin of the Old Catholic Movement as a response to the First Vatican Council but to the very see of Utrecht itself. “The bishopric of Utrecht, which until the sixteenth century had been the only bishopric in what is now Dutch territory, was founded by St. Willibrord, an English missionary bishop from Yorkshire.”² Willibrord was consecrated in Rome by Pope Sergius I in 696, given the pallium of an archbishop and given the see of Utrecht by Pepin, the Mayor of the Palace of the Merovingian dynasty. Utrecht became under Willibrord the ecclesiastical capital of the Northern Netherlands. One of the privileges the Chapter of Utrecht had was the right to elect its own archbishop.³ Another important factor for the see of Utrecht was the neutrality of the civil government which was not under the Court and thus control of Rome.

In the late Sixteenth century the Jesuits first entered into the Netherlands and soon tension and disagreement followed with the national clergy which ultimately lead to the schism. “The Roman Catholics of Holland had their own diocesan organization; the chapters had the right to elect bishops and present them to the Pope for confirmation. They regarded the Pope as their lawful superior but held that he was bound to respect their canonical rights.”⁴ From their arrival in Holland the Jesuits did their utmost to stop bishoprics from being filled. “They held that the bishop who was needed for ordination and confirmation should be only a vicar-apostolic appointed

¹ Official Commentary of The Declaration of Scranton, 2010, page 1

² The Old Catholic Movement, C.B. Moss, 1948 – reprinted 2005, page 90

³ Moss, page 90

⁴ Moss, page 96

by the Pope and removable at his direction; not a diocesan bishop with canonical rights of his own. The chapters, on the other hand, and the majority of the clergy and people, while perfectly loyal to the pope, did not want to be directly controlled from Rome. They valued their ancient rights, and were determined to maintain them.”⁵

Against this backdrop “the accusation of Jansenism was brought against the Chapter of Utrecht much later, on the principle of ‘Give a dog a bad name and hang him.’ But from the first to the last, the real issue was the rights of the chapters and, behind it, the claim of the Papacy to unlimited obedience.”⁶ Jansenism was a religious movement predominately in France in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries that arose out of reconciling divine grace and human freedom. The Jansenists focused on original sin, human corruption and the absolute necessity of divine grace. In France, it soon became connected with the struggle against the papacy by proponents of Gallicanism. These advocated the restriction of papal power and opposition to monarchical authoritarianism of Louis XIV. Pope Clement XI issued a papal bull ‘Unigenitus’ condemning Jansenism on September 8, 1713. This began a doctrinal controversy that lasted much of the eighteenth century and merged with the French Church’s fight for autonomy (Gallicanism).

Over time this tension grew until ultimately there was a break from Rome in 1723. “A Vicar Apostolic, Peter Codde, consecrated as Bishop at Brussels, Belgium in 1689 ... He was elected Archbishop by the Chapter of Utrecht. During this episcopate he refused to sign the formulary of Pope Alexander VII and died without recantation in 1710. The Church at Utrecht joined with the French “Appelants” in their resistance to the Bull, “Unigenitus” (*The Only Begotten*), issued in 1713 by Pope Clement XI.

*The Church of Utrecht kept up a supply of priests by sending their candidates with dimissorials to French Appellant Catholic bishops for ordination to the Holy Priesthood.*⁷

The chapter of Utrecht having received permission of the government met on April 17, 1723 and after a Mass to the Holy Ghost, elected Cornelius Steenoven to be the Archbishop of Utrecht. Steenoven received his doctorate in Rome and was the Vicar General of Utrecht prior to his election. The chapter of Utrecht asked the pope to permit the consecration but no reply was received. After looking to France but with no bishops willing to consecrate, the Bishop of Babylon – Dominique Marie Varlet, agreed to consecrate Steenoven. This took place on October 15, 1724

⁵ Moss, page 97

⁶ Moss, page 97

⁷ Apostolic Succession in the Polish National Catholic Church, 2007

in Amsterdam in the presence of the whole chapter. Cornelius Steenoven was now the seventh Archbishop of Utrecht and the first Archbishop in that territory since the reformation. “The deed was done: the Church of Utrecht, though as yet she did not know it, began her career as a church independent of the see of Rome.”⁸

The legitimacy and canonicity of this consecration was defended by Zeger van Espen, the famed canonist of Louvain University. Bishop Varlet consecrated four Archbishops of Utrecht. After Varlet’s death Bishop Meinhardt (the last consecrated by him) established the Bishopric of Haarlem in 1742 and the Bishopric of Deventer in 1752. Meinhardt’s successor was consecrated by the Bishop of Haarlem, who maintained the line of succession that continues to our day.”⁹

It was this church of Utrecht independent of Rome that 150 years later would lend support to Catholic faithful in Germany and Switzerland who desired to remain true to their Catholic roots and identity following the First Vatican Council and Pastor Aeternus (“*Eternal Shepherd*” - First Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of Christ which defines the Petrine primacy, supreme power of universal jurisdiction and infallibility of the Roman Pontiff). In Germany the response of theologians and professors was in great opposition to the new dogmas. They gathered like-minded individuals together in Munich for a congress in September of 1871. Their purpose was not schism, but they wanted to find a way to address the spiritual needs of those who had been excommunicated for refusing to submit to the Vatican Council. Momentum grew, and a second Old Catholic Congress was held in September of 1872 at Cologne and this time the Archbishop of Utrecht was present with four of his clergy and interested people from Switzerland and Austria. Also, important to note is that Anglican Bishop Christopher Wordsworth of Lincoln was present along with 22 Anglican priests.¹⁰ “The Old Catholics, as we must now call them (that is, those who maintained the Roman Catholic religion as it was before the Vatican Council), were finding support in other countries also.”¹¹

On June 4, 1873 an election was held where Josef Hubert Reinkens was elected at St. Pantaleon’s Church in Cologne. There were 77 electors (21 priests and 56 laity). “Probably it was the first popular election of a bishop in Germany since the days of St. Boniface. The assembly burst into tears of joy, and Schulte (*a professor/theologian*) calls the scene “a most inspiring

⁸ Moss, Page 123

⁹ Apostolic Succession in the Polish National Catholic Church, 2007

¹⁰ Moss, page 238

¹¹ Moss, Page 233

moment, such as the Church has not seen since the apostolic times.”¹² The Archbishop of Utrecht agreed that Reinkens should be consecrated and this took place on August 11, 1873 by Bishop Herman Heykamp. There was now an Old Catholic Bishop in Germany.

Paralleling the movement in Germany there was also great concern over the new papal dogmas in Switzerland. This was headed again by theologians and professors who could not accept the new Vatican decrees. In 1872 a great meeting of protest was held against the Infallibility of the Pope and 7 points of a Church program were passed by those present. The seven points are:

- “1 *The establishment of local branches of the movement.*
- 2 *The local branches would protest against the Papacy.*
- 3 *The local branches would do all they could to make sure that priests who opposed Papal Infallibility were appointed to vacant parishes.*
- 4 *The central committee was to bring influence to have Old Catholic teachers appointed.*
- 5 *Necessary reforms in worship and discipline could only be introduced when a new constitution for the church was established.*
- 6 *The Central Committee would have the right to invite foreign bishops for ordinations and Confirmations.*
- 7 *The overall goal of the movement was reunion of all Christian Churches.*”¹³

As the movement grew in 1873 “the ‘committee of the Society of Independent Catholics’ started a paper called *Katholische Blatter* (Catholic Leaves). In 1878 it became *Der Katholik* and still continues under this name.”¹⁴

The first National Synod of the Old Catholic Church of Switzerland met on June 14, 1875, it had 46 clergy and 115 lay members. This synod paved the way for the election of a bishop for their church. This became a reality in June of 1876 where a following Synod elected Eduard Herzog bishop. A similar process later played out in Austria as well.

“The result of the protest against the Vatican Council was that in three countries – Germany, Switzerland and Austria – new separate organizations had been formed, composed of individuals whom the Pope had excommunicated. Their hopes, first that a large section of the Roman Communion would join them, and then that they would be able to bring about immediate

¹² Moss, page 241

¹³ Moss, page 246

¹⁴ Moss, page 249

reunion with the Orthodox or Anglican churches were not fulfilled. The organization which had at first been expected to be temporary became permanent.”¹⁵

A further declaration from Rome again brought the Old Catholics together. In 1880 Pope Leo XIII declared that civil marriage was no marriage at all for Roman Catholics in an encyclical. The Archbishop of Utrecht at the time was Bishop Heykamp. He responded by proving from Scripture, the decrees of Council and from even teaching of past Popes that marriage is a natural right and may exist without the Christian sacrament which is namely the benediction of the Church. Archbishop Heykamp called a conference of Old Catholic bishops in September of 1889 which in turn led to the Declaration of Utrecht. The conference was composed of five Old Catholic Bishops: The Archbishop of Utrecht (Heykamp); the Bishop of Haarlem (Rinkel); the Bishop of Deventer (Diependaal) and Bishops Reinkens (Germany) and Herzog (Switzerland). They with theologians from the Dutch, Germany and Swiss Churches reached an agreement to unite their churches:

“1 The five Bishops’ agreed to establish a Bishop’ conference for mutual consultation. No Church was to have priority or jurisdiction over any other; all the bishops agreed that they would not consecrate any bishop without the consent of all the Old Catholic bishops, and without the acceptance of the Convention of Utrecht by the candidate.

2 An International Old Catholic Congress was to be held every two years.

*3 The five bishops issued a declaration of doctrinal principles by which all Old Catholic bishops and priests were bound. This document, known was the Declaration of Utrecht, is the doctrinal basis of Old Catholicism.”*¹⁶

In the Declaration of Utrecht “the Old Catholic churches now possessed a firm basis of principle and of unity: to be an Old Catholic is to accept the Declaration of Utrecht. It was the turning point in the history of the Old Catholic movement; it may yet prove to have been a turning point in the history of the reunion of Christendom.”¹⁷

The opening Statement of the Declaration of Utrecht is: We faithfully adhere to the Rule of Faith laid down by St. Vincent of Lerins in these terms: *“Id teneamus, ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est; hoc est etenim vere proprieque catholicum.”*¹ (We hold that which has been believed everywhere, always, and of all people: for that is truly and properly Catholic.) For this reason we persevere in professing the faith of the primitive Church, as formulated in the

¹⁵ Moss, page 271

¹⁶ Moss, Page 280

¹⁷ Moss, page 281

ecumenical symbols and specified precisely by the unanimously accepted decisions of the Ecumenical Councils held in the undivided Church of the first thousand years.¹⁸

The Declaration of Utrecht was written to respond to the situation in which Old Catholic Bishops found themselves following the First Vatican Council and due to the history of the see and chapter of Utrecht an opportunity was given to create a model of unity of churches through their bishops in faith and praxis based on the pristine Church of the First Millennium.

Across the pond in America at this time various ethnic groups immigrated to America. Some sought political and/or religious freedoms and some sought a better life for themselves and their families. Those immigrants, who were devout Roman Catholics, sought representation of their ethnicity in the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church in their new land. By 1900 there were approximately two million Polish immigrants in the United States. About one out of every ten Roman Catholics was of Polish birth or parentage and this number was significantly higher in major industrial cities in the Northeast. These Polish immigrants sought representation in the Roman Catholic hierarchy by asking for Polish bishops and more Polish priests. Their petitions were ignored by the hierarchy. The discontent among the Poles over this lack of representation and other issues led to the eventual rise of several independent religious movements in various parts of the country.

“Isolated by their language and culture, the Poles inhabited the poorest section of Scranton called Slocum Hollow or later, South Side. Feeling oppressed by both their working and living conditions, the Poles found solace in their local Polish parish, Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Their parish not only served as a place for worship and a center for religious life, but also as a place for social, cultural, economic and recreational activities. When their pastor, Father Richard Aust, began to demand additional offerings for enlarging the parish cemetery, the people became upset and began to rebel. They demanded that all such collections be handled not by the pastor, but by a committee chosen by a parish assembly. As discontent and tensions continued to build at the parish, Father Aust brought this situation to the attention of Bishop William O’Hara, the Diocesan Bishop of the Roman Diocese of Scranton. Father Aust, in a sermon delivered on August 23, 1896, “threatened to excommunicate anyone who would resist or criticize his actions.”¹⁹ In response to these threats a group of parishioners formed a temporary committee to

¹⁸ Declaration of Utrecht & Declaration of Scranton.

¹⁹ Wlodarski, page 23

approach Bishop O’Hara. They insisted that he compel Father Aust to organize a parish committee that would be elected by a general parish assembly. The bishop refused their demands.”²⁰

The people later turned to a former assistant pastor of theirs Fr. Francis Hodur. Hodur was born in Poland in a poor family and as an exceptional student traveled to Krakow to study and later entered the seminary. He was very much moved by the plight of the Polish people and was involved with political activism which eventually led to his expulsion from the seminary. In 1893 he arrived in the United States. Priests from the Scranton area sent him to a seminary in Latrobe, Pennsylvania and later that year he was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop O’Hara (Roman Catholic Bishop of Scranton).

In March of 1897 the people of a new organized St. Stanislaus parish after refusing to surrender the deed to the control of this bishop, turned to Fr. Hodur to lead them. Hodur agreed and had the first Mass for them on March 21, 1897. Father Hodur proposed a “Church Constitution” that was unanimously accepted, and the first parish committee was elected in accordance to it. Soon after, Hodur established and published a weekly newspaper, the *Straż* or “The Guard.” The first issue was published on Saturday, April 17, 1897. The purpose of the *Straż* was to be a true “Guard of our divine rights and the herald of a better future to come.”²¹ Through the *Straż* Father Hodur challenged several Roman Catholic teachings, including papal infallibility and universal jurisdiction.

Like the Old Catholics in Europe, Hodur did not intend to break away from the Roman Catholic Church. He was hopeful that the demands of these immigrants would be granted within the framework of the Roman Catholic Church. Therefore, in January 1898 he traveled to Rome to present the National Church (*Kościół Narodowy*) Program, created by the St. Stanislaus parish committee and co-signed by the neighboring churches of Nanticoke, Wilkes-Barre, Plymouth, Duryea and Priceburg (*now Dickson City*). The program called for:

- (1) legal ownership of church property by the local parish;
- (2) parish governance by parish committees elected by parishioners;
- (3) appointment of pastorates of priests approved by the Parishioners;

²⁰ Abridged PNCC History, 2010, page 7

²¹ Wlodarski, p. 52

- (4) appointment of Polish bishops by priests and parishioners, subject to confirmation by the Pope.

While in Rome, Father Hodur met first with Cardinal Ledochowski and then with Father Cormier. He was told that his efforts were fruitless and that he must submit to the authorities of the church or face exclusion. He returned to Scranton, met with his congregation and reported on his trip to Rome. Upon hearing the report of Father Hodur, the congregation unanimously voted to sever their ties with the Roman Church and to work diligently in building the “National Catholic Church.” Father Hodur received an official letter of excommunication, prepared by Bishop Hoban and dated September 29, 1898.

As the Polish National Catholic movement continued to grow and new parishes were organized, Father Hodur called the first synod of the Polish National Catholic Church on September 6, 1904 in Scranton, Pennsylvania. The clergy and lay delegates, as well as representatives of various Polish organizations and societies that were supportive of this independent movement, were present and voted on all matters. Father Hodur organized this first synod to solidify and give direction to the Polish National Catholic movement. This synod, lasting only three days, gave an organizational framework (synodal structure) through which the Polish National Catholic Church would function and grow. The major decisions made at the First Synod were: breaking ties with the Vatican, electing Hodur as bishop, established funding for a future seminary, adopted a Church Constitution, named *Straż (The Guard)* the official organ (newspaper) of the Church and established the Great Council, composed of six clergy and six lay people plus Father Hodur, to govern the Church between synods (*This became the Supreme Council*).

Just as there was great excitement in Germany of the election of their bishop, it was the same in Scranton. Father Hodur’s election as bishop was a time of great excitement and joy. *The Scranton Times* newspaper article reported it this way: “I have never seen such enthusiasm. They were hugging and kissing one another, shouting and ringing the church bells, and with shining faces – including crowds of people gathered in the streets outside – caught by a genuine feeling of joy, they all cheered with an indescribable enthusiasm reaching the utmost.”²²

Holding the faith of the undivided Church, Bishop Hodur sought out consecration from valid Catholic or Orthodox bishops that had unquestionable Apostolic Succession. Father Hodur approached the Old Catholic Churches in Europe for consecration. However, at that time the Old

²² Wlodarski, 85

Catholic Church already had a bishop in the United States in the person of Bishop Kozlowski of Chicago. It was a standing practice of the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht that there would be just one Old Catholic bishop for a country.

In 1907 Bishop Kozlowski died and thus a new Old Catholic bishop was needed for the United States and for this Polish Independent Movement. Father Hodur traveled to meet the Old Catholic Bishops in Europe and brought with him several letters and petitions for his consecration from several parishes under his jurisdiction. Father John Tichy from the Kozlowski movement in Chicago also approached the Old Catholics seeking consecration. “The matter of consecrations was discussed for a long time, each of the elects spoke of his work and his intentions for the future. When my [Hodur] turn came I presented the cause of the Polish people in America, its struggle for existence and the danger threatening it from all sides, and the one salvation, the creation of the Polish National [Catholic] Church free from all Roman dogmas.”²³

The Old Catholics decided that Father Hodur would be consecrated as the Old Catholic bishop for the United States. It is important to note that the election and consecration of a bishop is a two-step process, where first a valid election must take place illustrating the approval of the faithful and the clergy. The candidate for the consecration as a bishop must then be accepted by the current bishops. Their decision to consecrate him is a visible sign of their approval of him as a successor of the Apostles.

On September 29, 1907 Father Hodur was consecrated a bishop at St. Gertrude’s Cathedral in Utrecht, Holland by the Archbishop of Utrecht, Gerard Gul; Bishop of Haarlem, William Van Thiel; and the Bishop of Deventer, Michael Spit. The consecration of Bishop Francis Hodur was a moment of great joy and enthusiasm for the entire Polish National Catholic Movement. On October 17, 1907 Bishop Hodur was welcomed back to the United States by 28 priests and 46 lay people in New York City. Upon his return to the City of Scranton as Bishop, a great multitude of PNC faithful met Bishop Hodur at the train station and together they marched up Pittston Avenue to St. Stanislaus Cathedral. Bishop Hodur emphasized that “the consecration he received will never change his spirit of love toward the people which inspired him to work for his fellowman.

²³ Wieczerzak, Biographical Essays, page 273

He assured his congregation that he would continue along the same lines in the work which he chose ten years ago.”²⁴

The Polish National Catholic Church had now become the Old Catholic Church in the United States and a member of the Union of Utrecht. This was important for the PNCC to be a part of a union of Churches based the faith of the Undivided Church.

In 1931, in Europe, important developments that involved the PNCC and its membership in the International Bishops Conference of the Union of Utrecht took place. A historic intercommunion agreement, called “The Bonn Agreement,” was reached between the European Old Catholic Churches and the Anglican Church. This agreement allowed members of the Old Catholic Churches and the Anglican Church to receive the Holy Eucharist in each other’s churches. The Bonn Agreement is a significant ecumenical statement that continues to serve as a model for discussions about sacramental sharing among different churches.

The Bonn Agreement includes the following main points:

1. Each Church recognizes the catholicity and independence of the other, and maintains its own.
2. Each Church agrees to admit members of the other Communion to participate in the sacraments.
3. Intercommunion does not require from either Communion the acceptance of all doctrinal opinion, sacramental devotion, or liturgical practice characteristic of the other, but implies that each believes the other to hold all the essentials of the Christian faith.

This agreement continues to be a basis for the unity of churches in the Polish National Catholic Church.”²⁵

Bishop Hodur and the PNCC always had an ecumenical outlook to realize the prayer of Jesus “that they may be one” for the unity of His Church. After World War II ended, the PNCC continued to actively work to make connections with other churches. At that time our Church found it had much in common with the Episcopal Church in America. Both churches had similar governing structures and conducted their synods much the same way. Both churches held similar

²⁴ Wlodarski, page 96

²⁵ Requirements for Communion with the PNCC, 2010, page 1

beliefs related to the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. This led to a formal agreement of intercommunion between the PNCC and the Episcopal Church in 1946. We are painfully aware that this agreement was suspended in 1976 by Prime Bishop Thaddeus Zielinski and terminated in 1978 by the PNCC General Synod when the Episcopal Church attempted to ordain women to Holy Orders.

Concerning the termination of Intercommunion “The XV General Synod of the Polish National Catholic Church by majority vote 312 to 106 ratified the position of its Prime Bishop and adopted a resolution stating that the Polish National Catholic Church regretfully acknowledges and confirms the fact that by their unilateral action, the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States of America and the Anglican Church of Canada have effectively terminated sacramental intercommunion with the Polish National Catholic Church.”²⁶

As unfortunate as the termination of intercommunion was with the Episcopal Church and with the IBC, the PNCC was committed to continue her ecumenical efforts. Dialogues were established with the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches in the 1970s and 1980s.

As these dialogues met, many areas of common faith and practice were found to exist. Common statements of faith and practice were produced by both dialogues: “The Road to Unity” (Orthodox-Old Catholic Agreed Statements) was published in 1987, this is an important document of faith shared between the Orthodox, Polish National Catholic and Old Catholic Churches (*This dialogue concluded and the statements were presented prior to some Old Catholic Churches in Europe attempting to ordain women to the priesthood*). This Old Catholic/Polish National Catholic/Orthodox collaborative work continues to be an important doctrinal document for the Polish National Catholic Church. In the section “The Importance of the Union of Utrecht from the Orthodox Point of View” we see the following: “*The formation of the Union of Utrecht was and is a very important ecclesial event for whole of the Christian world. It was not only important for the identity and development of the Old Catholic church itself, but also initiated processes of ferment in the whole Christian world: a) in its opposition to the dogmatic decisions of Vatican I, b) in suggesting theological and ecclesiological criteria to find a solution to the post-Tridentine dialectic between the position of Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, in its search for the authentic spirit of the tradition of the ancient, undivided Church., c) in applying the dogmatic and*

²⁶ Constitution and Laws of the Polish National Catholic Church, 2006, page 64

canonical principles of the ecclesial tradition of the era of the ecumenical councils to the formation and administration of the communion of Old Catholic churches.”²⁷

The Dialogue with Rome also produced substantial agreement on many matters of faith, these were published in two books: “Journeying Together in Christ” (Report of the Polish National Catholic-Roman Catholic Dialogue) in 1990; and “Journeying Together in Christ-The Journey Continues” (Report of the Polish National Catholic-Roman Catholic Dialogue) in 2004. As a result of the PNC-RC Dialogue the Roman Catholic Church in 1996 permitted Polish National Catholics to receive the Sacraments of Penance, Eucharist and Anointing under Canon 844.3 of Roman Catholic Canon Law. By extending this canon to the PNCC the Roman Catholic Church officially recognized the validity of the orders and sacraments of the PNCC. Roman Catholics have always been able to receive these sacraments in the PNCC. However, the major issue inhibiting unity continues to be the exercise of authority of the Bishop of Rome.

As the PNCC celebrated her 100th anniversary in 1997 another new period in her history began. It was not long into the second century of existence when the PNCC was removed from the Union of Utrecht and the International Bishops Conference (2003). This occurred because the PNCC remained firm in the true Catholic and Apostolic Faith and would not accept the ordination of women to the priesthood and the blessing of same-sex unions. Unfortunately, during the 1990’s first the German Old Catholic Church and then the Swiss Church moved in a direction contrary to Scripture, Tradition and the Declaration of Utrecht. They began to allow women into the ordained priesthood. During the November 2003 IBC Meeting in Prague, Bishop Mueller of Switzerland made the following motion: “In our IBC meeting of 2003 we state that full communion as defined in the statutes was not possible to restore and as a consequence separation of our churches follows.”²⁸ The motion passed and the Polish National Catholic Church was de facto removed from the Union of Utrecht and her bishops were no longer members of the International Bishops Conference.

Following the removal of the PNCC from the Union of Utrecht after 96 years, the PNCC found herself standing alone. The PNCC through Bishop Thaddeus Peplowski was giving

²⁷ The Road to Unity, 1990, page 1.

²⁸ Motion recorded from the notes of Rev. Robert M. Nemkovich Jr. (*Proxy for PNCC Bishop Dawidziuk*) The motion passed with 6 votes in favor, 4 votes against and 1 abstention. The IBC never shared with the PNCC the official minutes of this meeting.

episcopal oversight to a group of former Lutherans in Norway and began to formulate a structure to move forward with this and other relationships. In 2006 Prime Bishop Robert Nemkovich and the 22nd General Synod formed the PNCC – Nordic Catholic Church Commission. In 2007 the Nordic Catholic Church held a synod during which they elected Roald Nikolai Fleместad as bishop. The Declaration of Scranton was promulgated by the PNCC Bishops in April of 2008 and the PNCC National Clergy Conference in October of 2009 gave its concurrence. The delegates of the 2010 General Synod concurred with the Official Commentary for the Declaration of Scranton, requirements for communion and the Statutes for governing the Union of Scranton.

The Declaration of Scranton

“As can be seen in its content, the Declaration of Scranton of 2008 is modeled heavily on the 1889 Declaration of Utrecht of the Old Catholic Churches. This is true not only in its content, but also in the reason for its coming to fruition.

The Declaration of Utrecht was written as a statement of faith for the Old Catholic Churches. Before his consecration in 1907 Bishop Francis Hodur was required to assent to the tenets of the Declaration of Utrecht and was required to sign it. This Declaration remains as one of the normative documents of faith for Polish National Catholics.

Subsequent to the 2003 separation from the Union of Utrecht, the Polish National Catholic Church has been approached by other religious bodies that desire to become Catholic Churches in the fullest sense. They express a desire to hold the traditional Catholic beliefs and practices of the Ancient Church (Church of the first millennium); this includes the Polish National Catholic/Old Catholic understanding of the papal office.

The Polish National Catholic Church found herself in a similar position as the Church of Utrecht did in 1889. That Old Catholic Church of Utrecht had existed since 1724 and had remained constant in her profession of the traditional Catholic faith. When approached by other religious bodies that had the same understanding of the Catholic faith and a desire to unite with Utrecht while still maintaining their autonomy, a document was needed to articulate such a relationship among them. Hence, the Declaration of Utrecht was written.”²⁹

²⁹ Official Commentary on the Declaration of Scranton

July 25, 2011 was a historic day in St. Stanislaus Bishop and Martyr Cathedral in Scranton, PA. Prime Bishop Anthony Mikovsky and the bishops of the Polish National Catholic Church consecrated Very Rev. Roald Nikolai Flemestad to the Holy Office of Bishop for the Nordic Catholic Church. With this consecration the Union of Scranton now became a reality.

The bishops of the Union of Scranton meet in the International Catholic Bishops Conference (ICBC) and the Union is now expanding in Europe. In addition to the Nordic Catholic Church with several parishes in Norway, Sweden, Germany, France and Italy.

The relationship among the Bishops of the Union of Scranton and their Churches is governed by the Statutes of the Union of Scranton.

1. *The Union of Scranton is a union of Churches and their bishops governing them that is determined to maintain and pass on the Catholic faith, worship, and essential structure of the Undivided Church of the first millennium. The Union of Scranton finds its origins in the development of the Union of Utrecht on September 24, 1889, at Utrecht, Holland. There a determination was made and recorded in three documents that formed the Convention of Utrecht: the “Declaration,” the “Agreement,” and the “Regulations” (Statutes). The full communion of the Churches found its expression and was evident in the bishops uniting to form a Bishops’ Conference, which other bishops later joined. Since the Polish National Catholic Church (PNCC) continues to hold the Declaration of Utrecht as a normative document of faith, the development of the Union of Scranton follows a similar design.*
2. *The Union of Scranton emerged because certain member Churches of the Union of Utrecht unilaterally began to ordain women to the Priesthood and to bless same-sex unions in opposition to Holy Scripture and the Sacred Tradition of the Undivided Church. Since November 20, 2003 the PNCC is neither in communion, nor affiliated with the Churches of the Union of Utrecht.*
3. *The Union of Scranton confesses the Catholic faith as articulated by the first seven Ecumenical Councils and expressed throughout the Undivided Church. The Declaration of Scranton affirms the principles of the Declaration of Utrecht, which was formulated in response to the decrees of Vatican Council I. Each declaration acknowledges the historic precedence of the Bishop of Rome as primus inter pares, but rejects the papal dogmas of the said council and a number of other papal pronouncements that are at variance with the doctrine of the Ancient*

*Church. Both declarations affirm faith in the essence and mystery of the Eucharist. Furthermore, the obligation of the Union of Scranton is to strive to overcome the divisions in the Church and, based on the faith of the Undivided Church, to restore unity and communion with other Churches.*³⁰

As has been recognized and expressed ever more clearly in the course of time, the original Union of Utrecht and the Convention of Utrecht imply a specific ecclesiology which continues to be the ecclesiology of the Union of Scranton.

This ecclesiology presupposes that:

- 1.1 each local Church is a communion of people, reconciled in Jesus Christ, and by the outpouring and the continuous work of the Holy Spirit is constituted as a unity in a given place. Each local Church is gathered around a bishop with the Eucharist as its center. Each local Church is a complete Church that carries out its tasks autonomously in that given place. Each local Church is a representation of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church as confessed by the ecumenical Creed of Nicaea-Constantinople (A.D. 381). Each local Church lives the common faith and has an indispensable synodal structure uniting the clergy and the laity, thereby expressing its communion and unity.*
- 1.2 each local Church is “Catholic,” because it participates and finds its unity in the whole reality of salvation and truth that comprises God and human beings, heaven and earth. The catholicity of each local Church is manifested in the unity and communion it shares with other local Churches perceived as being identical in their essential beliefs in the redemptive work of the Triune God. The unity and communion of local Churches is an expression of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, whether they are organized as national Churches, ecclesiastical provinces or patriarchates. This does not imply a kind of super-diocese of either supra-regional or universal dimension, but rather a communion of bishops and synodically organized local Churches. It is in this perspective that the relationship between the autonomy of the local Church and its obligation to its national Church, ecclesiastical province or patriarchate is understood.*
- 1.3 each local Church is the Body of Christ and its members are the people of God. In salvation history God began the renewal of creation through His promise to Abraham and his descendants and fulfilled that promise through the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. In Christ and*

³⁰ Preamble of the Statutes of the Union of Scranton, 2010

through His Church God opened to all peoples the blessing promised to Abraham. Through baptism they become “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people set apart” (see 1 Peter 2:9). Its members are baptized and confirmed in the name of the Holy Trinity and thereby are united in Christ and through the Eucharist. They are called and commissioned by Christ and sanctified by the gifts of the Holy Spirit to live a common life in witness, worship and service. On the road to salvation all its members have to walk in repentance and hope.

1.4 in continuity with its apostolic origins, Apostolic Succession is fundamental to the catholicity of the Church. Apostolic Succession is imparted when a synodically-elected candidate for bishop is validly consecrated through prayer, anointing and by the laying-on of hands of bishops who themselves possess Apostolic Succession. Whether in Word and Sacrament, doctrine and ministry, or in Sacred Tradition whatever the Church has done and continues to do has had as its origin the mission of Jesus Christ that was given to His Apostles, enlivened by the Holy Spirit, and passed on by them and their successor bishops.³¹

There is an equality among the bishops of Churches that are in full communion, since by Christ’s design each Church is overseen by its bishop. Full communion is understood to exist only among bishops in whom the Apostolic Succession of the Church resides. For “bishops in full communion” to share the sacramental nature of the Church, a certain relationship or collegiality must exist. The Polish National Catholic Church understands the following to embrace this collegiality of bishops: “Where the bishop is, there let the multitude of believers be; even as where Jesus is, there is the Catholic Church.”³² The term “collegiality” is used to express the relationship that bishops share among themselves as successors to the Apostles. In the role of shepherd each bishop teaches, sanctifies and governs through the grace of the Holy Spirit.³³

The PNCC began a dialogue with the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) in 2011 and has signed many agreed statements of faith taken directly from “The Road to Unity”. The major obstacle to unity is the issue of women’s ordination and the PNCC is waiting for the process from The Holy Orders Task Force to be completed. Although we are not at all pleased with the position of “dual integrity”.

³¹ Statutes of the Union of Scranton, 2010, pages 1-2

³² St. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, 1st Century

³³ Requirements for Communion with the PNCC, 2010, Page 1-2

The PNCC was pleased to be welcomed at the 2017 Anglican Joint Synods in Atlanta with the G4: The Anglican Catholic Church, the Anglican Church in America, the Anglican Province of America and the Diocese of the Holy Cross. Our hope is that their Full Communion agreement will lead to full organic ecclesial unity.

Due to the circumstances in which the Polish National Catholic Church found herself and cognizant of her history she brought to reality the Declaration and Union of Scranton to continue her ecumenical endeavors as she strives toward that unity for which Jesus prayed. The standard is the unity of the Ancient, Undivided Church. Through this Declaration and Union, the PNCC continues to preserve and maintain true and genuine Old Catholicism.

This brings us to today in Dublin and this Convocation for Restoration and Renewal of the Undivided Church: through a renewed Catholicity. Against our current backdrop of the present crisis of faith with increased secularism and the rise of militant Islam there is a need for a closer union to proclaim a strong catholic witness to our world. The PNCC looks forward to union with Orthodox Anglicans and Orthodoxy through the Union of Scranton to strengthen this witness. We are so pleased you have all joined us for this important conversation and may the Spirit guide us that God's will for His Church may be done.

I end with a couple passages of Scripture, from an Orthodox theologian, the Preface to Michael Ramsey's book and the Missal of the Polish National Catholic Church:

1 Peter 3:8: Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind.

2 Corinthians 13:11: Finally, brothers, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you all.

Church in the Making (Nikoloas Loudovikos)

"Indeed, if the average theologian, or average bishop today is asked who possesses or proclaims the truth in the Church infallibly, the usual answer is the Synod of Bishops, or the Ecumenical Synod, or the primate in harmony with other bishops, etc. Of course, practically speaking, the one who holds the truth, having at the same time the power to impose it upon the others, is the bishop.

The fact that the sense has been lost that the truth belongs to each partial charism of the Church when this charism is functioning “consubstantially,” i.e., properly, containing all the other charisms in communion with it and respecting the ecclesial “order” of each charism, is I think evident. Yet this truth is in my view the only possible broader meaning of Canon 34 of the Apostolic Canons, which is also in practice almost always ignored by our bishops.

This canon requires the bishops of every nation/region not to do anything without the consent of the primate, or first, among them (the metropolitan or patriarch), and at the same time requires the primate not to be anything “without the consent of all.” This is about a principle applicable equally to each local bishopric and also, in a modified manner, to each local parish, as we would say: the truth of the Church both in its life and teaching is the “amen” of all, the agreement of all its members and not just the command or will or absolute authority of one, whoever that one may be. There is no possessor of truth in the Church, because there is no representative of God or of Christ in it. Christ is offered directly as Truth by the whole of his body, universally and consubstantially...

Neither the primate nor the many possess the truth – even if he or they are “deified” or are saints. In the context of this ecclesiology of participation, neither the “deified” person nor the primate therefore possess the truth in themselves and alone, but the whole Church as a communion of unrepeatable charisms in which each believer who has been baptized and chrismated and communicates eucharistically in Christ personally participates.”³⁴

Arnold Klukas (Nashotah House) in the Preface to Michael Ramsey’s *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*:

The Church is more than a religious or philosophical concept; it is a physical fact, present in the world. In spite of its many flaws, it remains Christ’s Body; and as a Body, the Church’s outward order (its physical shape) expresses its inward purpose and meaning by representing the dependence of its individual members upon the whole. This is a thoroughly Pauline understanding of the Church as an integrated organism in which every part contributes to the working of the whole, and without the whole the independent parts would cease to exist.³⁵

³⁴ Nikolaos Loudovikos, *Church in the Making*, 2016, pages 109-110

³⁵ Michael Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*, 2009, p. xvii

PNCC Missal – Collect (Opening Prayer) – Holy Mass on the 7th Sunday of Easter (Cycle B):

Heavenly Father, hear the prayer of Jesus on our behalf. Move us from faith to love and from love to unity so that we may bear witness to His glory before the world. We ask this through the same Jesus Christ, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

*The Feast of the St. Matthias, Apostle
24 February 2018*

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Appendix I

The apostolic line of the Archbishops of Utrecht in communion with the Roman Catholic Church is as follows:

Frederick Schenck, 1560-1580

Sasbold Vosmeer, 1602-1614

Philip Rovenius, 1620-1651

Jam del la Torre, 1651-1661

J. van Neerchasel, 1661-1686

Peter Codde, 1688-1710

After the break from Roman jurisdiction:

C. van Steenhoven, 1724-1725

Cor. J. Barchman Wuytiers, 1725-1733

T. van der Croon, 1734-1739

P. J. Meinhardt, 1739-1767

Walter van Neuwenhuisen, 1768-1797

J. J. van Rhyn, 1797-1808

W. van Os, 1814-1825

J. van Santen, 1825-1858

Henry Loos, 1858-1873

John Heykamp, 1875-1892

Gerard Gul, 1892-1920

Gerard Gul was the Consecrator of Francis Hodur on 29 September 29 1907

Appendix II

THE DECLARATION OF SCRANTON
A Profession of Faith and Declaration
formulated by the Polish National Catholic Bishops
assembled at Lancaster, New York
April 28, 2008

We faithfully adhere to the Rule of Faith laid down by St. Vincent of Lerins in these terms: “*Id teneamus, ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est; hoc est etenim vere proprieque catholicum.*”¹ (We hold that which has been believed everywhere, always, and of all people: for that is truly and properly Catholic.) For this reason we persevere in professing the faith of the primitive Church, as formulated in the ecumenical symbols and specified precisely by the unanimously accepted decisions of the Ecumenical Councils held in the undivided Church of the first thousand years.

Therefore, we reject the innovations of the First Vatican Council that on July 18, 1870 promulgated the dogma of papal infallibility and the universal Episcopate of the Bishop of Rome, which contradict the Faith of the ancient Church and which destroy its ancient canonical constitution by attributing to the Pope the plenitude of ecclesiastical powers over all dioceses and over all the faithful. By denial of his primatial jurisdiction we do not wish to deny the historic primacy which several Ecumenical Councils and the Fathers of the ancient Church have attributed to the Bishop of Rome by recognizing him as the *Primus inter pares* (first among equals).

We also reject the dogma of the Immaculate Conception promulgated by Pius IX in 1854 in defiance of the Holy Scriptures and in contradiction to the Tradition of the first centuries.

We further reject the dogmatization of the Catholic teaching of the bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary by Pius XII in 1950 as being in defiance of the Holy Scriptures. We reject the contemporary innovations promulgated by the Anglican Communion and the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht. We also regard these innovations as being in defiance of the Holy Scriptures and in contradiction to the Tradition of the first centuries, namely: the ordination of women to the Holy Priesthood, the consecration of women to the Episcopate and the blessing of same-sex unions. Considering that the Holy Eucharist (Holy Mass) has always been the true central point of Catholic worship, we consider it our duty to declare that we maintain with perfect fidelity the ancient Catholic doctrine concerning the Sacrament of the Altar, by believing that we receive the Body and the Blood of our Savior Jesus Christ under the species of bread and wine. The Eucharistic celebration in the Church is neither a continual repetition nor a renewal of the expiatory sacrifice which Jesus offered once for all upon the Cross, but it is a sacrifice because it is the perpetual commemoration of the sacrifice offered upon the Cross; and it is the act by which we represent upon earth and appropriate to ourselves the one offering which Jesus Christ makes in Heaven, according to the Epistle to the Hebrews 9:11,12, for the salvation of redeemed humanity, by appearing for us in the presence of God (Hebrews 9:24). The character of the Holy

Eucharist being thus understood, it is, at the same time, a sacrificial feast by means of which the faithful in receiving the Body and the Blood of our Savior enter into communion with one another (1 Corinthians 10:17).

We hope that Catholic theologians, by maintaining the faith of the undivided Church, will succeed in establishing an agreement in regard to all such questions that have caused controversy ever since the Church became divided.

We exhort the priests under our jurisdiction: to teach the essential Christian truths by the proclamation of the Word of God and by the instruction of the faithful; to seek truth and practice charity when discussing controversial doctrines; and in word and deed to set, in accordance with the teachings of our Savior Jesus Christ, an example for the faithful of the Church. By faithfully maintaining and professing the doctrine of Jesus Christ, by refusing to accept those errors that have crept into the Church by human fault, and by repudiating the abuses in ecclesiastical matters and the tendency of some Church leaders to seek temporal wealth and power, we believe that we will effectively combat the great evils of our day, which are unbelief and indifference in matters of faith.

¹A Commonitory for the Antiquity of the Catholic Faith Against the Profane Novelties of All Heresies, ch. 2, par. 6.

The above Declaration was signed by the bishops of the Polish National Catholic Church on April 28, 2008 and was accepted together with the establishment of the Union of Scranton at the XXIII General Synod held in Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada in 2010.

Appendix III

The Declaration of Scranton

Official Commentary

Preface

As can be seen in its content, the Declaration of Scranton of 2008 is modeled heavily on the 1889 Declaration of Utrecht of the Old Catholic Churches. This is true not only in its content, but also in the reason for its coming to fruition.

The Declaration of Utrecht was written as a statement of faith for the Old Catholic Churches. The Churches that were involved in its writing were the Old Catholic Churches of Holland, Germany and Switzerland. This declaration was later accepted by the Old Catholic Church of Austria, which was also in existence at the time.ⁱ The Declaration of Utrecht served as a model of unity for these Churches and from it the Union of Utrecht was born. From that time forward the Declaration of Utrecht served as a standard for those churches that sought consecration of bishops and acceptance into the Union of Utrecht.

Before his consecration in 1907 Bishop Francis Hodur was required to assent to the tenets of the Declaration of Utrecht and was required to sign it. This Declaration remains as one of the normative documents of faith for Polish National Catholics.ⁱⁱ

Regrettably, many of the Old Catholic Churches have begun to look upon the Declaration of Utrecht as merely a historical artifact and not as a basis of faith. This view has led these churches to deviate from the faith of the Undivided Church that was expounded in the Declaration of Utrecht. This deviation became irreconcilable when these Churches attempted to ordain women to Holy Orders and solemnize same-sex unions.ⁱⁱⁱ

Because of this development within the Union of Utrecht, the Polish National Catholic Church is separated from the errant Churches of that Union since 2003. As it would seem, the Polish National Catholic Church is the only remaining Church that still holds the Declaration of Utrecht as a true document of faith for Old Catholics.

Subsequent to this separation from the Union of Utrecht, the Polish National Catholic Church has been approached by other religious bodies that desire to become Catholic Churches in the fullest sense. They express a desire to hold the traditional Catholic beliefs and practices of the Ancient Church (Church of the first millennium); this includes the Polish National Catholic understanding of the papal office.

The Polish National Catholic Church found herself in a similar position as the Church of Utrecht did in 1889. That Old Catholic Church of Utrecht had existed since 1724 and had remained constant in her profession of the traditional Catholic faith.^{iv} When approached by other religious bodies that had the same understanding of the Catholic faith and a desire to unite with Utrecht while still maintaining their autonomy, a document was needed to articulate such a relationship among them. Hence, the Declaration of Utrecht was written.

Similarly, the Polish National Catholic Church, in existence since 1897, has been steadfast in upholding the traditional Catholic faith. Other religious bodies have been approaching the Polish National Catholic Church with a desire to share in this understanding of the faith and to have an autonomous Catholic Church of their own. The Polish National Catholic Church found it necessary to expand the Declaration of Utrecht, clarifying points of Catholic understanding that were not addressed in the original document, especially those dealing with the issues that brought about the fracture in the Union of Utrecht. It is for this reason that the Declaration of Scranton was written. It is held as a normative document of faith of the Polish National Catholic Church and is the standard for future agreements with those who wish to unite with us in the Union of Scranton.

Commentary on the Declaration of Scranton

The first paragraph is taken directly from the Declaration of Utrecht. The Polish National Catholic Church continues to strongly hold to this foundational understanding of what is true and proper Catholic belief.^v This paragraph lays down the principle upon which the faith of the Church is understood. The Polish National Catholic Church continues to profess the faith of the Early Church, upholding the formulated Creeds and the accepted doctrinal teachings of the Ecumenical Councils of the Undivided Church as Magisterial foundations of our faith.

The second paragraph is taken directly from the Declaration of Utrecht as a statement of the Polish National Catholic Church's understanding of the role and office of the Bishop of Rome. The Polish National Catholic Church has held this understanding even before the signing of the Declaration of Utrecht by Bishop Hodur in 1907. The First Synod of 1904 speaks to this when the Polish National Catholic Church officially rejected the dogma of infallibility and universal jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome.^{vi}

The third paragraph is taken directly from the Declaration of Utrecht. The Immaculate Conception as a dogma is rejected because of the belief of the Polish National Catholic Church that the Bishop of Rome cannot infallibly declare articles of faith for the whole Church, since as stated above the Polish National Catholic Church rejects the infallibility and universal jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome. However, the teaching of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary is a doctrine that has been held throughout the history of the Church and, likewise found in Polish National Catholic teaching.

The fourth paragraph in the Declaration of Scranton is a response to the 1950 Roman Catholic dogmatization of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary – that is, at the end of her earthly life Mary was taken body and soul into heaven. The teaching of the Assumption\Dormition of the Blessed Virgin Mary is a doctrine that has been held throughout the history of the Church and, likewise, found in Polish National Catholic teaching.^{vii} The dogmatization of this teaching is the point at issue. The Polish National Catholic Church does not recognize the authority of the Bishop of Rome to make such a universal declaration.^{viii}

These statements in no way affect the traditional Catholic devotion that is given to the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Polish National Catholic Church. She is the “Theotokos,” the true Mother of God, through whom our Savior Jesus Christ was born into the world.^{ix} She has strong intercessory power and we seek her prayers and intercession on behalf of ourselves, the Church and the world.

The fifth paragraph addresses the issues that have caused much dissention and division throughout the Christian world and, in fact, brought about the fracture in the Union of Utrecht.^x As stated in paragraph one of the Declaration of Scranton, the Polish National Catholic Church holds firm to the understanding and decisions of the Undivided Church in regard to these issues. The Polish National Catholic Church rejects the ordination of women to the three-fold office of diaconate, presbyterate and episcopate in concord with the practice of the Undivided Church, the teaching on Apostolic Succession^{xi} and Ministry, and the living Tradition of the Church.^{xii} The Polish National Catholic Church also rejects the blessing of same-sex unions.^{xiii} These innovations are contrary to Holy Scripture and not in conformity with the teaching and praxis of the Ancient Church.

The sixth paragraph is taken directly from the Declaration of Utrecht and is retained because the Polish National Catholic Church has always affirmed, maintained and taught the traditional Catholic belief in the Eucharist. In the Holy Eucharist the Risen Christ is really and substantially present. When we receive Holy Communion, we receive our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ Himself. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the central act of worship for the Church during which we are united with Christ and each other.^{xiv}

The seventh and eighth paragraphs are similar to those within the Declaration of Utrecht. They are included because the Polish National Catholic Church desires to continue to pursue ecumenical endeavors, seeking the unity of the Church as prayed for by our Lord Jesus Christ:^{xv} “That they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” *John 17:21 NRSV* While being a guardian of the deposit of faith that has been entrusted to us as Catholics, the Polish National Catholic Church continues to reach out to others in the spirit of love and understanding. The fact of division within the Church is not consistent with what was intended by our Lord, thus the Polish National Catholic Church encourages theologians and priests to strive for unity,

remembering the words of St. Paul: “now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose.” *1 Corinthians 1:10 NRSV*

The ninth paragraph points to a goal not yet attained. Humbly seeking God’s grace, the Polish National Catholic Church stands in the conviction that unbelief and indifference can be overcome by maintaining and professing the precious faith that has been handed down to us. With truth, work and struggle we will succeed.^{xvi} In so doing we hope to fulfill the Great Commission given to us by our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember I am with you always, to the end of the age.” *Matthew 28:19-20 NRSV*

ⁱ CB Moss – “The Old Catholic Movement” SPCK, London, 1964, pages 279-280.

ⁱⁱ Since its organization the Polish National Catholic Church has always held the faith of the Undivided Church. With its entry into the Union of Utrecht the PNCC understands the Declaration of Utrecht to be in conformity with the Early Church and therefore its forms part of PNCC ecclesiology. cf. Requirements for Communion with the PNCC, May 2009.

ⁱⁱⁱ Several Churches of the Union of Utrecht attempted to ordain women to Holy Orders in the 1990’s and later began to solemnize same-sex unions and on November 20, 2003, during a meeting of the International Bishops Conference in Prague, the PNCC was removed from this union because of their refusal to endorse and accept these deviations from Holy Scripture and the Sacred Tradition of the Church which is foundational to the Declaration of Utrecht.

^{iv} The Church of Utrecht broke with the Roman Catholic Church over the issue of the authority of the Cathedral Chapter apart from Vatican influence to elect their own bishop. The Cathedral Chapter did eventually elect its own bishop, Cornelius van Steenoven, who was consecrated by Bishop Varlet. cf. CB Moss “The Old Catholic Movement” – chapter 7 – The Breach with Rome.

^v St. Vincent of Lerins – A Commonitory For The Antiquity Of The Catholic Faith Against The Profane Novelties Of All Heresies, chapter 2 paragraph 6.

^{vi} Resolution, 1st PNCC Synod (1904): “Regarding other Christian communities, we declare that we do not condemn any of them, indeed we sympathize with each, insofar as it has as its purpose the ennoblement and sanctification of the person and to carry the Gospel and the peace of Jesus to humankind, but we cannot agree to the pretensions of whatsoever confession that only it is the steward of God’s graces and that only its teachers are true sowers of God’s seeds, for from what we see from the history of the Christian Church, Popes erred, what one regarded as truth another cast aside, Councils, that is gatherings of teachers and the whole Christian world, erred, the most learned erred and they mutually accused each other of mistakes, and the human being, the individual and the collective, that is, humanity, will err so long as he will live, since the human will possess the infallible complete truth only then when he unites with the source of truth, God. For this reason therefore we regard the relationship of the Pope and his Church to Jesus Christ, so far as we know it from the Holy Scriptures, as unfounded, based on falsity and bad will, and the dogma of Roman infallibility as blasphemy against God.” *The Polish National Catholic Church: Minutes of the First Eleven General Synods 1904-1963, East European Monographs, Columbia University Press, New York, 2002, page 27.*

^{vii} “The Church does not recognize the recent dogmas of an immaculate conception and bodily assumption of the Mother of God. But it celebrates the entry of the Mother of God into eternal life and solemnly observes the festival of her dormition.” *The Road to Unity: A collection of agreed statements of the joint Old Catholic – Orthodox Theological Commissions, Scranton, PA, March 1990, page 185*

^{viii} The Polish National Catholic Church does not raise this teaching to the level of dogma. On November 4, 1950 the PNCC Bishops issued a statement “About The Dogma” in *God’s Field*, volume 26, number 44: “...It was not until the 19th Century that the Popes had reminded themselves that dogmas present remarkable opportunities to strengthen their power and their importance in the Christian world. ... This dogma is an artificial creation of theologians, writers and politicians from the papal camp. For 400 years nothing definite has been said in the Catholic world about the

assumption of the Mother of Christ into heaven with her body and soul. There is no mention of this in the Holy Scriptures. This matter was never discussed at the General Church Councils not at any particular synod. None of the well known theologians or philosophers of the post Apostolic Age, such as: Tertulian, Cyprian, Jerome, Augustine, in the west and in the east, Clement of Alexandria, Origin, and the Three Capadocians, that is, the two Gregories and Basil the Great, have written anything about it..." Signed by Prime Bishop Francis Hodur, Rt. Rev. John Jasinski, Rt. Rev. John Misiaszek and Rt. Rev. Joseph Lesniak.

^{ix} "The Church believes that the divine and human natures are hypostatically united in Jesus Christ. It accordingly believes also that the Blessed Virgin Mary gave birth not to a human being merely but to the God-man Jesus Christ and that she is, therefore, truly Mother of God as the 3rd Ecumenical Council defined and the 5th Ecumenical Council confirmed. According to St. John of Damascus, the name "Mother of God" (theotokos) "embraces the whole mystery of the divine plan of salvation." The Road to Unity: A collection of agreed statements of the joint Old Catholic – Orthodox Theological Commissions, Scranton, PA, March 1990, page 183.

Third Ecumenical Council – Ephesus A.D. 431 - The XII Anathematisms of St. Cyril against Nestorius: "If anyone will not confess that the Emmanuel is very God, and that therefore the Holy Virgin is the Mother of God (theotokos) inasmuch as in the flesh she bore the Word of God made flesh [as it is written, "The Word was made flesh"]; let him be anathema."

Fifth Ecumenical Council – II Constantinople A.D. 553 – The Capitula of the Council: VI "If anyone shall not call in a true acception, but only in a false acception, the holy, glorious, and ever-virgin Mary, the Mother of God, or shall call her so only in a relative sense, believing that she bare only a simple man and that God the Word was not incarnate of her, but that the incarnation of God the Word resulted only from the fact that he united himself to the man who was born [of her]; if he shall calumniate the Holy Synod of Chalcedon as though it had asserted the Virgin to be Mother of God according to the impious sense of Theodore; or if anyone shall call her the mother of a man or the Mother of Christ, as if Christ were not God, and shall not confess that she is exactly and truly the Mother of God, because that God the Word who before all ages was begotten of the Father was in these last days made flesh and born of her, and if anyone shall not confess that in this sense the holy Synod of Chalcedon acknowledged her to be the Mother of God: let him be anathema."

^x 2006 The Constitution and Laws of the PNCC: "As of November 20, 2003 the Polish National Catholic Church of America and Canada is no longer in Communion with or affiliated with the Churches of the Union of Utrecht, except for the Polish Catholic Church in Poland. Therefore, the Polish National Catholic Church does not endorse any actions or decisions of the International Bishops Conference of the Churches of the Union of Utrecht. Nonetheless, the Polish National Catholic Church still holds the Declaration of Utrecht as a normative document of faith." Signed by Most Rev. Robert Nemkovich, Rt. Rev. Thomas Gnat, Rt. Rev. Thaddeus Peplowski and Rt. Rev. Jan Dawidziuk - page 5

^{xi} "The apostles and, therefore, their legitimate successors are the persons to whom Christ entrusted the duty of forming in His name, among all nations and for all ages, the Holy Catholic Church. The Polish National Catholic Church was organized within this historic continuity, descended from the Holy Catholic Church that our Lord Jesus Christ established after His Resurrection in Jerusalem. The Polish National Catholic Church mirrors the same organizational principles that Christ gave to the apostles. It possesses and safeguards the same faith that He deposited with them; it believes in the doctrine, governance and worship of the primitive Apostolic Church." Apostolic Succession In The Polish National Catholic Church, PNCC Church Doctrine Commission, 2007.

^{xii} 2006 The Constitution and Laws of the PNCC : Termination of Intercommunion "The XV General Synod of the Polish National Catholic Church by majority vote 312 to 106 ratified the position of its Prime Bishop and adopted a resolution stating that the Polish National Catholic Church regretfully acknowledges and confirms the fact that by their unilateral action, the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States of America and the Anglican Church of Canada have effectively terminated sacramental intercommunion with the Polish National Catholic Church." – page 64.

^{xiii} "Given the clear teachings of Scripture and Tradition, the Church cannot in any way approve of or condone homosexual conduct. Some, perhaps, may object that such a stance, in this day and age, is not "pastoral," for it presumes to make a judgment that a homosexual "lifestyle" is wrong because it is inconsistent with Christian sexual ethics and morality. However, a genuinely pastoral approach to this moral disorder – as indeed to any other ethical problem, such as adultery or fornication among heterosexual persons – requires that the Church uphold the truth. The Church would fail in its duty if it either explicitly or implicitly agreed to call something "good" that is inherently evil. For this reason, the CDC [Church Doctrine Commission] categorically rejects and deplors the ecclesiastical "blessing" of homosexual "unions" or "partnerships." Churches and ecclesial communities that have adopted this

practice not only act in a way that is inconsistent with Christian morality but also seriously complicate efforts to promote Christian unity, for their action constitutes a grave obstacle to the establishment of full communion.” 21st PNCC Synod statement “Called to Faithfulness: The Church and Homosexual Conduct”, 2002, page 4.

^{xiv} “In bread and wine, which are consecrated and changed in the Eucharist, the Lord himself is really and truly present in a supernatural way and imparts himself to the faithful. Bread and wine are, after the consecration, the Body and Blood of Christ and not mere symbols of his body and blood. “The bread and wine are not images of the Body and Blood of the Lord – certainly not! – but the deified Body of the Lord himself; the Lord himself said: ‘This is’ not the image of my body but ‘my body’ and not the image of my blood, but ‘my blood’ (John of Damascus). According to the proclamation of the 7th Ecumenical Synod “neither the Lord nor the Apostles and Father have called the bloodless sacrifice offered by the priest an image, but the Body and Blood themselves ... before the consecration they were called images, after the consecration they are called, in an actual sense, Body and Blood of Christ; this is what they are and believed to be.” *The Road to Unity: A collection of agreed statements of the joint Old Catholic – Orthodox Theological Commissions*, Scranton, PA, March 1990, page 215 paragraph 3

6th General Synod of the PNCC (1931) “Also accepted unanimously on a motion by the same clergyman [Father Rudolf Zabek] was the teaching presented in the paper by Bishop Franciszek Hodur on the sacrament of the altar, or the Eucharist. The Bishop considered three principal theories about the presence of Jesus Christ in the sacrament of the altar, namely, the teaching of the physical, real presence, of the real, spiritual or sacramental presence, and of the treating of Holy Communion as a venerable memorial of the Last Supper, consumed by Jesus Christ with his disciples in the day before the Passion. The National Church teaches that Jesus Christ is present in the Eucharist in actuality, spiritually, in a sacramental manner.” *The Polish National Catholic Church: Minutes of the First Eleven General Synods 1904-1963*, East European Monographs, Columbia University Press, New York, 2002, page 179.

^{xv} Joint Declaration on Unity – PNCC-RC Dialogue, May 2006: “we the members of the Polish National Catholic-Roman Catholic dialogue wish to reaffirm our resolve to overcome what still divides us, and to state clearly that our goal is full communion between our churches. We wish to emphasize that “full communion” does not imply absorption or uniformity, but a unity that fully recognizes differing traditions that are consistent with our common apostolic faith.”

^{xvi} This is the motto of the PNCC that was adopted in 1921 at the 4th PNCC General Synod.