



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
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Joint Communiqué on the Mixed Commission of Croatian Catholic and Serbian Orthodox experts for a joint review of the figure of Cardinal Alojzije Stepinac, archbishop of Zagreb

On 12 and 13 July 2017, at the *Domus Sanctae Marthae*, the sixth and final meeting was held, chaired by Rev. Fr. Bernard Ardura, President of the Pontifical Committee of Historical Sciences, of the members of the mixed Commission of Croatian Catholic and Serbian Orthodox experts for a joint rereading of the figure of Cardinal Alojzije Stepinac, archbishop of Zagreb.

For the Croat Episcopal Conference, the following attended: H.Em. Cardinal Josip Bozanić, archbishop of Zagreb, H.E. Msgr. Antun Škvorčević, bishop of Požega; H.E. Msgr. Rakto Perić, bishop of Mostar-Duvno; Dr. Jure Krišto and Dr. Mario Jareb, of the Croat Institute of History.

For the Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the following attended: H.Em. Amfilohije, metropolitan of Montenegro and the Littoral, H.Em. Porfirije, metropolitan of Zagreb and Ljubljana; H.E. Irinej, bishop of Novi Sad and of Bačka; H.E. Jovan, bishop of Pakrac and of Slavonia; and Prof. Darko Tanasković, representative of Serbia at UNESCO.

The participants acknowledged the generosity of Pope Francis, who kindly welcomed the petition of the Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Irinej, and decided to establish the Commission.

All the members are grateful for the cordial atmosphere in which, with full freedom of expression, they were able to fulfil the task entrusted to the Commission, namely how to proceed with a joint review of the life of Cardinal Stepinac.

They were aware, from the commencement of the Commission's work, that the process of the canonization of Cardinal Stepinac is within the exclusive competence of the Pope. They also recognise that every Church has its own criteria for proceeding with canonization.

The members of the Commission also acknowledged that their work has permitted a better understanding of the history of the years between the First World War and 1960, the year of Cardinal Stepinac's death. It was also possible to illustrate the life and ministry of an important Catholic pastor, during a particularly troubled period of

history.

The Commission reached the conclusion that various events, interventions, writings, silences and positions are still subject to various interpretations. In the case of Cardinal Stepinac, the prevalent interpretations given by, respectively, Croatian Catholics and Serbian Orthodox, still remain divergent.

The study of the life of Cardinal Stepinac has taught that in history all the Churches have cruelly suffered from various persecutions and have their martyrs and confessors of the faith. In this respect, the members of the Commission agreed on the possibility of a future collaboration, with a view to joint work, to share the memory of the martyrs and confessors of the two Churches.
