

## The 1993 Ecumenical Directory and the Eastern Churches

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### Abstract

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The author comments on the 1993 *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and focuses on issues of particular interest to Eastern Christianity in general and the Eastern Catholic Churches *sui iuris* in particular. The new Directory is the chief source for the ecumenical discipline of the Catholic Churches, both Latin and Eastern. Although a significant portion of the Directory is theological in nature, it is mainly a juridical text that regulates both the internal ecumenical task of the Catholic Churches as well as its relations with other Christian Churches and ecclesial communities. After clarifying the purposes, nature, and binding force of the Directory, the article outlines its juridical sections, with special emphasis on the innovations the Directory has introduced.



In 1993 the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) issued a completely revised Ecumenical Directory, officially called the "Directory for the Application of Principles and

Norms on Ecumenism.”<sup>1</sup> It replaces the original Ecumenical Directory issued in two parts in 1967 and 1970<sup>2</sup>, and is approximately three times longer than the original. The Ecumenical Directory applies equally to all the Catholic Churches, Latin and Eastern, but we will highlight here matters that should be of particular interest to Eastern Christians.

### *Canonical Significance of the Directory*

Ordinarily, the canon law of the various Catholic Churches is kept distinct, or at least that of the Latin Church is issued separately from the discipline common to the Eastern Churches, as in the two codes of canons.<sup>3</sup> The Ecumenical Directory is an exception to this rule. The Eastern Catholic Churches and their synods are explicitly and repeatedly mentioned throughout the Directory. The term “synods of Eastern Catholic churches” is used to refer to the higher authorities of Eastern Catholic Churches *sui iuris* as found in the CCEO. Thus, it refers not only to the synods of the patriarchal and archiepiscopal Churches, but also to the council of hierarchs of metropolitan Churches and to the individual hierarchs of eparchial Churches, exarchial Churches, and an apostolic administration.

The intended audience of the Directory is the leaders (pastors) of the Catholic Church, namely, the bishops, but it also concerns all the faithful who are called to pray and work for the unity of Christians under the direction of their bishops (no. 4). It is intended

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<sup>1</sup> Directoire pour l'application des principes et des normes sur l'œcuménisme, March 25, 1993, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis (AAS)* 85 (1993), 1039–1119; English version in *Origins* 23 (1993): 129–60. The Directory was released on June 8, 1993 in three languages: French, English, and German.

<sup>2</sup> Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, *Directorium ad ea quae a Concilio Vaticano secundo de re oecumenica promulgata sunt exsequenda*, Part I, *Ad totam Ecclesiam*, *AAS* 59 (1967), 574–92; Part II, *Spiritus Domini*, April 16, 1970, May 14, 1967, *AAS* 62 (1970), 705–24.

<sup>3</sup> The Latin code is the *Codex Iuris Canonici (CIC)* of 1983; the Eastern code is the *Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium (CCEO)* of 1990.

to be "an internal Catholic instruction," not a dialogue statement.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, a secondary audience are members of Churches and ecclesial communities<sup>5</sup> that are not in full communion with the Catholic Church who can use the Directory as an authoritative resource for Catholic positions relative to particular ecumenical questions and on the direction of the ecumenical movement as a whole.

### *Purposes, Nature, Binding Force*

The purposes of the Directory are: (1) to be of service to the whole Church, especially those directly involved in ecumenical activity; (2) to motivate, enlighten and guide this activity and in some cases also to give binding directives; (3) to bring together and to update where necessary all the norms already established for implementing and developing the decisions of Vatican II on ecumenism;<sup>6</sup> (4) to strengthen the structures that support and guide ecumenical activity at all levels of the Church by providing guidelines and norms for Catholic participation in ecumenical activity; (5) to provide consistency and coordination for the various practices of ecumenism among the particular Churches and groups of particular Churches; (6) to assure that ecumenical activity by Catholics is in accord with the unity of Catholic faith and discipline; (7) to avoid doctrinal confusion and abuses that contribute to or entail doctrinal indifferentism (no. 6).

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<sup>4</sup> See Cardinal E.I. Cassidy, President of the PCPCU, "The Revised Ecumenical Directory of the Catholic Church: A Valuable Instrument for Continued Ecumenical Commitment and Cooperation," *Centro Pro Unione Bulletin*, no. 44 (Fall, 1993): 27.

<sup>5</sup> Canonical documents use the phrase "churches and ecclesial communities" to refer to non-Catholic Christians. The term "Churches" includes Eastern non-Catholics and other Christian Churches that "have preserved the substance of the Eucharistic teaching, the sacrament of orders, and the apostolic succession." See communication, *Dopo la pubblicazione*, October 17, 1973, *AAS* 65 (1973): 616-19, no. 9. The term "ecclesial communities" is used for other Christians, namely, the Protestants.

<sup>6</sup> The third footnote of the Ecumenical Directory lists the papal and curial documents that were the principal sources for the revision.