

## ECUMENICAL PRAYER VIGIL

To entrust to the Holy Spirit the works of the first session of the  
XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (4-29 October 2023)

# Together

## Gathering of the People of God

St Peter's Square, 30 September 2023

### CHURCH AND CHRISTIAN LEADERS IN ATTENDANCE

*The Ecumenical Prayer Vigil will be attended by representatives of the different Christian traditions: Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Mainline Protestant and Evangelical-Pentecostal communions. In particular, twelve Church and Christian Leaders have been invited to lead the prayer together with Pope Francis. Some Fraternal Delegates sent by their Churches to the General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops will also speak.*

#### ORTHODOX CHURCH

##### **Patriarch Bartholomew I**

His Holiness Bartholomew I, born in 1940 in Imbros (Turkey), has been Archbishop of Constantinople since 1991. As Ecumenical Patriarch, he is the primus inter pares among the heads of the Orthodox Churches. A forerunner in the defence of fair and sustainable development, he is often nicknamed the 'Green Patriarch'. Very committed to the ecumenical movement, Patriarch Bartholomew, in an unprecedented gesture, attended the Mass at the beginning of Pope Francis' pontificate in 2013.

##### **Patriarch Theophilos III**

His Beatitude Theophilos III, born in 1951 in Greece, has since 2005 been Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem, a Church of Byzantine tradition recognised as autocephalous since the fifth century, whose see is in the basilica of the Holy Sepulchre. It was in this basilica that Patriarch Theophilos had welcomed Pope Francis in 2014 on the occasion of his pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

##### **Metropolitan Gennadios**

His Eminence Gennadios Stantzios, Metropolitan of Botswana and Free State-South Africa, will represent His Beatitude Theodore II, Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Alexandria. Born in 1969 in Germany, Metropolitan Gennadios is also responsible for relations with the Holy

See and a member of the International Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, which recently met in Alexandria.

## **ORIENTAL ORTHODOX CHURCHES**

### **Patriarch Ignatius Aphrem II**

His Holiness Ignatius Aphrem II, born in 1965 in Syria, was elected Syrian Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch in 2014, after serving eight years as a bishop in the United States. The Syrian Orthodox Church, of the West Syriac tradition, is part of the family of Oriental Orthodox Churches that recognise the three first ecumenical councils. Patriarch Aphrem hosted the meeting of the International Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches in 2020 at his see in Atchaneh (Beirut).

### **Mar Paulus Benjamin**

His Grace Mar Paulus Benjamin will represent His Holiness Mar Awa III, Catholicos-Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East. Born in 1968 in Iran, he studied canon law in Rome. Since 2012, he has been Bishop of Chicago and the Eastern United States for the Assyrian Church of the East, a Church of Eastern Syriac tradition that recognises the two first ecumenical councils, with its see in Iraq.

### **Archbishop Abune Ermias**

His Grace Abune Ermias, Archbishop of the Diocese of North Wello in Ethiopia, will represent His Holiness Abuna Matthias I, Patriarch of the Ethiopian Tewahedo Orthodox Church. The Ethiopian Church is one of the oldest Christian Churches, belonging to the family of Oriental Orthodox Churches of the Alexandrian (Coptic) tradition.

## **MAINLINE PROTESTANT COMMUNIONS**

### **Archbishop Justin Welby**

His Grace Justin Welby, born in London in 1956, has been Archbishop of Canterbury since 2013, after having been Bishop of Durham. As Archbishop of Canterbury, he is Primate of the Church of England and the *primus inter pares* of the Anglican Communion, which comprises 39 Provinces and over 85 million faithful. He has visited Rome several times and made an ecumenical peace pilgrimage to South Sudan with Pope Francis in February 2023.

### **Rev. Dr. Anne Burghardt**

The Rev. Dr. Anne Burghardt, born in Estonia in 1975, was elected Secretary General of the Lutheran World Federation, a communion of 148 Lutheran Churches in 99 countries, comprising more than 75 million members. She is the first woman to hold the position of General Secretary. Her first official visit to Rome took place in 2022.

### **Archbishop Bernd Wallet**

His Grace Bernd Wallet, born in 1971 in the Netherlands, was elected Archbishop of Utrecht in 2020. In this position he is also President of the Utrecht Union, which comprises six national churches that belong to the Conference of the Old Catholic Bishops.

## **EVANGELICAL-PENTECOSTAL COMMUNIONS AND ECUMENICAL BODIES**

### **Rev. Prof. Thomas Schirmacher**

Rev. Prof. Thomas Schirmacher, born in Germany in 1960, has since 2021 been General Secretary of the World Evangelical Alliance, a worldwide network founded in 1846 in London. He participated as a Fraternal Delegate at the Synod on the Family in 2015.

### **Rev. Dr. William Wilson**

Born in 1958 in the United States, Rev. Dr. William Wilson has since 2019 been President of the Pentecostal World Fellowship, established in 1947, which represents 76 denominations and more than 230 million believers.

### **Rev. Dr. Kuzipa Nalwamba**

The Rev. Dr. Kuzipa Nalwamba, originally from Zambia, is a member of the United Church in Zambia. She will represent the World Council of Churches, which comprises 350 member churches of different Orthodox and Protestant traditions. Rev. Nalwamba is Director of the WCC programme for unity, mission and ecumenical formation.

Among the Fraternal Delegates to the Synod the following will take part in the vigil:

- Rev. Dr. **Jong Chun Park**, President of the World Methodist Council
- Rev. Dr. **Elijah M. Brown**, General Secretary of the World Baptist Alliance
- His Excellency **Nikodim (Kosović)**, Bishop of Dalmatia and His Excellency **Nektarije (Samardžić)**, Bishop of Jegar, of the Serbian Orthodox Church
- His Eminence **Khajag Barsamian**, Representative of the Armenian Apostolic Church to the Holy See (Catholicosate of Etchmiadzin), His Excellency **Daniel Findikyan**, Director of the postgraduate programme at Holy Etchmiadzin Seminary
- Rev. Dr. **Martin Warner**, Bishop of Chichester, Anglican Communion