

THE UNION OF BREST 1596 AND BEYOND:

Towards an Entangled and Social History of Church Unions in the Early Modern Era

430th Anniversary of the Union of Brest (1596-2026),
Rome, November 9-10, 2026

DAY 1

MONDAY
NOVEMBER 9

Deutsches Historisches Institut in Rom,
Via Aurelia Antica, 391, 00165

10:00–10:30 Welcome address

PANEL 1 Chair: Daniel Galadza, Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome

TRADITIONS AND MODELS OF CHURCH UNIONS

10:30–11:00 **Yury P. Avvakumov,** *University of Notre Dame*: **"Transconfessionality or Preconfessionality? Reflections on the Henotic Tradition's Destiny between Medieval and Modern"**

11:00–11:30 **Francesca Samorì,** *Ghent University*: **"Restoring the Union with the Roman Church during the Late Byzantine Empire: The Union of Lyon (1274) as a Political and Social Challenge"**

11:30–12:00 Coffee break

12:00–12:30 **Alfons Brüning,** *Protestant Theological University, Amsterdam / Radboud University, Nijmegen*: **"Common Structural Elements in the History of the Uniate Churches"**

12:30–13:00 Discussion

13:00–14:30 Lunch

PANEL 2 Chair: Elisabeth Lobenwein, German Historical Institute in Rome

REFLECTIONS ON ECCLESIASTICAL DIPLOMACY

14:30–15:00 **Giulio Merlani,** *La Sapienza University, Rome*: **"Defense of Orthodoxy, (Re)Union with Rome and the Ottoman Question: The Greek World and the Papacy during the Early Modern Age"**

15:00–15:30 **Dorota Gregorowicz,** *University of Silesia in Katowice*: **"Papal Diplomacy in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Question of Union with the Eastern Churches in the Early Modern Period"**

15:30–16:00 Discussion

16:00–17:00 Coffee break

KEYNOTE LECTURE

17:00–18:30 **John-Paul Ghobrial,** *University of Oxford*: **"Union from Below? Improvisation and Everyday Life in Rome's Quest for Union with the Nestorians, 1616-1617"**

18:30 Reception at DHI Rom

DAY 2

TUESDAY
NOVEMBER 10

École Française de Rome,
Piazza Navona, 62, 00186

PANEL 3 Chair: Povilas Dikavičius, German Historical Institute Warsaw – Vilnius Branch

PIETY AND DISCIPLINE: THE RUTHENIAN CASE

09:30–10:00	**Wioletta Zielecka-Mikołajczyk,** *Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń*: **"Between Rites. The First Decades of the Church Union in the Diocese of Przemyśl"**
10:00–10:30	**Ivan Almes,** *Ukrainian Catholic University, Lviv*: **"Apostle of Unity: The (Cross-)Regional Cult of Blessed Josaphat Kuntsevych in the 17th Century"**
10:30–11:00	Coffee break
11:00–11:30	**Liliya Berezhnaya,** *University of Vienna*: **"Eighteenth-Century Greek Catholic Iconostases across Galicia, the Mukachevo Eparchy, and in Imperial Vienna: Confessional Reforms, Transfers, and Stylistic Transformations"**
11:30–12:00	**Irena Wodzianowska,** *John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin*: **"The Greek-Catholic Clergy in the Bracław Voivodeship in the 18th Century: An Attempt at a Portrait"**
12:00–12:30	**Laurent Tatarenko,** *CNRS–University of Warsaw, IRL 2042 LIMINA+*: **"Legal Practices and Confessional Cultures in the Ecclesiastical Courts of the Uniate Dioceses of Brest and Przemyśl during the 18th Century: A Comparative Perspective"**
12:30–13:00	Discussion
13:00–14:30	Lunch at EFR

PANEL 4 Chair: Cesare Santus, University of Trieste

ACTORS: BETWEEN CONFESSIONS AND POLITICS

14:30–15:00	**Ovidiu Olar,** *Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna*: **"Jesus Suffered, Died and Was Resurrected for All Mankind: Kyrillos Loukaris, Representative of the Patriarch of Alexandria, and the Union of Brest"**
15:00–15:30	**Radu Nedici,** *University of Bucharest*: **"Beyond Religion: The Agenda and Political Leverage of the Byzantine-Rite Romanian Elite in the Transylvanian Church Union, c. 1700"**
15:30–16:00	Coffee break
16:00–16:30	**Bernard Heyberger,** *School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences, Paris*: **"The Origins of the Melkite Union of Antioch (1724): The Establishment of a Catholic Culture"**
16:30–17:00	**Aurélien Girard,** *University of Reims Champagne-Ardenne*: **"Monks and Missionaries in Westernized Orders: The Melkite Basilians as Promoters of Union with the Catholic Church (Near East, 18th Century)"**
17:00–17:30	Discussion
17:30–18:00	Closing remarks by **Birgit Emich,** *Goethe University Frankfurt*, and final discussion
20:00	Dinner

THE Union of Brest (1596) has long been regarded as a decisive turning point in the history of early modern Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania, and Belarus. Traditionally examined within regional and confessional frameworks, it has been treated as a singular event. Marking the 430th anniversary of the Union of Brest, this conference seeks to rethink that historical moment by situating it within broader European and global contexts, and by approaching church unions as entangled, socially embedded, and historically dynamic phenomena of the early modern world.

The conference aims, first, to expand the geographical and conceptual horizons of the Union of Brest by identifying connections, comparisons, and interactions with other projects of church union across different regions. By examining both well-known and lesser-studied unions, the conference seeks to capture the diversity, complexity, and scale of union-making as a significant early modern phenomenon in European and non-European contexts. Second, the conference moves beyond established centre/periphery models. While recognising the importance of Roman policies, curial politics, and other ecclesiastical centres, it equally foregrounds local projects, negotiations, and practices. Particular attention will be paid to the agency, subjectivity, and lived experiences of actors who operated beyond – or actively reconfigured – the presumed hierarchies between centres and peripheries. Third, the conference deliberately shifts the focus from an exclusively top-down, political perspective towards social history. It invites contributions that explore how unions were experienced, contested, and negotiated in everyday life: through community formation, boundary-making, family relations, ritual practices, regulatory regimes, economic interests, materialities, and local temporalities. Rather than viewing church unions solely as juridical or diplomatic acts, the conference seeks to understand them as social processes that reshaped communities and identities over time.

Overall, the conference aims to contribute to the development of a more integrated, comparative, and globally entangled history of church unions in the early modern era, rethinking both their historical significance and the analytical frameworks through which they have been understood.

VENUES:
Deutsches Historisches Institut in Rom, Via Aurelia Antica, 391, 00165 (Day 1)
École Française de Rome, Piazza Navona, 62, 00186 (Day 2)

Each panelist has 20 minutes for the presentation and 10 minutes for questions from the audience

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ORGANIZERS:
Ivan Almes, Ukrainian Catholic University, Lviv
Birgit Emich, POLY Research Group, Goethe University Frankfurt
Iryna Klymenko, Research Centre Ukraine / Max Weber Foundation; LMU Munich
Alexander Koller, German Historical Institute, Rome
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POLY

Ukrainian Catholic University

École Française de Rome
Histoire, Archéologie, Sciences sociales

University of Warsaw

Centre de Civilisation Française

LMU Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München