

Light of the East

Society of St. John Chrysostom – Youngstown/Warren Chapter

SPRING 2018
Volume 17, No. 1

Next Meeting

Tuesday, May 8, 2018

7–9 pm

Holy Trinity Serbian Orthodox Church

Fr. Bosko Stojanovic will be speaking on the topic of “St. Sava and the Serbian Orthodox Church”.

Tuesday, June 5, 2018

7–9 pm

St. Maron Maronite Church

Fr. David Fisher will be speaking on the topics of “The History of the Filioque Problem” and “How Western Scholasticism Changed the Theological and Philosophical Approach Inherited from the Fathers of the Church”.

Featured Article

IT IS PASCHA NOT EASTER!

I hear occasionally from someone who sometimes accuses the Orthodox Church of being “foreign”, and so unsuitable for the British. A few days ago he sent me a card saying “the word in English is Easter”. My reply was “the word in Greek (and, therefore, English), is Pascha.

This is a much more important subject than a mere dispute about words. If the word in English is Easter, then one is bound to ask “what word?” Was there some word which, when translated into English, became “Easter?” ...

Continued on page 3



THE PASCHAL SERMON

By St. John Chrysostom



If any man be devout and love God, let him enjoy this fair and radiant triumphant feast. If any man be a wise servant, let him rejoicing enter into the joy of his Lord. If any have labored long in

fasting, let him now receive his recompense. If any have wrought from the first hour, let him today receive his just reward. If any have come at the third hour, let him with thankfulness keep the feast. If any have arrived at the sixth hour, let him have no misgivings; because he shall in nowise be deprived thereof. If any have delayed until the ninth hour, let him draw near, fearing nothing. If any have tarried even until the eleventh hour, let him, also, be not alarmed at his tardiness; for the Lord, who is jealous of his honor, will accept the last even as the first; he gives rest unto him who comes at the eleventh hour, even as unto him who has wrought from the first hour.

And he shows mercy upon the last, and cares for the first; and to the one he gives, and upon the other he bestows gifts. And he both accepts the deeds, and welcomes the intention, and honors the acts and praises the offering. Wherefore, enter you all into the joy of your Lord; and receive your reward, both the first, and likewise the second. You rich and poor together, hold high festival. You sober and you heedless, honor the day. Rejoice today, both you who have fasted and you who have disregarded the fast. The table is full-laden; feast ye all sumptuously. The calf is fatted; let no one go hungry away.

Enjoy ye all the feast of faith: Receive ye all the riches of loving-kindness. let no one bewail his poverty, for the universal kingdom has been revealed. Let no one weep for his iniquities, for pardon has shown forth from the grave....

Continued on page 4

Officers

| | |
|----------------|-------------------|
| President | Fr. Dan Rohan |
| Vice President | Socrates Kolistos |
| Secretary | Ray Nakley, Jr. |
| Treasurer | Rich Mattiussi |

Trustees

Lori Demiduk, O.F.S.
Fr. John Schmidt
Chorbishop Anthony Spinosa

Chaplain

Fr. Ken Bachofsky

Current Members

Msgr. Robert Siffrin, Fr. Ken Bachofsky, Fr. Dan Rohan, Beri Berardi, Richard Mattiussi (Family), Bice Comichista (Family), James Basista, George Mansour, Lori Demiduk, O.F.S., Joan and Jenna Binsley (Family), Ray Nakley Jr. (Family), Fr. John Schmidt, Socrates Kolistos, Chris Berardi, Robert Demoko, Fr. Mel Rusnak, Fr. Joe Rudjak, Lou Jacquet, Gary Deckant, Fr. Don Feicht, Benedictine Sisters - Queen of Heaven Monastery, Fr. Shawn Conoboy, Mr. and Mrs. Michael DeMas (Family), Fr. Joseph Hilinski, Fr. Joe Witmer, Chorbishop Spinosa, Chorbishop Kail, Will Sleever

Current dues are \$25 for an individual or \$30 for a family membership. For membership inquiries, contact Rich Mattiussi at (330) 573-8653 or via email at mattiussi52001@yahoo.com.

Treasurer's Report

Balance as of May 2, 2018
\$2,029.35

Newsletter Committee

| | |
|------------------|----------------|
| Editor | Rich Mattiussi |
| Assistant Editor | Dom Mattiussi |
| Assistant Editor | Chris Berardi |

Who are we?

The Society of St. John Chrysostom aims to make known the history, worship, discipline, and theology of Eastern Christendom. The Society also works and prays that all Christians, particularly the Orthodox and Catholic Churches, will attain the fullness of unity which Jesus Christ desires and encourages support for the Eastern Christian Churches:

- Byzantine and Oriental Catholic Churches
- Orthodox Church
- Oriental Orthodox Church
- Church of the East

The Society was founded in the United Kingdom and Europe in 1926. In 1998, the Society was also founded in the United States. Following some exploratory and preparatory meetings in 1998 and early 1999, the local Youngstown/Warren Chapter was founded and the first meeting took place on May 4, 1999.

Who was Saint John Chrysostom?

Saint John Chrysostom was born in Antioch around the year 349, and after an extensive education embraced a life of asceticism. He was the Archbishop of Constantinople from approximately 397 to 407, during a period of great reform and renewal among the clergy and faithful of the Byzantine Roman Empire. Twice he was forced into exile by enemies and the imperial court, and died at Comana in Pontus, Asia Minor (present-day Turkey).

Who are the Eastern Churches?

Jesus Christ commanded his apostles to preach the "good news" to the whole world. St. Peter traveled from Jerusalem to Antioch and then to Rome. St. Andrew founded the Church in Byzantium which later became Constantinople. St. James went to Egypt and St. Thomas to India. Of the five initial Patriarchates, known as the Pentarchy, the four in the Eastern half of the Roman Empire are the origins of what are today called the Eastern Churches.

For more information

Youngstown/Warren Chapter Website
<http://www.byzcath.org/stjohnchrysostom/>

National Society Website
<http://www.ssjc.org>

IT IS PASCHA NOT EASTER!

By Fr. Michael Harper

I hear occasionally from someone who sometimes accuses the Orthodox Church of being “foreign”, and so unsuitable for the British. A few days ago he sent me a card saying “the word in English is Easter”. My reply was “the word in Greek (and, therefore, English), is Pascha”.

This is a much more important subject than a mere dispute about words. If the word in English is Easter, then one is bound to ask “what word?” Was there some word which, when translated into English, became “Easter”? The plain answer is “no”. There is one simple reason for this, Jesus Christ in the days of his flesh never visited these shores, and his words were not written in English. He spoke Aramaic, and his sayings were recorded in Greek, as were the words of the other NT writers like Paul and Peter. An example of the desire to replace the word “Pascha” with “Easter” is the King James Version translation of Acts 12:4 which describes the arrest of Peter by Herod and his intention “after *Easter* to bring him forth to the people”. The Greek word here is *pascha*, and all modern translations rightly now translate the word “passover”.

We need to realize also that there is no equivalent word for “Easter” in the Greek language, for one simple but important reason, *the word is an Anglo-Saxon word for a pagan festival*. The word in its original use is entirely pagan. According to the English Church historian Bede, it derives from a pagan spring festival in honor of *Eastra* or *Ostara* a Teutonic goddess. It has no associations whatsoever



with Christ, his death and Resurrection, or indeed anything Christian. Is it not, therefore, unsuitable to be used to describe the greatest day in the life of the Church? The French, Italians, and Spanish do not make the same mistake. Their words come from the proper source — Passover, which in Greek is the word “Pascha”.

Pascha is derived from the Jewish word *Pesah* which means “Passover”. And here there is a direct link with the New Testament. In 1 Corinthians 5:7 we read, “for our *paschal* lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed”. According to St. John, Christ was

crucified at the very time that the paschal lambs were being killed. There is another link with the Old Testament because of the importance to the Jews of the Feast of the Passover. The verbal form means to protect and to have compassion as well as “passover”. The experience of the Israelites was literally a “passover”, but it was also an experience of both God’s compassion for his people, and a great act of protection, as for example, the passage through the Red Sea. The crucifixion and later Resurrection of Christ took place during the Passover Feast. So for Christians Christ was clearly the *Paschal Lamb*, the fulfilment of all that the Passover had foreshadowed since the first Passover which celebrated the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. Let us remember that because the word “Pascha” is in its origin a Hebrew word, by using it we are a witness to the Jewish community, for whom the Passover is still one of the most important words in their religious faith.

Orthodox believers living in the West have always been under pressure in all directions to conform to western ways, ideas, and practices. There is nothing new in this. The Crusades were the worst and most blatant attempt by the West to bring the East to heel. But the pressures continue, albeit in more subtle ways. And one example of this is our constant temptation to drop the word “Pascha” and for clarity (and sometimes charity) use the western word “Easter”. But perhaps the time has come for us to make a stand against this. In our increasingly secular and pagan society the use of a pagan word, of which no one knows the meaning, is hardly suitable to describe the greatest day in the Christian year. When most people knew the Christian meaning of the word “Easter” one could perhaps make out a case for using the word. But not today!

To be practical

There are still some for whom the word “Easter” has all the right resonances. Let us not want for a moment to deprive them of that blessing. Easter for them does not mean hats, chocolate eggs, parades, or watching football; it means the Cross of Christ and his glorious Resurrection.

But let the Orthodox stick to the right word, which is “Pascha”. Let us use it in our own circles, and

Continued from page 1

...Let no one fear death, for the Savior’s death has set us free. He that was held prisoner of it has annihilated it. By descending into Hell, He made Hell captive. He embittered it when it tasted of His flesh. And Isaiah, foretelling this, did cry: Hell, said he, was embittered, when it encountered Thee in the lower regions. It was embittered, for it was abolished. It was embittered, for it was mocked. It was embittered, for it was slain. It was embittered, for it was overthrown. It was embittered, for it was fettered in chains. It took a body, and met God face to face. It took earth, and encountered Heaven. It took that which was seen, and fell upon the unseen.

discard the pagan word “Easter”. We should do this — not to be different, but to be truthful.

However, when we are in mixed company, for the sake of clarity (and charity) let us use both words, if possible with a simple and humbly presented explanation. For example — “We shall soon be celebrating Pascha — or as you call it ‘Easter’”. Or, “we shall soon be celebrating Easter, or as we call it ‘Pascha’”.

We should encourage the West to unite with us in using the right word, which is Pascha.

And finally, let us not get dragged down with a dispute about mere words. St. Paul warned believers in his day “to avoid wrangling about words, which does no good but only ruins those who are listening” (2 Timothy 2:14). The important matter here is not what the Festival is called, but the reality of the death and Resurrection of Christ. *Yes, Christ is Risen!* If we can agree there, then what we call it, important though that is, can be seen in its proper perspective.

This article appeared on the Orthodox Research Institute website dated Pascha 2001 (orthodoxresearchinstitute.org).

O Death, where is your sting? O Hell, where is your victory? Christ is risen, and you are overthrown. Christ is risen, and the demons are fallen. Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice. Christ is risen, and life reigns. Christ is risen, and not one dead remains in the grave. For Christ, being risen from the dead, is become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. To Him be glory and dominion unto ages of ages. Amen.

The Catechetical Sermon of St. John Chrysostom is read during Matins of Pascha.

2018 Events

Tuesday, January 30

SSJC (Y-W) meeting at the Franciscan Shrine of Our Lady Comforter of the Afflicted in Youngstown. The topic was “The Franciscans and the East” and speakers were Fr. Vit Fiala, OFM and Lori Demiduk, OFS. They both gave great talks! Fr. Vit led us in Evening Prayer and served us some very delicious homemade soup on a very cold evening. Maybe he will share the recipe?! Franciscan hospitality is always a gift from God. Thank you!

Sunday, March 11

Both Rich Mattiussi and Ray Nakley represented our local chapter by being invited by the Majetich family to attend Great Lenten Vespers. We enjoyed a delicious Lenten Dinner and heard a presentation by Fr. Aleksa Pavichevich on “Great Lent and Fasting” at Holy Trinity Serbian Orthodox Church in Youngstown. We made contact with the pastor, Fr. Bosko Stojanovic, who was most gracious to host our SSJC (Y-W) Chapter Meeting on May 8! Thank you for your hospitality!

Sunday, March 25

Great Lenten Vespers and Dinner at St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church in Youngstown. Several of our members attended a very beautiful prayer service, an excellent reflection by Presbyteria on the Annunciation, generous hospitality, and great fellowship. Thank you Fr. DiStefano, Presbyteria, Socrates Kolitsos, and parishioners of St. Nicholas!

Monday, April 30

SSJC (Pittsburgh) Spring 2018 event at 7:00 pm at St. Anthony Chapel located at 1704 Harpster St., Pittsburgh, PA.

St. Anthony’s chapel on Pittsburgh’s north side is home to thousands of relics of the saints and has been designated a Historical Landmark by the Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation. This

is the perfect venue to discuss the common heritage of the saints and their relics in both the eastern and western church with presentations from both the perspectives with discussion and questions encouraged.

Western devotion to the saints and their relics spread in the Roman Catholic community. The extensive collection at this Pittsburgh landmark provides both the example and the spiritual and prayer focus of these practices. The eastern churches also devoted to the examples of the saints have used relics in liturgical practice like the Antimension in Byzantine Liturgy and seen them as sources of miracles throughout the ages.

The Society of St. John Chrysostom promotes understanding of Eastern Christian Churches and promotes Christian unity of east and west while providing material support to Eastern Christian churches.

SSJC (Pittsburgh) events have three main sections lasting two hours:

- Opening Prayer Service: Vespers
- Main Topic Presentation and Discussion
- SSJC Business and Discussion on Next Steps, Operations, and Future Events

Feel free to email suggestions to Steve Puluka (steve@puluka.com) or volunteer to help with the spring 2018 event or with planning the next event.

More information on St. Anthony’s Chapel Relic Collection can be found online at:

saintanthonychapel.org/relics-2

More information about the SSJC Pittsburgh Chapter can be found online at:

puluka.com/home/society-of-saint-john-chrysostom-pittsburgh/

Tuesday, May 8

SSJC (Y-W) meeting at Holy Trinity Serbian Orthodox Church in Youngstown. The host pastor is Fr. Bosko Stojanovic who will speak on the topic of “St. Sava and the Serbian Orthodox Church”.

Monday, June 4

SSJC (Pittsburgh) meeting at SS. Cyril and Methodius Seminary in Pittsburgh. Fr. David Fisher (Maronite) will speak on the topics of “Comparing and Contrasting Purgatory of the Latin/Roman Tradition with the Eastern Tradition of Final Theosis” and “Pneumatology (Theology of the Holy Spirit) in the Liturgical Theology and Practice of Catholicism and Orthodoxy”.

Tuesday, June 5

SSJC (Y-W) meeting at St. Maron Maronite Church in Youngstown. Fr. David Fisher (Maronite) will speak on the topics of “The History of the Filioque Problem” and “How Western Scholasticism Changed the Theological and Philosophical Approach Inherited from the Fathers of the Church”.

Society of St. John Chrysostom – Youngstown/Warren Chapter News

Please make note of the revised dues for 2018. Individual membership is now \$25 and a family membership is \$30. The new dues will be collected starting January 2018. You may send a check to Rich Mattiussi, 4656 Driftwood Lane, Austintown, Ohio 44515. Please remit check to “SSJC (Y-W) Chapter”. Thank you.

Also, the chapter is deeply thankful to Lou Jacquet for his donation of \$200 for the purchase of a new microphone and speaker system to be used at chapter meetings.

Society of St. John Chrysostom featured on Spotlight.

The newly elected officers of the Society of St. John Chrysostom – Youngstown/Warren Chapter were featured in a recent episode of Spotlight, a series produced by the Catholic Television Network of Youngstown and the Ecumenical Television Channel. The episode can also be viewed on YouTube at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=CgDRTBmUxWE

Paschal Message of His Holiness Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia



Beloved in the Lord archpastors, all-honorable presbyters and deacons, God-loving monks and nuns, dear brothers and sisters!

CHRIST IS RISEN!

From a heart filled with radiant joy in the Savior who has risen from the tomb I greet you all with these life-affirming words and congratulate you on the “feast of feasts” – the Lord’s Passover.

Today we are called to a great banquet of faith, to a great triumph of the spirit. The Only-begotten Son of God, who has come into the world, endured suffering and death on the Cross, and at the word of the heavenly Father rose victoriously from the tomb! Jesus has risen and “death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Cor 15:54)! He has risen and the whole universe rejoices! The Lord has vanquished Hades and crushed the power of the devil. And all of this has been accomplished by the God who loves humankind, “who has predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself...in whom we have redemption through his blood and the forgiveness of sins” (1 Eph 1:4-5,7).

Christ’s victory over death is not only a spiritual, but also a physical reality. The Lord Jesus truly rose bodily for the salvation of all people. With his resurrection death has lost its irreversible nature,

and for those who believe in Christ it has become the rebirth into life everlasting, the door which opens up the way to heaven and the kingdom of God.

It is not fortuitous that the martyrs too welcomed all sorts of sufferings for Christ’s sake. And if before even great righteous men mourned the dead as having perished forever, then after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus death no longer held any terror for them. In the remarkable words of St. Athanasius the Great, henceforth “all who believe in Christ trample down death as nothing. For they truly know that when they die they are not destroyed, but actually live, and become incorruptible through the resurrection” (Homily on the Incarnation of God the Word and his coming to us in the Flesh). The New Martyrs of the Church of Russia have shown to us a clear example in fearlessly accepting the crowns of martyrs during the time of persecution for the faith in the 20th century.

Today, when the world ever more resembles the foolish rich man in the Gospel parable (see: Lk 12:16-21), when comfort, success and a long life are proclaimed as practically the main values in human existence, we, the disciples and followers of the Savior, along with the apostle Paul boldly testify: “For me to live is Christ” (Phil 1:21), and death is no longer the end of our existence. We speak and believe thus, for we know that God created the human soul for eternity.

How often do we, who are engulfed in the vanity and anxieties of everyday life, lack the spiritual insight to see the transforming power of the presence of God in our lives! Yet the time of Pascha is a completely special time. In these days the air itself is replete with incomparable Paschal joy, while God’s love and mercy are poured out in abundance upon every human being.

As we enter into the festivities of this wondrous and radiant holy day, we are called upon, not only in word but also in deed, to bear convincing witness to the great gift that people have received through the risen Lord Jesus. So let us then share with those around us the joyous news of the Gospel, let us

bestow our love, care and attention upon our neighbors, let us do good to those who need our help and comfort. Only thus, with lips and hearts full of thanksgiving as we glorify the Savior who has risen from the tomb, do we become heirs of the Paschal miracle that has now been accomplished and with boldness call ourselves the sons and daughters of the Most High God who has manifested to all of us his boundless love.

In sending you my heartfelt congratulations on the bright feast day of Holy Pascha, I again and again address you with the joyous greeting:

CHRIST IS RISEN!

Easter Urbi et Orbi Message of His Holiness Pope Francis



Dear brothers and sisters, Happy Easter!

Jesus is risen from the dead!

This message resounds in the Church the world over, along with the singing of the Alleluia: Jesus is Lord; the Father has raised him and he lives forever in our midst.

Jesus had foretold his death and resurrection using the image of the grain of wheat. He said: “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit”

(Jn 12:24). And this is precisely what happened: Jesus, the grain of wheat sowed by God in the furrows of the earth, died, killed by the sin of the world. He remained two days in the tomb; but his death contained God’s love in all its power, released and made manifest on the third day, the day we celebrate today: the Easter of Christ the Lord.

We Christians believe and know that Christ’s resurrection is the true hope of the world, the hope that does not disappoint. It is the power of the grain of wheat, the power of that love which humbles itself and gives itself to the very end, and thus truly renews the world. This power continues to bear fruit today in the furrows of our history, marked by so many acts of injustice and violence. It bears fruits of hope and dignity where there are deprivation and exclusion, hunger and unemployment, where there are migrants and refugees (so often rejected by today’s culture of waste), and victims of the drug trade, human trafficking and contemporary forms of slavery.

Today we implore fruits of peace upon the entire world, beginning with the beloved and long-suffering land of Syria, whose people are worn down by an apparently endless war. This Easter, may the light of the risen Christ illumine the consciences of all political and military leaders, so that a swift end may be brought to the carnage in course, that humanitarian law may be respected and that provisions be made to facilitate access to the aid so urgently needed by our brothers and sisters, while also ensuring fitting conditions for the return of the displaced.

We beseech fruits of reconciliation for the Holy Land, also experiencing in these days the wounds of ongoing conflict that do not spare the defenseless, for Yemen and for the entire Middle East, so that dialogue and mutual respect may prevail over division and violence. May our brothers and sisters in Christ, who not infrequently put up with injustices and persecution, be radiant witnesses of the risen Lord and of the victory of good over evil.

We invoke on this day fruits of hope for those who yearn for a more dignified life, above all in those

areas of the African continent deeply affected by hunger, endemic conflicts and terrorism. May the peace of the risen Lord heal wounds in South Sudan and open hearts to dialogue and mutual understanding. Let us not forget the victims of that conflict, especially the children! May there be no lack of solidarity with all those forced to abandon and leave their native lands and lacking the bare essentials for living.

We implore fruits of dialogue for the Korean peninsula, that the discussions under way may advance harmony and peace within the region. May those who are directly responsible act with wisdom and discernment to promote the good of the Korean people and to build relationships of trust within the international community.

We also beseech fruits of peace for Ukraine, that the steps taken to favor harmony may be consolidated, and facilitated by the humanitarian initiatives needed by its people.

We also invoke fruits of consolation for the Venezuelan people, who, as their bishops have written, are living in a kind of “foreign land” within their own country. May that nation, by the power of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, find a just, peaceful and humane way to surmount quickly the political and humanitarian crises that grip it. May welcome and assistance not be wanting to its sons and daughters forced to abandon their homeland.

May the risen Christ bring fruits of new life to those children, who as a result of wars and hunger, grow up without hope, lacking education and health care; and to those elderly persons who are cast off by a selfish culture that ostracizes those who are not “productive”.

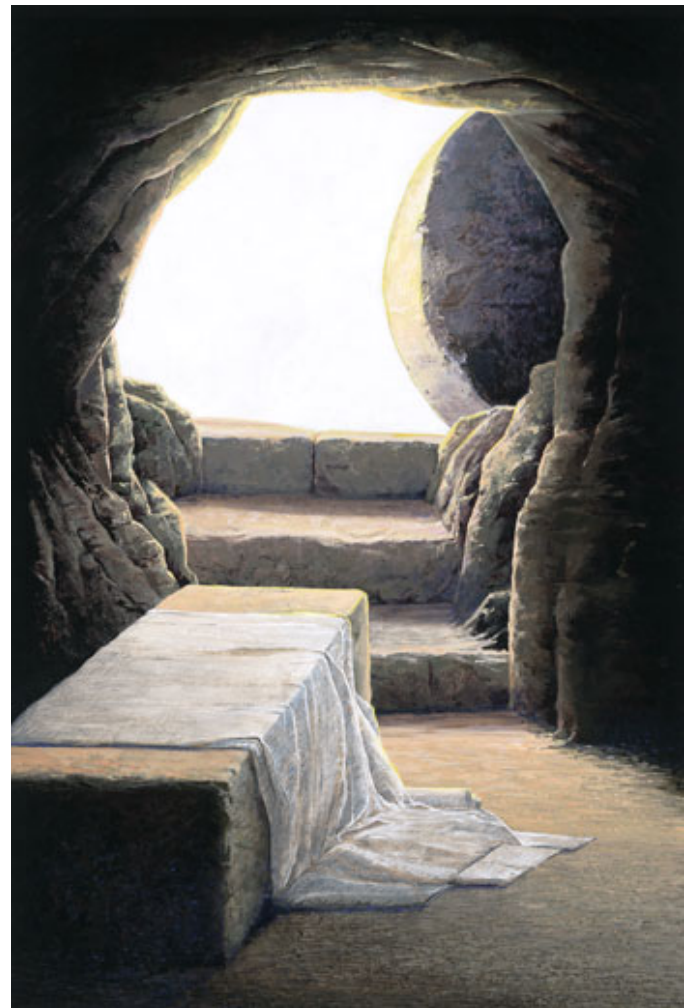
We also implore fruits of wisdom for those who have political responsibilities in our world, that they may always respect human dignity, devote themselves actively to the pursuit of the common good, and ensure the development and security of their own citizens.

Dear brothers and sisters,

The words heard by the women at the tomb are also addressed to us: “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen” (Lk 24:5-6). Death, solitude and fear are not the last word. There is a word that transcends them, a word that only God can speak: it is the word of the resurrection (cf. John Paul II, Conclusion of the Way of the Cross, 18 April 2003). By the power of God’s love, it “dispels wickedness, washes faults away, restores innocence to the fallen, and joy to mourners, drives out hatred, fosters concord and brings down the mighty” (Easter Proclamation).

Happy Easter to all!

Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!



Statement of the Permanent Conference of Ukrainian Orthodox Bishops Beyond the Borders of Ukraine

To the Venerable Clergy, Clergy, Monastics and Faithful of our Holy Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Diaspora

CHRIST IS RISEN! INDEED HE IS RISEN!

We write to you all having been informed about recent events in Ukraine surrounding the life of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. If you have not yet heard or read anything about these events, which are filling the social websites and media in and beyond Ukraine, we hereby inform you that the President of Ukraine met in a day-long audience with His All-Holiness, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew I, on Bright Monday – 9 April 2018. The result of this meeting was the beginning of the Patriarchate’s long-awaited consideration of Autocephaly for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Ukraine.

Upon his return to Ukraine, President Poroshenko immediately began the process of rallying the hierarchs of the Ukrainian Orthodox jurisdictions in Ukraine and the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian Parliament). All the hierarchs of two of the three jurisdictions and the vast majority of the Rada responded to the President’s emotional appeal to support the process of asking His All-Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew and the Holy Synod of Constantinople to move forward with the process of granting a Tomos of Autocephaly to the Church in Ukraine, which has for 1030 years been the canonical territory of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, since 988 when our nation was baptized and confirmed into the Holy Orthodox Faith.

Not even under 332 years of non-canonical and often tortuous subjugation to a foreign Orthodox patriarchate could the faithful of Ukraine be convinced that they did not belong to the authority

of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. This is simple history, as documented by generations of Patriarchs and Synods of Constantinople, which never abandoned its canonical rights and privileges in Ukraine.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate, through releases on its own website and through the media has confirmed that the process of considering the Autocephalous status of the Church of Ukraine has begun, which will continue through the next meeting of the Holy Synod to be held in May.

President Poroshenko in all his public appearances and statements about these current events has been incredibly enthusiastic about the possibility of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Ukraine being granted even by the 1030th anniversary in July 2018 of the Baptism of Ukraine into the Orthodox Faith in 988 by Equal-to-the-Apostles, Great Prince Volodymyr.

The Permanent Conference of Ukrainian Orthodox Bishops Beyond the Borders of Ukraine has written a strong letter of support for the actions being taken by His All-Holiness and the Holy Synod of Constantinople regarding the possible granting of a Tomos of Autocephaly to the Ukrainian Church. We have assured His All-Holiness of the unceasing prayers of not only the hierarchs, but also the millions of Ukrainian Orthodox clergy and faithful in and beyond the borders of Ukraine, for him personally during this process.

We invite our faithful to join us in this prayer:

Prayer for the Unification of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church

O Lord our God, You can see, as the invisible and visible enemies divided the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, and with it all Ukrainian people. Help us to promote the unification of Ukrainian Orthodoxy into a single Church, putting the cornerstone of apostolic rule that orders us to know that every nation, and among them the Ukrainian people, must have its first hierarch.

O Lord, inspire our separated brethren, so that they will unite around the Throne of Kyiv into a single Church and that Christian love would prevail among all of us, because You said: "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another".

Look upon us, Lord the Lover of all mankind, and do not punish us for our iniquities, voluntary and involuntary, committed in knowledge and in ignorance. Let us have a true love amongst us, forgive us our trespasses and do not remember our transgressions.

Great Merciful Master, protect and preserve Ukraine from those who encroach on its independence and wants to divide it, as you have always protected the Christian countries. Let a single Ukrainian Orthodox Church be a strong spiritual foundation for the indivisible Ukraine and the unity of our people, let its enemies be scattered and let peace, harmony, and unity prevail in us.

O Lord, You said: "For without me you can do nothing." Hear, O God, the prayer of your faithful and bless the beginning of the unity of the Orthodox in a single Church of Ukraine to lead to a successful conclusion. To His All-Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew, the Ukrainian Orthodox Hierarchs, the President, the Verkhovna Rada, and all those who work for this, send wisdom and inspiration of Your Holy Spirit, and in the good cause of the recognition of the Ukrainian Church to bring everyone to close conclusion. For Yours it is to have mercy on and save us, our God and we glorify You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and ever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

With Archpastoral Blessings,

+YURIJ, Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada

+ANTONY, Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA and Diaspora

+JEREMIAH, Archbishop of the Ukrainian Orthodox Eparchies of Brasil and South America

+DANIEL, Archbishop of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA and Western Europe

+ILARION, Bishop of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada

+ANDRIY, Bishop of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada

Pope urges continued dialogue between Orthodox, Catholics

By Junno Arocho Esteves



Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople embrace at the conclusion of an interfaith peace gathering outside the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi, Italy, Sept. 20, 2016. (Credit: Paul Harding/CNS)

Pope Francis, in a message to Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, urged Catholics and Orthodox to continue the path of dialogue on key theological issues to achieve full communion between the two churches.

Theological discussions on primacy - the authority of the lead bishop - and synodality, or the deliberation of the College of Bishops in the West and the synod of bishops in the Eastern churches, can enable Orthodox and Catholics "to evaluate, even critically, some theological categories and practices which evolved during the second millennium," the pope said in a written message delivered Nov. 30 to the patriarch in Istanbul.

The pope's message was carried to Bartholomew by Cardinal Kurt Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, who led a Vatican delegation to Istanbul for the feast of St. Andrew the Apostle, the patriarchate's patron saint.

In his message, Francis sent greetings to all those attending the liturgical celebration in Istanbul and asked for prayers while he continues his Nov. 27-Dec. 2 visit to Myanmar and Bangladesh.

“When the deacon invites those gathered during the Divine Liturgy to pray ‘for those who travel by land, sea and air,’ I ask you, please, to pray for me, also,” the pope said.

Like the apostles, who proclaimed the death and resurrection of Jesus “through their words and the sacrifice of their lives,” the pope said Catholics and Orthodox are called to make this proclamation “our own,” which will enable both churches to “enter into communion with the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit.”

Recalling Patriarch Athenagoras’s words during his first meeting with Blessed Paul VI in 1967, Francis said Catholics and Orthodox must “join together what was divided, wherever this is possible, by deeds in which both churches are involved, giving added strength to matters of faith and canonical discipline which we have in common.”

Francis also praised Bartholomew’s efforts in promoting the care of creation, the peaceful coexistence among peoples and the plight of Christians in the Middle East.

The patriarch’s commitment, he said, “is a source of inspiration, support and encouragement for me personally for, as you well know, we share the same concerns.

“It is my fervent hope that Catholics and Orthodox may promote joint initiatives at the local level with regard to these issues, for there are many contexts in which Orthodox and Catholics can already work together without waiting for the day of full and visible communion,” the pope said.

Catholic-Orthodox Bilateral Dialogue on the Way to its Next Plenary

The Coordinating Committee of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church met in Leros (Greece) on 5-8 September 2017, under the presidency of the two co-chairmen, Cardinal Kurth Koch (President of the Pontifical Council for the promotion of the unity of Christians) and Archbishop Job of Telmessos (Ecumenical Patriarchate), benefiting from the hospitality of Metropolitan Paisios of Leros, Kalymnos and Astypalaia (Ecumenical Patriarchate), to discuss the next stage of the dialogue following the agreed statement “Synodality and Primacy during the First Millennium: Towards a Common Understanding in Service to the Unity of the Church,” finalized on 21 September 2016 at the plenary meeting of the Commission in Chieti (Italy).

After much discussion, it was decided that the topic for the next stage of the dialogue should be: “Towards Unity in Faith: Theological and Canonical Issues”. A paper on this topic will be prepared for the next plenary meeting of the Commission which is expected in 2019. It was also decided that work should begin already on an additional document, which will follow on from the Chieti document and will be entitled: “Primacy and Synodality in the Second Millennium and Today”. It will include consideration of “uniatism” among other issues.

DISCLAIMER: Please note that in the interest of inquiry and dialogue, our newsletter sometimes presents articles with points of view with which we do not necessarily agree.

If you have ideas or suggestions for upcoming issues of this newsletter, please send the information to the Editor at mattiussi52001@yahoo.com.