

Light of the East

Society of St. John Chrysostom – Youngstown/Warren Chapter

SUMMER 2017

Volume 16, No. 2



Next Meeting

TBA

The Executive Board met on July 18 and August 10 and will meet again on September 5 at St. Mark's Orthodox Church to plan upcoming meetings and programming.

Featured Article

Joint Committee of Orthodox and Catholic Bishops convenes and talks about unity and pastoral issues.

The Joint Committee of Orthodox and Catholic Bishops and North American Orthodox Catholic Theological Consultation convened on May 31 to June 2 at the Saint John's Inn in Plymouth, Michigan. The purpose of the Joint Committee is to contribute to the restoration of full communion between the Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church.

The Joint Committee is the second formal gathering of Orthodox and Catholic bishops blessed and supported by both churches, and is co-chaired by Cardinal Sean O'Malley, O.F.M. Cap., of Boston and Metropolitan Methodios of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Boston...

Continued on page 3

UNITY IS MORE THAN 'BLAND UNIFORMITY', POPE TELLS ORTHODOX

By Catholic News Agency



Pope Francis met with a delegation from the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, saying their journey toward full communion is one that ought to respect their

unique traditions – rather than a uniformity that would, in the end, make the Church more boring.

“Peter and Paul, as disciples and apostles of Jesus Christ, served the Lord in very different ways,” the Pope said June 27. “Yet in their diversity, both bore witness to the merciful love of God our Father, which each in his own fashion profoundly experienced, even to the sacrifice of his own life.” Because of this, since ancient times the Church in the East and in the West has celebrated the feast of the two Apostles together, he said, adding that it is right to jointly commemorate “their self-sacrifice for love of the Lord, for it is at the same time a commemoration of unity and diversity.”

Pope Francis spoke to a delegation from the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, who are currently in Rome for the June 29 celebration of the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul. The Pope is particularly close to the Orthodox Church of Constantinople, and has met with their Patriarch, Bartholomew I, several times since his election in 2013.

In his address to the delegation, Francis said the traditional exchange of delegations on the feast of their patrons is something that “increases our desire for the full restoration of communion between Catholics and Orthodox.” This, he said, is something “which we already have a foretaste in fraternal encounter, shared prayer and common service to the Gospel.”

Continued on page 4

Officers

President	Fr. Dan Rohan
Vice President	Socrates Kolistos
Secretary	Ray Nakely, Jr.
Treasurer	Rich Mattiussi

Trustees

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

Chaplain

Fr. Remus Bleahu

Current Members

Fr. Kenneth Bachofsky, Beri Berardi, Christopher Berardi, Jenna Binsley, Joan Binsley, Fr. Remus Bleahu, Fr. Bob Bonnot, Dcn. Tom Bury, Br. Dominic Calabro, S.S.P., Fr. Shawn Conoboy, Gary Deckant, Lori Demiduk, O.F.S., Bob Democko, Jim and Esther Dershaw, Fr. John Ettinger, Fr. Don Feicht, Fr. Joseph Hilinski, Lou Jacquet, Chorbishop Michael Kail, Socrates Kolistos, Fr. William Loveless, Richard Mattiussi, Raymond Nakley, Jr. (& Hope), Queen of Heaven Monastery (Byzantine Benedictine Sisters), Fr. Dan Rohan, Fr. Mel Rusnak, Br. Peter Scalise, S.S.P., Fr. John Schmidt, Msgr. Robert Siffrin, Chorbishop Anthony Spinosa, Michael Vasilchek, Fr. Joseph Witmer

Current dues are \$20 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 August 12, 2017
\$2,096.72

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>

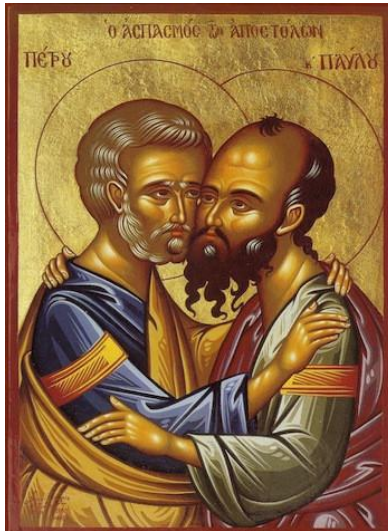
Joint Committee of Orthodox and Catholic Bishops convenes and talks about unity and pastoral issues

The Joint Committee of Orthodox and Catholic Bishops and North American Orthodox Catholic Theological Consultation convened on May 31 to June 2 at the Saint John's Inn in Plymouth, Michigan. The purpose of the Joint Committee is to contribute to the restoration of full communion between the Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church.

The Joint Committee is the second formal gathering of Orthodox and Catholic bishops blessed and supported by both churches, and is co-chaired by Cardinal Sean O'Malley, O.F.M. Cap., of Boston, and Metropolitan Methodios of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Boston.

In their working sessions, the bishops addressed together the topics related to the pastoral life and witness of the churches. Among the common statements that the Joint Committee has issued, include: Ordination (1988), Pastoral Statement on Orthodox/Roman Catholic Marriages (1990), and on Catholic-Orthodox Dialogue at the Dawn of the New Millennium (2000).

The first day of meetings started with the liturgical service of Orthodox Matins served by His Eminence Archbishop Daniel of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA. Following the formal opening of plenary session, Metropolitan Methodios of Boston and Archbishop of Detroit Most Rev. Allen Vigneron welcomed the hierarchs and members of the North-American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation to the annual meeting, expressing hope and desire that a comprehensive agenda for the meetings, addressing various social and moral issues of our society will result in closer cooperation of the Churches in addressing the steps of practical pastoral ministry.



The delegation of the Orthodox Church consisted of His Eminence Metropolitan Methodios (Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Boston), His Eminence Archbishop Daniel (Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA), His Grace Bishop Demetrios (Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago, IL), His Eminence Metropolitan Nicolae (Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in the Americas), His Eminence Archbishop Melchisedek (Diocese of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania – Orthodox Church of America), Archimandrite Nathaniel (Director of Inter-Orthodox and Ecumenical Relations of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America) and Very Rev. Fr. Thomas Fitzgerald (Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Boston).

The delegation of the Catholic Church consisted of Most Rev. Allen Vigneron, Archbishop of Detroit; Bishop Emeritus of Orange – Most Rev. Tod D. Brown; Bishop Emeritus of Gary – Most Rev. Dale Melczek; Bishop of Phoenix – Most Rev. Thomas J. Olmsted; Bishop of the Eparchy of Newton – Most Rev. Nicholas J. Samra, as well as director of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs – Rev. Ronald G. Roberson, CSP.

The Joint Committee was established in 1981 by the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in America, now the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States, and by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

For more information about the Joint Committee of Orthodox and Catholic Bishops, including its current membership, see: www.usccb.org and www.assemblyofbishops.org

The complete texts of the Joint Committee's Statements can be found at: www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/ecumenical-and-interreligious/index.cfm

Continued from page 1...

He noted how in the first millennium, Christians of both the East and West were able to share the same Eucharist and preserve the essential truths of the faith while at the same time cultivating and exchanging a variety of theological, canonical and spiritual traditions founded on the teaching of the apostles and the ecumenical councils.

“That experience,” Francis said, “is a necessary point of reference and a source of inspiration for our efforts to restore full communion in our own day, a communion that must not be a bland uniformity.”

Francis then noted how this year marks 50 years since Blessed Pope Paul VI visited Istanbul's Phanar district in July 1967, where the seat of the ecumenical patriarchate is located, to visit Patriarch Athenagoras, as well as the visit of Athenagoras to Rome in October of the same year.

“The example of these courageous and farsighted pastors, moved solely by love for Christ and his

Church, encourages us to press forward in our journey towards full unity,” Francis said. The Pope then expressed his gratitude for the many occasions on which he has been able to meet with Patriarch Bartholomew, which have taken place largely during his various trips and ecumenical prayer events.

At the end of his speech, Pope Francis noted that in September, a meeting of the Coordinating Committee of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church will take place in Leros, Greece. He voiced his hope that the event “will take place in a spiritual climate of attentiveness to the Lord’s will and in a clear recognition of the journey already being made together by many Catholic and Orthodox faithful in various parts of the world, and that it will prove most fruitful for the future of ecumenical dialogue.”

The Pope closed by voicing his hope that with the intercession of Saints Peter, Paul and Andrew, through mutual prayer they would become “instruments of communion and peace.”

2017: Year of Protection of Childhood

In his Christmas encyclical, the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew proclaimed 2017 as the year of Protection of Childhood. *“We appeal to all of you to respect the identity and sacredness of childhood. In light of the global refugee crisis that especially affects the rights of children; in light of the plague of child mortality, hunger and child labor, child abuse and psychological violence, as well as the dangers of altering children’s souls through their uncontrolled exposure to the influence of contemporary electronic means of communication and their subjection to consumerism, we declare 2017 as the Year of Protection of the Sacredness of Childhood, inviting everyone to recognize and respect the rights and integrity of children”.*



In his homily on Christmas Eve, Pope Francis reflected on the mystery of Christ’s nativity, inviting people to be challenged *“also by children of today’s*

world, who are not lying in a cot caressed with the affection of a mother and father, but rather suffer the squalid ‘mangers that devour dignity’ hiding underground to escape bombardment, on the pavements of a large city, at the bottom of a boat overladen with immigrants”. Children *“who are not allowed to be born, by those who cry because no one satiates their hunger, by those who do have not toys in their hands, but rather weapons”.*

On Christmas day, in his Christmas message “Urbi et Orbi”, he made a special request for the well being of children. *“Peace to the children, on this special day on which God became a child, above all those deprived of the joys of childhood because of hunger, wars or the selfishness of adults”.*

Thus, on Christmas 2016, both Pope Francis and the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew spoke about protection of childhood in perfect symphony.

Meet the Oriental Orthodox Christians and Their Controversial Christology

By Dr. Taylor Marshall

These 70 Million Christians Have a Valid Eucharist but a Controversy over Christ...



On planet earth there are about 70 million Orthodox Christians that are not in full communion with the Catholic Church (centered at Rome) or with the Eastern Orthodox (centered at Constantinople). These are the Oriental Orthodox Christians. They have all seven sacraments, revere the Mother of God and the saints, have a valid Eucharist, pray for the faithful departed, and have preserved a valid line of apostolic succession.

These Oriental Orthodox Christians do not accept the Council of Chalcedon in AD 451 which dogmatically defined that Christ is one divine Person with two natures (divine and human).

Meet the Miaphysites

The Non-Chalcedonian Oriental Orthodox Christians rejected this Council because Saint Cyril of Alexandria spoke of one nature (Greek: *mia physis*) in the incarnate Christ. These Non-Chalcedonian Christians rejected the Council of Chalcedon on grounds that a great saint and doctor of the Church, Saint Cyril, spoke of “one nature” or “*mia physis*.” According to them, how then could the Council teach “two natures”?

The Six Oriental Orthodox Churches

The Non-Chalcedonian “Miaphysite” Christian Churches are the:

- Armenian Apostolic Church
- Syriac Orthodox Church
- Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church of India
- Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt
- Ethiopian Orthodox Church
- Eritrean Orthodox Church

The Oriental Orthodox Communion of Churches

This communion of Oriental Orthodox Churches are called by the following terms:

- Oriental Orthodox (to distinguish them from the Eastern Orthodox)
- Non-Chalcedonian (since they do not receive the Council of Chalcedon as do Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox)
- Jacobites (after Jacob Baradaeus, the Miaphysite Bishop of Edessa who died in AD 578)
- Miaphysites (in honor of the term used by Saint Cyril: *mia physis* or “one nature”)
- Monophysites (a pejorative term rejected by the Oriental Orthodox Church – they prefer the term Miaphysite)

The Big Debate Over Ek or En “Two Natures”

The big debate between Non-Chalcedonian Miaphysites on one hand, and Chalcedonian Catholics and Eastern Orthodox on the other, centers on the use of terms in Greek:

- The Non-Chalcedonians insist on Saint Cyril’s phrase “*mia physis*” (one nature) and the formulation that the incarnate Christ is “*ek duo physeon*” (*out of* two natures).
- The Chalcedonians (Rome and Constantinople) allow for Saint Cyril’s phrase “*mia physis*” (we must accept it, because it comes from a sainted champion of

orthodoxy!) but prefer the formulation that the incarnate Christ is “*en duo physisin*” (*in* two natures).

It is important to note that Non-Chalcedonians reject the heretic Eutyches and also rightly believe that Christ is consubstantial with the Father *and consubstantial with humanity*. It seems that the heretic Eutyches condemned by the Council of Chalcedon *did not* profess that Christ was consubstantial with the rest of humanity. This is bad, bad theology because if Christ does not share our nature, He cannot save us or lift us up.

Saint John Paul II Forges a Way Toward Union

Pope Saint John Paul II signed accords with the Coptic Orthodox and the Syriac Orthodox (both miaphysite) recognizing that their Christology is currently sound and orthodox – fully in accord with Roman Catholic Christology. The Catholic Church recognizes that the debate was essentially linguistic and political and it’s worth noting that ALL the miaphysite churches belong to the Eastern Provinces of Byzantium and were non-Greek speaking nations. Hence, there is little separating the Oriental Orthodox from joining into full communion with the Successor of Saint Peter in Rome.

With the recent martyrdom of the 21 Coptic Martyrs and persecution of Syrian Christians, let’s pray for a reunion of all followers of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist.

Note: Saint Cyril of Alexandria wrote against the Nestorians saying: “one (mia) nature of the Word of God incarnate” (μία φύσις τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου σεσαρκωμένη μία φύσις τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου σεσαρκωμένη). Although Chalcedon taught “two natures” there must always be a way to preserve Saint Cyril’s “one nature” formulation. See John McGuckin (2004), Saint Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy, ISBN 0-88141-259-7 p. 140.

The Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God (“Uspenije”/Assumption) According to the Byzantine Rite

By Archeparchy Of Pittsburgh

On November 1, 1950, Pope Pius XII solemnly proclaimed the centuries-long belief that the “Immaculate Mother of God, the ever-Virgin Mary, having completed the course of Her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory.” (Apost. Const. “*Munificentissimus Deus*,” n. 44) This solemn proclamation of the dogma of Mary’s assumption into heaven fittingly describes this crowning event in the life of the Most Holy Mother of God [Theotokos], whose liturgical veneration originated in the East.

1. The origin of the feast of the Dormition or the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary [Theotokos] is closely connected with her public veneration since the beginning of the fourth century. It developed from the early celebration of Christmas in which the Theotokos, the Mother of God our Savior, played an important role. The solemn proclamation of Mary as “the Theotokos” at the Council of Ephesus (431) greatly enhanced her public veneration as the “Mother of God.” This is evidenced by the fact that a few years later her divine maternity was celebrated in Jerusalem as the Feast of Mary, the Mother of God, on August 15. (cf. Armenian Lectionary, 434 A.D.)

In Egypt, the same Feast of Mary was celebrated on January 18 under the influence of St. Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444) who presided at the Council of Ephesus. In Constantinople, the veneration of “Mary’s divine motherhood” was promoted by St. Anatolius (d. 458) who also composed the first liturgical hymns in honor of the Theotokos.

At the beginning of the sixth century, a magnificent basilica was erected over the tomb of Mary in Gethsemane. With this, the feast of Mary celebrated on August 15 took on a new meaning and became the solemn celebration of Mary’s death and assumption into heaven under the name of the

Feast of the Dormition. In some liturgical calendars



Dormition of the Theotokos

of the East, the feast was referred to as the Journey of the Theotokos into Heaven, or the Deposition of Mary, i.e. the interment of Mary into her grave.

2. In Constantinople, the Empress St. Pulcheria (d. 453) promoted devotion to the Blessed Mother and built three churches in her honor. Being present at the sixth session of the Council of Chalcedon (451), she asked St. Juvenal of Jerusalem (d. 458) for some relics of the Blessed Mother to be enshrined in St. Mary’s Church at Blachernae, near Constantinople.

The saintly Bishop replied: “We have received from ancient and the most reliable tradition that at the time of the glorious dormition (falling asleep) of the Mother of God, the whole company of the Apostles

were brought together in Jerusalem. So, amid divine and heavenly praises, they commended her holy soul to the hands of God and, taking her God-conceiving body, they carried it in procession to Gethsemani and there placed it in a little tomb.

“For three days a choir of Angels continued to sing above Her tomb. After the third day, when finally St. Thomas arrived, (he had been absent and desired to venerate the body that had borne Christ God), they (the Apostles) opened the tomb and found no trace of her blessed body. Thus, taking the winding sheets, which were filled with fragrance, the Apostles closed the tomb. Wondering at this mystery, they could only think that He, Whom it had pleased to be born of her in the flesh, the Lord of Glory, desired that after her departure from this life, her immaculate and all-pure body would be honored by incorruptibility, being translated (to heaven) before the universal resurrection of the dead.” (cf. Cyril of Scythopolis, *The History of St. Euthymius III*, 40, written about 515)

On July 2, the Byzantine Church commemorates the Deposition of the Venerable Mantle of Our Lady, the Mother of God at Blachernae. It seems that, instead of the holy relics requested, the imperial city had received Mary’s vestments which were found in Nazareth and brought to Constantinople in 474, i.e. after the death of Juvenal and Pulcheria.

3. The solemn celebration of the Feast of the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God was extended to the entire East during the sixth century. Since the feast was celebrated on different days, it was decreed by Emperor Maurice (582-602) that, in the entire Byzantine Empire, the feast will be celebrated on August 15 under the name of Dormition (Old Slav. “Uspenije”) which, literally translated, means “the falling asleep.” (I Thess. 4:14) St. Modestus of Jerusalem (d. 634), to whom the oldest extant homily of the Feast of the Dormition is ascribed, fully accepted the Jerusalem tradition concerning Mary’s wondrous departure and the assumption of her purest body to heaven. (cf. Migne, P. G. 86, 3277 ff.)

In the middle of the seventh century, the Feast of Dormition was introduced in Rome from where it gradually spread to the entire West. However, at the end of the eighth century, the Western Church changed the name of the feast to the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven.

In the East, the celebration of the feast was enhanced by the famous homilies of St. Andrew of Crete (d. about 720) , St. Germanus of Constantinople (d. 733) and especially St. John Damascene (d. 749), who became the main champion of the traditional belief in the bodily assumption of Mary.

According to his testimony, the tomb, which harbored the purest body of the Mother of God for only a short time, became an object of public veneration and the source of numerous miracles and special graces. (cf. Hom. on Dorm. I, 13) St. John Damascene, in the homily he delivered at the Basilica of the Dormition in Jerusalem, pointed to Mary’s tomb and said: “Her immaculate body was placed here, in this renowned and all-glorious tomb, from whence after three days it was taken up to the heavenly mansion.” (cf. Hom. on Dorm. 11,14)

4. The liturgical hymns extolling the wonderful dormition of the Blessed Mother, for the most part, were composed during the eighth and ninth centuries by such renowned hymnographers as St. Germanus of Constantinople (d. 733), St. John Damascene (d. 749), St. Cosmas of Maiuma (d. 760), St. Theophanes Graptos (d. 845) and others. In their hymns, these inspired writers clearly revealed the traditional belief in Mary’s “translation from earth to heaven.” (cf. 2nd Stichera of Vespers)

Through these liturgical compositions, the general belief in the bodily assumption of Mary into heaven remained well preserved and provided sufficient historical evidence for the proclamation of the dogma in 1950. The principal arguments from Byzantine tradition and liturgy in support of the dogma were collected by our Ruthenian theologian, Msgr. Nicholas Russnak, S.T.D. (1872-1952) and were submitted to the Holy See by Bishop Paul P. Gojdich, OSBM of Prjashev (1927-1960) on January

25, 1932. (ct. G. Hentrich-R. De Moos, *Petitiones de Assumptione Corporea B. V.M.*, Vatican 1942, vol I, p. 770- 779)

Concerning the petition of Bishop Gojdich, the authors write: "The importance of this petition is obvious since it comes from the Ruthenian Hierarchy, well versed in the Greek and Old Slavonic liturgical texts which, starting with the ninth century, are in constant use by both Catholics and Orthodox. And these texts 'clearly and absolutely' contain the doctrine of the bodily assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary." Thus we can conclude that the dogma of the Assumption of Mary, based on the deduction from Holy Scriptures, is a logical development of the centuries-long tradition deeply rooted in the liturgical prayers and minds of the people.

5. The Feast of the Dormition is one of the twelve Major Feasts of the Byzantine Rite and is celebrated with uncommon solemnity. In preparation for the feast, a two weeks period of fasting is prescribed for the faithful, called the Fast of Dormition ("Uspenskij Post"), which begins on the first day of August.

Since the Feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord, popularly known as "Spasa," fell within this time, the people in the Old Country referred to this fast as the "Spasovka," meaning the Savior's Fast. Historically, the Fast of Dormition can be traced to the ninth century but it was officially introduced into the Byzantine discipline by the Synod of Constantinople in 1166.

Liturgically speaking, the Feast has one day of pre-festivity and eight days of post-festivity during which time the mysteries of Mary's wondrous death and her glorious assumption to heaven are celebrated.

The Vespers of the Feast, celebrated with Litija, repeatedly implore the intercession of the Mother of God: "O Lady, do not forget the ties of kinship with those who commemorate your all-holy Dormition with faith." (Stichera of Litija)

According to an old custom, flowers and medicinal herbs are blessed after the Divine Liturgy on the

Feast of the Dormition. This custom most probably originated from the traditional belief that after Mary's glorious assumption into heaven, her holy tomb was filled with a "heavenly fragrance" and flowers. (ct. St. Germanus, I Hom. on Dorm.) The herbs, used by our people as natural medicine, are blessed in commemoration of the numerous healings and extraordinary graces bestowed on the pilgrims at Mary's tomb. (cf. St. John Damascene, Hom. on Dorm. I, 13)

The blessing of the herbs on the Feast of Dormition was introduced by the Fathers to combat the superstitious incantations and charlatanism among our people.

Preaching at the tomb of Mary, St. John Damascene reminded the people that: "Divine power is not circumscribed by any place and neither is the inexhaustible goodness of the Mother of God. For if the graces were restricted only to Her tomb, only a few people would gain them. Now Her graces are poured out in every place throughout the world." (cf. Hom. on Dorm. II, 19)

In his Homily on the Dormition, St. John Damascene makes the Tomb of Mary talk:

"Why do you seek in the tomb what has been assumed into heaven? Why do you exact from me an account of her dissolution? I had no power to go against the divine command. Leaving the winding sheet, that holy and sacred body, which filled me with myrrh, sweet fragrance and holiness, has been caught up and has departed with all the powers of heaven accompanying it.

"Now the Angels keep watch over me. Now the divine grace dwells in me. I have become a well of healing for the sick, a defense against demons, a refuge to those who fly to me. Draw near in faith, you people, and you will receive grace in streams." (cf. Hom. on Dorm. II, 17)

Society of St. John Chrysostom to be featured on Spotlight.

The newly elected officers of the Society of St. John Chrysostom – Youngstown/Warren Chapter will be featured in an upcoming episode of Spotlight, a series produced by the Catholic Television Network of Youngstown and the Ecumenical Television Channel. The episode will be aired on Monday, November 27, 2017 at 10:30 am and 8:00 pm and also on Monday, April 23, 2018 at 10:30 am and 8:00 pm.

Responding to Difficult Situations in Orthodox / Catholic Marriages

Fr. John Crossin, OSFS

Pope Francis had an important interview with reporters aboard his airplane returning from World Youth Day in Brazil last summer. He mentioned in the course of this lengthy discussion that perhaps the Catholic Church had something to learn from the pastoral practice of the Eastern Christian Churches on marriage and divorce. The Pope's remarks commanded widespread and continuing attention. He said:

"But also – a parenthesis – the Orthodox have a different practice. They follow the theology of what they call *oikonomia*, and they give a second chance, they allow it. But I believe that this problem – and here I close the parenthesis – must be studied within the context of the pastoral care of marriage."

For decades the American and Canadian Catholic Bishops Conferences have engaged in fruitful dialogue with our Orthodox colleagues. We have the deepest respect for the thinking, the theology and the pastoral sensitivity of the Orthodox churches. In 1990, the Joint Committee of Orthodox and Catholic Bishops published an agreed statement on Orthodox-Catholic marriages. They described the different practices of the two churches this way:

"Our churches have expressed their conviction concerning the enduring nature of Christian marriage in diverse ways. In the canonical discipline of the Orthodox Church, for example, perpetual monogamy is upheld as the norm of marriage, so that those entering upon a second or subsequent marriage are subject to penance even in the case of widows and widowers. In the Roman Catholic Church the enduring nature of marriage has been emphasized especially in the absolute prohibition of divorce. Our churches have also responded in diverse ways to the tragedies which can beset marriage in our fallen world. The Orthodox Church, following Mt 19:9 ("whoever divorces his wife except for unchastity, and marries another, commits adultery"), permits divorce under certain circumstance, not only in the case of adultery but also of other serious assaults on the moral and spiritual foundation of marriage (secret abortion, endangering the life of the spouse, forcing the spouse to prostitution and similar abusive situations). Out of pastoral consideration and in order better to serve the spiritual needs of the faithful, the Orthodox Church tolerates remarriage of divorced persons under certain specific circumstances as it permits the remarriage of widows and widowers under certain specific circumstances. The Roman Catholic Church has responded in other ways to such difficult situations. In order to resolve the personal and pastoral issues of failed consummated marriages, it undertakes inquiries to establish whether there may have existed some initial defect in the marriage covenant which provides grounds for the Church to make a declaration of nullity, that is, a decision attesting that the marriage lacked validity. It also recognizes the possibility of dissolving sacramental non-consummated marriages through papal dispensation. While it true that the Roman Catholic Church does not grant dissolution of the bond of a consummated sacramental marriage, it remains a question among theologians whether this is founded on a prudential judgment or on the Church's perception that it lacks the power to dissolve such a bond."*

We should note that there have always been significant differences in the Western and Eastern

Christian approaches to marriage. Even within the Catholic Church, for example, the Latin Code of Canon Law states that the husband and wife are ministers of the sacrament, while the Eastern Code states that the minister of the sacrament is the priest who blesses the couple. As with their Catholic colleagues, Orthodox theologians can have different insights into theology and pastoral care. Drawing on both of these traditions would enrich a more extensive and well-informed study and meditation on one of the most important pastoral question of our times.

**The full text of this document is available online at <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/ecumenical-and-interreligious/ecumenical/orthodox/pastoral-orthodox-catholic-marriage.cfm>*

Can relics unite Catholics and Orthodox? Pope Francis thinks so.

By Andrea Gagliarducci



Common veneration of relics is one of the tools Pope Francis is using to foster ecumenical relations with the Eastern Orthodox Churches.

In May, relics of St. Philip and St. Nicholas were transported to Turkey and Russia, respectively. They

have been exposed for the veneration of the Orthodox faithful from the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Patriarchate of Moscow.

The transportation of the relics of St. Nicholas from the Italian city of Bari to Moscow is particularly noteworthy. It is the first time in 930 years that a part of the body of St. Nicholas has left Bari for veneration abroad.

The novel action comes after a specific request Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill of Moscow made

to Pope Francis when they met in Havana, Cuba in February 2016.

Pope Francis consented to Patriarch Kirill's request and forwarded the request to Bari's Archbishop Francesco Cacucci. The archbishop then started the procedures to move the relics.

In the end, it was possible to detach a small particle of St. Nicholas' left rib, which the archbishop noted was "close to the saint's heart."

Archbishop Cacucci discussed the letter Pope Francis had sent him to about the Patriarch's request. The archbishop explained that, for Pope Francis, the veneration of relics is "an essential part of the path toward the re-establishment of full communion among all Christians."

The common veneration of saints help us to look at the ecumenical dialogue with a light of hope," he said.

St. Nicholas was one of the most venerated saints in Christianity even before his relics were taken from Myra, Turkey, by 62 sailors from Bari in 1087.

Those sailors made an expedition to Myra to save St. Nicholas' relics from Muslims who had conquered the city where St. Nicholas had lived and served as a bishop in the fourth century.

This year, St. Nicholas' relics arrived in Moscow May 22. They were placed in a container specially crafted for the occasion. The relics were then placed in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior of Moscow. Patriarch Kirill himself celebrated a divine liturgy to welcome them.

St. Nicholas' relics will be in Moscow until July 12. They will then move to St. Petersburg for several weeks before returning to Bari July 28.

While the Russian Orthodox Patriarchate received St. Nicholas' relics from the Church of Rome, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople on May 8 welcomed relics of St. Philip in the Turkish city of

Izmir, better known by its ancient Greek name: Smyrna.

St. Philip evangelized that land and was martyred there.

His relics had been secured in Rome's Santi Apostoli Church since the sixth century. Last year, the relics were taken out and submitted to an examination. Then, they were exposed for a while for the veneration of the faithful.

Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople strongly advocated sharing the relics for veneration, as he is particularly devoted to St. Philip. The Catholic community joined the Patriarch in this request, and so one of St. Philip's relic could return home. The Catholic Archbishop of Izmir Lorenzo Piretto personally forwarded the request to bring the relics to the Turkish city.

The common veneration of saints and relics is one area where ecumenism is performed today.

It echoes Pope Francis' idea of "walking ecumenism," which he described in an Oct. 12 meeting with members of the Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions.

In his remarks, the Pope said that "it is important that theologians study, that they find agreement and identify disagreements."

But, he added, "ecumenism is done by walking and by walking with Jesus." It is "a simple path, traveled with prayer and through helping one another."

Another reflection came while the Pope presided at Vespers Jan. 25, 2016 at St. Paul Outside the Walls Basilica, a time that by tradition closes the week of prayer for Christian unity. Pope Francis said that "while we journey together toward full communion, we can begin already to develop many forms of cooperation in order to favor the spread of the Gospel – and walking together, we become aware that we are already united in the name of the Lord."

This "walking ecumenism" is also emphasized

through the veneration of the same saints. Patriarch Kirill seems to think the same.

Bari's Archbishop Cacucci, having returned from Russia where he accompanied St. Nicholas' relic, reflected on the phenomenon.

"In fact, the translation of the relic is already an ecumenical dialogue, and this Patriarch Kirill said more and more times. When ecumenism does not involve only the top ranks of Churches or theologians, but rather involves the people of God, then it is possible to move forward."

Catholics, Coptic Orthodox must work toward unity, pope says

By Junno Arocho Esteves



In a letter to Coptic Orthodox Pope Tawadros II, Pope Francis said he hoped that both their churches can continue along the path of true unity and communion.

The bond between the Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church is a reminder "to intensify our common efforts to persevere in the search for visible unity in diversity, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit," the pope wrote in a letter to the patriarch May 10.

"Along this path, we are sustained by the powerful intercession and example of the martyrs. May we continue to advance together on our journey toward the same eucharistic table, and grow in love and reconciliation," he said.

The letter commemorated the “Day of friendship between the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church,” which marks the 44th anniversary of the first meeting between Blessed Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III.

Recalling his visit April 28-29 to Cairo, Francis expressed his appreciation for the agreement he and Tawadros signed ending a long disagreement between the two churches over the sacrament of baptism.

In the joint declaration, the two leaders declared they “will seek sincerely not to repeat the baptism that has been administered in either of our churches for any person who wishes to join the other.”

Francis said he was “especially grateful that we have strengthened our baptismal unity in the body of Christ.”

He also assured Tawadros of his prayers “for you, and for peace in Egypt and the Middle East.

“May the Spirit of peace bestow on us an increase of hope, friendship and harmony,” the pope said.

Federal judge halts deportation of more than 1,400 Iraqi nationals

By Karma Allen

A federal judge in Michigan blocked the deportation of more than 1,400 Iraqi nationals on Monday, giving them time to make their cases in court before the government may deport them.

U.S. District Judge Mark Goldsmith entered a preliminary injunction to give the Iraqis at least three more months to argue their cases before the Board of Immigration Appeals and the courts before the government may send them back to Iraq.

In his ruling on Monday, Goldsmith said the possible deportees, many whom are Chaldean Christian, would face “grave harm and possible death” in Iraq

because there they are members of a persecuted minority.

They were targeted for deportation because they overstayed their visas or committed crimes — typically misdemeanors, according to advocates.

Many of those targeted entered in the U.S. as children, and more than half of them have been in the country for more than a decade because Iraq refused to take them back, according to the ruling.

Earlier this year, the Trump administration said it would remove Iraq from its updated travel ban, and the country agreed to start accepting deportees from the U.S. after refusing to do so for many years.

In June, 234 Iraqi nationals were arrested and detained on removal orders that in most cases had been dormant for five to 10 years.

Those detained — most of them from Detroit, which has a large Chaldean Christian population — have been scattered around the country in federal detention facilities, with limited access to legal advocates and their families, the court said.

Goldsmith wrote in his ruling that returning them “to the lawlessness and senseless religious hatred that engulfs much of Iraq would subject them to persecution, torture and possible death.”

“In these singular circumstances, a federal district court is armed with jurisdiction to act as a first responder,” he wrote, adding that the court can assure “that those who might be subjected to grave harm and possible death are not cast out of this country before having their day in court.”

The American Civil Liberties Union, which previously obtained a temporary order blocking the Iraqis' deportation, said the ruling could save lives. That order was set to expire at midnight Monday, according to the ACLU.

“This ruling continues to block the government from recklessly sending these individuals into harm's way,” Judy Rabinovitz, the deputy director of the

ACLU's Immigrants' Rights Project, said in a statement Monday. "The court's action could literally save lives."

There was no immediate response by the Justice Department, although lawyers at earlier court hearings signaled that an appeal was likely if Goldsmith granted an injunction, according to The Associated Press.

"This court and petitioners rely primarily on conditions in ISIS-controlled territory to establish harm. But no alien would be removed to that part of Iraq," the Justice Department's William Silvis said in a court filing last week.

ABC News' James Hill contributed to this report.

Today's drug crisis desperately needs solutions. Could this be one?

By John Burger

An Italian nun may have an answer for opioid addiction.



It's a story that, unfortunately, is becoming more and more familiar. "Kevin" had a degree from a university in Florida and a good job at a logistics company when he suffered a back injury. He got prescription painkillers but eventually found that he couldn't live without them. And then he started using harder stuff.

"I was working at a good job and had the money to support my habit for a while, so it wasn't evident in my family I was using pills and using heroin," he said. "I drank a lot and used drugs in college and it caused

problems in my life and relationships, but it wasn't until I started using heroin that I really started to develop a true drug addiction where I would wake up and have to use drugs every day to go about my daily life or to feel normal or just to operate."

Kevin ended up in prison for armed robbery. After all, he had a \$400-a-day addiction to subsidize. A priest who visited him regularly suggested that he might be a candidate for "Comunità Cenacolo" (Community of the Cenacle), which was founded by an Italian nun to help young men and women struggling with alcohol and drug addiction. Granted probation in late 2013, Kevin entered the Community house Birmingham, Alabama. It's one of four houses in the United States that is part of the international Comunità Cenacolo, founded in Italy by Mother Elvira Petrozzi in 1983. Houses operate in 18 countries around the world. A new one is about to open in Costa Rica, according to Albino Aragno, who oversees the communities in North America.

Leaders of the organization requested that family names of those interviewed not be used in this article.

Drug abuse has been a problem for a long time, and it knows no national borders. But the United States seems to be undergoing a particularly sharp rise in the number of people addicted to opioids right now, both legal and illegal.

As Christopher Caldwell noted in a recent article in *First Things*, 52,000 Americans died of overdoses in 2015—"about four times as many as died from gun homicides and half again as many as died in car accidents."

Comunità Cenacolo doesn't deal exclusively with drug addicts but has its fair share.

"Almost all of us are drug addicts," said Kevin, 35, "but some have life struggles, or they need to get their spiritual life back in order."

And Cenacle doesn't have medical professionals or counselors on staff to lead addicts and alcoholics through a particular method of treatment. Mother

Elvira refers to it as a “school of life,” focusing on work, prayer and interpersonal sharing.

“We propose a simple, disciplined, family style of life, based on the rediscovery of the essential gifts of prayer and work (*“ora et labora”*), true friendship, sacrifice, and faith in Jesus,” explains the organization’s website. “The spirituality of the Community is centered on the Eucharist and the Blessed Mother. The day is structured around times of prayer (Eucharistic Adoration, the Liturgy of the Hours, the Rosary), work, deep sharing about one’s own life in the light of the Word of God, recreation, and times of celebration. We believe that the Christian life in its simplicity and fullness is the true answer to every restlessness in the human heart and that, in the living encounter with God’s Mercy, man is reborn into hope and is freed from the chains that have enslaved him, thus discovering the joy of being loved and of loving others.”

Each house for men has about 20-25 residents, usually between the ages of 18-39. The daily routine begins with a wakeup call at 6am and follows a rigorous structure that includes time in chapel, workshop and garden.

“We do everything here: gardening, we take care of the grounds, we do building. All the benches you see, all the porches,” Kevin explained as he gave a tour of the 10-acre Our Lady of Hope men’s community in St. Augustine, which he now co-directs. “This time last year we redid the whole roof. We pray, we work and we share—the three things we do in community. And we eat good as well.”

That last, he added, is important for morale.

In addition to regular household chores, including cooking, growing crops and raising hogs (which gives someone a daily, though not entirely pleasant, task of cleaning out the sty), the community is engaged in woodwork, making anything from furniture to the crosses for rosary beads (which a nearby women’s community finishes off). There’s a church across the state highway where the men recently refinished the pews.

The prayer aspect of the life here includes Mass two or three times a week, recitation of three rosaries each day, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and Gospel sharing.

If it sounds like a quasi-religious community, here’s something else: there’s a strong emphasis on living a communal life and limiting material possessions. “When I entered, my initial challenge was detaching from the world,” said Samantha, who joined three and a half years ago. “I come from a family that’s pretty well off, so I was spoiled and taken care of my whole life.”

Samantha, 30, who was addicted to painkillers and anxiety medication and started using heroin, said the initial adjustment to the community was hard: “working all day long and not having everything at your fingertips, waiting for things, not always hearing the word ‘Yes,’ detaching from material things. We live a really simple life here,” she said.

“We have no money, no wallets, no cell phones, so we can focus on ... what we need to focus on, to recognize the things we need to change, the things we need to grow,” Kevin added. “When I used drugs I covered up everything. I didn’t want to deal with my emotions so I got high instead.”

“We don’t have TV, newspaper, phone or internet, no computer. So we learn how to have a conversation with somebody,” said 22-year-old Eileen. Those things can keep community members from communion with one another. Without them, a member isn’t able to escape from difficult confrontations.

“We have two girls who do housecleaning together every morning, and whether you got in a fight with that girl or you get along, you’re still working together,” she said. “So you learn to be consistent in a friendship. And it’s hard.”

In the life they left behind, she added, addicts were constantly running away from difficulties. “We changed jobs or changed schools, we unfriended the person on Facebook—you get rid of people you don’t get along with,” Eileen said. “We think we’re

here because we use drugs, but it's a lot deeper than that. Why did we resort to that? It was maybe because we never learned to communicate ourselves. Maybe we felt hurt or maybe we felt forgotten, maybe we ran and ran and ran and felt like nobody ever truly knew us. All these underlying things are the reasons why we started to abuse."

Now, in the daily situations of life, she said, "you build your character so that you're able to say no in all kinds of situations." That will be helpful when community members leave and return to the world, where there will surely be temptations.

"Drugs and alcohol are always going to be there—and even more accessible than in my times, cheaper," said Aragno, who came to Cenacolo some 40 years ago as a drug addict himself. "For them, the challenge is to sustain the life they have learned in community and be able to keep the faith and stay away from the old environment. And in a time when everything is global it's much more difficult. You used to be able to move away from bad influences, but now everyone can too easily be found on the internet."

At Cenacolo, there are times built into the schedule for sharing and "fraternal correction." In a session called "revision of life," community members gather every two weeks in groups of four or five. One at a time, each person shares about his feelings, his prayer, his work, his relationships with the other members, his struggles, and his behavior since the last revision of life. He also tells how well he maintained the particular "commitment" he was given at the last session.

"Then one at a time, everyone else tells you what they see in you, corrects you or encourages you," said Aragno. "You are not allowed to respond, not allowed to explain why you are acting like that... They give you a commitment. If you are lazy, never on time, you have to be first in every activity in the community, or if you are struggling, closed in on yourself, they give you the commitment to talk to a different guy every day, open up, come out of your shyness."

As Samantha said, "There's no distracting or disappearing or hiding or escaping anything. You deal with yourself here, and that's that. There's no running. You deal with stuff here."

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.