

Light of the East

Society of St. John Chrysostom – Youngstown/Warren Chapter

WINTER 2017
Volume 16, No. 3



Next Meeting

Friday, December 29, 2017

6–9 pm

St. Maron Maronite Church

Chorbishop Kail will be hosting a holiday potluck and social. All are invited.

Tuesday, January 30, 2018

7–9 pm

Our Lady Comforter of the Afflicted Shrine

Fr. Vit Fiala, OFM and Lori Demiduk, SFO will be speaking on the topic of “The Franciscans and the East”.

Featured Article

A culture without God is like a ship without a pilot

In the (Roman Catholic) Liturgy of the Hours this week we read a remarkable text attributed to St. Macarius, a bishop of the early Church. I marvel at its vivid imagery, and yet at the same time, questions arise in my mind as to the general application of the text. In effect, the text states that if the soul does not have Christ living within, it falls into utter disrepair and a contemptible state...

Continued on page 3

GOD IS WITH US!

By Chris Berardi



On a seemingly ordinary night, like any other to the eyes of men, a babe was born. In all appearance, it seemed like nothing noteworthy. Indeed, there was a distinct note of tragedy and failure, as the world judges things, in the

story of the child born in Judea that night. A family forced to relocate by the whims of a tyrant; a mother in labor without the comfort and assistance of medical facilities; a father who couldn't even give his wife a roof over their heads.

If that was all there was to the story then the world would shed a single tear for the humanity of it all and then move on with the dealings of daily life. But, in that ordinary moment of a woman bringing forth her firstborn child, something beyond imagining occurs. God breaks into his own creation and touches the lives of each and every man and woman for all eternity.

On the great holy day when we celebrate the Nativity of the Lord, we remember that unfathomable reality that God came. God stands not aloof and apart, but hand and hand with us here on earth. He has become one of us, to restore us, and to elevate us to a new life greater than any we could ever have hoped for.

To us who pray with Jesus that we may be one, it is a reminder also that God is to be found in the ordinary things of our life. That prayer of unity must come forth in how we relate to each other in every moment of our days, no matter how dull, mundane, or boring. Every moment of our time here on earth is special and to be consecrated to God who entered into time and consecrated it by his life, death, and resurrection. Merry Christmas! Christ is born!

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. Ken Bachofsky

Current Members

Fr. Kenneth Bachofsky, Beri Berardi, Chris Berardi, Ruth Billcheck, 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, Fr. Pat Manning, 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, Will Sleeper, Chorbishop Anthony Spinosa, Michael Vasilchek, Fr. Joseph Witmer

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 December 12, 2017
\$2,006.72

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>

A culture without God is like a ship without a pilot

By Msgr. Charles Pope

In the (Roman Catholic) Liturgy of the Hours this week we read a remarkable text attributed to St. Macarius, a bishop of the early Church. I marvel at its vivid imagery, and yet at the same time, questions arise in my mind as to the general application of the text. In effect, the text states that if the soul does not have Christ living within, it falls into utter disrepair and a contemptible state.

Allow me to have Bishop Macarius speak for himself and then I would like to pose a few questions.

When a house has no master living in it, it becomes dark, vile and contemptible, choked with filth and disgusting refuse. So too is a soul which has lost its master, who once rejoiced there with his angels. This soul is darkened with sin, its desires are degraded, and it knows nothing but shame.

Woe to the path that is not walked on, or along which the voices of men are not heard, for then it becomes the haunt of wild animals. Woe to the soul if the Lord does not walk within it to banish with his voice the spiritual beasts of sin. Woe to the house where no master dwells, to the field where no farmer works, to the pilotless ship, storm-tossed and sinking. Woe to the soul without Christ as its true pilot; drifting in the



darkness, buffeted by the waves of passion, storm-tossed at the mercy of evil spirits, its end is destruction. Woe to the soul that does not have Christ to cultivate it with care to produce the good fruit of the Holy Spirit. Left to itself, it is choked with thorns and thistles; instead of fruit it produces only what is fit for burning. Woe to the soul that does not have Christ dwelling in it; deserted and foul with the filth of the passions, it becomes a haven for all the vices. (St. Macarius, bishop, Hom. 28: PG 34,

710-711).

This is a remarkably vivid, creative description of the soul without Christ, of one who has turned aside from the faith. To be sure, St. Macarius speaks in a general sort of way. Each person's personal journey will be affected by any number of factors: how absolute a person's rejection of the faith is, how influenced he is for better or worse by the people and culture around him, how operative he has allowed their natural virtues to be, and so forth. Hence, we ought not to simplify the lives of unbelievers. They come in many forms and degrees.

If, however, the "person" in question is a culture or nation, St. Macarius' words are especially accurate. We have clearly seen how our own Western culture has suffered gravely as it has "kicked God to the curb." It is not an exaggeration to describe the Western world as *a house that has no master living in it ... dark, vile, and contemptible,*

choked with filth and disgusting refuse ... darkened with sin, its desires are degraded, and it knows nothing but shame. Increasingly, this is our lot in the West, our daily fare.

As the recent spate of sexual abuse allegations and revelations demonstrate, we as a culture engage in some degree of self-correction. Too often, however, our outrage is both selective and short-lived. There is little evidence that we are willing to consider the overall “pornification” of our culture as an underlying problem. It seems unlikely that the current celebration of sexual misconduct, confusion, and immodesty in movies, music, and popular culture is going to be included in our national examination of conscience.

Thus our culture remains in great disrepair. As St Macarius describes, we are adrift like a pilotless ship, *foul with the filth of the passions, and a haven for all the vices.* While lust and greed predominate, it is clear that our jettisoning of the faith and of biblical norms is having increasingly devastating effects on every level. We have become more coarse, base, angry, and disrespectful of one

another; we are exploitative, wasteful, and often ungrateful for what we have; we are increasingly impatient, resentful, and sullen at even the slightest inconvenience or problem. By jettisoning the first three commandments that refer to our relationship

with God, the seven commandments that regulate our relationship with one another are undermined as well. This is central to St. Macarius’ point. *When a house [or culture] has no master living in it [because collectively we have shown God the door], it becomes dark, vile and contemptible, choked with filth and disgusting refuse.*

Help us, Lord, to rediscover the beauty of your truth. We have suffered by casting you to the margins. Though even in more religious times we were not free of sin, we have only suffered more by departing from you. Bring us back as a

nation, O Lord! Keep us more faithful and help us enjoy more than ever before the beauty of your truth and order. In Jesus’ name!

This article appeared on the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C. blog dated November 29, 2017 (blog.adw.org).



Is Jesus Christ at the helm of your life?

A Farewell to Fr. George and Presbytera Juliana

By Rich Mattiussi

Fr. George and Presbytera Juliana Gage were most grateful to the SSJC (Y-W) Chapter for the icon of St. John Chrysostom that was presented to them on Sunday, September 24 by Rich Mattiussi on behalf of our SSJC local chapter members.

Fr. George wrote:

Dear Rich and Members,

Thanks for the nice card and for the beautiful icon of St. John Chrysostom. Presbytera and I appreciated very much your presence at our church, one of the last Liturgies we have here before my retirement.

With blessing,
Fr. George

Fr. George served his final Liturgy at St. Mary's in Boardman, Ohio on Sunday, October 8. A farewell gathering took place in the side room in the Church Hall afterward.





Fr. George's final words to us, sent to Rich Mattiussi in an email on September 30, 2017 are as follows:

Dear Society of Saint John Chrysostom,
Dear Rich Mattiussi and Distinguished Members,

Last Sunday (Sept. 24), I was surprised to receive from you a very nice icon of one of the greatest doctors of the Universal Church, St. John Chrysostom. He is one of my favorite saints. On behalf of my Presbytera Juliana, I extend our most profound gratitude shown to us in writing and in gesture.

The Society, from its inception intended to bring together mostly the clergies from the Orthodox and the Catholic Churches to know each other, to pray one with another, and to love one another. Vito Carchedi would become the life and leader, so to speak, of this ecumenical group. And he did an outstanding job through the years. God rest his soul in peace.

My personal observation was that in spite of all these efforts, we could not get above the historical ecclesiastical barriers and we were limited to the status of hearing great speakers. I challenged twice this status quo and invited the clergies to not be afraid to pray together. I am saying this as a former Orthodox priest and as a Byzantine Catholic priest, bi-ritual for the Roman Rite. I have been blessed to breathe in these two lungs of the Universal Church and to suffer because of this knowledge. I thank God for that.

The Sunday of Orthodoxy was always an invitation to us all to come, to pray, and to be together, Orthodox and Catholics. In this sense, I invited Myrna Nazzour twice here, but it did not help too much.

The Society of Saint John Chrysostom is meant to bring more unity in prayer. Please try to do this. Do not be afraid. Bring the priests to pray together in the sanctuary. The people would feel the need to do the same.

I ask the merciful Lord to look upon us and to emancipate us in doing what we were meant to do, because it is so good to see the brethren praying together. And after all, we come and we go, realizing we are 'dust and sand', but God created us in His love.

My prayers will always be for all of you.

With love in the Lord Jesus,

Fr. George,
a miserable sinner

Thank you, Fr. George and Presbytera Juliana, for all your hospitality and service to our Society and faithfully promoting the cause of Christian Unity! God be with you.

Our Lady of Soufanieh, pray for us!



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 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, April 23, 2018 at 10:30 am and 8:00 pm. It can also be viewed on YouTube at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=CgDRTBmUxWE

First meeting held for Society of Saint John Chrysostom in Pittsburgh



Steve Puluka and Jack Figel, National President of the SSJC speak at the inaugural SSJC Pittsburgh meeting.

On Saturday, November 18, 2017 the first meeting for the Pittsburgh chapter of the Society of Saint John Chrysostom was held at the Byzantine Catholic Seminary on Pittsburgh’s north side.

The SS Cyril and Methodius Seminary was kind enough to supply the venue for this first meeting which opened with a moleben to the Holy Spirit in English in the seminary chapel.

Planning has begun for a spring meeting with one pastor potentially volunteering the venue. We are still exploring speaker and topic options. Feel free to email suggestions to Steve Puluka (steve@puluka.com) or volunteer to help with planning the next event for the spring of 2018.

Russian Orthodox and Catholics united for peace

By Claire Giangravè



Pope Francis meets with Patriarch Kirill in Havana, Cuba on Feb. 12, 2016. Credit: L'Osservatore Romano

Rome, Aug 22, 2017 (Crux) – Vatican Secretary of State, Italian Cardinal Pietro Parolin met Tuesday with the Russian Patriarch Kirill in Moscow, where, among other things, they discussed the difficult situations in the Middle East and Ukraine.

Referring to the struggle in Ukraine, which pits Ukrainian forces against Russian-based separatists, Patriarch Kirill stated that the “Church cannot play any other role if not one of peacemaking when people are in conflict among each other.

“Conflicts do not last forever, and sooner or later they end,” the patriarch added, and asked, “If all social forces are involved in the conflict, the who will pick up the stones?”

The two representatives from the Catholic and Russian Orthodox Churches met at Danilovsky monastery, the seat of the Patriarchate of Moscow, on August 22.

Kirill stated that the Vatican is “close” to the patriarchate’s position concerning Ukraine, and expressed his satisfaction with the fact that during the course of the meeting the parties confirmed their agreement on how their churches should behave in the divided country.

“We greatly appreciate the fact that even this time, we found a mutual understanding on the role that our churches must play concerning the reconciliation of the population in Ukraine,” Kirill said.

The Vatican planted the seed of this spirit of camaraderie not only during an historic meeting between Pope Francis and Kirill in Havana, Cuba in 2016, but also this summer, when the relics of St. Nicholas were transported from their resting place in the Italian city of Bari to Moscow, and then St. Petersburg.

The patriarch confirmed that nearly 2.3 million people visited the relics, in what was “an exceptional event in the history of our two churches.”

“The ecumenism of holiness is real, it exists,” Parolin said.

“The saints unite us because they are closer to God and therefore they are the ones who more than anyone help us in overcoming the difficulty of past relations given by previous situations and to walk ever more speedily toward the fraternal embrace and Eucharistic communion,” the Vatican’s number two official said.

The Vatican’s top diplomat also presented the patriarch with the pope’s personal greeting to “his brother, Kirill,” to which the Russian leader responded with a smile and, in Italian, *grazie* (“thank you”).

Parolin had told reporters before leaving for his August 21-24 trip to Russia that a possible visit by Francis to the country - which would be another historic first - would not be on the table, but he did express hope that his outing would move the ball closer in that direction.

Concerning the Middle East, which Parolin discussed at length during a previous meeting with the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sergey Levrov, the patriarch expressed hope for further future cooperation.

“The collaboration between the Orthodox Church and the Catholic one in humanitarian aid to the populations who suffer due to conflicts in the Middle East can be an important unifying factor,” Kirill said.

Bishop appointed for Canada’s Chaldean eparchy



Pope Francis with members of the Synod of the Chaldean Church in Vatican City on Oct. 5, 2017. Credit: L’Osservatore Romano

Toronto, Canada, Oct 31, 2017 (CNA/EWTN News) – Bishop Bawai Soro was on Tuesday appointed Bishop of the Chaldean Eparchy of Mar Addai of Toronto, which serves Canada’s estimated 40,000 Chaldean Catholics.

The Oct. 31 appointment fills the vacancy left by August’s transfer of Bishop Emmanuel Shaleta to the Chaldean Eparchy of Saint Peter the Apostle of San Diego.

Bishop Soro was born in 1954 in Kirkuk, Iraq, and was baptized into the Assyrian Church of the East, a non-Chalcedonian Church based in northern Iraq. His family emigrated to Lebanon in 1973, and then to the US in 1976.

He was ordained a deacon in the Assyrian Church of the East in 1973, a priest in 1982, and a bishop in 1984. While a priest he served as pastor of a parish in Toronto, and was bishop of the Assyrian eparchies of San José and Seattle.

He obtained a master’s degree in theology from the Catholic University of America in 1992, and a doctorate from the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas in 2002. While a bishop, he was actively involved in ecumenical dialogue between the Assyrian Church of the East and the Catholic Church.

Bishop Soro was received into communion with the Catholic Church in 2008, along with nearly 1,000 families of his Church.

He was received into the Chaldean Catholic Church, which is the Catholic analogue to the Assyrian Church of the East. Both Churches use the East Syrian rite. They are both derived from the Church of the East, a non-Chalcedonian Church which experienced a schism in 1552.

In 2014 he was appointed protosyncellus, or vicar general, of the Chaldean Eparchy of Saint Peter the Apostle of San Diego.

Bishop Soro has been outspoken about the persecution of Christians in his native Iraq, and has applauded their perseverance.

In June, he told CNA that “the story of suffering of Iraqi Christians is an ongoing phenomenon.” He reflected on his family’s perseverance in the face of the Ottoman’s Assyrian genocide, saying that “if my grandparents survived this difficulty and were able to hand their faith to the next generations, this suffering generation will do the same.”

The Chaldean Eparchy of Mar Addai of Toronto was established in 2011. It consists of 10 parishes and missions, and is served by 10 priests and two deacons.

Pope Francis calls Indian bishops to respect, cooperation with Eastern rites

By Claire Giangravè

Rome, Oct 22, 2017 (Crux) – Pope Francis believes that the “time is now” to cater to the pastoral needs of the Syro-Malabar Catholics in India who have been living outside of their territory, an effort started by Pope emeritus Benedict XVI in 2011.

In a letter to the Indian bishops, the pope authorized the Congregation for Oriental Churches to erect two new eparchies and extend the scope of those already in place - Ramanathapuram and Thuckalay - which will be run by the Major Archbishop of Ernakulam-Angamaly, Mar George Alencherry, and the Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church.

The two new eparchies are Shamshabad and Hosur, which will be led respectively by Bishop Raphael Thattil and Bishop Sebastian Pozholiparampil.

The Catholic Church in India is composed of three independent ‘sui iuris’ Churches: The Latin rite and two eastern rites, the Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara rites, which trace their lineage to St. Thomas the Apostle, who is believed to have evangelized India.

In the letter dated Oct. 9, the pope underlined that the future of the Catholic Church in India cannot be “that of isolation and separation, but rather of respect and cooperation,” and that the collaboration between the various Catholic rites in the territories “will surely offer an eloquent witness to a vibrant and marvelous communion.”

The pope underlined that such a provision should not disrupt the Church’s life or be seen as a requirement for faithful to leave the communities where they have lived and cooperated peacefully for many years.

“It should rather be seen as an invitation as well as an opportunity for growth in faith and communion” with the Syro-Malabar Church - the pope said - “in

order to preserve the precious heritage of their rite and to pass it on to future generations.”

Francis began his letter by recognizing the variety of ecclesial life that exists in India, which is made up of three distinct Catholic rites. “Although this situation has sometimes led to tensions in the course of history, today we can admire a Christian presence that is both rich and beautiful, complex and unique,” the pope wrote.

The Congregation of the Oriental Churches celebrates its centenary this year and it’s dedicated to protect, oversee and cater to the needs of the Eastern Catholic traditions, which - the pope said - “is essential for the Catholic Church to reveal her face in all its beauty to the world, in the richness of her various traditions.”

This vision was made clear by the Second Vatican Council and inspired Pope John Paul II when he wrote to the Indian Bishops encouraging the different rites to work and collaborate with one another. “In India, even after many centuries, Christians are only a small proportion of the population and, consequently, there is a particular need to demonstrate unity and to avoid any semblance of division,” Francis wrote.

The Syro-Malabar Church had expanded to the northern regions of India starting 50 years ago, creating tensions with the pre-existing Latin rite dioceses in those territories, which insisted that one bishop should have jurisdiction over the territories. Today those regions are eparchies under the jurisdiction of the Syro-Malabar Church.

Despite that, the pope pointed to the fact that in traditional territories of the Eastern Churches, such as Kerala, and in territories where Christians have migrated, the Catholic bishops have worked in “fruitful and harmonious collaboration” with the various rites.

“In a world where large numbers of Christians are forced to migrate, overlapping jurisdictions have become customary and are increasingly effective tools for ensuring the pastoral care of the faithful

while also ensuring full respect for their ecclesial traditions,” Francis wrote.

“I hope that my decision will be welcomed with a generous and peaceful spirit, although it may be a source of apprehension for some, since many Syro-Malabars, deprived of pastoral care in their own rite, are at present fully involved in the life of the Latin Church,” Francis wrote.

The letter states that this collaboration should continue and extend to include retreats and the formation of priests, as well as Bible studies and the celebration of common feast days.

“With the growth of spiritual friendship and mutual assistance, any tension or apprehension should be swiftly overcome,” Francis concluded.

Overlapping jurisdictions between Latin and Eastern Churches is common outside of India, including in the United States, where several Eastern-rite jurisdictions exist alongside the majority Latin-rite Church.

Greek Orthodox Patriarch: Christians are not strangers in Middle East

By Adelaide Mena

Washington, D.C., Oct 28, 2017 (Crux) – Middle Eastern Patriarchs reaffirmed the deep history of Christianity in the Middle East and called for its perseverance into the future at this week’s In Defense of Christians summit in Washington, D.C.

They called for Western partners to remember that history, and to help keep Christianity in its ancient homeland, as people from around the world work for peace and an end to conflict in the Middle East. “We as Christians in the Middle East: we are going to remain and stay there,” said the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch John X Yazigi. “We are not strangers in that part of the world: we are people of light and of truth.”

Yazigi spoke Oct. 24 at the opening press conference for the In Defense of Christians (IDC) 2017 Summit, bringing together Patriarchs of Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Oriental Orthodox Churches, Middle Eastern Christians of all denominations, and policy leaders from the United States.

The organization and the summit seek to preserve and protect Christian and other religious minorities living in the Middle East.

This year’s theme for the Oct. 24-26 summit was American Leadership and Securing the Future of Christians in the Middle East.

The keynote speaker at the event was U.S. Vice President Mike Pence, who promised direct American aid for persecuted Christians in the Middle East. Congressman Chris Smith (R-N.J.) was the recipient of IDC’s Cedars of God award.

Speaking alongside Yazigi at the press conference held at the National Press Club were Maronite Patriarch of Antioch Bechara Boutros Rai and IDC Vice President Andrew Doran.

Rai pointed to the high number of refugees who had fled to his country of Lebanon, as well as to the West and other areas, as violence and instability has increased over the past several decades.

“The conflicts that have beset the Middle East have driven out millions of busy citizens, including so many Christians, and with their exodus, our region becomes more extreme, more dangerous to the outside world,” the patriarch said.

He pointed out that Lebanon has taken on an immense number of these refugees over the past 70 years, first from Palestine and now Syria, stressing the nation’s resources.

He noted that the proportion of refugees now living in Lebanon would be analogous to more than 150 million refugees living in the United States. He thus called on Americans to help solve these problems. “We have been abandoned to solve the problems we did not create,” the patriarch urged.

“We look to America to exercise its diplomacy to solve the many challenges in the region that have a direct and indirect impact on Lebanon,” he stated. “We have a long tradition of pluralism in the Middle East, but in recent years we have been divided against one another,” he lamented, calling for Middle Eastern Christians to come together with Muslims as well as with people from the West who wish to help in order to form a solution together.

Rai also pointed out that the West’s approach to refugees could be more helpful. While he emphasized that Christians want to go back to their countries, he questioned rhetoric from nations that say that “refugees should be allowed to live in dignity wherever they may be, while those nations have closed their borders and prevented them from entering into their countries.

“Where is the human dignity of all that? If the family is living under a tent and you’ve given them a meal, do you think that’s enough for their human dignity to be guarded?” he asked.

Yazigi echoed many of Rai’s concerns, especially the ability of Christians to have the “right to express on our destiny and our own plight.” He stressed that the Christian message is one of peace, of truth, and of the Good News: “The Church is the beacon of truth in this agitated world and we will continue to witness to that truth even if we are hanged on the Cross.”

In addition to calling for the end of war, the Greek Orthodox patriarch also stressed the necessity for Middle Eastern Christians to be involved in finding the solution to the problems they face - to be partners in finding peace. “Sometimes the media

may portray us in a negative way, not necessarily in the way that we would have us portrayed,” he said, adding that “if we are talking about our destiny in our land, we have something to say.”

One of the solutions Christians of the Middle East want, he stressed, is the ability to “seek unity of our own country” and rebuild their lives in their own homelands.



Christians have lived in the Middle East since the time of Christ.

“We call all Christians and Muslims to work together for the well-being of their country.”

Mother Olga of the Sacred Heart, founder of the Daughters of Mary of Nazareth and an Iraqi Christian, offered a statement as a member of the audience, saying

that many Christians from the region “are lost in-between” political and military struggles of actors within the region and from overseas.

She urged Americans to consider the long history of Christianity in the Middle East, where it has thrived since the first century, and asked if “we expect it will be easy for people to leave their land?” when proposing solutions that require resettlement into new areas or permanent residency in the West.

She called for increased awareness and education on Middle Eastern Christianity among the American people, and advocated for all to seek permanent peace.

Message to His Holiness Bartholomew I, Ecumenical Patriarch

From the Holy Father Francis for the Feast of Saint Andrew



Pope Francis and Patriarch Bartholomew embrace each other as brothers in the Lord.

November 30, 2017 (Zenit/ Libreria Editrice Vatican)
– At part of the traditional exchange of delegations for the respective feasts of the patron saints – on 29 in Rome for the celebration of Saints Peter and Paul, and on 30 November in Istanbul for the celebration of Saint Andrew – Cardinal Kurt Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity leads the Holy See delegation for the feast of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The cardinal is accompanied by Bishop Brian Farrell, secretary of the dicastery, and Msgr. Andrea Palmieri, under-secretary. In Istanbul, the delegation was joined by the apostolic nuncio to Turkey, Archbishop Paul F. Russell. The Holy See delegation took part in the solemn Divine Liturgy presided at by His Holiness Bartholomew in the patriarchal church of Saint George in the Phanar, met with the Patriarch and conversed with the Synodal commission responsible for relations with the Catholic Church.

Cardinal Koch delivered to the Ecumenical Patriarch a Message written by the Holy Father, which was read out publicly at the end of the Divine Liturgy.

The following is the full text of the Message:

Message of the Holy Father

To His Holiness Bartholomew
*Archbishop of Constantinople
Ecumenical Patriarch*

Though away from Rome on my Pastoral Visit to Myanmar and Bangladesh, I wish to extend my fraternal best wishes to Your Holiness and to the members of the Holy Synod, the clergy, the monks, and all the faithful gathered for the Divine Liturgy in the Patriarchal Church of Saint George for the liturgical commemoration of Saint Andrew the Apostle, brother of Simon Peter and first-called of the Apostles, the patron saint of the Church of Constantinople and of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. 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 also for me.

The Delegation I have sent is a sign of my spiritual solidarity with your prayer of thanksgiving and praise for all that our Almighty and Merciful God has accomplished through the witness of the Apostle Andrew. In like manner, the Delegation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate welcomed in Rome last June demonstrated its spiritual closeness to us as we celebrated the wonderful deeds that God, the source of all good, accomplished through the Apostles Peter and Paul, patron saints of the Church of Rome.

The Apostles proclaimed to the ends of the earth, through their words and the sacrifice of their lives, what they themselves had seen, heard and experienced – the Word of Life, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died and rose for our salvation. Making our own this proclamation enables us to enter into communion with the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit, which is the very foundation of the communion that already unites those baptized in the name of the Most Holy Trinity (cf. *1Jn* 1:1-3). Catholics and Orthodox, by professing together the dogmas of the first seven Ecumenical Councils, by believing in the efficacy of the Eucharist and the other sacraments, and by preserving the apostolic succession of the ministry of bishops, experience already a profound closeness with one another

(cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 15). Today, in thanksgiving to the God of love, in obedience to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ and in fidelity to the teaching of the Apostles, we recognize how urgent it is to grow towards full and visible communion.

It is a source of joy to learn that on the eve of the feast of Saint Andrew, during a meeting attended by Your Holiness, the fiftieth anniversary of the visit of Pope Paul VI to the Phanar on 25 July 1967 was commemorated. That historic moment of communion between the Pastors of the Church of Rome and the Church of Constantinople brings to mind the words of Patriarch Athenagoras in welcoming Pope Paul VI to the Patriarchal Church of Saint George, where you are gathered today. I believe that these words can continue to inspire the dialogue between our Churches: "Let us join together what was divided, wherever this is possible, by deeds in which both Churches are involved, giving added strength to the matters of faith and canonical discipline which we have in common. Let us conduct the theological dialogue according to the principle [of] full community in the fundamentals of the faith, liberty both in theological thought, where this is pious and edifying and inspired by the main body of the Fathers, and in variety of local customs, as was favored by the Church from the beginning" (*Tomos Agapis*, Vatican-Phanar (1958-1970), pp. 382-383).

I offer my heartfelt gratitude to Your Holiness for the generous and warm hospitality extended by the Metropolis of Leros of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, under the pastoral care of His Eminence Paisios, to the members of the Coordinating Committee of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. I wish to encourage anew this theological dialogue. The consensus reached by Catholics and Orthodox on certain fundamental theological principles regulating the relationship between primacy and synodality in the life of the Church in the first millennium can serve to evaluate, even critically, some theological categories and practices which evolved during the second millennium in conformity with those principles. Such consensus may enable us to envisage a

common way of understanding the exercise of the ministry of the Bishop of Rome, in the context of synodality and at the service of the communion of the Church in the present context. This sensitive task needs to be pursued in an atmosphere of mutual openness and, above all, in obedience to the demands that the Holy Spirit makes of the Church.

Your Holiness, beloved brother in Christ, in recent months I have followed with great interest your participation in significant international events held throughout the world regarding the care of creation, peaceful coexistence among peoples of different cultures and religious traditions, and the presence of Christians in the Middle East. Your Holiness's commitment is a source of inspiration, support and encouragement for me personally for, as you well know, we share these 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.

With the assurance of my continued remembrance in prayer, it is with sentiments of warm affection that I exchange with Your Holiness a fraternal embrace of peace.

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.