

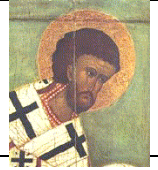
LIGHT OF THE EAST

"GLORY BE TO GOD FOR ALL THINGS."

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY OF SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, YOUNGSTOWN-WARREN OHIO CHAPTER
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FROM THE EDITOR...

Dear Members and Friends, the next regular chapter meeting will be **Tuesday, March 11, 7 pm at St. Nicholas Roman Catholic Church, 764 Fifth Street Struthers, OH 44471. Our speaker will be Father Bogdan G. Bucur, Ph.D.** Father is Associate Professor McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts Department of Theology at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. Father Bogdan works in the area of New Testament and early Christianity, with a special interest in the link between biblical exegesis and doctrinal developments. He views it as important to study how early Christians expressed their religious identity by reworking doctrines, imagery, and practices inherited from the many currents of Second Temple Judaism. In approaching biblical texts, he uses *Wirkungsgeschichte* (usually rendered "reception history") as a valuable complement to historical-critical exegesis of the Bible

As a second field of interest, Dr. Bucur does research in the history of Christian thought, focusing on doctrine and spirituality in the early centuries and the Byzantine tradition. His academic interests, bridging the conventional boundaries between New Testament Studies, Patristics, and the history of Christian thought, were shaped significantly by participation in the interdisciplinary Seminar on the [Jewish Roots of Christian Mysticism](#), and the "Theophaneia" group, both led by Dr. Andrei Orlov and Dr. Alexander Golitzin at Marquette University.

At present he is particularly interested in the pneumatological traditions of the New Testament and later Christian writings, and the New Testament roots of pre-Nicene exegesis of the Biblical theophanies. Father serves as pastor of St. Anthony's Orthodox Church (Antiochian Archdiocese) of Butler, PA. The title of his talk is **"The Feet that Eve Heard in Paradise and Was Afraid": Learning Theology From the Hymns of Holy Week**



CHAPTER DUES

The following have paid their 2014 Chapter dues. Others, please send check made to the Society of St. John Chrysostom for \$20 (25 family, 15 student) to the address above in the masthead of this newsletter. Thanks.

Gilbert, Billcheck, Democko, Limbert, Sarantopoulos, Jim & Esther Dershaw, Fr. Witmer, Beri & Christopher Berardi, Carchedi, Fr. Gage, Fr. Manning, Fr. Rick, Msgr. Siffrin, Chiu, Mattiussi, Tavolario, Nakley & Katz, Fr. Schmidt,

Chorbishop Kail, Msgr. Spinosa, Benedictine Sisters, Hudak, Rev. Mr. Ettinger.

WHO ARE WE?

The Society of St John Chrysostom promotes greater appreciation of the spiritual, theological and liturgical traditions of Eastern Christendom, works and prays for the unity of the Churches of East and West, and encourages support for the Eastern Churches :

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

In the United Kingdom and Europe the Society was founded in 1926

In 1998 the Society was also founded in the United States, where it runs the annual North American and international Orientale Lumen conferences

Following some exploratory and preparatory meetings in 1998 and early 1999, the first regular meeting of the Youngstown-Warren Chapter took place May 4, 1999.

The walls of separation do not rise as far as heaven.

Metropolitan Platon Gorodetsky of Kiev

Roman Rights and Wrongs

January 25, 2014

What needs to change for East-West unity to happen?

Dr. Adam A. J. DeVille



Pope Francis embraces Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople at the Vatican in March 2013. (CNS photo/L'Osservatore Romano via Reuters)

Every January for over a century now, Christians have set aside a special week to pray for unity. This week, my friend the Orthodox priest and historian Oliver Herbel posted an excellent [reflection](#) in which he upbraided his fellow Orthodox for, as he powerfully put it, “spitting in the eye of Rome” every time she makes advances towards East-West unity. Father Oliver then went on to note some changes that he and his fellow Orthodox should make to respond better to Rome’s invitations.

Let me return the favor of my gracious friend. Speaking as an Eastern Catholic who tries to help East and West understand each other, let me offer a few reflections on the kind of changes Eastern Catholics and, perforce, Eastern Orthodox, want to see in very practical ways for unity to become a closer and more realistic possibility. However, I do not want to be thought querulous, so let me dwell briefly on areas where I think Roman practice is right and needs to be encouraged:

1) Ecclesial organization: Anyone who knows anything about Orthodoxy in North America knows that one of her besetting struggles is with ecclesial disorganization. Early ecclesiology rather strictly prescribed one bishop to one city to avoid the problems of overlapping and

conflicting jurisdictions. Orthodoxy still upholds this as the ideal (as does Rome), but has long struggled with making it a reality in this country. Indeed, the most recent effort to overcome this problem—the so-called episcopal assembly of all Orthodox bishops—seems this month on the verge of collapse, which is sad but not surprising.

Rome, however, has in some ways been better able (though not perfectly so) to avoid these problems and to keep Catholics of all traditions—Eastern and Western—united in certain (imperfect) regional structures. For example, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) includes Latin and Eastern bishops on full and equal terms and they regularly meet together in organized fashion twice a year, with Eastern Catholics also serving in the other committees of the USCCB. Though the USCCB (and comparable conferences around the world) are not the synods, they could and should be, as I have argued elsewhere, and they are at the very least a commendable start down that road.

2) Canonical updating: Part of the way you keep your home life organized is through periodic purges in which you force yourself to realize that sweater from 1979 no longer fits and that coffee pot from your great Aunt Hilda, who died in 1936, no longer works. The Church is no different. As we recognize that certain old canons do not adequately deal with the conditions and issues of today, we must make a choice: to ignore the canons, to abolish the canons, or to update the canons. Orthodoxy usually chooses the first option while Rome has preferred the latter two. Thus, in 1990, Rome published the *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, an (imperfect) attempt to bring Eastern canon law into the 20th century and to give it some rational coherence and consistency.

3) Money: Eastern Catholics need to be frank in acknowledging the generosity of Roman institutions in many ways. For decades the Catholic Near Eastern Welfare Association has given generously to Eastern Catholics (and Orthodox!) around the world. Many Eastern communities (including my own mission parish here in Ft. Wayne) are too small to afford their own buildings, and local Roman parishes immediately open their doors and let us use their facilities for worship and fellowship without any cost to us. Other examples could be mentioned. Though we are a tiny drop in the Catholic bucket (a few millions compared to over a billion Latin Catholics in the world), we benefit from belonging to a larger, global institution in very practical ways, including these kinds of “subsidiaries” in which big, wealthy local churches in, say, (Continue next page)

the United States or Germany, can help small, impoverished churches in Ukraine or the Middle East and Africa. One regularly sees such subsidies given in the form of scholarships to Eastern Catholic seminarians and priests to be able to pursue advanced degrees in pontifical universities, both in the Eternal City and elsewhere.

4) Intellectual life: This latter point reminds us that the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome itself has long been one of the premier centers of Eastern theological scholarship, and not a few of today's leading bishops and theologians in Orthodoxy (including the current Ecumenical Patriarch) have studied there. Catholic intellectuals (especially the Jesuits, including Robert Taft, Michael Fahey, Brian Daley) have long been recognized as world-class specialists in Eastern theology. Catholic-sponsored scholarly journals (including the one I edit, *Logos: A Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*) have long focused, either in whole or in part, on Eastern Christian scholarship, making it far more accessible than it would be if it were confined to Orthodox periodicals. And numerous Catholic universities—Loyola Marymount in Los Angeles, Dayton, Notre Dame, Fordham, Saint Paul University (Canada), CUA in Washington, and many others—have in the past (and still today) opened professorial appointments to Orthodox theologians who would be otherwise out of academic work because there are no Orthodox universities anywhere on this continent—nor in most of the rest of the world.

5) Universal focus, universal spokesman: Say what you want about the papacy (and I have in my book, *Orthodoxy and the Roman Papacy*) but I think no fair-minded observer can deny that the papal office remains a salutary trans-national focus for Catholics around the world, reminding all of us that we are but one part of a vast organization with a presence in huge numbers around the world. In other words, it keeps us from descending into smug little enclaves where, as St. Paul puts it, one part can say to the other, “I have no need of you.” Moreover, though not without risks, the popes are able to command instant, widespread international media attention, making it possible to get the word out immediately on any number of issues. When Pope Francis, for instance, called for a day of fasting for Christians in Syria (most of whom are Orthodox or Eastern Catholic), there were millions around the world who immediately responded. Similar calls to focus on the plight of Syrian Christians, issued by the patriarchs of Antioch and even the Ecumenical Patriarch, never have gained the same level of attention

(this is not triumphalism but a simple factual observation of media habits).

I hope, in view of the foregoing litany, that I may be permitted now to note a few areas in which there is room for improvement. Indeed, let me state it as strongly and bluntly as I can: absent significant and unambiguous evidence of change—and not merely vague promissory notes with an unspecified future date—in the following areas, unity with Orthodoxy will not happen.

1) Clerical Celibacy: The whole history of much of Orthodoxy in North America would be inconceivable without the complete fiasco of Latin bishops trying to force priestly celibacy on Eastern Catholics in the early 20th century. When the Latins attempted this with staggering arrogance and insensitivity, tens of thousands of Catholics became Orthodox. Today's Orthodox (and Eastern Catholics) need it made very clear that while we *all* honor celibacy highly, in the East the longstanding custom has been that parish priests are usually married while celibate priests are usually monastics. No requirement, therefore, can again be demanded of Eastern Christians whereby all seeking priestly ordination must be celibate. The East should be able to decide about a married priesthood without interference just as the West decides about a celibate priesthood without interference. The Eastern custom, as valid and ancient and “apostolic” as the West's tradition, must be accepted on equal footing without cavil or qualification. (If the West decides to alter her tradition, it should only be changed after *very* careful discernment and deliberation as to the major costs—financial and administrative, *inter alia*—that such a change would bring. It should also be changed not because of some supposed “vocations shortage,” because a married priesthood is no guarantee of lots of priests.)

2) Local election of bishops and patriarchs: Similarly, the right of local churches to elect their own bishops, and especially their patriarchs, must be preserved. The idea that Rome, either by history or custom—or, more absurdly, “divine law”—can and must appoint all the world's bishops is an innovation so new (emerging juridically only in 1917 with the Pio-Benedictine code of canon law) that the Cambridge historian Eamon Duffy has rightly called it a *coup d'Église*, unjustified by Vatican I and Vatican II. Not even Gregory VII or Pius IX in their most ultramontane moments would have dared arrogate such power unto themselves.

3) Restoration of liturgical tradition: Many Orthodox (and, again, many Eastern Catholics) are rightly scandalized at the state of the (Continue next page)

liturgy in Latin parishes today. Though we seem, thankfully, to have moved well beyond the (possibly apocryphal) clown Masses of the high 1960s, still today there is a liturgical culture too often marked by a “domestication of transcendence” (William Placher), by banality and mediocrity instead of mystery and reverence. This is inconceivable to the East where, through centuries of persecution, the liturgy was often the only thing the Church was permitted to do, and so has acquired a pride of place as *theologia prima*.

4) Discipline of dissenters: The fact that Catholic academics, especially so-called theologians, are permitted to teach for decades in Catholic institutions while openly dissenting from Catholic teaching does not go unnoticed in the East. Heterodoxy needs to be given a simple ultimatum: put up or shut up. The failure of bishops to show much spine here appalls many in the East who are, after all, concerned precisely about, well, *orthodoxy*.

5) The filioque: Following the **statement** of Rome in 1995, and the 2003 **statement** of the North American Orthodox-Catholic dialogue, as well as even more recent statements by leading Orthodox theologians such as Metropolitans Kallistos Ware and John Zizioulas, and the Orthodox **historian** Edward Siecienski, no serious observer today believes that, *theologically*, the *filioque* (the belief, expressed in the Nicene Creed, that the Holy Spirit proceeds “from the Father and the Son [*filioque* in Latin]) is a church-dividing issue. However, the fact of its continued usage liturgically in the Latin tradition every Sunday does rankle *procedurally* for many Orthodox. In other words, even if both sides understand and can accept the theological meaning of the other, the fact that the Western church unilaterally altered the creed outside of the procedure of an ecumenical council remains a sore point for the East, made all the more so by the fact that recent popes have said the Greek original remains the authoritative text. If that is so, then why do liturgical translations not use the Greek as their source-text for translation, rather than the Latin with its interpolation? With careful preparation and catechesis the *filioque* could and should be deleted from common liturgical usage. Yes, it would be a gesture of extraordinary generosity for the Latin Church to remove the *filioque* from the Creed. But merely to issue a clarification on it would not, I think, be enough for most Orthodox.

6) Papal primacy and jurisdiction: Finally, we come to the major issue widely agreed to be the most important one requiring resolution before unity. I will

not get into details here for I have already written **an entire book on the topic**. I am not being immodest when I say that of the reviews I have seen so far from serious Orthodox observers (i.e., not the illiterate cranks on Amazon who admitted they were never going to read the book but slagged it nonetheless), all of them have said my proposals *could* offer a way forward.

Certain Orthodox apologists writing this list would add 3, 5, 15, or 30 more items—unleavened bread, priestly beards, altar girls, statues vs. icons, and so on. No sober observer today believes these are remotely serious issues justifying continued division. Other, relatively more serious theological issues—e.g., the modern Marian dogmas, or purgatory—are, properly understood, compatible with Orthodox theology as others (see Sergius Bulgakov, *The Burning Bush: On the Orthodox Veneration of the Mother of God*; and Emmanuel Lanne, “L’enseignement de l’Église catholique sur le purgatoire,” *Irénikon*64) have shown. In the end, if unity is to have a realistic prospect in this century, Rome needs to step up to the plate and prove, by unmistakable actions and not hoary promises, that she means business on these six issues at least. Then the ball will be back in Orthodoxy’s court.

About the Author

Dr. Adam A. J. DeVille

Dr. Adam A. J. DeVille is assistant professor of theology at the University of Saint Francis (Fort Wayne, IN) and author of *Orthodoxy and the Roman Papacy* (University of Notre Dame, 2011).

WHAT SHOULD THE ORTHODOX DO? (LOE Title, article edited by LOE)

modestinusfromtheblog: <http://modestinus.wordpress.com/01/28/2014>

Just off the top of my head, leaving the very contentious Primacy issue to the side, I would say...

First, the cessation of all stereotypes concerning “Western rationalism” vs. “Eastern mysticism.” With that comes the disarming of the thoughtless polemics concerning the “carnal,” “earthly,” “delusional,” etc. nature of Western, specifically Catholic, mysticism and spirituality.

Second, the end of all polemics and casual condemnations of Scholasticism, Thomism, or any other Western Catholic theological school/paradigm which the Orthodox claim is “alien” to their tradition and the tradition of the first millennium of Christianity.

Third, full acceptance of the validity of Catholic liturgical rites with the caveat that they, no less than any other Western Catholic, has (Continue next page)

the right to criticize theological and substantive defects in the Novus Ordo Mass and revised liturgical books. (At the same time, Western Catholics, on the same basis, should be allowed to be critical of Byzantine liturgical praxis, but always in a spirit of charity and with an eye to correcting abuses.)

Fourth, a full affirmation of the understanding of the filioque which Chris Jones outlined above.

Chris Jones I certainly can't speak for the Orthodox (not being one any longer), but a formal definition by Rome of the doctrine of the procession of the Holy Spirit which:

- takes account of the difference in breadth of meaning between the Greek *ekporeuo* and the Latin *procedere*
- clearly excludes the errors that the Orthodox suspect the filioque of allowing
- grounds its teaching on the procession in the teachings of both the Greek and Latin Fathers, especially St Maximus Confessor... would go a long way towards reassuring the Orthodox that the filioque is not heretical. In my opinion the continued liturgical use of the filioque would be acceptable if its meaning were normed by such a formal definition. I think (and again it is one man's opinion) that the "Clarification" that the Vatican issued a couple of decades ago is, in substance, the sort of doctrinal statement that I am talking about. It lacks only the level of authority as a doctrinal definition. It is easier to ask Rome to say "we were unclear" for a millennium than it is to ask them to say "we were wrong" for a millennium. Altering the Creed as it is used liturgically sends the message that "we were wrong" to all of the faithful. If we can patch up the donnybrook over the filioque without sending that message, then we should.

(I'll leave to the side its place in Western liturgy, though I still stand behind my belief that it should not be omitted.)

Fifth, the cessation of all arguments, polemics, and mockery of "Uniatism." The Eastern Catholic churches have a right to exist, and the Orthodox need to get over it.

Sixth, a cessation of all polemics and criticism of Catholic devotional practices, ranging from the Rosary to the veneration of statues. This can also be extended to other practices which some Orthodox argue is "heretical," including kneeling at Mass, using unleavened bread in the Mass, Holy Water, the way the Sign of the Cross is performed, Baptism by pouring, etc. I am sure I could list more, but there's a start. A lot could be built off of that, I think.

Newest member Deacon John Ettinger of Mt. St. Mary's Seminary Cincinnati—WELCOME!

. Spitting in Rome's Eye: A Reflection on How Orthodoxy's Sinfulness Prevents Reunion

Posted on January 20, 2014

<http://holyyresurrection.areavoices.com/> by Fr. Oliver Herbel

In my previous post, I mentioned some of the internal problems besetting the Orthodox Church, causing dysfunction (which I termed "implosion"). I noted how it affects the Great Commission and how our relationship with Rome is part of that larger picture (for a unified front between these truly-mega-churches would give strength in spreading the Gospel). I noted how Moscow currently rejects the Ecumenical Patriarch's (legitimate) claim to primacy, in wanting to convoke a pan-Orthodox council and in engaging in serious dialogue with Rome. It doesn't take a very long search for someone to see that many Orthodox Christians agree with Moscow, calling Rome heretical and, furthermore, expressing not a little invective (or at least heated rhetoric) when taking that stance.

An important factor in this is that the kind of careful historical and theological analysis (not to mention humility) that occurs within official Orthodox-Catholic dialogues is not seeping into the Orthodox groundwater. Many Orthodox prefer to dismiss Catholicism and Protestantism as two sides of the same coin, as though Orthodoxy is completely separate from them. If it weren't for the fact that such an attitude is based on ignorance, it would be audacious in the extreme. Take, for example the North American Catholic-Orthodox dialogue. They haven't skirted the issues that need to be addressed and yet they have produced helpful starting points, free from anti-Westernism (based, ironically, on rather Western models):

<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/ecumenical-and-interreligious/ecumenical/orthodox/orthodox-dialogue-documents.cfm>

Moreover, there has been a real shift in attitude in Rome. In the early 20th c., one could still easily find anti-Orthodox attitudes and statements. Today, however, I believe Fr. Taft expresses well the currently dominant Roman Catholic view here:

"Vatican II, with an assist from those Council Fathers with a less naïve Disney-World view of their own Church's past, managed to put aside this historically ludicrous, self-centered, self-congratulatory perception of reality. In doing so they had a strong assist from the Council Fathers of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church whose concrete experience of the realities of the Christian East made them spokesmen and defenders of that reality."

He made this statement in the context of the notion of "Sister Churches." You may find it in context here: (Continue next page)

<http://www.firstthings.com/blogs/firstthoughts/2013/05/15/reunion-not-a-return-to-rome-on-catholic-orthodox-ecumenism/>

Granted, a few of the comments to that link were Roman Catholics upset by what he was saying, so it is not as though Catholics are blameless “on the ground,” but I suspect Orthodox are more likely to oppose such a statement. Certainly, in today’s climate, it is difficult to find Orthodox willing to take a position similar in humility to the statement above given by Taft. We do have scholars doing this, though, and one starting point may be the newly published Orthodox Constructions of the West. A great example may also be found in Adam DeVille’s work on this very ecumenical dialogue: Orthodoxy and the Roman Papacy. Somehow, we have to get these perspectives “on the ground.” A great step forward would be for our seminaries to start requiring these as reading materials. Orthodox priests often (though not always) play key roles in shaping how laity read and understand Orthodox history, theology, and piety. Humility has to start with our clergy. Pastorally, there are good reasons for us to adopt the virtue of humility. If ever reunion could happen, it could have practical, pastoral edification in the lives of many. Recently, Fr. Stephen Freeman, a good (and popular) priest, commented on Catholics wanting communion at his parish, reducing their desire to a “Modern project.” By this, he meant they wanted communion based on what they believed to be true (that in the Orthodox liturgy it is bread and wine and also body and blood). He even emphasized the “I” when quoting them. My point here is not to engage in culture war language nor to analyze a classical versus modern dichotomy, etc. That would be a different series of posts. Rather, what I would want to interject and say is that in my experience, a lot of Roman Catholics saying such things are not saying that what matters is their intellectual ability to create something in their minds. What they are saying is that they recognize a sacramental presence in our services. Sure, many Roman Catholics in America may have a superficial faith and just feel they can take communion anywhere, but that is not always the case and indeed, many look at Orthodoxy through thoughtful eyes and gracious hearts. More than that, we have many “mixed marriages” and other situations where Orthodox-Catholic reunion could have a real healing and gracious effect. In other words, as long as we don’t disregard issues of importance (which our official dialogues have not), the humility to engage Rome willingly and openly could beget some real grace “in the pews,” if you will. At minimum, it would help us avoid reducing Roman Catholics desiring communion to some sort of modern neo-gnostic mentality.

My fellow Orthodox, let’s be honest here. With regard to Orthodox-Catholic relations the humility struggles are primarily on our side. They are evidenced in internet chatter, in parish dining halls, amongst our seminarians, publicly displayed in sermons by our clergy, and (indirectly, if nothing else) advertised for the world to see in official statements. We Orthodox sure like to talk about the virtues, the Desert Fathers, etc., but when it comes to ecumenical relations, humility too often goes out the window. I, for one, think it’s time to close that window. The sectarian draft has a real chill to it.

*****PLEASE NOTE THAT IN THE INTEREST OF INQUIRY, OUR NEWSLETTER SOMETIMES PRESENTS ARTICLES WITH POINTS OF VIEW WITH WHICH WE DON’T NECESSARILY AGREE.*****

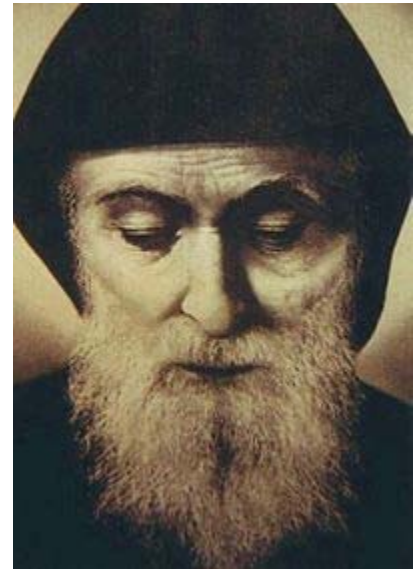
St. Charbel: Shining Glory of the Maronites

from: <http://ascentofcarmel.blogspot.com/>

Few pictures are as iconic as the ones we find of St. Charbel, the famed Lebanese monastic of the 19th century. His eyes held downward, his gaze turned distinctly inward to his heart wherein dwelt the light of Christ, a black cowl covering his weathered face; few images of the great monastic saints are as impacting or as striking.

St. Charbel is arguably the greatest saint of the Maronite Catholic Church, which is one of the few Eastern Christian communities to not enter into schism with Rome. Amongst its leading lights are the illustrious St. Maroun himself, as well as St. Rafqa, St. Hardini, Bl. Brother Estephan, and the Servant of God, Estephan El Douaihy (called the "second Chrysostom").

But none seem to have the same impact upon the Christian soul as St. Charbel. At once, he appears to be a living embodiment of the desert fathers, albeit one living in the beginnings of the modern world. A hermit for much of his life, St. Charbel had an ardent devotion to Adoration of the (Continue next page)



Blessed Sacrament. In the accounts of his life that I have gone through, it seems that he maintained a kind of holy silence at all times. His childhood piety and love of God had already marked him as a saint it seems, and like his days of youth spent in prayer as a shepherd, he continued his intense prayer life not only in the monastery but throughout 23 years as a hermit as well. All in all, His life was one of penance and mortification, and deep contemplative prayer - in any pictures I see of him, he appears as a pillar of total silence and recollection, a man with one foot already in the next world.

To me, St. Charbel is an exemplary monk - his eyes perpetually turned inward and gazing upon the kingdom of Heaven within his own heart that was so very consecrated to Christ, he lived a life of monastic perfection. Upon his death, strange lights began to emanate from his tomb, his body perspired with blood, and many miracles began to occur through his intercession.

Without a doubt, St. Charbel remains a glorious light not only of the Maronite Catholics, but of all the Catholic Church as a whole.

Pope Francis' ecumenism



FRANCIS WITH BARTHOLOMEW I

The Bishop of Rome's messages and gestures to promote Christian unity

ANDREA TORNIELLI
VATICAN CITY

Almost a year after Francis' election and with the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity at an end, it is now possible to give a first overview of the Pope's initiatives to promote ecumenism. "For me ecumenism is a priority" Francis told *Vatican Insider* and Italian newspaper *La Stampa* in [last December's interview](#).

Some of the choices he made even at the very start of his pontificate had a very positive impact of ecumenism.

Bishop of Rome

Francis has given a special emphasis to his role as Bishop of Rome ever since he made his first appearance on the central Loggia of St. Peter's Basilica after his election and wanted his Cardinal Vicar by his side; the morning after his election he went to pay tribute to the icon of Mary Salus Populi Romani in the Basilica of St. Mary Major (where he returned on a number of other occasions) and entrusted the City of Rome to her; he has given great importance to his ties with his local diocese, the poor and his parishes, with visits to parishes on the outskirts of the city on various Sunday afternoons – a new practice introduced by Francis. These visits allow him to devote more time to meeting people who want to approach him. This is not such a new thing: The Pope is Pope because he is Bishop of the Church of Rome who "presides in charity over all the other Churches" as Ignatius of Antioch wrote. The fact that Francis has made this a priority and the willingness to convert the papacy – expressed in the *Evangelii Gaudium* and proven in his everyday ministry – are aspects that have been greatly welcomed by the Orthodox world.

St. Martha's House

Francis' decision not to live in the papal apartment but to remain in suite 201 in St. Martha's House, has had a practical consequence for ecumenical relations too. Delegations of Churches and religious communities visiting Rome stay in the very same residence as him so the Pope is able to welcome these figures at the doorstep of his home, away from the public spotlight and share moments of friendship and conviviality with them under the same roof. One of these occasions was the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople Bartholomew I's visit to attend the mass for the inauguration of Francis' pontificate.

At the time, the [Patriarch said](#): "When we met there, the fact we were both living in the Domus Sanctae Marthae meant we had the chance to have a few brotherly chats and sit down to table together. As you know, the Pope took the suite I usually stay in when I come to the Vatican. At one point he said to me: "I stole your room..." to which I replied: "You're welcome to have it!""

"Over the course of these first nine months, I have received visits from many Orthodox brothers: Bartholomew, Hilarion, the theologian Zizioulas, the Copt Tawadros. The latter is a mystic, he would enter the chapel, remove his shoes and go and pray. I felt like their brother. They have the apostolic succession; I received them as brother bishops. It is painful that we are not yet able to celebrate the Eucharist together, but there is friendship. I believe that (Continue next page)

the way forward is this: friendship, common work and prayer for unity. We blessed each other; one brother blesses the other, one brother is called Peter and the other Andrew, Mark, Thomas...”.

The Synod and the G8

One of the first decisions the new Pope took was to set up a group of eight cardinal advisors who were entrusted with carrying the plans for the reform of the Roman Curia forward and help in the government of the universal Church. Francis’ intention was to reform the way the Synod works in order to ensure more collegial and far-reaching consultations across the Church. Bartholomew said: “We are very glad he has given such focus to his role as “Bishop of Rome”. And we are also glad about his decision to nominate eight cardinals as advisors: this is similar to the synod system in our Church.”

Together towards Jerusalem

At the end of his homily at the Vesper celebration in the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Francis said: “Unity will not come about as a miracle at the very end,” he said. “Rather unity comes about in journeying. If we do not walk together, if we do not pray for one another, if we do not collaborate in the many ways that we can in this world for the people of God,” the Pope said, “then unity will not come about.” Unity will not be the result of human effort, “but rather of the Holy Spirit, who sees our good will.” One leg of this journey will be completed next May when Francis will take up Bartholomew I’s invitation and visit the Holy Land for a brief pilgrimage of prayer. He will thus commemorate Paul VI’s historical meeting and embrace with the Patriarch of Constantinople Athenagoras fifty years ago. Paul VI was the first successor of Peter to set foot again on the land where Jesus once lived.

Ecumenism of blood

Finally, there is another kind of ecumenism Francis has spoken of. The ecumenism of blood. “In some countries they kill Christians for wearing a cross or having a Bible and before they kill them they do not ask them whether they are Anglican, Lutheran, Catholic or Orthodox. Their blood is mixed. To those who kill we are Christians. We are united in blood, even though we have not yet managed to take necessary steps towards unity between us and perhaps the time has not yet come. Unity is a gift that we need to ask for. I knew a parish priest in Hamburg who was dealing with the beatification cause of a Catholic priest guillotined by the Nazis for teaching children the catechism. After him, in the list of condemned individuals, was a Lutheran pastor who was killed for the same reason. Their blood was mixed. The parish priest told me he had gone to the bishop and said to him: “I will continue to deal with the cause, but both

of their causes, not just the Catholic priest’s.” This is what ecumenism of blood is. It still exists today; you just need to read the newspapers. Those who kill Christians don’t ask for your identity card to see which Church you were baptised in. We need to take these facts into consideration.”

Seventh edition of the Symposium of Romanian Orthodox Spirituality

The seventh edition of the Symposium of Romanian Orthodox Spirituality of our Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in the Americas will take place at the **Duquesne University of Pittsburgh, Department of Theology at the Bayer Learning Center – Wolf Hall** on Saturday, March 22, 2014 starting at 9:00 am. The event is intended to be a dialogical confluence between the great thinking tradition and experience of the Church and the cutting-edge academic research in the field of theological studies such as biblical, historical, patristic and spiritual.

This year the Symposium will have the theme: **“The Church, a communion model –an Eucharistic Perspective.”** On behalf of the Hosting Committee the event will be attended by HE Archbishop Nicolae, HG Vicar-Bishop, Ioan Casian and Dr. Mareen O’Brien, the head of the Duquesne University, Department of Theology. Some other local hierarchs are expected to attend the Symposium.

The Symposium features lectures by the following speakers:

- **HG Bishop Maxim** (Western USA Serbian Diocese, Los Angeles, CA)
- **Prof. Edith M. Humphrey** (Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, PA) **Has spoken to our Youngstown-Warren Chapter*
- **Prof. Nicholas Denysenko** (Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, CA)
- **Prof. Aristotle Papanikolaou** (Fordham University, New York)
- **V. Rev. Prof. Dr. Stelyios S. Muksuris** (Byzantine Catholic Seminary, Pittsburgh, PA)
- **Prof. Bogdan Bucur** (Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, PA) **Will speak to our Youngstown-Warren Chapter*
- **Prof. Radu Bordeianu** (Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, PA) **Has spoken to our Youngstown-Warren Chapter*
- **V. Rev. Protopresbyter Christopher H. Bender** (Dean of St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Cathedral, Pittsburgh, PA)

The event will conclude with the Vespers service at the Department of Theology of Duquesne University chapel.

Divine Wisdom

January 8, 2014 | by [Kaya Genc](#) from:
<http://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2014/01/08/divine-wisdom/>

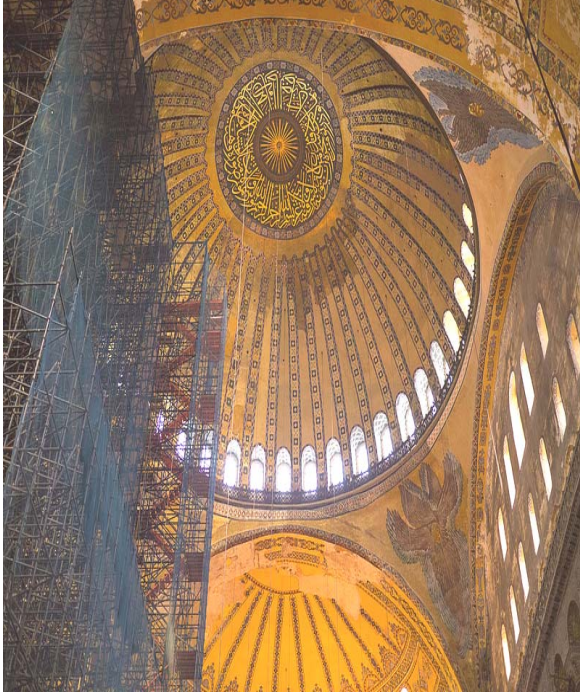


Photo: Schezar, via Flickr

On May 28, 1453, the Byzantine emperor Constantine XI entered Hagia Sophia, “the church of the divine wisdom,” to pray. Constantinople was under siege, and the fate of the great basilica was unclear. The emperor prayed there before returning to the city walls, where he coordinated the defense effort against the army of Mehmed II, who would be christened conqueror by day’s end.

As the two armies struggled to outmaneuver each other, those caught inside Hagia Sophia waited anxiously, fearful of what might happen if the capital of Greek Orthodoxy fell into Muslim hands. Emperor Justinian had commissioned the church in 532 A.D.; planned by the mathematician Anthemius of Tralles and the physicist Isidore of Miletus, and built by more than ten thousand laborers, it was intended to symbolize the magnificence of Christianity and become the seat of the Orthodox patriarch. Twenty years after its completion, two major earthquakes shook Hagia Sophia and destroyed its eastern arch. After extensive renovation, it reopened in 562 A.D. to the delight of Justinian, who, three years before his death, saw his great church survive one of nature’s worst calamities.

On May 29, 1453, Mehmed II and his army entered the city, immediately marching on Hagia Sophia. In their book *Strolling Through Istanbul*, John Freely and Hilary

Sumner-Boyd describe how Mehmed “dismounted at the door of the church and bent down to take a handful of earth, which he then sprinkled over his turban as an act of humility before God.”

In the five centuries following that symbolic act, the greatest religious building of the Ottoman Empire continued to shine—but this time, the glory belonged to Islam. Hagia Sophia became an imperial mosque; it came to boast four minarets (these also serve an architectural purpose, protecting the building against collapsing onto itself) and additional *türbes* (Islamic mausoleums).

Centuries later, in 1935, its role changed again. Twelve years after the foundation of the Turkish republic, President Mustafa Kemal Atatürk signed a decision that turned Hagia Sophia into a secular museum. According to the *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, Atatürk’s decision not only turned Hagia Sophia into “an artifact of the past” but rendered it “a site of memory instead of ... a symbol of lived religious experience.” In the decades to come, the secularized building would serve as Istanbul’s main tourist attraction; in 2012 alone it attracted around three and a half million visitors.

Today, the building is on the brink of another transformation; 2014 may be remembered as the year that decided Hagia Sophia’s fate. Last month, Yusuf Halaçoğlu, a parliamentarian from the nationalist MHP party, filed a proposal founded on a curious historical argument that brings to mind the books of Dan Brown and Umberto Eco. According to Halaçoğlu, the 1935 decree that transformed Hagia Sophia into a museum was forged. Atatürk, he argued, had never wanted the building to be a museum, and thanks to a legal loophole, the current parliament could easily transform the museum back into a mosque.

Was it conceivable that a forgery could be at the heart of arguably the most significant decision in Turkey’s early republican history? Halaçoğlu’s argument hinged on Atatürk’s name. Before the parliament had christened him Atatürk (“the father of Turks”) on November 27, 1934, he’d been known simply as Mustafa Kemal. Only after the Turkish parliament retitled him did he start to sign documents under the new name. But the motion that desanctified Hagia Sophia was passed on November 24, and it was signed “K. Atatürk”—three days too soon, to Halaçoğlu’s mind.

Further complicating matters, the decree’s issue number was 1589, while another decree issued two days earlier was numbered 1606. Halaçoğlu also pointed out that the decree was never published in the Official Gazette (*Resmî Gazete*) of the Republic, which may signal that the decree had been added to the presidential archive at a later date.

To prove his theory, (Continue next page)

Halaçoğlu brought the decree document and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's signature to the Police Headquarters of Turkey and asked experts to compare the two; there does indeed seem to be a difference between them. The experts said as much, but not everyone was convinced—intellectuals and historians began to weigh in. In *Yeni Akit*, Turkey's most conservative newspaper, well known for its opposition to republican reforms, Faruk Köse argued that the forgery theory was an absurd attempt to distance Atatürk from the cultural revolutions of early twentieth century. A forgery was impossible, Köse said. The mosque was turned into a museum in 1935 and opened its doors on February 1 of that year; since Atatürk died on November 10, 1938, how on earth could he not have known about the transformation of the greatest mosque of Islam into a museum? As for the experts' verdict about the difference in signatures, Köse argued that it was natural for a person using a new signature for the first time to make slight alterations to it later. He also claimed that Atatürk would've executed anyone who attempted to forge his signature—so absolute was his authority.

* * *

One morning not long ago, I took a tram to Hagia Sophia with my girlfriend. I wanted to get at the heart of the controversy. The entrance fee is twenty-five liras, which visitors are allowed to pay only after standing in a very long queue where guides of varying degrees of competence vie for attention.

We entered the museum through the impressive Imperial Door, which only the emperors could use in the Byzantine era. Once inside, the first thing that struck us was the coldness of the place—the chill almost overshadowed the beauty of the grand dome, which is 108 feet in diameter, rising to 180 feet above the floor. Having watched a *National Geographic* documentary about its construction the night before, we had our doubts about the building's safety.

More than anything else, the interior of the museum resembles an endless construction site. The library in the south aisle, commissioned by Sultan Mahmud in the eighteenth century, is currently being renovated, and a huge scaffold stands at the center with warning signs placed on columns around it. My girlfriend remembered having visited in 2010—she said the scaffolding had been removed then. I found that difficult to believe, but she said she could prove it with pictures.

Before climbing upstairs, we looked at the circular calligraphy panels that hang from the piers. Painted by Kazasker Mustafa Izzet Efendi, they contain the names of Allah, the prophet Muhammad, his four caliphs (Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali), and Muhammad's

grandchildren Hussein and Hassan. They stand in striking contrast with the Christian imagery of the mosaics: the cohabitation of Islamic words and Christian images is a beautiful thing to behold.

There are more than a hundred columns in the building, but none is more interesting than the so-called sweating column on the northern corner. Brought from the Temple of Artemis, the column has a huge hole in its center where visitors can insert their thumbs and rotate their hands, thus transmitting their dreams to the ancient structure's wish-fulfillment center. Because water can be seen coming out of it, people believe the column sweats, or cries, and that this is a miracle—it may also be a sign of poor care.

We walked among crowds of tourists, tour guides, and security guards, seeking perhaps the most curious object in the museum—not an inanimate piece of ancient history but a living animal. Gri, the famous Hagia Sophia cat, [has a Tumblr devoted to him](#); the cross-eyed creature was named after the color of his coat. When Barack Obama visited Hagia Sophia in 2009, he was photographed fondling Gri's head. We, too, fondled it; I asked Gri about his take on the mosque-versus-museum controversy. He raised his tail, purred, and turned away. Not everyone's reactions are so docile. "We are looking at a sad Hagia Sophia, but hopefully we will see it smiling again soon," said the Turkish deputy prime minister last year, implying that it should be opened to Islamic service. According to the Greek Foreign Ministry, his suggestion had been "an insult to the religious sensibilities of millions of Christians and actions that are anachronistic and incomprehensible from a state that declares it wants to participate as a full member in the EU." Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew was quoted as saying, "If it is to reopen as a house of worship, then it should open as a Christian church." Although most people take an either/or stance, some have proposed opening Hagia Sophia to both Islamic and Christian services. This is a welcome prospect to Christians, who have made a number of attempts to organize religious rituals. On one such occasion, in 2010, Turkey's director of religious affairs said, "Turkey would not be a Christian country just because Christians performed their religious duties in a few churches." There's precedent for such a hybrid, too. I came across numerous articles about the so-called church-mosques of Anatolia. Pazaryeri Camii, in the coastal city of Izmir, is one example: built for Christian service in 1874, it was repurposed as a mosque once Turkey became a republic. During the building's renovation, the experts found Christian icons and decided to install a curtain system to cover them during Islamic prayers. Another church-mosque, in the Çardak village of Göreme, has been used by both Orthodox Christians (Continue next page)

and Muslims. Indeed, a Turkish columnist recommended a similar solution for Hagia Sophia: "We should allow Aya Sofya to become all three things at the same time!" she wrote. "Let's keep it as a museum from Monday to Thursday, turn it into a mosque on Friday, close it for holiday on Saturday and use it as a church on Sunday. We can cover the floor with a carpet on Thursday nights and place chairs on Saturday nights."

Whichever outcome arrives, it would be great if someone installed proper heating equipment there. And whoever manages the building shouldn't forget about feeding Gri and managing his Tumblr feed. Above all, respect for the building's immense heritage is a must. Otherwise the ghosts of Justinian and Constantine will surely haunt us—and so will the ghost of Mehmed the Conqueror, whose first action in front of Hagia Sophia was one of humility.

Kaya Genç is a novelist and essayist from Istanbul.

India to host Orthodox-Catholic dialogue

Published: 2:48 pm, January 24, 2014 Story By: mattersindia.com



Dialogue in Ethiopia 2012

Kochi: The International Dialogue between the Orthodox and the Catholic Churches will be held for the first time in India.

As many as 35 delegates from the Oriental Orthodox Churches of Egypt, Armenia, Malankara (India), Syria, Ethiopia will with Catholic officials at Pampakuda in Kerala from January 27.

During the weeklong dialogue, they will address issues such as ecclesiology, episcopacy, apostolic succession, the relevance and important of the Ecumenical Councils, the Church and its mission, Indian Orthodox Last year, the conference was held in Rome and at Ethiopia in 2012. This is the first time it is being held in India, the metropolitan said.

This year's dialogue will discuss the relevance of the

nature and communion of the United and Undivided Apostolic Church that existed until the 5th century in the present day churches, he said.

The dialogue also seeks to emphasize that communion in worship and sacraments is multi-faceted and multi-layered; hence putting the onus on the Churches to realize this aim, reported the Business Standard.

Seminar papers relating to the Anaphora and Liturgy, Pilgrimage would be presented by eminent scholars, he said.

Delegates from various countries, including Egypt, Lebanon, Ethiopia, Italy, America, Armenia, Germany and Israel are expected to participate.

Metropolitan Yuhanon Demetrius and Father Mathew Vellanickal are the delegates from India, besides Gregorios.

Vienna Archdiocese defends giving churches to Orthodox

Catholic News Service

Austria's Vienna Archdiocese has defended its gifts of Catholic churches to Orthodox communities, as part of a current reorganization.

"Our own church is receding in Vienna, whereas other Christian confessions are on the rise because of immigration," Michael Pruller, the archdiocese spokesman, told Catholic News Service Dec. 19.

"Many large churches were built in the 19th century for parishes numbering tens of thousands. As in other countries, we're now having to get rid of churches, which can't be maintained by their small congregations." He said the archdiocese had tried to find an "alternative Catholic use" for unwanted churches, to prevent them being turned into "supermarkets and cafes," but would otherwise hand them over to other Christian denominations. No money is given as compensation, he said.

In 2015, the archdiocese will formally hand over St. Anthony of Padua Church to the Romanian Orthodox, who have already begun celebrating liturgies there. The Kathpress news agency reported that fewer than 30 Catholics currently attended Sunday Mass at the church. Under the reorganization, unveiled in September 2012, the Vienna Archdiocese's 660 parishes are to be merged into 150 larger units, each served by three-five priests. Lay volunteers will conduct Liturgies of the Word in smaller affiliated communities.

In November 2011, the Vatican approved the handover of Vienna's Our Lady of Sorrows Church to the expanding Serbian Orthodox Diocese of Central Europe, despite protests by its predominantly Polish parishioners. Two other churches have been given to the Coptic Orthodox community and one to the Syrian Orthodox Church, which is also negotiating the handover of a second.

West, East have much to learn from each other

Written by [Evan Boudreau](#), [The Catholic Register](#)

Friday, 13 September 2013

Syro-Malankara Cardinal Baselios Cleemis recently completed a cross-Canada pastoral tour that ended in Toronto in early September.

Photo by Evan Boudreau

TORONTO - Embracing diversity within the Catholic Church will lead towards a world where the presence of God is felt in greater proportions, said Cardinal Baselios Cleemis.

“Uniformity is no longer accepted as a sign of unity,” said the cardinal, major archbishop of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. “Uniformity is something artificial now in the public life as well as in the Church life. Diversity is not indifference to the reality, diversity is something complimentary to the nature of objectivity because that is the way God created us.”

Cleemis, who spoke to *The Register* on Sept. 5 while in Toronto on the final stop of a pastoral tour of Canada before heading to New York, wasn't speaking of diversity in terms of creed, nationality or skin tone. Rather he was referring to the diversity of the Christian churches, primarily the Eastern and Western Catholic Churches.

“(Easterners live) the same Catholic faith as our brothers and sisters of the Western Church, the Roman Catholic Church, but celebrate it in a different way,” said Cleemis, 54.

“Our mission, our vocation, is to see that the same faith of the Catholic Church can be lived in different ways.” One main difference between the Eastern Churches and those of the West can be found in the celebration of Mass, he said. For example, while Churches of the West see the sacrament of Holy Communion as a reliving of Jesus speaking at the Last Supper, Syro-Malankara parishioners view it as a celebration of God's constant presence in the world.

“This is not a simple memorial of the passion of the death of Jesus Christ for us,” he said. “This is a re-enactment of God's saving work in the world. The Holy Mass for us is a reminder of all these events in life, not a particular moment of the events which happened in the life of Jesus Christ.”

Cleemis said that sense of reverence is something which the Catholics of the West could take from their Eastern brothers and sisters.



“When the sense of reverence is gone, when it is minimized, the human beings tend to dominate (the Mass),” said Cleemis, who became the first Syro-Malankara to be made a cardinal when he was ordained last November.

“The sense of reverence should be maintained so that we all adore God.”

And while parishioners from the West could benefit from a greater sense of reverence in their Mass, people of the Eastern Churches would be wise to borrow the West's dedication to evangelizing mission work.

“The Church of the West and countries which follow the Catholic traditions, they have produced a lot of missionaries around the world,” he said. “The Church of this Catholic tradition (Roman Catholic) has produced many

saints who are real missionaries. They went around and spoke about the mercy of God and the love of Jesus Christ.”

This significant contribution to the population of saints shows that even Roman Catholics are not hindered from living truly authentic Christian lives, said Cleemis.

It is a sign to him that diversity in how we practise and live our faith is yet another gift from God.

“Diversity is always a blessing,” he said.

Eastern Catholics Note Role of Culture in Proclaiming Gospel

Bishops Conclude Annual Meeting

Rome, October 21, 2013 ([Zenit.org](#))

Even though not identifying itself with any culture, the Church is aware of the importance of dialogue with the cultures present in the European continent. It is impossible to think of the proclamation of Christ outside history. In fact, Christ's encounter with history gives rise to culture: the culture of life

These were the thoughts of the Eastern Rite Catholic bishops in Europe in drawing up a final message at the end of their four-day annual meeting, which concluded Sunday.

About thirty European Eastern Rite Catholic bishops met in Košice (Slovakia).

The meeting took place against the backdrop of the Year of Faith and the commemoration of the 1150th anniversary of the arrival of the brother Saints Cyril and Methodius in Slav territory. In Košice, the participants examined the ways in which the Gospel today makes culture. There were addresses from Cardinal Jozef Tomko, Prefect Emeritus of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples; Archbishop Cyril Vasil', Secretary of the Congregation(Continue next page)

for the Oriental Churches; the Apostolic Exarch for Byzantine Rite Catholics in Greece, Mgr Dimitrios Salachas; and from Fr Juraj Dufka SJ from Košice's East-West Centre of spirituality, who gave a reflection on Art as a tool of evangelisation.

In the course of the meeting, and especially within the context of the Year of Faith, the bishops wanted to make together their profession of faith by reciting communally the profession of faith which Blessed John Paul II included in *Slavorum Apostoli*.

During the meeting, the participants were received by the Latin Rite Bishop of Kosice, Mgr Bernard Bober, they met the Mayor of the city and visited the Exhibition of Byzantine Art displayed in Košice's Theology Faculty.

The meeting took place in a cordial and friendly atmosphere, enriched by moments of prayer and the daily celebration of the Divine Liturgy.

The 2014 meeting will take place in Lviv, in the Ukraine, from 23-26 October, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the legalisation of the Greek-Catholic Church in the Ukraine.

Here is the Message from Europe's Eastern Catholic bishops

The Eastern Catholic bishops of Europe, gathered for their annual meeting under the patronage of CCEE, in the city of Košice, European Capital of Culture 2013, at the invitation of the local Greek-Catholic Eparch, on the joyful celebration of the 1150th anniversary of the arrival of Saints Cyril and Methodius among the Slav peoples, examined the theme of the evangelisation of culture, with a re-reading, too, of the evangelising mission of the two Greek brother saints, bearing in mind the challenges which their Churches in Europe must face at the local level.

At the end of their meeting, the bishops wish to address their faithful and all people of goodwill with this message of hope, charity and love.

Once again we come to affirm and recall the Christian roots of Europe, profoundly convinced of the topicality of the message of Saints Cyril and Methodius. A civilisation and a European culture, where the salvific gospel of Christ has been uprooted, will be unable to build a robust human society, founded on ethical, moral values and on the family which guarantees justice and peace between peoples. A Godless culture leads the human person to desperation and death. We advocate a culture of life and hope: a culture capable of embracing the human person in all their aspects and creating fraternity, love, friendship and solidarity, especially towards the poor, the emigrant and the abandoned. A culture worthy of the name is that which includes worship of God, a God who loves humanity, every

person for who He has given his life and has overcome death by his glorious resurrection.

We are well aware of the problems of our peoples, the crisis sweeping across the European continent and the world, terrorism and the various armed conflicts, the political struggles and racism. The crisis is not just economic, but above all spiritual. We Christians, in our identity as Eastern Catholics, are called to be more authentic witnesses of the rich heritage of our fathers verified by the martyrdom of so many of our pastors and brothers.

We want to proclaim the Good News of God's Love for everyone with joy and enthusiasm. We need God to re-discover the meaning of our existence on this earth. No one can carry their own cross alone, but only with God and with their brothers and sisters. So, we want to reaffirm that Christ is not distant from our affairs. He asks us to trust Him. In life's affairs we find in Him the rock on whom we can rely.

The living experience of the Risen Christ was the source from which sprang Christians' commitment to building European culture. Today, just like yesterday, we Eastern Catholic bishops of Europe, confirm our goodwill in collaborating to build a culture of encounter and dialogue based on truth, freedom, justice, respect and tolerance.

In the European context, our Eastern Catholic Church communities and every person of faith is called personally by Divine Providence to continue the evangelising mission of Saints Cyril and Methodius, achieving the necessary internal renewal and systematic progress desired by the Second Vatican Council. In this way our rich traditions will not remain a monument to admire and recall, but a source of life to heal European culture which more and more is becoming secularised and de-Christianised.

During our meeting, we looked with apprehension at the dramatic situation of suffering of our Christian brothers and faithful in the Middle East, especially in Syria.

United with the Holy Father and the local bishops, we pray that the path of dialogue might be embarked upon more decisively and that to prayer may be united political decisions based on justice and respect for the various religious communities leading to an immediate ceasefire, the abandonment of any form of violence and an end to arms shipments which feed the war in the country.

Through the intercession of the Mother of God and Saints Cyril and Methodius, we ask our Lord to send peace on all the people on the continent.

**"Father, may they all be
one" *John 17.23***

Historic Christian site found in China

ucanews.com reporter, Hong Kong China January 17, 2014

Nestorian Christian site dates back at least 1,200 years



The carved Nestorian cross can be seen above the niche, indicating that this was an early burial place for Christians. A recently discovered site may shed new light on historical research into the Nestorian Church, which is believed to be the earliest Christian movement to spread the Gospel in China.

A niche in a stone wall with a cross carved above it has now been verified by experts as a repository for the ashes and bones of Christians. The experts also confirmed that this is the earliest Nestorian burial place discovered so far in China.

The discovery at the Longmen Grottoes, a UNESCO World Heritage site in central Henan province, was made in 2009. Its verification was announced to the public this week.

Precise dating has yet to be carried out, but it would have been created at some time during China's Ming and Tang dynasties of 316-907 AD. It has yet to be established if it is older than the well known Nestorian Stele, an inscribed limestone tablet found in Xi'an, Shaanxi, which dates back to 781 AD and is currently considered the most ancient Nestorian artefact.

The discovery was made by Jiao Jianhui, a researcher at the Longmen Grottoes Research Institute. The grottoes contain thousands of Buddhist and Daoist statues and carvings, But Jiao told ucanews.com that "this is the first discovery of a religious relic other than that of

Buddhism and Daoism".

Jiao recalled the moment when he discovered the site by chance. "I felt instantly that it was different from other niches and grottoes," he said.

"There are many similar niches at the grottoes, carved with Buddha statues as well as inscriptions to say that the deceased are buried there. So it is certain that the Nestorian site was also for burials," he said.

Originating in the Middle East in the fifth century AD, the Nestorian Christian Church was initially recognized by the Tang Emperor Taizong but suppressed by his successors.

As Jiao pointed out, the discovery of the site puts a different perspective on historians' beliefs about those early days in China. "Historical records shows Buddhist suppression of the Nestorian Church in the Tang Dynasty," he said. "But the niche shows some religious tolerance, as the two religions could coexist harmoniously at the Grottoes."

Now known as the Assyrian Church of the East, the Nestorian Church was regarded by the Catholic Church as schismatic. But in 1994, the two Churches signed a common declaration of doctrine.

PRAYER OF SOUFANIEH

Unity of Hearts!

Unity of Christians!

Unity of the Feast of Easter!



Monastery streams live liturgical services-(Close to Home)

JANUARY 28, 2014 LEAVE

Mother Abbess Christophora with a couple members of the sisterhood of Transfiguration Monastery

Source: [Orthodox Church in America](#)

ELLWOOD CITY, PA [OCA] – The nuns of the Orthodox Monastery of the Transfiguration here recently began a new ministry—live streaming and recording of chapel services for the elderly, ill, those away from home, and those who for other reasons are unable to attend services at their parish. The nuns broadcast select services—usually Vigils and Liturgies for Sundays and the Great Feasts, Vespers on two weekday evenings, and weekday Liturgies—many of which are then archived for future viewing. (Continue next page)

“All that is required is a high speed internet connection and a computer,” said Mother Magdalena. “If you are using a mobile device, you may need to download the Ustream app for live viewing.”

The ministry became a reality through a grant awarded by the [Ganister Orthodox Foundation Fund](#) at the [First Community Foundation Partnership of Pennsylvania](#).

“The grant funded hardware and software improvements to our online video streaming,” Mother Magdalena added. “Video quality is now streamed in high quality at 30fps rather than medium quality averaging 14fps. For a schedule of services visit the monastery’s web site at www.orthodoxmonasteryellwoodcity.org and click the “[Online Chapel](#)” tab, where links to live services and a YouTube archive of past services may be accessed. “We have received e-mails from persons around the world telling us how much they appreciate being able to join us in worship,” said Sister Helene, who oversees the monastery’s web site.

Christian rivals find unity in Nativity church restoration

FEBRUARY 9, 2014 [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)

In this Tuesday Dec. 10, 2013, photograph, tourists walk around the Church of the Nativity in the West Bank city of Bethlehem. Wrapped in scaffolding, the basilica

is having a much-needed facelift after 600 years. (Photo: Nasser Nasser, AP)

Source: [Global Post](#)

Agence France-Presse

When Pope Francis visits Bethlehem in May he will see scaffolding covering the roof of the Church of the Nativity. It may be an eyesore, but it symbolises a rare show of unity among rival Christian faiths that are working together to restore the ancient basilica.

Built in the fourth century by the Roman Emperor Constantine and restored by Justinian after a fire in the sixth century, the shrine over the cave where Jesus is believed to have been born is undergoing a major renovation.

The project, which will see the entire church restored, began last September and is expected to cost 15 million euros (\$20 million).

Following a historic agreement between the Palestinian Authority and the three churches that administer the site in an uneasy partnership, repairing the roof was designated as a priority.

Its rotting rafters, each weighing 20 tonnes, have not been repaired for the past 200 years.

That task, at a cost of 1.9 million euros, was entrusted to a family firm in Italy that specialises in the preservation of ancient structures.

Marcello Piacenti, leader of the Italian-Palestinian renovation team, said that, “damaged by fungus and damp, the wood fractures easily in places.

“The project is about preserving what can be preserved in the best way possible, such as the beam of the central nave,” he says.

“We will reuse the roof timber; 80 to 90 percent of the roof will be preserved.”

The rest of the wood — a matched supply of 300- to 400-year-old wood of the same colour and density as the existing beams — arrived from Italy last month.

The oldest beams date to 1470 when the Franciscans, the Roman Catholic Church’s guardians of holy places, brought from Venice a shipment of larch, a weather-

resistant resinous wood.

Some 400 years later, the Greek Orthodox Church refurbished most of the roofing with Anatolian oak, similar to Lebanese cedar, another species native to the region that was used prior to 1300.

- ‘Crying out for unity’ -

“Between the sheets of (roofing) lead and the timbers, we are going to put a waterproof felt which will guard against moisture and heat,” Piacenti said.

Work on the roof also involves ensuring the protection of the

basilica’s magnificent Crusader-era mosaics and mediaeval frescoes, which will be restored at a later stage.

The first phase is to be completed by September. Father Stephane Milovich, a Franciscan and former caretaker at the church, says it has turned out to be a blessing that the project is getting under way only now, as a cooperative venture among his order, the Greek Orthodox and the Armenian churches.

“A century ago the Greeks, the Armenians and the Franciscans wouldn’t have cooperated,” he said. “We have a building which has not changed, which is why we must save it.”

For Milovich, the basilica is a shared heritage for all of the Holy Land’s churches. (Continue next page)



“We have a common creed, a common faith. We have a church crying out for unity instead of division,” he says. In June 2012, the UN cultural body UNESCO overrode Israeli and US objections to urgently grant World Heritage status to the Church of the Nativity and its pilgrimage route.

Bethlehem lies in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, and recognition of the site was a diplomatic victory for the Western-backed Palestinian Authority, which is playing a leading role in the restoration programme.

“The Palestinian National Authority intervened with the blessing of the three churches,” said Ziad Bandak, head of the presidential commission for the renovation. “The churches are cooperating very well with us.”

The roof restoration is being funded by the Palestinian private sector and the Palestinian Authority, which is contributing 740,000 euros (\$1 million). The rest is made up by donations from the Vatican, Hungary, France, Greece and Russia.

“It is a sacred church which has seen many upsets over the centuries: wars, earthquakes, as well as the Israeli siege of 2002, from which you can still see the marks made by bullets, shrapnel and tear gas grenades,” Bandak says.

He was referring to a dramatic incident in which dozens of Palestinian militants pursued by the Israeli army took refuge in the church, trapping scores of clerics and others inside for 39 days before agreeing to give themselves up and be exiled.

“We are here to stay,” Bandak adds with a smile. “It’s as if my family was babysitting the Virgin Mary.”

Fordham University Confers an Honorary Doctorate to Archbishop Anastasios of Albania

Jan 29, 2014

NEW YORK – Fordham University conferred yesterday, January 28, 2014, an honorary doctorate degree of Humane Letters, the highest honor of the University, to His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana, Durrës and All Albania, in an official ceremony at Fordham’s University Church. Following the conferral, His Beatitude delivered the “Orthodoxy in America Lecture” on the topic Sharing the Good News in a Multi-Religious Country: Theological Reflections on Other Religions.

His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana, Durrës and All Albania delivering his address.

(photo © Dimitrios Panagos/GOA)

“Your name suggests, speaks and points to the Resurrection as does your ministry,” said Fr. Joseph M. McShane, S.J., the president of Fordham in his welcoming remarks. Fr. McShane welcomed Archbishop

Anastasios to the Fordham family saying that the University considers itself blessed to be a home for Orthodoxy and have the only Orthodox Studies program in the United States.

His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America offered the invocation, preceded by short introductory remarks in which he acknowledged “the distinct honor for him to welcome as a member of Fordham, his brother hierarch Archbishop Anastasios.”

Dr. Stephen Freedman, the University’s Provost, read the citation recognizing Archbishop Anastasios “as an inspirational leader who is always willing to go where God calls him, as a great contemporary hierarch of the Orthodox Church, an outstanding scholar and a visionary theologian, and his strong support for coexistence with people of all faiths,” noting especially the triumph of resurrecting the Orthodox Church of Albania.

Archbishop Anastasios was accompanied by faculty sponsors, the two co-founders of the Orthodox Christian Studies Center of Fordham, George Demacopoulos who is also the Center’s director and professor of Historical Theology; and Aristotle Papanikolaou, who holds the Archbishop Demetrios Chair in Orthodox Theology and Culture and is a Senior Fellow and Professor of Theology.

President Fr. Joseph M. McShane, S.J. and Nora Ahern Grose, Secretary of Fordham University Board of Trustees conferred the honorary degree to His Beatitude as the faculty and the guests exclaimed ‘Axios,’ the Greek word for “He is worthy.”

The conferral of the Honorary Doctorate, (L to R) Fr. Joseph McShane-President, Stephen Freedman-Provost, Prof. Aristotle Papanikolaou, Prof. George Demacopoulos, Archbishop Anastasios, Archbishop Demetrios and Nora Ahern Grose, Secretary of the Board of Trustees (photo © Dimitrios Panagos/GOA) Archbishop Anastasios, filled with sentiments of gratitude, thanked the University for honoring him and delivered his address recounting his didactic experiences in Albania since 1991 when he was first appointed Patriarchal Exarch. He explained the approach he employed in reviving the Orthodox Church there and in sharing the Good News of the Gospel. In the second part of his address, His Beatitude analyzed what he said were three basic notions and concepts in Orthodox Christian Theology: Logos (Word), Agape (Love) and Fos (Light). The ceremony and lecture were well attended by Fordham’s Trustees and officials, members of the Faculty and the student body, dignitaries and many clergy and faithful. A reception followed, and the University hosted a dinner to honor their speaker and honoree.

PRAY FOR THE UNITY OF THE APOSTOLIC CHURCHES!