

light of the east



NEWSLETTER OF THE YOUNGSTOWN-WARREN CHAPTER OF THE SOCIETY OF SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

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FROM THE EDITOR...

Dear Members and Friends, The next regular meeting of our chapter will be Tuesday, March 10, 7pm at St. Brendan Catholic Church 2800 Oakwood Ave. Youngtown 44509. Our speaker will be Father Camillus O. Njoku. Father has a Ph.D. in systematic theology from Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He has several publications including a book chapter in *Against All Odds: The Igbo Experience in Postcolonial Nigeria*, ed. Apollos Nwauwa and Chima Korieh (NJ: Goldline & Jacobs, 2010) and in *Translating Religion*, ed. Mary Doak and Anita Houck (NY: Orbis Books, 2013). Fr. Camillus currently serves as Parochial Vicar at Holy Redeemer Parish in Ellwood City, in the Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh. His topic will be "Dialogue Between Gregory Palamas and Thomas Aquinas."

Chapter dues 2015 paid

Demiduk, Fr. Conoboy, Fr. Rohan, Br. Calabro, Br. Scalise, Sleever, Tavolaro, Billcheck, Sarantopoulos, Limbert, Fr. Gage, Carchedi, Fr. Hilinski, Joan Binsley, Jenna Binsley, Fr. Schmidt, Chorbishop Kail, Msgr. Spinosa, Fr. Bleahu, Jim Dershaw, Esther Dershaw, Beri Berardi, Chris Berardi, Kolitsos, Basista, Jacquet, Borak, Msgr. Siffrin, Fr.



Manning, Fr. Feicht, Fr. Witmer, Mattiussi, Fr. Rudjak, Perantinides, Benedictine Sisters.

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.

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

Ioannis of Pergamon: The meeting at the Phanar took place in “anticipation” of full communion



(©LAPRESSE) FRANCIS AND
BARTHOLOMEW'S JOINT
DECLARATION

*The Orthodox Metropolitan theologian talks
about how theology has divided the Church.
Now it must help overcome the obstacles that
are standing in the way of full communion
between catholic and Orthodox faithful*

GIANNI VALENTE
<http://vaticaninsider.lastampa.it/> 2/ 9/2014
ROME

Pope Francis has publicly referred to him as the greatest Christian theologian around. But Joseph Ratzinger also held him in high regard when he was Pope. The Metropolitan of Pergamon, Ioannis Zizioulas, previously a member of the Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, attended the Divine Liturgy for the Feast of St. Andrews alongside Pope Francis and the Cardinal Secretary of State, Pietro Parolin, on Sunday 30 November. Under the

vaults of the Patriarchal Church of St. George in the Phanar on the Golden Horn, Metropolitan Ioannis – who co-chairs the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue Between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church – was also struck by the words the Bishop of Rome pronounced at the time. Particularly when the Pope said that in the context of the efforts being made to achieve full unity between Catholic and Orthodox Christians, the Catholic Church "does not intend to impose any conditions except that of the shared profession of faith".

Those were powerful words the Pope pronounced at the Phanar Your Eminence.

Coming from a Pope, those words are very powerful indeed and represent a big step forward, which the Orthodox will appreciate. Because for many centuries, the Orthodox believed that the Pope wanted to subjugate them. And now we see this is not in any way true. The emphasis he placed on professing and sharing the same faith is also important. Professing the same faith is the only basis of our unity. The question is recognising what that same faith is; we need to profess this faith together in order for us to be in full communion.

Which criterion should be followed?

For us members of the orthodox Church, the common faith that makes full communion possible is the one professed in the 7 Ecumenical Councils of the first millennium. We need to clarify, from a Catholic point of view, whether a common faith that allows for sacramental communion should also include certain doctrines and dogmatic definitions which were established unilaterally by the Catholic Church. This point needs to be clarified in order to determine what concrete consequences may derive from the Pope's words at the Phanar.

Is this clarification also to do with the Pope's role and his ministry?

Of course. If the reference criterion being looked at were the shared understanding of the role of the Bishop of Rome which prevailed in the first millennium, then there would be no problem. We know that in the second millennium, different conceptions (Continue next page)

of the papacy emerged. And this issue has been at the centre of the Commission for Theological Dialogue Between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches' work for years. In the first millennium, the question surrounding the primacy of the Bishop of Rome was not about him not being recognised as an individual, but as the head of his Church. When we speak about primacy, we refer to the primacy of Roman Catholic Church, which is exercised by the Pope, who is Bishop of that see.

Is Christian unity only of interest to Christians?

In the speech he gave at the end of the liturgy for the Feast of St. Andrews, Patriarch Bartholomew reiterated that the Church does not exist for itself but for the whole world. For the salvation of men and women who live in the world. Unity also helps give a stronger common testimony in the face of the problems that afflict the world and society today. Environmental problems, for example, or problems linked to the protection of creation. This is another important message that came through from the Pope's visit to the Phanar.

Some say Christians should work together on concrete issues, leaving aside their attempts to mend theological and sacramental divisions. What do you think?

We tend to distinguish between co-operation and aspirations of unity. I believe "collaboration" is not enough. Our greatest wish is to achieve full communion in the Eucharist and across the Church's structures. This is not yet possible. But it is still something we cannot forget or put aside.

The Ecumenical Patriarch said that Pope Francis has reignited hope among Orthodox faithful by assuring that the Churches will return to full communion during his.

The current Pope has given some very important signs that give us the hope that quick progress will be made in achieving full communion. The way in which he is carrying out his ministry removes the many apprehensions and fears of the past. With the current Bishop of Rome we are seeing a ministry of charity and service. And this really is a big step forward. Furthermore, in

some parts of the world like the Middle East, Christians are suffering and their persecutors do not stop to ask them whether they are Catholic or Orthodox. All that matters is that they are Christian. This means that from the outside, we are seen as one family, the divisions we sometimes seem to have grown used to, are of no consequence. This also suggests that whether we like it or not, with this Pope and under the current circumstances, so many opportunities are presenting themselves from an ecumenical point of view.

On the way back from Istanbul, Pope Francis quoted Patriarch Athenagoras who suggested that to make progress on the path toward full unity, all theologians needed to be left on an island to discuss, while the Churches went on with their work. "If we wait for theologians to reach an agreement," the Pope said, "that day will never come!"

Yes, this may be true. But at the same time, history tells us that theology has divided the Church. So now, theology must help remedy and unite the Church. We cannot ignore the theological disagreements that have caused division in the Church.

Will the pan-Orthodox Synod due to take place in 2016 deal with the question of unity with the Catholic Church?

Perhaps, but only in broad terms. It could be the right time to take stock of the big steps forward that have been made. But I do not think we will see anything more than this. The focus will be mainly on existing problems in the Orthodox world.

The latest theological discussions between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches have not yielded many results, particularly due to the divisions that have emerged between the Orthodox Churches. How do you explain his?

It is important for the Orthodox Churches to be united. Unfortunately I see some Orthodox adopting the old attitudes of hostility toward the Catholic Church and toward the papacy. And this certainly does not make the situation any easier.

Liturgical Reform, Human and Divine

SEP12 <http://www.praytellblog.com/>

Posted by Nicholas Denysenko

I'm working on a book on liturgical reform in the Orthodox Church, in dialogue with Vatican II. Among Orthodox, there is a perception that Vatican II unleashed an avalanche of innovation in the implementation of liturgical reform with the promulgation of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the Missal of Paul VI, and the restoration of the RCIA. The prevailing perception is in desperate need of scholarly treatment, which is one of my many tasks in developing this monograph. Unfortunately, the perception of Vatican II's reforms is also quite negative. Those familiar with the essays of Alexander Schmemmann likely paused at his tepid responses to liturgical reform and refusal to proclaim the Orthodox Church ready for such a reform. A more recent and equally prestigious Orthodox scholar, Ioannis Fountoulis, also depicts the post-Vatican II liturgical reforms as models to be avoided by Orthodox. My own sense is that many Orthodox theologians have not read the primary documents on Catholic reform with sufficient care and have consequently rushed to judgment. Perhaps their perceptions of Catholic liturgical reform would differ if they were present with us today.

How do Orthodox theologians approach liturgical reform? I've been reading a diverse collection of articles on liturgical and ecclesial reform by Greek and Russian theologians, ranging from the late-nineteenth through the twenty-first centuries. The proposals for liturgical reform are plurivocal and are responding to diagnoses of problems in the Church. On the one hand, theologians recognize the inseparability of liturgy and ecclesiology in thinking that liturgical reform has the capacity to reinvigorate ecclesial participation. I'm guessing this sounds familiar to the Catholic reader. On the other hand, theologians are equally fearful of reform, concerned that a haphazard reform of

the liturgy will foment schism and decline. Again, this sentiment probably sounds familiar.

One of the theologians I have been reading is Metropolitan Antonii Krapovitskii, who was a proponent of restoring the Patriarchate of Moscow in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the Church leader who established the Russian Church Abroad after the October Revolution. The Russian Church deliberated the question of liturgical reform at some length in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and Metropolitan Antonii consistently questioned the need for liturgical reform. In an article on the possibility of removing or lowering the iconostasis of the Church for the purpose of providing the laity with greater visual access to the sanctuary, presumably enhancing their participation, Metropolitan Antonii responded that such an action would tempt the presider to shift his focus from praying to God to offering an aesthetically pleasing ritual performance for the people. After blaming Protestants and Catholics for creating this phenomenon of pleasing the people in liturgy, he stated that the current liturgy offered everything an Orthodox believer needs for salvation.

I suspect that such an argument might sound familiar to readers of *Pray, Tell*, but I ask you to consider this: does Metropolitan Antonii offer us material for reflection? Is liturgical reform a divine act, an outpouring of the Spirit that vivifies the body of Christ? Is liturgical reform a creation of elite liturgists and artists deigned to glorify God? Is it some combination of these, or perhaps a distortion, where innovators propose actions to glorify themselves?

History teaches us that some of the most resilient and beautiful liturgical traditions emerged in the aftermath of catastrophe. Robert Taft's scholarship on liturgical history refers to two central points in the composition of Byzantine hymnography: the recovery of Palestinian monastic life after the Arab invasions of 638 CE and the importation of hymnographers into the Constantinopolitan Studite monasteries to enrich their liturgical life during the city's (Continue next page)

adjustments to the iconoclastic controversy in the eighth and ninth centuries. These reforms occurred in an environment of adjustment to societal turbulence, and hymnography eventually became one of the chief fixtures of the Byzantine rite, admired and praised for its theological texture almost universally. In retrospect, these reforms are gifts from God, the Church's response to God's initiative in the Spirit. But it is very convenient to arrive at such a conclusion some 1,300 years later, when the one thing one can count on experiencing in a given Byzantine rite Church is the singing of numerous hymns. Our perception of these reforms today might well differ from those views held at the time of the reforms.

The challenges confronting the contemporary Church are well-known. Scandals, war, poverty, poor leadership, and the growing phenomenon of addiction challenge pastors in every corner of the globe. The time for responding with creativity is at hand: implementation of liturgical reform has the capacity to form Christians who can remain faithful as they negotiate these times of troubles. My recent reading has taught me that Christians are obliged to treat the liturgy with great care, so that each instance of change, reform, or fine-tuning is for the glory of God. Certainly, no one will refute this statement. The task of discerning whether or not a proposal for liturgy will do what we hope it does—build up Christ's body—requires care, humility, prayer, and fasting. That said, I also believe that the Lord is inviting us to act, to respond with a Spirit-laden creativity in the liturgy God gives us. However we respond, whether through new reforms or by faithfulness within our current traditions, we must respond to the divine invitation. If the work we do in creating initiatives for liturgical reform occurs in response to the outpouring of the Spirit, we can hope that the ultimate perception of our work will occur in a spirit of thanksgiving, received by future generations as a product of creative fidelity.

PRAY FOR UNITY!

Constantinian Christianity



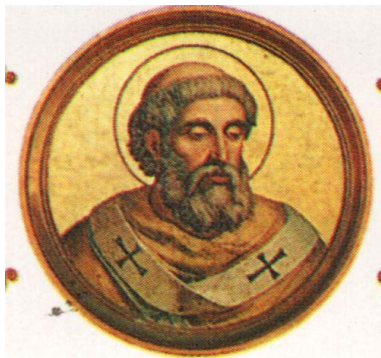
source: fineartamerica.com

Popular now among Catholics, Schmemmann-derived Orthodox, and various stripes of protestants is the narrative that Constantine corrupted Christianity by bringing about its legality and the official juridical preference given to it by his successors. Malachi Martin promoted this telling in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Church* as did Alexander Schmemmann in his *Church, World, Mission*. A complimentary narrative purports that the schism between Rome and Constantinople occurred in 1054, was solidified in 1204, and was the consequence of papal ambition. There is some truth to the last part of the second story, but it wholly misses the point. The un-caused cause of the schism is Constantine, who created "Byzantine" Christianity.

He is called "St. Constantine, equal to the Apostles" in the Greek liturgy—"equal" in his influence in spreading Christianity and in no other way whatsoever. Emperor Constantine was accorded by Russell Kirk the same appellation Edmund Burke gave Oliver Cromwell: "a great bad man." After the miraculous apparition prior to the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, Constantine found himself the ruler of a war torn empire stirred by the upstart (Continue next page)

Catholic faith. Constantine presided at the Council of Nicaea, partially to resolve a theological dispute which caused angst within the large Christian community and partially to baptize Christianity into the reformed and Hellenized Roman Empire.

In the years following Nicaea the bishop of Constantinople, formerly a minor bishopric of little prestige (antipodal to Jerusalem, a prestigious bishopric of no political importance) exercised greater and greater authority within the Eastern Roman Empire. The fourth ecumenical council, held at Chalcedon, effectively pushed out of the Church Coptic Christians who were duped by the heresiarch Eutyches. The same council promoted the bishop of Constantinople to Patriarch, second only to the Apostolic See of Rome. This promotion bypassed the eminence of the Petrine see of Antioch and the newly-alienated see of Alexandria in favor of political expediency. Slowly the Christianity at Constantinople became separated from Roman Christianity. By the time of the iconoclast controversy, we could say that there was such a thing as Byzantine Christianity, supported by the state and defined both by its Platonic language, its liturgy, and its prominence in conciliar decisions.



90 - St. GREGORY III

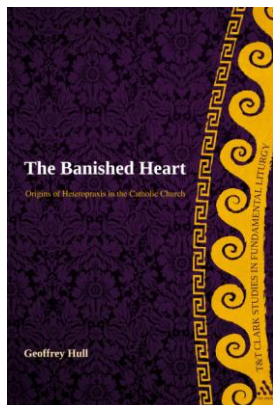
strongest point of the popes during the period of Byzantine domination of theology is that they themselves contributed next to nothing. The popes of the first millennium, in stark contrast to the 20th century popes, were distinctly allergic to any kind of renovation, innovation, or evolution of the faith whatsoever. The papal reaction to the iconoclast dispute exemplifies this. While the Byzantines fought in the streets

All this time the popes sat in Rome doing exactly what they should have done, absolutely nothing. Fr. Hunwicke once said it best: the

over proactive veneration of icons against the imperials who want them erased from the churches altogether, Pope Gregory III condemned iconoclasm and at the same time suggested a pastoral resolution, to put icons on the walls and ceilings of churches where veneration would not become an issue. After Greek control of the papacy detumesced and the Western Roman Empire fell apart, the Bishops of Rome and their Greek counterparts found themselves presiding over two increasingly distance parts of the universal Church.

The schism, contrary to popular opinion, did not happen in 1054. It did not happen in 1204 either. 1054 was not a breach between Rome and the rest of Christianity, which had long ago itself been separated from the former-Byzantine Empire. 1054 marked the culmination of a bickering match between Rome and Constantinople that began with the creation of a uniquely Byzantine Church, which was nurtured by the Photian affair and the triumph over the iconoclasts, and which was brought to a head by the re-assertion of Papal power. For the two previously centuries the popes had been a remarkably bad bunch (philanderers, simonists, murders, and the occasional heretic). Meanwhile the various patriarchates became accustomed to operating without the popes and their judgments. One could say Papal power was stronger in the 5th century than in the 10th. The all-time nadir of the Papacy came during the reign of Benedict IX, who bought and sold the papacy to marry a woman, held the Petrine chair thrice, and raised an army to dispute his uncle for the Roman see. After such a soap opera, the re-assertion of papal primacy under Leo IX, Gregory VII, and Urban II seemed absurd to the Byzantine patriarchs, who now presided over a tradition separate from that of Rome. A rift that had been taking root for centuries flowered with the dispute between Cardinal Humbert and Archbishop Michael Cerularius. The Emperor rightly ignored the separation when his kingdom was put at risk. The Crusades created a cultural animosity between the Greeks and Latins that spilled over into religion and in the years after the fall of Constantinople Greek Christians, understandably, looked to blame the Latin Church for its sins in(Continue next page)

meddling with Byzantine affairs. The Pope became the absolute head of all matters in the Latin West and the Greek Patriarch became Vice President of non-Islamic Religions in the Ottoman Empire; many patriarchs, even given their animosity towards the Roman Church, should be admired for their sufferings under the Turks. Individual cases of reunion, like that of the Melkite Church, were often disrupted or brought to naught by Turkish and Constantinopolitan intervention. Moreover, the roles of the Pope as Patriarch of Rome and "head bishop," as Armenian king Vartan II called the Roman bishop, became blurred.

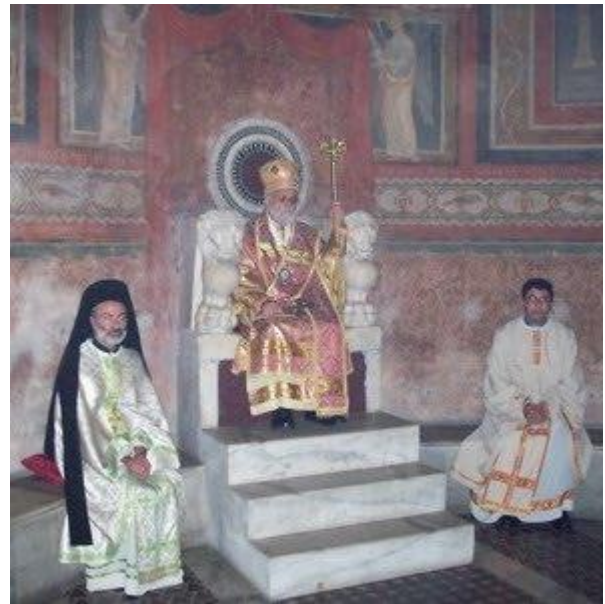


At this point the "Hull thesis" takes over. The Latin Church been self-reflective and encumbered in her own legal system, her own theology, and her own devotions with no external oversight from the other patriarchates as existed centuries earlier. The Roman

objectified theology and turned it into a variation of Greek logic. Conversely, the Greeks began to hold in suspicion things that were not Greek: the Roman Canon, the primacy of the Pope, St. Augustine, and the like. One epigraph in *Banished Heart* referred to the Pope as the "ghost of Caesar." Similarly, historian John Romer called the Orthodox churches the last "relic" of the lost Byzantine Empire. Both statements are exaggerations, but do procure strong elements of truth for modern consideration.

Now the Roman Church is in administrative and bureaucratic shambles; Mass attendance is in the gutter. The Byzantine Orthodox world is *de facto* run by Russian primacy, and Russia is among the most secular countries in the world; Orthodox churches are often strong centers of faith, but just as often seem to function as cultural hubs (Eastern Catholic churches are just as guilty here). The Greeks triumphantly uphold the religion of a defunct world power while the Romans have dismantled their once ubiquitous,

virile praxis. And the Oriental Catholic and Orthodox Churches are forgotten.



Patriarch Gregory III of the Melkite Church

The cultural divide begun by Constantine continues to this day, separating Byzantine Christianity from both Rome and the far East. Coptic Catholics and Orthodox have inter-Communion in Egypt and have for years. The Melkites and their Antiochian Orthodox brethren also have inter-Communion, shared Sacraments, and even shared parishes; they use the Greek liturgy, but have carefully spurned any excessive embrace of non-Arabic culture. The non-Byzantine Eastern Catholics have displayed very little trouble adapting to the teachings of the last millennium without vitiating their own perspectives. Why must the Byzantines be different? Perhaps it is post "Uniate" guilt wrought by de-Latinization, pro-Orthodox ecumenism, and cultural pull. One Slavic Byzantine Catholic said to me "Well, we should all really be Orthodox and would be if not for the Union of Brest." Ignoring the fact that the Union of Brest influenced the Slavic churches and not the north African or far Eastern churches, my mind nearly prompted me to ask "Are you Catholic by birth or by faith?" I held my tongue.(Continue next page)

The healthiest Byzantine Catholic parishes I have seen in the United States have embraced Byzantine spirituality as their future and reeled in the ethnocentrism that once dominated those churches. The Melkites and Ruthenians are doing well enough in the United States while the Ukrainian Catholic Church is struggling (but doing well in missionary areas). Was this not what Alexander Schmemmann wanted his own Russian Orthodox Church to do decades ago? God became Man neither as a Greek, nor Slav, nor Roman, but as Palestinian Jew. Constantine did not intend to drive a wedge between the various parts of Christendom, only to use part of it to strengthen his declining Empire. In that he succeeded. He was not the immediate cause of the East-West Schism, but he is the most necessary one.

This short reflection carefully advocates nothing. The purpose of this post is to summarize why the author believes the seeds of division of Byzantine Christianity (Orthodox and Catholic) from the rest of Apostolic Christendom were planted long before most think. Such a long division brings about many questions. Answers will not be found with the Moscow Patriarchate, the Congregation for Oriental Churches, or weekend conferences in Ravenna. They will only be found at the ground level.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 08, 2015
A Maronite Ordination in Portland, Oregon

GREGORYDIPIPPOHTTP://WWW.NEWLITURGICALMOVEMENT.ORG/

On Saturday, December 27, 2014, His Excellency A. Elias Zaidan, bishop of the [Maronite Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles](#), ordained Abouna Anthony



Joseph Alles to the priesthood at Holy Rosary Church, the parish of the Dominican Friars in Portland, Oregon. Abouna Anthony Joseph is a [Maronite Monk of Jesus, Mary and Joseph](#). His Grace Alexander K. Sample, Archbishop of Portland, and His Excellency Liam Cary, Bishop of Baker, Oregon, were in attendance. Many Maronite, Byzantine and Latin Rite Catholics — clergy, religious and lay faithful — were also present for this first Maronite priestly ordination to take place in the Pacific Northwest.

Coptic patriarch renews call for common Easter date

[Catholic World News](#) - November 10, 2014

The head of the Coptic Orthodox Church has renewed his call for a common date among all Christians for the celebration of Easter. Patriarch Tawadros II made his remarks in Vienna on November 9, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the ecumenical organization Pro Oriente, according to a Fides report. Eastern churches tend to use the Julian calendar in calculating the date of Easter, while the Roman Rite makes use of the Gregorian calendar.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 20, 2015
The Pope Creates a New *Sui Juris* Church in Eritrea

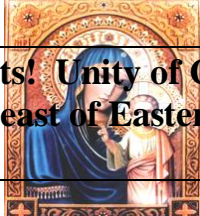
GREGORY DIPIPPO

It was [announced yesterday on the Bulletin of the Holy See](#) that the Holy Father has erected the Eritrean Catholic Church to *sui juris* status as a Metropolitan Church, separating its territory from that of the Archeparchy of Addis Ababa (the capital of Ethiopia). The 23rd *sui juris* Church, which follows the Alexandrian liturgical tradition, will comprise four eparchies, covering the entire territory of the nation of Eritrea: the Archeparchy of Asmara, seat of the new Metropolitan and the national capital, and the Eparchies of (Continue next page)

Barentu, Keren and Segheneity. The Pope has nominated as the first Metropolitan His Excellency Mons. Menghsteab Tesfamariam, who has served hitherto as the Eparch of Asmara. In 1995, the Latin Rite Apostolic Vicariate of Eritrea was abolished, and so the Latin Rite Catholics of Eritrea are also under the spiritual jurisdiction of the new Metropolitan and his suffragans. The Pope has also created a fourth eparchy of the Ethiopian Catholic Church, that of Bahir Dar - Dessie, the territory of which is also removed from the Archeparchy of Addis Ababa.

PRAYER OF SOUFANIEH

**Unity of Hearts! Unity of Christians!
Unity of the Feast of Easter!**



BRING A FRIEND TO OUR MEETING!

“Do you think that the angels in heaven talk over and ask each other questions about the divine essence?”

Posted on [28 January 2013](#) by [Fr Aidan Kimel](#)

Let us now mount up to the heavens and see if there are those on high who know what God is in his essence. But even if there are in heaven beings possessed of this knowledge, we must realize that they will have nothing in common with us. For the distance which separates men from angels is a great one, and this gives us the best of reasons for trying to find out if the angels do have such knowledge. Let us, therefore, listen to the angels so that you may know—and know

abundantly—that, not even in heaven, does any created power know God in his essence.

What, then, do you think? Do you think that the angels in heaven talk over and ask each other questions about the divine essence? By no means! What are the angels doing? They give glory to God, they adore him, they chant without ceasing their triumphal and mystical hymns with a deep feeling of religious awe. Some sing: “Glory to God in the highest”; the seraphim chant: “Holy, holy, holy,” and they turn away their eyes because they cannot endure God’s presence as he comes down to adapt himself to them in condescension. And the cherubim sing: “Blessed be his glory from this place,” not that God is surrounded by a place—heaven forbid!—but they are speaking after the fashion of men, just as if they were to say: “wherever he is,” or, “in whatever way he is,”—if indeed, it is safe to speak in this way about God. For our tongues speak with the words of men.

Did you see how great is the holy dread in heaven and how great the arrogant presumption here below? The angels in heaven give him glory; these heretics on earth carry on meddlesome investigations. In heaven they honor and praise him; on earth we find curious busybodies. In heaven they veil their eyes; on earth the busybodies are obstinate and shamelessly try to hold their eyes fixed on his ineffable glory. Who would not groan, who would not weep for them because of this ultimate madness and folly of theirs?



St John Chrysostom, *On the Incomprehensible Nature of God* 1.35-36.

SUPPORT US BY JOINING OUR CHAPTER

Chaldeans' order for priest to return to Iraq prompts rift in church



Father Noel Gorgis at St. Paul Assyrian Chaldean Catholic Church in North Hollywood in 2005. (Brian Vander Brug, Los Angeles Times)
By **TONY PERRY** *contact the reporter*

A priest is ordered back to Iraq, but some fear he'll be one of those Christians slaughtered

Speaking in Aramaic, Father Noel Gorgis is preaching to parishioners of St. Peter Chaldean Catholic Church at a Saturday night Mass. Older parishioners are pleased that Gorgis celebrates Mass — and hears confessions — in Arabic and Aramaic, the ancient language of the Chaldean people. Younger parishioners appreciate Gorgis' use of websites and live-streaming.

In his four years at St. Peter, the soft-spoken Gorgis, a naturalized U.S. citizen, has become a popular figure among the faithful, many of whom, like their priest, are immigrants from Iraq.

But the 48-year-old priest's days at St. Peter may be dwindling. The violence that once forced him to flee his native land may now force him to return, to the dismay of parishioners.

The Chaldean patriarch, the Iraq-based church's

top official, has ordered Gorgis and several other priests to return to Iraq to stand beside the church in its hour of maximum peril. Islamic radicals are ravaging much of the country, destroying churches and killing Christians. Since October, Patriarch Louis Sako has repeatedly said that Chaldean priests who did not seek church permission to leave must return to Iraq. To remain abroad is to put personal safety above the needs of the church and violate the sacred oath of a priest, Sako has told Aleteia, a Rome-based Catholic news agency.

Fareed Saka, 39, a church deacon who came to El Cajon in 2010 after serving as a translator in Iraq for the U.S. Army, has no doubt what awaits Gorgis in Iraq: "He'll be killed in a day or two, kidnapped maybe."

The dispute has led to a rift between the patriarch and Bishop Sarhad Yawsip Jammo of the San Diego-based Chaldean diocese, and between the patriarch and the Vatican. The bishop wants Gorgis to stay in El Cajon and has endorsed his defiance of the patriarch.

"The patriarch talks about keeping Chaldean culture alive in Iraq," said church member Allen Theweny, 22, a UC San Diego student. "But what about here? This is our Babylon."

The Chaldean Catholic Church shares the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church and considers itself "in full communion" with the Vatican. But for complex historical reasons, the governance of the Chaldean church is largely separate from Rome, and the relationship between the two is dotted with disputes over authority.

As Iraqis — Christians and Muslims — have fled their homeland to escape Saddam Hussein and then the sectarian war that followed his overthrow, El Cajon has been one of the most popular locations for the immigrants. Like many immigrant Iraqis, Gorgis' life has been shaped by war and tyranny. He was born in a village in northern Iraq, the son of a farmer. His religious studies were interrupted when he was drafted into the army during the Iran-Iraq war.

A returning priest from the United States would be a very high-value target for the radicals.-

Rep. Juan Vargas, D-San Diego

After serving in the army, he fled Iraq for Turkey at the time (Continue next page)

of the Gulf War. In 1992, he was admitted into the U.S. as a refugee and came to El Cajon. The Chaldean church helped support him.

The church sent him to parishes in Chicago and Arizona and in 2002, to St. Paul Assyrian Chaldean Catholic Church in North Hollywood. In 2011, he was assigned to El Cajon, where two Chaldean churches, St. Peter and St. Michael, minister to about 3,000 families.

When the U.S. moved in 2003 to depose Hussein, Gorgis was quick to call the move not an invasion but a liberation. "I am an American, 100%," he said recently. At St. Peter, Gorgis assists in the English-language Masses and is a frequent choice of young couples to perform marriage ceremonies. He co-signs for immigrants who need housing but lack credit. "The community needs him," said Saka, the deacon. A

Vatican official, responding to a plea from parishioners at St. Peter, attempted early last month to quash the patriarch's order that Gorgis must return or face excommunication. The patriarch responded in a written statement that although the Chaldean church reveres the pope as the father of all Christians, issues of Chaldean personnel management are not in the Vatican's province. In 2010, Pope Benedict called a gathering of Middle Eastern bishops to discuss, among other issues, the inherent tension in the relationship between the Vatican and other Catholic churches. Two years later he issued what is called an "exhortation." But the 90-page document did not sufficiently clarify the authority issue, scholars say.

"In principle, the pope is not in a position to dictate to the Chaldean church," said Edward Watts, history professor at UC San Diego, an expert in late antiquity and early Christianity. Sako has sought to have Pope Francis come to Iraq and bring worldwide attention to the plight of Christians. "The whole world must rebel against these abominable acts," Sako said. Islamic radicals have taken control of Mosul, Iraq's second largest city, where Sako was the bishop before becoming patriarch in 2013. Churches are being desecrated and Christian homes and businesses destroyed.

Iraq once had an estimated 1.3 million Christians. That number is down to several hundred thousand, perhaps half of whom live in

the relative safety of Baghdad. The patriarch and other Chaldean leaders are in Irbil, the capital of Kurdistan, which is protected by Kurdish forces and U.S. and coalition air power.

Conflicting rumors suggest different resolutions to the issue of the priests: One says the patriarch will up the ante and remove the San Diego bishop; another says the pope will use his moral authority to persuade the patriarch to back off. Each side seems to expect a resolution soon, perhaps this month.

Bishop Jammo declined to be interviewed or to allow Gorgis or other priests at St. Peter to be interviewed.

Pope Francis has not made his views known. The letter attempting to overturn Sako's order was written by a cardinal.

In a trip to Iraq, Rep. Juan Vargas (D-San Diego) talked to Chaldean leaders in Irbil about Gorgis, although not to the patriarch. "A returning priest from the United States would be a very high-value target for the radicals," Vargas said.

Mark Arabo, a leader in San Diego County's Chaldean business community, has made several trips to Washington to urge the White House to help Christians in Iraq. He hopes that Gorgis can remain in El Cajon and that the dispute will not cause a permanent split with the patriarch.

"If we are to continue any efforts at saving people in Iraq, we must have the support and collaborative input of our patriarch," he said. The dispute between El Cajon and Irbil involves a question of what it means to be a Catholic, said Rebecca Moore, professor of religious studies at San Diego State.

"The issue is: Where is your loyalty? Is it to your own self or to the church of Jesus Christ?" Moore said. From that perspective, Sako may someday be seen as a Catholic hero for fighting the Islamic State radicals, she said.

But to the parishioners of St. Peter, the issue of Father Noel is practical, not theological.

"We are praying every day for him," said Beth Younan, 54, who was born in Kirkuk, Iraq, and is now a member of the parish council at St. Peter. "We know that prayer can do miracles."

Oriental Orthodox and Catholics work to conclude joint document



A woman prays at an Armenian Orthodox church in Damascus, Syria - EPA 27/01/2015

(Vatican Radio) Representatives of all the Oriental Orthodox Churches are here in Rome this week for a meeting of their International Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue with the Catholic Church. During the five day encounter, which began on Monday, participants hope to finalise a joint document on Communion and Communication in the first five centuries of Christianity.

The Oriental Orthodox Churches are amongst the most ancient Christian communities in the world, founded according to tradition by the first apostles in Egypt, Armenia, Syria, India and Ethiopia in the decades following Christ's death and Resurrection. They have not been in communion with either the Roman Catholic Church or the Orthodox world since they officially severed ties in the 5th century.

To find out more, Philippa Hitchen spoke with Fr Gabriel Quicke, who's in charge of relations with these Oriental Orthodox Churches at the

Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity....

Fr Gabriel says the new document is significant for Christians today as it highlights the rich heritage the Churches shared in the first five centuries before the divisions took place...

He says the Commission will go on to a new round of discussions on the sacraments, especially the question of Baptism which is still not recognised by some of the Oriental Orthodox Churches...

Fr Gabriel says many of the Oriental Orthodox Church leaders are witnessing an emptying out of their communities because of the lack of security in the Middle East region. He says the solidarity of the Catholic world and the appeals of Pope Francis on behalf of persecuted Christians are very important and much appreciated by the people there.....

Patriarch Kirill Praises Vatican's Balanced Approach to Ukraine Crisis

Expresses Concern Over Greek Catholic Church's Stance in Conflict

Rome, February 04, 2015 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org))

While expressing criticism for the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church's stance in the conflict between Russian-backed rebels and Ukraine, Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia praised the Vatican's "balanced approach toward the Ukrainian crisis."

Interfax news service reported that the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church said that policies pursued by the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church "are causing concern in our relations with the Roman Catholic Church. Patriarch Kirill stated that the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church "pushed for the overthrow of the authorities using nationalistic and often 'Russophobic' slogans as its cover."

However, the Orthodox Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia praised the Holy See's stance for a halt to the conflict(Continue next page)

and appealing for peace on both sides.

"I would like to note with satisfaction that the Holy See itself has always pursued a balanced stance toward the situation in Ukraine and has avoided any lop-sided assessments, but has called for peace talks and an end to armed clashes," he said.

The relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church, he concluded, "demonstrate positive dynamics, primarily thanks to their clear understanding of the need for Orthodox and Catholic believers to act jointly in order to protect traditional Christian values and counter modern challenges such as secularism, discrimination of Christians, family crisis and the dilution of moral principles in private and social life."

Earlier today, Pope Francis renewed his appeal for peace in Ukraine calling for both sides to lay down their arms.

"I think of you, brothers and sisters of Ukraine," he said. "But think about this, this is a war among Christians! You have your Baptism, you are fighting among Christians! Think about this, this scandal! And let us pray so that prayer may be our protest in front of God in times of war."

11 December 2014

<http://liturgicalnotes.blogspot.co.uk/>

Papa Coggan?

At a time when B Paul VI was dying, in 1977, Archbishop Donald Coggan made an official visit to Rome. Coggan, it seems, was in an emotional state. He had recently been to Papua New Guinea, where hordes of Catholics had received Communion at his hands, and the local Catholic Bishop, in floods of tears, had embraced him afterwards and said "It will be even better next time you come".

So, preaching in Rome, Coggan called, in effect, for 'Intercommunion' *now*. He did so as a good, deeply sincere and well-meaning Christian, of very Protestant origins, who had moved a great distance from his background. He simply did not realise how his peremptory, even if praiseworthy, call would be received. Perhaps he thought that *this* was the moment to cut through Gordian knots; a moment of Grace when a heart-

felt call could move a 400 year old log-jam. *Perhaps he believed in a God of Surprises!* I thought of Coggan as I watched those clips of Pope Francis seeking a blessing from the Ecumenical Patriarch, 'both for himself and for the Church of Rome'. Here was another good, deeply sincere and well-meaning Christian who was trying to make a dynamic gesture for that most worthy of causes, the Unity of God's people. My assumption is that he meant his request as a *captatio benevolentiae*: behold, the Successor of S Peter bows himself down to receive the blessing of another ... does not the Letter to the Hebrews make clear that the lesser is blessed by the greater? Had not his chum and 'fellow-bishop' Justin Welby been dead chuffed when *he* had been asked to bless the Bishop of Rome?

I do not think that this move had been checked out with His All-Holiness beforehand; the Patriarch's action of smiling and kissing the Pope's skull cap looked for all the world like the kindly, indulgent gesture of a wise parent whose impetuously unrealistic child had suddenly asked for a space-rocket in which to go to Pluto and back before nursery school tomorrow morning.

Why is this a tricky area?

There are sections of Orthodoxy which do not approve of gestural politics implying that Jorge Bergoglio *is*, for Orthodox, the canonical Bishop of Rome. Holding to their belief that Orthodoxy *is* the One (and only) Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, they neither understand nor sympathise with the whole ecumenical project. Some of them baptise converts from the Latin Church and even do this to former non-Orthodox who have already been received into another Orthodox jurisdiction by the *sphragis*. I wonder if the Experts of the Pontifical Council are keeping the Pope briefed on the progress of the petition which is at this moment collecting signatures from Greek clergy and academics who violently disagree with what *did* go on last month in the Phanar ... a document which has already secured the signatures of several metropolitans of the Church of Greece, and which raises the question of removing the name of Patriarch Bartholomew from the diptychs. Since a number of Greek bishoprics are still under the Patriarch(Continue next page)

and are not technically part of the Autocephalous Church of Greece, this could even involve contentious feelings among Orthodox Christians within Greece. One of these bishoprics is that of the Holy Mountain. So, officially blessing the 'Church of Rome' (whether that means the Diocese of Rome or, by synecdoche, the whole 'Papic Church', is not very important) is an act about which any Ecumenical Patriarch might well wish to think extremely carefully. Francis probably intended his request to be seen as yet another example of his far-famed 'humility' without realising that there are Orthodox who would understand it as an aggressive and cunning plot to secure validation for the *hairesis papike*.

If the Holy Father did this without seeking professional advice from his ecumenical advisers in the PCCU, then I think that there ought to be *someone* in Rome with the guts to explain quietly to him, man to man, a few of the ecumenical complexities. Folks report that nobody says or does much in Rome these days because, if they are deemed to have put a foot wrong, they might find themselves in uncomfortable disfavour. When a game of musical chairs is going on among the Heads of Dicasteries, this may be an even more nervous time than usual. Fair enough. But is there *nobody*, apart from Burke, big enough to put the interests of the Church before their curial careers by making an individual approach to the Holy Father?

If, on the other hand, the Sovereign Pontiff *had* taken advice, *and* been given the OK, then I think some more curial heads, this time in the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity, ought to roll.

Psalm 132

Behold how good and how pleasant it is
for brethren to dwell in unity.
Like the precious ointment on the head,
that ran down upon the beard, the beard of
Aaron,
Which ran down to the skirt of his garment:
As the dew of Hermon, which descendeth upon
mount Sion.
For there the Lord hath commandeth blessing,
and life for evermore.

(SSJC Chapter Member is Chair) Priest group asks US bishops to 'start the dialogue' on married clergy

Brian Roewe | Feb. 3, 2015

<http://ncronline.org/>

Editor's Note: *This story was updated at 3:55 p.m., central, with comments from Fr. Bob Bonnot, chair of the Association of U.S. Catholic Priests.*

A group representing approximately 1,000 U.S. Catholic priests has asked their bishops "to start the dialogue" toward the ordination of married men to the priesthood.

In letters mailed Jan. 23 to all members of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Association of U.S. Catholic Priests said they made the request primarily with concern for "the pastoral care of souls," and that married priests are needed "to serve the pastoral needs of the people."

"The time has come. The door is open. The need for this is urgent," the priests said.

The letter is signed by 12 members of the priest association's leadership and staff, representing nine dioceses and one religious order; its executive secretary Franciscan Sr. Jackie Fr. Bob Bonnot, a priest in the Youngstown, Ohio, diocese and chair of the priests' association, told *NCR* that to his knowledge there has not been a response so far from the bishops' conference or individual bishops. He said they are not asking the bishops to respond to them, but to take up the issue among themselves. He added that the association has encouraged its members, where appropriate, to discuss the issue of married priests with their individual bishops.

"This might be an issue that priests in some situations would say, 'Bishop, we think you ought to be thinking about this.' It's up to them to make that decision," Bonnot said.

(Continue next page)

Among the reasons the priests cited in their letter for beginning the conversation:

- the Roman Catholic church's inclusion of ordained married clergy from other Christian denominations, such as the Anglican church;
- calls from the laity for a discussion of married priests;
- the continued declining number of active priests -- and resultant parish closures;
- and the spiritual, mental and physical health of current priests, particularly those experiencing "an increasing and sometimes overwhelming workload."

"The health and vitality of the priest's role within the faith community is critical to the life of the Roman Catholic tradition and its ministry. Given the signs of the times and the diversity and challenges facing the church at this time, the ministerial priesthood needs creative options. The witness that could come from married priests serving the church with celibate priests is a crucial option to be explored," the letter said.

"There are many voices in the church waiting to be heard on this -- including our own," said the priests.

The priests' association based its request of married priests on the belief that Pope Francis is open to the possibility, if brought to him by a national bishops' conference. They referenced an April 2014 interview in an Austrian newspaper in which the pope reportedly told a Brazilian bishop that it was up to regional bishops' conferences to seek and find consensus on church reforms, and then bring them to Rome. According to a report on the interview [by the U.K.-based Tablet](#), Bishop Erwin Kräutler told the *Salzburger Nachrichten* that in a conversation about a shortage of priests in his Xingu diocese, Francis expressed open-mindedness to finding solutions.

"The Pope explained that he could not take everything in hand personally from Rome. We local bishops, who are best acquainted with the needs of our faithful, should be *corajudos*, that is 'courageous' in Spanish, and make concrete suggestions," the bishop said, according to the *Tablet*.

Kräutler confirmed that he and the pope

discussed the ordination of *virii probati* ("proven married men") into the priesthood. "It was up to the bishops to make suggestions, the Pope said again," the bishop said.

In their letter, the U.S. priest association asked their bishops to "accept the offer of Pope Francis to consider the possibility of ordaining married *virii probati* as priests." They requested the bishops begin a broad consultation process that would seek input from diocesan staffs, parish priests, deacons and the laity. Bonnot told *NCR* that at this point the association does not have additional actions planned, and that it will give the issue "time to brew."

The request to review the possibility of married priests was among eight resolutions the Association of U.S. Catholic Priests considered [at its third annual assembly](#), held in St. Louis in June. The group, largely composed of Vatican II-era priests, formed in August 2011 as a support network for priests and to allow for them to speak in a unified voice.

"We're trying to be a voice of joy and hope in our pilgrim church and that we think that expressing the views of priests with regard to issues such as this is something we hope is a positive contribution to the life of the church in this exciting time," Bonnot said.

SSPXnews & events

Who is Cardinal Brandmuller?

January 14, 2015

[District of Canada](#)



<http://spx.ca/en/who-is-cardinal-brandmuller> (Continue next page)

The Visitation of Cardinal Brandmuller has begun ...

... but the question remains for many: Who is Cardinal Brandmuller?

On September 23, Bishop Fellay met with Cardinal Mueller in the Vatican offices of the CDF. The key result of the meeting was the decision to continue discussions in order to 'clarify points of contention that remain' ([DICI](#)). Bishop Fellay later explained that the discussions would be 'continued in a broader, less formal framework than in the previous discussions' ([DICI](#)).

The first set of discussions took place on December 5 at the SSPX Herz Jesu Seminary in Zaitzkofen ([DICI](#)) between Cardinal Brandmuller, Bishop Fellay and several priests of the SSPX. Two more meetings are planned to be held at the SSPX's seminaries in Flavigny (France) and Winona (United States of America).

Who is Cardinal Brandmuller?

Simply put, Cardinal Brandmuller is 85 years old, of German Nationality, was ordained a priest in 1953, consecrated bishop and made cardinal in 2010. His eminence holds a doctorate in history and from 1969 to 1997 was, successively, Professor of Church History & Patrology, Professor of Modern and Medieval Church History (University of Augsburg). He is also an acknowledged specialist on the history of councils and from 1998 to 2009 was the President of the Pontifical Committee for Historical Sciences. ([Wikipedia](#))

What are his thoughts on the work of the SSPX?

What is of greater interest to us are his past and present thoughts on the work of the Society of St. Pius the Tenth and the crisis of the Church of Christ. The key elements of His Eminence's opinion can be summed up in three points:

- SSPX rejects legitimate doctrinal development, but that the vitality of the SSPX forces the Church to prove their protests unfounded. ([CNS](#))
- Novus Ordo Missae is attributable to neither the Council nor its constitution on the liturgy. ([Rorate-Caeli](#))

- Distortions of the Conciliar Teachings are perhaps due to a false concept of what is the Church and the documents of the Second Vatican Council have yet to be fully implemented. ([Zenit](#))

In the controversy surrounding the Synod On The Family, his Eminence has supported the teaching of the Church by co-authoring with Cardinals Muller, Burke, De Paolis, and Archbishop Caffarra a book "Remaining in the Truth of Christ". He also has given interviews stating:

- Pastoral work cannot be in contradiction with doctrine. ([Lifesitenews](#))
- Only if human nature is changed can the moral doctrine of the Church be changed. ([Catholic World Report](#))

Finally, actions speak louder than words. Cardinal Brandmuller, while not intimately familiar with the SSPX is familiar with "Traditionalists". His eminence has participated in the congress of Una Voce International (FIUV), publicly and solemnly said the Tridentine Mass in St. Peters.

Reading the previous points what conclusions can we draw?

Perhaps the most important aspect is that Cardinal Brandmuller, being retired and unable to vote in the next conclave, has a high degree of independence from the various forces that exist within the circles of the Vatican. This independence, coupled with His Eminence's deep understanding of the history of the Church should serve as a strong foundation for his discussions with and evaluation of the SSPX and its doctrinal positions in the broader context of the life of the Church.

Finally, his Eminence is not hostile to Traditionalists in general and the SSPX in particular. As the SSPX embodies all the key aspects of Traditional Catholicism without compromise, this is yet another opportunity to determine whether the Church is ready to accept Traditional Catholics - as Catholics.