

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, Our next regular meeting of the Youngstown-Warren Chapter of the Society of St. John Chrysostom will be **Tuesday, September 4, at 7 pm. The meeting will be at St. Mary Byzantine Catholic Church, 7782 Glenwood Ave., Boardman, OH 44512, (330)726-8573.** Parish priest, Fr. George D. Gage. Our speaker will be **Fr. Deacon Andrew Rubis of the Albanian Orthodox Church, Diocese of America (Patriarchate of Constantinople).** The topic will be: **The Albanians of the East in the West: A look at the Greek Rite Albanians in Italy and the Orthodox Albanians in North America.**



Born to Albanian Orthodox parents in 1966, baptized and raised at the Albanian Orthodox Church of St. John Chrysostom in Philadelphia, Fr. Dn. earned a B.A. degree from the Johns Hopkins University, served in the U.S. Naval Security Group, worked for Dames & Moore, Inc. as a Security Officer for classified documents and as a researcher, worked for International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC), completed course work toward a Master of Divinity at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, served at the Lutheran Settlement House in Philadelphia, worked as a vocational instructor at Covenant House in Philadelphia, served with COMHAR assisting disabled adults, currently employed with the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) of the U.S. Dept. of Defense .

He served as a tonsured Chanter in the Albanian Orthodox Churches from 1997 until August 2008 when he was ordained to serve as Deacon by His Grace, Ilija (Katre) of the Albanian Orthodox Diocese of America. Married with three children, his family maintains a second residence in Jamestown, NY.+++

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***We are not at peace with others
because we are not at peace with ourselves,
and we are not at peace with ourselves
because we are not at peace with God.***

~ Thomas Merton

Archimandrite Grigorios (Tatsis) Is Nominated By Diocesan Priests As Successor To Metropolitan Nicholas



JOHNSTOWN, PA [Christ The Saviour Cathedral] -- Meeting in Special Assembly today which was presided over by His Eminence, Archbishop Demetrios of America, Diocesan Locum Tenens, the priests of the American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese of the USA

nominated the Very Rev. Archimandrite Grigorios (Tatsis) as successor to His Eminence, Metropolitan Nicholas of Amissos. Having formally designated Archimandrite Grigorios as the nominee, His Eminence, Archbishop Demetrios, as Exarch of the Ecumenical Patriarchate will submit his name to the Holy and Sacred Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate for Canonical Election. Archimandrite Grigorios was born in Charlotte, NC on Dec 7, 1958, with the baptismal name of George, the first of two children of Peter and Antonia Tatsis. He is a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill earning a BA degree in Biology (1981) and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte earning a MS degree in Biology (1989). Working for more than 20 years in the field of Cardiovascular Research at Carolinas Medical Center in Charlotte, NC, he authored/co-authored over one hundred articles, abstracts, and book chapters. A true son of the Church, from his early youth Archimandrite Grigorios served in his home parish of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Charlotte, NC in various capacities including altar server, Sunday School teacher for 13 years and in several leadership positions including Parish Council President. He was also a founding member of St. Nektarios Greek Orthodox Church in Charlotte, NC where he served on the Parish Organizing Committee, as Sunday School teacher for four years, as a member of the choir and as its first parish council president. After taking part in a mission trip to Alaska sponsored by the Orthodox Christian Mission Center, Archimandrite Grigorios felt the calling to pursue his

life-long dream of studying for the Holy Priesthood. Leaving his secular job in early 2003, he entered Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Brookline, MA in the Fall of 2003 and graduated in May of 2006 with the Masters of Divinity degree. Archimandrite Grigorios was ordained a Deacon at St. Nektarios Greek Orthodox Church in Charlotte, NC on November 4, 2006 by His Eminence, Metropolitan Alexios of Atlanta. He was tonsured a Monk at Agia Lavra Monastery in Kalavryta, Greece on January 17, 2007, receiving the name Grigorios with St. Gregory Palamas as his Patron Saint. He was ordained a priest at Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Atlanta, GA on January 28, 2007 also by His Eminence, Metropolitan Alexios of Atlanta and was elevated to the rank of Archimandrite on the same day. On February 1, 2007, he was appointed as the Ierokyriax (Itinerant Preacher) of the Metropolis of Atlanta. On September 14, 2007, he received the offikion (rank) of Confessor at the Archangel Michael Greek Orthodox Chapel in Atlanta, GA. Serving in his role as Itinerant Preacher and Confessor, Archmandrite Grigorios has travelled extensively throughout the Metropolis of Atlanta, where he has led parish retreats, heard confessions and provided spiritual direction to countless numbers of clergy and faithful. Recognizing his affinity for youth ministry and his administrative skills, he was given the responsibility of overseeing all youth programs in the Metropolis of Atlanta. Archimandrite Grigorios also served as the Parish Priest of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Raleigh, NC from December 20, 2010 until May 31, 2011. Since October of 2011, he has served as Dean of the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral in New Orleans, LA, and as Vicar of the Western Conference of the Metropolis of Atlanta.+++

THE FOLLOWING HAVE PAID 2012 CHAPTER DUES: *BERI & CHRIS BERARDI, FR. ROHAN, FR WITMER, MSGR. SPINOSA, CARCHEDI, FR. GAGE, LIMBERT, VASILCHEK, SKURICH, CALABRO, HUDAK, MSGR. MIHALIC, CHORBISHOP KAIL, FR. RUDJAK, FR. GALL, MCGIFFIN, L.DEMIDUK, FR. SCHMIDT, PETER & NORMA KOPKO, FR. DENAS, MATTIUSSI, FR. HILINSKI, ELSEY, STANISLAW, DECKANT, RENDULIC, BENEDICTINE BYZANTINE SISTERS, FR. BONNOT, MSGR. SIFFRIN, DEMOCKO, BILLCHECK, MSGR. APLEYARD, NAKLEY, KATZ, PERANTINIDES, ESTHER & JIM DERSHAW, FR. LAMBERT, S. KOLITSOS, SLEEVEVER, FR. MANNING, REV. RICK, COMICHISTA. PLEASE MAKE A CHECK FOR \$20 (25 FAMILY, 15 STUDENT) PAYABLE TO THE SOCIETY OF ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM AND MAIL TO VITO R. CARCHEDI, 35 SCHENLEY AVE. STRUTHERS, OH 44471. THANK YOU. +++*

Schedule released for Pope's September trip to Lebanon

CWN - July 03, 2012 The Vatican has released the full schedule for the September 14-16 visit by Pope Benedict XVI to Lebanon, where he will release his apostolic exhortation concluding the work of the Synod for the Middle East.

The Holy Father will leave Rome on Friday morning, September 14, for Beirut. Arriving early in the afternoon, he will go to the basilica of St. Paul in Harissa, where he will sign the apostolic exhortation. The papal document will summarize and reflect upon the discussions held by the Synod of Bishops in October 2010. That special meeting of the Synod was dedicated to the challenges facing the Church in the Middle East. On Saturday, September 15, the Pope will pay a courtesy visit to the presidential palace, meet with Islamic leaders, and deliver an address to the country's political and religious leaders. After lunch with members of the Lebanese Catholic hierarchy, he will speak to a gathering of young people at the headquarters of the Maronite Catholic patriarchate in Bkerke. On Sunday, September 16, the Pope will celebrate Mass at a park on the Beirut waterfront, and formally release his apostolic exhortation. After an ecumenical assembly in the afternoon, he will take an evening flight back to Rome. +++

Kyivan Patriarchate Asks Christian World to Condemn Repeated Baptism By Moscow Patriarchate

27 July 2012

http://risu.org.ua/en/index/all_news/orthodox/uoc_kp/49000/

The Holy Synod of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kyivan patriarchate (UOC-KP) issued an [address](#) to the Catholics, Anglicans and to the Primates and the wholeness of the national Orthodox Churches with the request to help stop in Ukraine the practice of “repeated baptism” by the Moscow Patriarchate of persons who already received the sacrament of Baptism in the Kyivan Patriarchate, “which practice is shameful for the whole Christian world,” the website of the [UOC-KP](#) reported. “We understand that recognition of the autocephaly of the Ukrainian Church is a complicated and long process. But already now we,

as well as any conscious Christian, cannot put up with the existing practice of the Moscow Patriarchate to 'baptize' again people who already received baptism in the Church of the Kyivan Patriarchate. For this practice is a gross violation of the instructions of the Holy Scripture and Tradition, disregard for the Creed of Nicea and Constantinople, the dogmas and canons of the Church,” reads the address. “Therefore, we address you primarily with the request to pray to God that He should teach the hierarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate to stop violating the dogmas and canons of Christ’s Church, which recognizes only one baptism for the remission of sins,” states the Synod. “We also ask the Blessed Primates of the National Orthodox Churches and the respected heads of the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England with whom the Orthodox Churches maintain permanent Theological dialogue, if possible, to remind the hierarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate that it is unacceptable to administer the 'second baptism' to those persons who are already baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit according to the Holy Scripture and Tradition. For this practice absolutely contradicts the spirit of the inter-Christian dialogue and is ruining it,” stressed the bishops of the UOC-KP. +++

Russian Orthodox, Polish Catholic leaders push for reconciliation between nations

CWN - July 16, 2012 (edited by LOE)

Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill dedicated a church at the site of the Katyn massacre on July 15, saying that with the acknowledgment of the Soviet execution of thousands of Poles, “finally, the truth prevailed over lies.”

In 1940, on orders approved by Stalin, Soviet troops shot many thousands of unarmed Polish military officers and civilians—the exact number is in dispute—and left them buried in the Katyn Forest. For many years the Soviet government denied the slaughter, but after the fall of the Soviet Union, Russian leaders acknowledged the deaths—while emphasizing that many Russians had died at Katyn as well. +++

PRAY FOR CATHOLIC/ORTHODOX UNITY!

Bishop to tell Copts to immigrate

Connor Molloy / July 30, 2012 /

<http://thedailynewsegypt.com/2012/07/30/bishop-tells-copts-to-immigrate/>

Controversial debates over religious aspects of constitution only further isolate Egypt's Copts

Coptic Christian Bishop Paul of Tanta will tell Copts to leave Egypt if the Church is not guaranteed religious jurisdiction. Bishop Paul, a representative of the Coptic Orthodox Church in the



Constituent Assembly, is also threatening to leave the Assembly if Article II is not modified to his liking. Bishop Paul wants the contentious Article II of the constitution, which deals with the nature of the state as it relates to religious authority and principles, to include text guaranteeing that the Church will be given the mantle of authority for issues concerning Copts. "If this text is not added, I will tell the Copts: There is no longer a place for you in the land of Egypt, because it is not the right of the judiciary to rule on the clergy," the Bishop told Al-Shorouk newspaper. The Bishop's threat to leave Egypt taps into worries within the Coptic community and the country at large that Copts will leave if Egypt becomes more Islamic. Others are arguing that they have already begun to do this.

Dr. Naguib Gabriel, head of the Egyptian Union of Human Rights, has conducted research finding that over one hundred thousand Copts have settled abroad since the revolution. This figure has been widely cited in Christian news outlets.

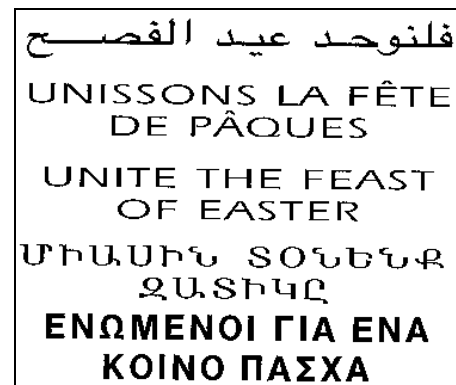
Those numbers, however, may be very difficult to verify, argued Sherief Etman of the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights.

"We don't have numbers like this, because we would need to get this information from the government," Etman said. He added that the government does not like to incite fear and would therefore be reluctant to research and release information about the exact number of

Coptic Christians who have left since the revolution. Diana Maher Ghali of the Arab West Report argues that it is impossible to have accurate statistics on how many Coptic Christians have left Egypt. "You cannot estimate that number for many reasons," said Diana Maher Ghali of the Arab West Report. "Some go to the Austrian embassy and apply for a visa or religious asylum. They can apply at more than one embassy. How can you count those? The second thing is, embassies are not allowed to give out that information." The threat of a Coptic exodus was also called for earlier in the week by the Maspero Youth Union which objects to Article II.

"I understand the position of these young people well, and they are entitled to express their opinions, and I am very happy with them," the Bishop said. But the Maspero Youth Union has qualms with Article II. Rather than the inclusions of Coptic religious authority, a group calling itself Egyptians Against Religious Discrimination, comprised of Maspero Youth Union members, a spectrum of Egyptian rights groups and international Coptic groups, wants Article II to be the inspiration for civil law rather than grant religious jurisdiction.

"The stipulation in the draft constitution that 'Sovereignty is for God' should replace the current 'Sovereignty is for the people,' plays on religious sentiment," said a member of the Maspero Youth Union. "It takes Egypt back to the Middle Ages, shatters the basis of a modern state, legalises theocracy, and opens the door for countless legal problems – let alone blackmail by opportunists who feign religiosity." The recent statements by Bishop Paul echo those made by Sunni Sheikhs in Al-Azhar. Earlier this month, Al-Masry Al-Youm reported that the Constituent Assembly representatives of Al-Azhar were advocating for an addition to Article II that would contain the text: "Christians and Jews shall resort to legislation derived from their own religions." The proposal was greeted favourably by the Church.+++



Identity Among Middle East Christians

By Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi on 1.5.12
<http://spectator.org/archives/2012/01/05/identity-among-middle-east-chr/print>

What accounts for clear examples of their strong loyalty to Islamic regimes?

In the course of the present unrest across the Middle East and North Africa, it has become clear that questions of identity are going to be extremely important in deciding the future paths of the various countries in turmoil, not only as regards the divide between Islamists and secularists, but also concerning ethnic and sectarian tensions in countries like Syria, Yemen, and Libya. For Christians in the region, the issue of identity will similarly be important in determining ways to adapt to the changing political order. This naturally raises the problem of how exactly these Christians define themselves. For example, what does it mean to speak of an "Arab Christian"? Which Christians in the region feel the strongest affinity with such a description? Which ones reject it most vehemently?

It is often said that the concepts of Arab nationalism and pan-Arabism were formulated in significant part by Christians who did not wish for their communities to continue enduring discrimination. For instance, one could point to the fact that Michel Aflaq -- a founder of the Ba'ath Party -- and George Habash, an Arab nationalist thinker who founded the Marxist terrorist group known as the "Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine," were both Christians.

However, what is often overlooked is that these Christians who were the most vociferous and staunch proponents of Arab nationalism and the notion of "Arab Christians" have been either Antiochian Greek Orthodox or Melkite Greek Catholics, two Christian sects concentrated in Syria, Lebanon, and the Palestinian territories. Aflaq and Habash were Antiochian Greek Orthodox, but a case in point for the Melkite Greek Catholics is the current patriarch of the church: Gregory III Laham.

In an [interview](#) with the Italian monthly magazine "30Giorni" back in 2005, Laham even went so far as to state that "the Melkite bishop Edelby... would always repeat: we are Arabs, not Muslims.... I add: we are the Church of Islam."

As for the terrorist attack in October 2010 on the Syriac Catholic "Our Lady of Salvation" church in Baghdad and similar assaults on Christians in the region, Laham characterized the persecution as a "conspiracy planned by Zionism and some Christians with Zionist

orientations... that aims at depicting Arabs and Muslims in Arab countries as terrorist and fundamentalist murderers," according to a [report](#) in Lebanon's *Daily Star*.

Meanwhile, when it comes to the uprising in Syria, Laham has condemned the Arab League's suspension of Syria from the organization on the grounds that the move has caused separation in the Arab world, with the Patriarchate Council affirming the following, as noted by the [Syrian Arab News Agency](#): "The criterion of the Arab League's success will be through its capability to solve the Palestinian cause, not through division or hostility."

In contrast, among the Maronites in Lebanon and the Copts in Egypt, the sentiment is more divided. One will almost certainly encounter members of both groups who identify as "Arab Christians," yet there has been a counter-trend on the question of identity that has never existed for the Antiochian Greek Orthodox or the Melkite Greek Catholics. For the Maronites, an alternative identity has been offered in the ideology of "Phoenicianism," which traces a link between the ancient Phoenicians and the Lebanese of today, besides taking pride in Lebanon's multicultural nature. A notable proponent of this view has been the well-known poet Said Akl, who reached his centenary last July.

Among Copts, there is the notion of "Pharaonism," which prefers to stress Egyptian identity as a combination of descent from the Ancient Egyptians, Egypt's historically close links with the Mediterranean world, and individual nation-state patriotism. This sentiment is shared by some Egyptian Muslims, and one of the most prominent advocates of Pharaonism in the 20th century was the liberal Muslim intellectual Taha Hussein.

Finally, one comes to the issue of identity among the Christians of Iraq. In this case, we find a virtually unanimous rejection of the term "Arab Christians." Instead, Christians in Iraq identify as ethnic Assyrians, although among some Chaldean Catholics there is a preference for a distinct Chaldean identity.

There is even a political party for Assyrians known as the "Assyrian Democratic Movement," which aims to secure an autonomous province for Assyrians in the northern Nineveh plains of Iraq.

One might note in objection to my point that Tariq Aziz -- the vice-president of Iraq during Saddam's rule -- was a Chaldean. On the contrary, he is overwhelmingly viewed as a traitor by Assyrians. Not only did Aziz drop his Christian birth name Mikhail Yuhanna, but he also abetted Saddam's Arabization policy in the north of Iraq, which led to the destruction of numerous Assyrian villages and the inhabitants' forced resettlement in Baghdad and points south (Continue next page)

in order to make way for Arab settlers.

What is apparent from these observations is that the degree of absorption of the Arabic language into the various churches correlates with the prevalence of the concept of "Arab Christians." In the cases of the Antiochian Greek Orthodox and Melkite Greek Catholic churches, Arabic has come to dominate as the main liturgical language over Byzantine Greek.

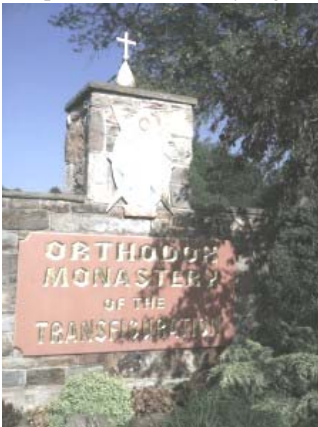
The Maronites and Copts used to maintain Syriac and Coptic respectively as their sole liturgical languages even after the Muslim conquests, but have gradually come to incorporate Arabic to a limited degree as their adherents have adopted Arabic as their language of everyday communication. However, the Assyrian churches, whose adherents primarily speak various Eastern Neo-Aramaic dialects as their mother tongue, still maintain Syriac as their sole liturgical language. In short, the degree of linguistic and cultural Arabization over time has played more of a part in the formulation of identity among Middle Eastern Christians than a simple desire to avoid persecution at the hands of the Muslims majorities.+++

You can learn all about the various churches that make up Eastern Christianity here:
<http://www.cnewa.org/default.aspx?ID=1&pagetypeID=9&sitecode=US&pageno=1>

Monastery advances with multi-million dollar renovation

Posted on [July 12, 2012](#) by [Jon-Paul Wimer](#)

<http://news.ellwoodcity.org/2012/07/12/monastery-advances-with-multi-million-dollar-renovation/>



Several weeks ago, a groundbreaking took place at the Orthodox Monastery of the Transfiguration, just off Portersville Road in Wayne Township, beginning a year-long expansion and renovation project.

"We've spent a lot of time planning and preparing for this renovation," said Mother

Barbara, secretary of the Monastery. "It's all very exciting."

Construction began on June 18 and will continue for at least a year. Called the 2012 Expansion Project, the construction will focus on making the monastery more available to visitors and allow a more peaceful experience.

"The renovation is not intended to benefit the sisters [of the monastery], but intended to benefit all those who come visit the monastery," said Mother Barbara.

The 2012 Expansion Project is a \$2 million endeavor, with \$700,000 being used on the first wave of the project. The first wave, according to Mother Barbara, is fixing the immediate needs of the monastery first, and the second wave will finish the remaining areas if funds are available.

"We are focusing on the important areas first," said Mother Barbara, "and as more funds become available, we'll see how much more we can do."

For the first phase, the football field-size monastery will improve its all-purpose meeting/classroom, enlarge the gift shop and hospitality room, fix the handicap restrooms, build a new garage, improve kitchen storage, and repair sidewalks and parking.

[<View 2012 Expansion Project brochure>](#)

Mother Barbara said that the main goal of the project is to better meet the needs of the people. She said that many people visit, but they often have trouble with the amount of room they have, especially if the visitors must be inside because of weather issues.



The Orthodox Monastery of the Transfiguration all began in 1967 when Mother Alexandra, former Princess Ileana of Romania, had a dream to provide a place where American Orthodox women from all ethnic backgrounds could come to live the monastic life and benefit from a liturgical cycle in English.

Through the years, the monastery continued to expand and attention of such a holy place began to grow. Mother Alexandra was succeeded by Mother Benedicta who arrived from Varatec Monastery in Romania in 1978. Under Mother Benedicta's leadership a complete cycle of liturgical prayer was established and the strong monastic tradition she had lived in her homeland took root as well. Mother Christophora, the current abbess, was elected in 1987, (Continue next page)

and since then, the monastery has continued to develop, both spiritually and physically. “We encourage everyone of all faiths and religions to visit the monastery and see the hospitality it has to offer,” said Mother Barbara. “Even the UPS man says how peaceful it is up here; anyone can enjoy this beautiful place.”

Read more:

<http://news.ellwoodcity.org/2012/07/12/monastery-advances-with-multi-million-dollar-renovation/#ixzz20jpuUIYZ> +++

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

Istanbul: The historic meeting between the Grand Mufti and Patriarch Bartholomew

The meeting marked a new phase of collaboration and interreligious dialogue which had long been impossible. Negotiations also began for the reopening of the Orthodox Halki seminary

VATICAN INSIDER
STAFF
ROME 7/5/12

Today was a historic day for Istanbul. Turkey’s greatest religious authority, the Grand Mufti, Mehmet Görmez, attended a meeting with Bartholomew I, at the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

This was the first time in the history of modern Turkey that the head of the Presidency for Religious Affairs (Diyanet) visited the highest representative of the country’s oldest religion, the Orthodox faith, which has its origins in the Byzantine Empire.

The meeting, which had been scheduled some time ago, was arranged in order to give impetus to interreligious dialogue and push for the re opening of the Orthodox Halki seminary, which the military closed in 1971. For centuries, this seminary was the training place for the



upper echelons of the Orthodox Church.

The Grand Mufti addressed this issue in today’s meeting with Bartholomew: “A country as big as this - Görmez stated – should not have to send its clergy abroad to be educated.” In other words, if the Halki seminary is not reopened, Bartholomew I’s successors will inevitably come from abroad.

The Patriarch said he “fully agreed” with Görmez, adding that Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s conservative Islamic government “is dealing with the problem in a constructive manner.”

In this morning’s issue of Turkish daily newspaper *Radikal*, Huseiyn Celik, former Education minister and Vice Secretary of Akp, stated: “It was a mistake to close Halki; not to reopen it would be another mistake. There is no criticism preventing it from being opened; it is a right.”

The first discussion between the two religious leaders, which was then followed by a second closed-door meeting, was broadcast live on television. The two clerics exchanged gifts. A beautiful silver engraved with the name of Allah engraved on it, for Mehmet Görmez and a papyrus with verses from the Koran, the Gospel and the Torah, on God’s existence, for Bartholomew. “Let us not make this meeting an isolated case, – Görmez said – let us meet more often.”

The Last Ancient Patriarch of Jerusalem: Saint Sophronius

by Robert Shaffern from: <http://www.crisismagazine.com/2012/the-last-ancient-patriarch-of-jerusalem-saint-sophronius> July 12, 2012

Heavy-hearted, Sophronius, the patriarch of Jerusalem, set out to meet the Caliph, the successor to the Muslim prophet Muhammad, at the gates of the Holy City. The surrender had already been negotiated, after a siege that had lasted four months. Sophronius, patriarch of the city since 634, had



decided that the doom of Christian government in the Levantine regions. The Byzantine army was utterly destroyed. The Persian and (Continue next page)

Muslim wars, coming as they did in quick succession, had exhausted the Byzantine Empire's military resources. Heraclius, who lived until 641, could do nothing to recover what had just been recovered. He spent the rest of his days broken hearted city must be surrendered. For several years, Palestine had been cut off from the rest of Christian-Byzantine territory.

Sophronius could have known nothing of Emperor Heraclius's intentions to relieve or leave the city to its fate. He did know that invaders had ransacked villages of Palestine for the second time in a generation. That terror certainly encouraged him to accept surrender in exchange for the lives of the Jerusalemites and the safety of its churches. In the meantime, he sent many of the city's precious relics, including the True Cross, to Constantinople, where they could be kept safe. Shortly after the capitulation of the city, Sophronius seems to have fled into a voluntary exile. He died shortly thereafter, sometime in 638, many said of a broken heart. Sophronius lived in a religiously and politically tumultuous era. Violence between Monophysite and Chalcedonian Christians often erupted in the great cities of Antioch and Alexandria. These two rival groups had been at odds since the fifth century, when oriental Christians began to insist on the one nature in the incarnate Christ, in opposition to the teaching of the Council of Chalcedon in 451, which taught two natures in Christ, one fully divine and the other fully human. In addition to this religious strife, Byzantine politics destabilized, and made the empire vulnerable to invasion from Persia, the Roman Empire's age-old enemy. In 602, a bloody coup in the palace in Constantinople ushered in a decade of terror and instability, which the Persians used to conquer Egypt, Syria, and Palestine, all of which remained in Sassanid hands for a generation. Sophronius was born sometime around 560 in Damascus, but was formed by the Christianity of Palestine. Great monastic and liturgical creativity flourished in Christ's homeland during the sixth century. Still to be seen today are the remnants of numerous *lavra*, the cliff monasteries in the Judean countryside, some of which are still living communities. *Lavra* monasticism sought to combine the eremitic and cenobitic observations of monasticism. Between the hours of communal worship, when the monks gathered in church for the celebration of the Office, they remained in solitary prayer in cells bored out of the cliffsides of the Judean desert. Sophronius joined the *lavra* of St. Chariton, where he became the disciple and friend of the spiritual master John Moschus. In 604, the two monks left St. Chariton to travel throughout Egypt, where they studied monasticism in its homeland. They became advisors to the patriarch of Alexandria, who in 607 encouraged them to gather the lore of the desert fathers.

John Moschus collected these in his *The Spiritual Meadow*, a catalogue of the lives and deeds of mostly Middle Eastern holy men. Some of Sophronius's own works survive; they clearly influenced the thought of the most creative of the later Fathers, Maximus the Confessor (died 662). All three of these great figures emphasized deification—the divinization and glorification of humanity by the grace and glory of God. Upheaval in the imperial capital must have contributed to their decision to leave Egypt for Rome. In 602, a general named Phokas deposed and executed the Emperor Maurice. Phokas was a cruel, bloodthirsty tyrant whose rule amounted to a reign of terror. In 610, a general from Africa named Heraclius gathered an army and deposed and executed Phokas. The political instability proved a catastrophe, for the Sassanid Persians took advantage and seized the regions of Syria, Palestine, and Egypt from Byzantine control. Persecution of Christianity accompanied the military campaign, for the Persians slaughtered lay and clerical Christians, and destroyed numerous churches. They took Jerusalem's most precious relic, the True Cross, off to Mesopotamia. Many Byzantine-Christians fled to the west. Like many other refugees of the religious and political tumult of the east, Sophronius and Moschus found sanctuary in Rome. Christian worship in the east was badly damaged, and the length of the Persian occupation (about 15 years) meant that many of the young grew up knowing little of Christian faith or liturgy.

Heraclius, however, rallied Byzantine forces and had decisively defeated the Persians by 628. Sophronius returned to Palestine and was named patriarch of the city in 634. The True Cross returned to Jerusalem amid triumphal rejoicing. Still, Byzantine political and religious authorities faced a colossal task. Both government and church desperately needed time to be reconstructed. Alas, that time was not forthcoming. Muhammad himself had planned on a campaign against Christian Syria and Palestine, but when he saw Heraclius's armies decided to bide his time. In the meantime he died, but his successor Umar waged a campaign of conquest in fulfillment of Muhammad's ambitions. The great battle of the Yarmuk river in 636 spelled, having seen his great reconquests lost. The feast of Saint Sophronius is observed on March 11, but it is also fitting to remember his struggles on July 15, the date of the reconquest of Jerusalem by the First Crusade.+++

Lord, gather us from East and West around the altar of reconciliation.
--

American Orthodox Church Leader Resigns Unexpectedly

Monday, July 9, 2012



Metropolitan Jonah at his 2009 investiture as head of the Orthodox Church in America.

The head of the Orthodoz Church in America resigned unexepctedly on Sunday.

Metropolitan Jonah submitted his resignation during a [conference](#) call on Saturday with other primates. In his letter of resignation, he said he was leaving the post in response to the unanimous request of the primates. "I had come to the realization long ago that I have neither the personality nor the temperament for the position of Primate, a position I never sought nor desired," he wrote in a letter of resignation composed on Friday in his Washington D.C. residence and witnessed by the Orthodox Church in America's chancellor, according to a statement from the denomination. Elected in 2008 to lead the main branch of Orthodox Christianity in the U.S., the Chicago native became primate under a banner of reform after his predecessor Archbishop Herman retired amid allegations that leaders of the 400,000-member denomination used millions of [dollars](#) from church coffers to cover personal expenses. The Orthodox Church in America is part of a constellation of churches separate from the Roman Catholic Church since the 11th Century. In his letter over the weekend, Metropolitan Jonah asked the primates to consider his [financial](#) situation when making another assignment since he supports his parents and sister. "I will appreciate your consideration in this, and beg forgiveness for however I have offended you, and for whatever difficulties have arisen from my own inadequacies and mistakes in judgment."

NEW ORTHODOX JOURNAL

[http://www.orthodoxartsjournal.org/The Orthodox Arts Journal](http://www.orthodoxartsjournal.org/The_Orthodox_Arts_Journal) publishes articles and news for the promotion of traditional Orthodox liturgical arts.++

What Can Orthodox and Catholics Teach Each Other?

from *His Broken Body: Understanding and Healing the Schism between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches* by

Laurent Cleenerck.

<http://orthocath.wordpress.com/2012/06/29/what-can-orthodox-and-catholics-teach-each-other/>



Both Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism are facing difficult new challenges. Christianity has become an open market where competition from upstart denominations is extremely fierce. The temptation to bury one's head in the sand (Eastern Orthodoxy) or to mimic successful Evangelical methods and worship styles (Roman Catholicism) is as great as it is destructive. In North America, converts from Protestantism have provided their respective 'teams' with solid theological responses, but the struggle remains very difficult. In the rest of the world, the tide of sectarian Christianity (notably Adventism, Mormonism and Pentecostalism) continues its damage to the ancient apostolic Churches.

While Rome has effectively embraced a liturgical modernism as a remedy that has proven even worse than the disease, Orthodoxy is often in denial that anything needs to be fixed liturgically or organizationally. In fact, both sides can learn and benefit from the other's strengths and experiences, as we shall see.

1. Catholics must become Orthodox

The rift between East and West was already extreme by the ninth century and reached its apex with Vatican I. But this apex was also marked by a growing sense that the theological and liturgical path of Roman Catholicism had reached some kind of a dead-end. Vatican II was an attempt to engineer a conciliar return to the sources that would reinterpret the Roman Catholic legacy of the past thousand years for the next millennium. Jean Danielou and Yves Congar – both Early Church scholars – were very influential at the council, but their vision was only partially achieved. As we have seen, the new mass of Pope Paul VI was an overreaction to the possible excesses of the Tridentine (Continue next page)

rite of Pius V. What was obscured or even lost in modern Roman Catholic worship is not just reverence and a few prayers; it is the eschatological experience of the Eucharist as an ascent to heaven, a manifestation on earth of the eternal liturgy of the angels and saints. Everything comes together to make the modern mass an expedited Eucharistic gathering of the community – or at least part of it since there are now various kinds of masses served at different times. Vestments and architectural styles are a manifestation of today’s trends and attitudes: universal ecclesiology becomes incarnate in its liturgical consequence. As a result of this anchoring in the present and disconnection from the apostolic past and eschatological future, the Roman Catholic priesthood is often disoriented. Liberal theology is rampant in seminaries and universities where many have rejected both patristic and scholastic theology in order to look for new ways to ‘rescue Christianity from the New Testament.’ I would like to suggest that if Roman Catholicism rediscovers and embraces the liturgical spirit of Eastern Christianity, the crisis of post-Vatican II liturgics will end. But this cannot be achieved without a concurrent embracing of eschatological-Eucharistic ecclesiology and pre-Nicene theology. Time is running short for a Vatican III council that would prepare the Roman Catholic world for the third millennium with an era of convergence and reconciliation with Eastern Orthodoxy.

2. Orthodox must become Catholic

The message of the Eastern Orthodox world to Roman Catholicism (and all other Christians) is often reduced to ‘leave us alone, we’d like to pretend you don’t exist.’ This fortress mentality is also a subconscious admission that ‘the God-protected city’ is in fact a weak and easy prey. The temptation to curl away from the world leads to nationalism and a failure to embrace the catholic-universal vocation of the Church. As a result, Orthodox Christians see themselves as Russian, Serbian or Greek Orthodox members of a national Church whose head is located in a political capital.

The contrast with Roman Catholicism is striking: the ability of the Church of Rome to coordinate worldwide missions, social work and a consistent doctrinal message should make the Orthodox think. The need for a universal center of unity and arbitration is obvious, and it does not have to mean absolute supremacy or infallibility. Two admonitions of our Lord come to mind:

“Why do you notice the splinter in your brother’s eye, but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own? How

can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me remove that splinter in your eye,’ when you do not even notice the wooden beam in your own eye? You hypocrite! Remove the wooden beam from your eye first; then you will see clearly to remove the splinter in your brother’s eye” (Luke 6:40-41)

“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

The real tragedy about the Schism is the lack of concern about its tragic consequences. The voice that should still cry out from heaven is that of Patriarch Peter of Antioch who had written in 1054:

“I tremble lest, while you [Photius] endeavor to sew up the wound, it may turn to something worse, to schism; lest while you try to raise up what has been smitten down, a worse fall may be in store. Consider the obvious result of all of this, I mean the yawning gulf that must ultimately separate from our holy Church [Orthodox Antioch and Constantinople] that magnanimous and apostolic see [Rome]... Life henceforth will be filled with wickedness, and the whole world will be overturned...”

We should not have to think in terms of ‘mutual interest’ to discuss cooperation and reconciliation, but it may be that a common threat will do more for the cause of unity than our concern for the unity of the body of Christ.

3. Loving the Saints

If we confess Cyprian, Basil, Leo and Martin as saints and members of the same Body, what we also confess is that in spite of our earthly differences, heaven is filled with both ‘Roman Catholic’ and ‘Eastern Orthodox’ saints. In order to achieve visible and authentic unity, there must first be a desire to embrace what is best on the other side, and to find room for legitimate differences of expression. I am convinced that if Orthodox Christians can discover and love such lights as St. Therese of Lisieux or St. Solanus Casey, and if Catholics can embrace as their own St. Seraphim of Sarov or St. Elizabeth Fyodorovna, a new form of dialogue can take place: one motivated by love and respect. In general, Roman Catholicism has been more generous with its beatification and canonization process, with the result that a great variety of remarkable souls are presented as inspiring models for us today. By contrast, recent Eastern (Continue next page)

Orthodox saints tend to be martyrs and monastics: to my knowledge, not a single woman has been glorified for North American Orthodoxy, which means that if we can embrace Sts. Leo and Martin, we can certainly be inspired by Sts. Mary Cabrini or Katharine Drexel.

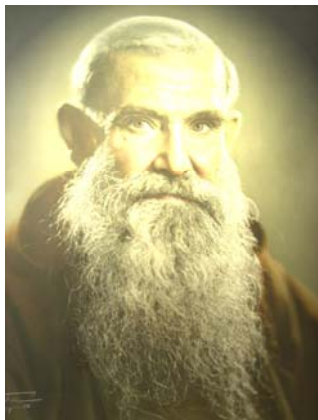
If we fail to realize that we are only “witnesses to the Truth” of Jesus Christ and imagine that our witness – in life and theology – will always be perfect, we are chasing the same mirage that leads countless American Christians from denomination to denomination, until one imagines that ‘the perfect Church’ has been discovered. If we accept the fact that our priests, bishops and ecclesial structures can make mistakes, we can focus on the incarnate Truth and deal reasonably with the theological formulas that are as fingers pointing to the moon: they are only signs, imperfectly crafted in human language, to a reality that is “ineffable, inconceivable, invisible, incomprehensible.” In a court of law, a human witness can be accurate without being perfect, but inaccuracies can also lead to a ‘falsification of the word of God’ (2 Corinthians 4:2) This is the mandate given to us by Scripture, both as individuals and as communities. Let us deal with our shortcomings without trepidation and strive to be conformed to Him who is the “faithful witness” (Revelation 1:5; John 18:37) +++

LEBANESE BLESSED FOLLOWS IN ST. FRANCIS' FOOTSTEPS

Abouna Yacoub's Relics Are Displayed in Maronite Church

Rome

By Robert Cheaib
ROME, JUNE 28, 2012 (Zenit.org).-
“Abouna (father, in Lebanese) Yacoub reflects Lebanon’s authentic face. Today we pray for his intercession and that of Lebanon’s saints so that the Middle East will return to be a model of peaceful coexistence,” said Cor-Episcopo Tony Gebran, chaplain of the mission for the care of souls of the Maronite Church in Rome, during a Mass last Sunday in the church of Saint Marun at Porta Pinciana. The Eucharistic celebration included the blessing with the relics of the Lebanese blessed, donated to the church of Saint Marun by the Congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of the Holy Cross of Lebanon, founded by Abouna Yacoub, a Capuchin friar who was born at



Ghazir, Lebanon, in 1875 and died on June 26, 1954, (June 26 is his liturgical feast day).

Gebran, who is also Legal Representative of the Maronite Antiochian Patriarchate of Rome, recounted during his homily the various works of charity carried out by Father Yacoub at a time of great poverty and serious problems of hunger, especially during the two World Wars.

Recalling the incredible energy that characterized the Blessed, the prelate mentioned several important institutions in Lebanon that go back to Abouna Yacoub who founded numerous “convents, hospices, schools and hospitals, the most famous being undoubtedly the Hospital of the Cross at Jal-el-Dib, established in 1930, not forgetting Saint Joseph’s Hospital of Dora (1949), Notre Dame du Puits (1941), Christ-Roi (1950), the schools of Broumana and Deir el-Kamar.”

Gebran said: “He sought Jesus’ face in the poorest.” Abouna Yacoub’s secret was his love of Jesus crucified and marginalized. He was a man “who planted the cross wherever he was.”

Gebran also spoke of the work for, in particular, elderly and sick priests to whom the tireless Capuchin dedicated the convent and great shrine of Christ the King (Christ-Roi), explaining that “the monument was erected where all the ancient kings left the seal of their rule, sign of the domination of the Rising Sun. And thus Abouna Yacoub wished to leave the sign of Christ King of the universe whose Kingdom is not passing as the kingdoms of the world.”

In the footsteps of Francis of Assisi

Summing up the life of the Blessed, Gebran explained that one of the most important teachings he left us is trust in the goodness of the Lord and in Divine Providence: “Abouna Yacoub invites us to believe in Providence, in the Lord who loves us and thinks of us.” “He is a prophet of the 20th century. His prophecy was to serve Christ in the poor. By serving these brothers of ours, we serve Jesus Christ and see his suffering face,” he added.

Abouna Yacoub’s testimony is a confirmation that the history of Christians of Lebanon is “a history of sanctity,” hence “his presence in this Roman parish of the Maronites is a particular sign.”

Gebran then linked the Blessed’s figure to that of the Poverello of Assisi. “In the footsteps of his spiritual father, Saint Francis of Assisi, Abouna Yacoub lived the dimension of charity by not sparing any effort, any spiritual charism, any literary gift, and thus the whole of Lebanon experienced his pastoral dynamism.”

Finally, the prelate explained that the charism of the Blessed Capuchin is alive in the work of his spiritual daughters the Franciscan Sisters of the Cross of Lebanon. (Continue next page)

The Mass was followed by a blessing with the Blessed's relics and the whole congregation recited a prayer, written by Yacoub:

"O Jesus, my Lord, take my tongue and make me speak what you wish, make my silence be a dialogue with you! Take my ears and make them hear the voice of duty, your voice, O Jesus! Take my eyes, and make them see you in every face and every work! Take my hands and my feet, give them agility and consecrate them to your service and to the fulfillment of your every desire! Take my thought: illumine it with your splendid light! Take my heart: make it a throne for your love and your rest."

A timely charism

Apart from the celebration, Mother Jeanne d'Arc, superior of the Community of the Franciscan Sisters of the Cross present in Rome, confirmed to Zenit the current importance of Abouna Yacoub's charism, a charism of dedication to the poor, to elderly and sick priests and to the education of youngsters.

The superior explained how the Community, founded in 1930, operates mainly in Lebanon, Egypt and Jordan in a multi-religious context where "more than have of those looked after in the hospitals belong to other religions." Finally, Mother Jeanne d'Arc explained that the Franciscan Congregation is also present in Rome where it offers a service of hospitality for pilgrims visiting the Eternal City, as well as a hospice for students.+++

The Interesting History of Our Lady of Perpetual Help

Wednesday, June 27, 2012
Posted by Dr. Taylor
Marshall from:
<http://cantuar.blogspot.com/>

Our Lady of Perpetual Help (or of Perpetual Succour) is a Byzantine icon from the late middle ages and has resided in Rome since the late 1400s. The Eastern Catholics call it "Holy Theotokos of the Passion."

The image depicts the Blessed Virgin Mary wearing a blue mantle and veil. On the left side is the Archangel Michael, carrying the lance and sponge of the crucifixion of Jesus. On the right is the Archangel Gabriel carrying



the cross and nails. The Christchild rests in her arms and looks intently at the cross.

Tradition states that the icon memorializes an occasion in which the young Christ awoke from a dream in which He saw the instruments of His passion. Mary comforted Him, but remained solemn since she knew that that the dream was a portent of her Son's future passion. The icon brilliantly captures both the reality of the incarnation and the reality of the crucifixion of Christ in one single image that mystically links the events to Mary - who was present for each.

The icon was brought to Rome by a pious merchant, who desired that the picture should be exposed in a church for public veneration. It was exposed in the church of San Matteo, Via Merulana, between St. Mary Major and St. John Lateran.

The rascally French invaded Rome in 1812 and destroyed the church - and the icon disappeared.

In 1865, the icon was rediscovered to the joy of many. Pope Pius IX as a boy had prayed before the icon in the church of San Matteo before it was lost during the French invasion. Pius IX took great interest when the icon was finally rediscovered - since he had been especially devoted to it. He subsequently approved a liturgical feast in commemoration of the icon. The Redemptorists especially revered the image for its profound spiritual meaning.

Today it is one of the most popular images of Our Lady and it is one of the few images that is universally revered in every rite of the Catholic Church - East to West.+++

SPECIAL SYNOD OF THE POLISH NATIONAL CATHOLIC CHURCH

Friday June 22nd, by Deacon Jim, from:
<http://konicki.com/blog2/> (edited by LOE)

A Special Synod of the Polish National Catholic Church took place at St. Stanislaus Bishop & Martyr Cathedral and its Youth Center in Scranton, Pennsylvania. The Synod was held to elect two candidates for the office of Bishop within our Holy Church. Four nominees were put before the Church, Rev. Stanley Bilinski, Rev. Raymond Drada, Rev. Bernard Nowicki, and Rev. Jerzy Rafalko. There were 218 delegates from the Church's five Dioceses as well as guests who witnessed this solemn and special occasion. The Synod body chose Rev. Stanley Bilinski and Rev.

Bernard Nowicki as candidates for the office of the Bishop. There are two dioceses, Buffalo-Pittsburgh and the Western Diocese, in need of Bishops +++

A Roman Catholic Goes to an Eastern Catholic Liturgy for the First Time

Sunday, June 17, 2012 from:

<http://ascentofcarmel.blogspot.com/2012/06/roman-catholic-goes-to-eastern-catholic.html>

For the first time in history, it seems that one can have their cake and eat it too. Attracted as I am by everything Eastern Christian in theology, spirituality, and practice, I was most privileged to attend the Divine Liturgy at St. Nicholas the Wonderworker Ukrainian Catholic Parish, here in Victoria, BC.

I met with Fr. Theodosius outside (who wore a black cassock and square-ish hat, and sported a long beard), for the church doors were not even open yet, and I had come extra early just in case it was proper to do so, and in case I might need to get some advice on how to participate in the liturgy itself. Fr. Theodosius was a most kind and warm-hearted priest, and welcomed me in right away. After procuring a wad of pamphlets and a very interesting little welcome envelope filled with information for awkward Roman Catholics like myself, I took a seat in the church.

It goes without saying that the inside of a Byzantine-rite Catholic parish is much different than what an average Roman Catholic might be used to. No statues are to be seen, but instead, icons, those "windows into heaven", abound.

For a fledgling Roman Catholic like myself, it was entirely awkward to cross myself from right to left, instead of left to right, but I managed to do so without any major problem. However, I must inform the reader that Eastern Catholics cross themselves about five times as much as Roman Catholics do - indeed, the mere mention of a person of the most blessed Trinity is enough to cause the entire parish to begin crossing themselves with vigor. This kind of reverence could really be used at parishes where modernism and new-age spirituality have invaded with considerably little resistance from both the clergy and the faithful.

Most of the Liturgy takes place with the priest behind a kind of fortress-like structure covered in icons. Inside, Fr. Theodosius displayed some of the most incredible swinging of a censer I have ever witnessed - I know it sounds shallow in a sense, but to watch the priest swing the censer full circle about his arm as though it were light as a feather was absolutely incredible!

Everything about the Divine Liturgy was done with the same kind of beauty and reverence as a traditional Catholic Mass, but different. More emphasis is placed on the priest, who acts in persona Christi, as a mediator between the human and the divine - one can see elements of Jewish worship throughout in the notion of

the priest alone venturing into the "holy of holies", as it were.

Unfortunately, I did not go up to receive Holy Communion, as I was too nervous of making a mistake, not showing the proper reverence, or doing some other thing wrong. I shall do so next time however, and muster the courage. What is different is that, whereas Catholics receive the Host ideally on the tongue, Byzantine Catholics receive the Precious Body and Blood from a golden spoon. Again, similar but different, and yet entirely the same when it comes down to brass tacks.

Nervous as I can be sometimes, it was saddening to not go forward to the heavenly banquet, but nonetheless - the entire Liturgy was absolutely edifying.

Other aspects of note - the entire Liturgy is sung, both in English and, in this case, Ukrainian. It sounds a little trite, I am sure, but the singing made me feel like I was in some cold Eastern European village out of a Dostoevsky novel - this is a good thing in my case. After the Divine Liturgy, I was invited by the very friendly parishioners to have a cup of coffee and some victual downstairs - let me tell you, this parish knows how to eat. Everything I love, from popcorn to strawberries to copious amounts of rich garlic sausage, was on display.

Fr. Theodosius and another kind parishioner sat and took the time to talk to me, half-shaking and nervous, and I felt very welcome to be at the parish. Fr. Theodosius and I discussed much of Eastern Christianity as a whole, its history, its theology, and its saints that may not be as well known in the West; a most enlightening experience, and a very cordial and kind man of God.

In short, I cannot recommend and heartily praise our Eastern Catholic brothers and sisters enough - they have maintained the traditions of our ancestors without taint in my eyes, and their warmth and reverence is to be admired. It is exceedingly sad that they were once viewed as "second-rate Catholics" for a time in history, as Fr. Theodosius remarked over some fine food in dining room. It is my wish that they become more recognized in the Church, and that we remember that the Church is not Roman, but Catholic. The Christian East is absolutely rich with wisdom, holiness, and beauty - we in the Roman Catholic rite truly must learn from our brothers and sisters in the Eastern rites.

+May God, in His mercy, grant unity and peace to His Church.Amen.+++

“The Church is the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. He who has divided it has sinned...” (Message of the Virgin Mary given to Myrna in Damascus—March 24, 1983.)

Three Eastern Orthodox Saints That Every Catholic Should Read...

Monday, June 25, 2012 from:

<http://ascentofcarmel.blogspot.com/2012/06/three-eastern-orthodox-saints-that.html> (edited by LOE)

As anyone who reads this blog knows, my heart literally bleeds over the tragic split between the Eastern Orthodox and Catholics - it is, in my opinion, one of the greatest sufferings endured by the Body of Christ on Earth.

But in studying the saints of the East, some recognized by the Eastern Rites within the Catholic Church and in communion with her (such as St. Symeon the New Theologian), and some recognized by the Eastern Orthodox only, I have found a very rich, untapped resource of spiritual writings and wisdom that every Catholic should read. So I am going to go out on a limb here, at the risk of offending those who consider the Eastern Orthodox nothing less than schismatic heretics, and recommend the writings of some of the saints of the Christian East. I am sure some mudslinging will ensue, but for those interested in some hearty spiritual nourishment, read on.

Of course, it would be amiss of me as a faithful Catholic to not caution Catholic readers concerning some of the invectives leveled against the Catholic Church by some Orthodox saints. Nonetheless, their writings, whether one agrees or disagrees with some elements in them, should be examined and delved into by anyone serious about their spiritual life.

Here, I wish to highlight three that have really affected me in my own conversion process and in my own spirituality, for the benefit of the reader.

1. Seraphim of Sarov



"Acquire inward peace, and thousands around you will find their salvation." 1 A much-beloved figure and saint of the Russian Orthodox Church, few writers are able to speak to the heart as much as

Seraphim does. If one wants to learn humility and meekness, look no further than this humble Russian saint. His writings are scant, but his life and what remains of his words are beyond precious. I think any Christian could and will be edified by his words if they

allow themselves to be - in some ways, he is much in the same vein as the beloved St. Therese of Lisieux.

2. St. Symeon the New Theologian

"Even if I, as a human being, have sinned beyond any person, You know it, but You, in your personal compassion, my God, had mercy on me the beggar, the orphan in the world, and You have done, Master, what You alone know." 2

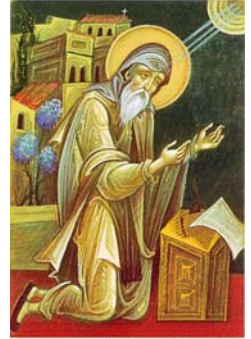
In the Christian East, only three saints have the title of "Theologian" attached to their names - St. John the Evangelist, St. Gregory Nazianzus, and this man. A 10th-century Byzantine monk, Symeon's spiritual writings are reminiscent of the Psalms in their power and universality. His emphasis on the personal experience of God through prayer, and his continuation of the great traditions of the spirituality of the Desert Fathers is most engaging. Though he should be approached with some caution due to the depth of his writings (similar things are said of St. John of the Cross in the West), for the mature reader, his beautiful hymns and ascetical writings are, at times, without compare.

3. Theophan the Recluse

"God abandons no one. For Him all are children. None are stepchildren. And the hard occasions and situations - all is sent for our benefit." 3

I read the writing of Theophan in his *The Path to Salvation* in order to prepare myself for baptism this April. This Russian Orthodox saint is one of the most keen in his understanding of repentance, sin, and spiritual struggle. He speaks with a kind of blunt common-sense that penetrates to the very core of the reader due to its simplicity of language and yet depth of content. Theophan the Recluse, in my opinion, is a must read for those looking to deeper understand the nature of sin, and how to turn to God.

Though the divide between the Eastern Orthodox and Catholics still unfortunately exists, there is no reason why those of us in the West should not dive into the writings of the saints of the East, with due caution for own Catholic faith of course. I myself have no prejudice in doing so, and think anyone interested in deepening their spiritual life and life of prayer shouldn't either. +++



Serbian Orthodox patriarch would welcome papal visit

CWN - July 10, 2012

Serbian Orthodox Patriarch Irinej I has said that he would welcome a visit by Pope Benedict XVI, despite an earlier decision by the Serbian Orthodox Church not to invite the Pope to a major ecumenical celebration next year.

Speculation about a possible papal visit to Serbia had arisen earlier this year, in connection with the scheduled celebrations in 2013 in Nis, the birthplace of the Emperor Constantine, marking the 1700th anniversary of the Edict of Milan. But the Russian Orthodox Church had frowned on the idea of a papal appearance, and the Serbian Orthodox Synod announced earlier this year that the Pope would not be invited.

Patriarch Irinej, however, expressed enthusiasm for the idea of a papal visit. The Serbian prelate did not specify a time, leaving open the possibility that, if opposition among the Orthodox faithful in Serbia eased, Pope Benedict could travel to Serbia at some time during the year of the 1700th anniversary, if not for the major ecumenical celebration.

A high-level delegation from the Vatican--probably led by Cardinal Kurt Koch, the president of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity—is expected to attend the primary celebrations in Nis. +++

A path of no return

2012-07-13 L'Osservatore Romano

Istanbul, 12 July. Continuing with steadfast faith on the way of ecumenical dialogue despite the criticism, despite the many difficulties, following the example delineated by Patriarch Athenagoras in his time. Commemorating his great predecessor in the see of the Phanar 40 years after his death, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomaios I of Constantinople

reaffirmed with

determination that the dialogue with the other Christian denominations, starting with the Catholic



Church, is now a way of no return. For it is “only through dialogue that it is possible to attain agreement, rapprochement and reconciliation” among the baptized in Christ.

In the background, therefore, is the figure and example of Athenagoras, the Orthodox Patriarch who died on 7 July 1972 and who courageously unfolded “new horizons for the Ecumenical Patriarchate”, particularly through the historic and fraternal encounters he had with Pope Paul VI with whom, as is well known, the reciprocal excommunications were revoked. And this is not all. Patriarch Bartholomaios also recalls Athenagoras' ability to open other important “windows for Orthodoxy”, namely, the Patriarchal Centre in Geneva, the Orthodox Academy in Crete and the Patristic Studies Centre in Thessalonica. The effective collaboration of the Orthodox Patriarchate with the World Council of Churches fits into this context, he points out. Yet today, as then, Bartholomaios emphasizes, it is a way that is not exempt from pitfalls or, at times, from harsh criticism, which also comes from within the Orthodox world itself. “Patriarch Athenagoras was criticized at the time for the openness he had demonstrated. Our Ecumenical Patriarchate, then as now, is continuously criticized for the ecumenical dialogue it pursues, as if it were our wish to sell Orthodoxy. Nothing is more unfounded. And yet today is no longer the epoch of egoistic withdrawal into self, autarchy and self-sufficiency”. On the contrary, not only is “ecumenical dialogue” the line that our Church, the Church of Constantinople”, has taken; it is also a line that is “permanent and steadfast”.+++

Egyptian Coptic activists declare creation of Christian Brotherhood

Thursday, 05 July 2012 By AL ARABIYA

A group of Coptic activists in Egypt announced the establishment of the Christian Brotherhood to counter the growing influence of the Muslim Brotherhood especially after their candidate Mohammed Mursi won the presidential elections.

The idea was first initiated in 2005 by lawyer Mamdouh Nakhla, head of al-Kalema Center for Human Rights, and political analyst Michel Fahmi. It was then adopted by Amir Ayad, member of the Maspero Youths Union for Free Copts, the group established after clashes with military forces in front of the TV building in the Cairo district of Maspero left more than 20 Copts dead.

The Christian Brotherhood has branches in 16 governorates in Egypt as well as four branches outside Egypt, three in Europe (Continue next page)

and one in Australia.

“The idea started in 2005 with the rise of Islamist groups, but it had not been put to action since then,” Michel Fahmi told Al Arabiya in a phone interview. Fahmi explained that it was the victory of Muslim Brotherhood candidate presidential elections that necessitated taking steps towards creating the new Brotherhood.

“It was then important to establish a body that can resist the Islamist tide.”

Fahmi stated that he has no problem calling the Christian Brotherhood a sectarian group since the idea of the Muslim Brotherhood is also sectarian.

“We created our group to create a balance in the Egyptian political scene.”

The new group, Fahmi pointed out, is not meant to compete with Muslims but with the rise of political Islam and its members are not after power.

“Muslims are something and Islamists are something else and it is not true that we wanted to a Copt to take part in presidential elections.”

According to Amir Ayad, members of the group decided to put their ideas into action when they felt that the hope of having a civilian state was gone.

“With Mohammed Mursi’s victory, we felt that Egypt is about to turn into a religious state so we decided to create the group as a means of peaceful resistance against Islamist powers,” Ayad was quoted as saying by the Egyptian newspaper al-Youm al-Sabea.

This resistance, which Ayad likens to that adopted by Mahatma Gandhi, will be basically through chronicling all sorts of violations and discriminatory acts committed against Copts across Egypt.

“We will then use all available legal channels to make sure the perpetrators of these actions do not get away with them.”

In the first response to be issued by an Islamist body, the Salafi Front welcomed the establishment of the Christian Brotherhood as the counterpart of the Muslim Brotherhood.

“As long as the Christian Brotherhood will abide by the law and will work towards the welfare of Egypt, then there is no problem,” said Khaled Said, the front’s official spokesperson.+++

The Anglican Use of the Roman Rite

From the blog so named

The first principle of the Ordinariate is then about Christian unity. St. Basil the Great, the Church’s greatest ecumenist, literally expended his life on the work of building bridges between orthodox brethren who shared a common faith, but who had become

separated from one another in a Church badly fragmented by heresy and controversy. He taught that the work of Christian unity requires deliberate and ceaseless effort...St. Basil often talked with yearning about the archaia agape, the ancient love of the apostolic community, so rarely seen in the Church of his day. This love, he taught, is a visible sign that the Holy Spirit is indeed present and active, and it is absolutely essential for the health of the Church.

- Msgr. Jeffrey Steenson, Homily on the Occasion of his Formal Institution as Ordinary+++

Polish National Catholic Church and Anglican Church in North America Dialogue Meeting PRESS RELEASE

The inaugural meeting of the Polish National Catholic Church (PNCC) and the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) met on June 19-20, 2012 in Scranton, Pennsylvania. This historic meeting was hosted by the PNCC at the National Church Center located on Pittston Avenue.

In attendance for this inaugural meeting were the Primate of both Churches, the Most Reverend Anthony A. Mikovsky, Prime Bishop of the Polish National Catholic Church and the Most Reverend Robert Wm. Duncan, D.D., Archbishop and Primate of the Anglican Church in North America.

The Dialogue members in attendance were the Right Reverend Paul Sobiechowski as Co-Chairman, Right Reverend John E. Mack, Very Reverend Augustin Sicard, Reverend Jaroslaw Rafalko, Reverend Stanley Bilinski, and the Reverend John P. Kowalczyk, Jr. as Secretary for the PNCC. ACNA was represented by the Right Reverend Richard W. Lipka as Co-Chairman, Right Reverend Ray R. Sutton, Abbot Luis A. Gonzalez, OSB, and the Right Reverend Keith L. Ackerman, SSC, DD. Also in attendance was the Ecumenical Officer of the PNCC the Reverend Robert M. Nemkovich, Jr. The two Churches met on Tuesday starting at 12:00 Noon and concluded with Vespers celebrated by the Primate of the two Churches. The dialogue continued on Wednesday morning with Holy Mass celebrated by the Right Reverend Paul Sobiechowski. This was followed by a presentation by Bishop Sutton on the 39 Articles of Religion and a presentation by Reverend Bilinski on the 11 Great Principles of the Polish National Catholic Church. Press Release Mtg 1 PNCC-ACNA The PNCC-ACNA Dialogue will continue on January 29-30, 2013 in Bartonville, IL at Saint Benedict’s Abbey and will be hosted by the Anglican Church in North America. +++