

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 chapter meeting will be **Tuesday, July 9th at 7pm at St. Brendan Catholic Church, 2800 Oakwood Ave. Youngstown, Ohio 44509.** Our speaker will be **Matthew Leonard.**



Matthew Leonard is an internationally known speaker, author, and Executive Director of the St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology.

Using Scripture and the teachings of the spiritual greats of the Church, Matthew focuses on deep prayer and the interior life to inspire Catholics to sainthood...and nothing less. He travels far and wide giving dynamic talks at conferences, parish missions, and retreats, as well as leading Journey Through Scripture, the St. Paul Center's parish-based Bible study program.

A convert and former missionary to Latin America, Matthew is a frequent guest on radio stations around the world and has appeared on the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN). He is also featured by Lighthouse Catholic Media. His first book, "Louder Than Words: The Art of Living as a Catholic" is published through Our Sunday Visitor.

Mr. Leonard's topic is "**Divine Destiny: Your Place in The Family of God**", which draws out the

family motif in Scripture and how it all leads to divinization/theosis.

About the Society of St. John Chrysostom

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 in communion with the Apostolic See of Rome (especially in their contemporary calling to promote reconciliation and the recovery of union between Catholics and Orthodox)
- the Orthodox Church
- the Oriental Orthodox Churches and
- the Apostolic Church of the East.

In the United Kingdom and Europe the Society, founded in 1926, is a group of Catholics of the Latin and Eastern Churches, along with our friends in other traditions, promoting awareness and friendship in the Christian West for our fellow Christians of the East – through prayer and liturgy, conferences and lectures, pilgrimage and ecumenical encounters.

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



Bring a friend to our next meeting. Spread the Word of Light of the East. Pray for unity!!!

Romanian Catholic bishop glad to serve Canadian faithful

By Carl Bunderson

Bishop John Michael Botean. Courtesy of the Eparchy of St. George in Canton.



Columbus, Ohio, May 7, 2013 / 02:04 am (CNA).- The bishop of the Eparchy of Saint George in Canton is thankful that the area now extends across both Canada and the U.S., enabling him to serve all Romanian Catholics in North America.

On April 23, Pope Francis extended the eparchy's jurisdiction, which was throughout the U.S., to cover all of Canada as well. The eparchy – which is equivalent to a diocese in the Latin Church – had already, in 2010, been given jurisdiction over the two existing Romanian Catholic parishes in Canada.

“That's where the problem lay, it was kind of unclear what we'd be able to do throughout the rest of the country, in terms of establishing new missions, or taking care of dispensations, permissions and marriages,” Bishop John Michael Botean, told CNA May 2.

“So this is a clarification we needed, and which I'm glad the Holy Father granted.”

The Romanian Catholic Church is a Byzantine-rite Church in full communion with Rome and which is headed by the Major Archbishop of Fagaras and Alba Iulia, Cardinal Lucian Muresan.

Bishop Botean explained that the eparchy's extension is important because of the increasing Romanian presence in Canada.

“There is more immigration of Romanians to Canada than to the U.S., and we've been approached by Canadians in a couple different areas...to explore the possibility of establishing missions.”

The eparchy has received requests for missions by Romanian communities in British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario. But without jurisdiction throughout Canada, it had been unable to fulfill these requests.

“I hope we'll be able to look into that more seriously at this point now,” Bishop Botean said.

“The fact that our mission now involves our neighbors in Canada, people who actually...already have relationships across the border, that just extends our family in a way that

can't but be beneficial to us.”

The eparchy faces changes in the U.S., because its 21 parishes and missions are located primarily

where the economy was doing well at the beginning of the 20th century, where Romanian emigrants settled, which is “not necessarily the case anymore in any of those places.” Parishes of the eparchy are now either focusing on “mission” and reaching out to their neighborhoods, Bishop Botean said, or they “find themselves in trouble, as Romanian families move away from the area...mission becomes important.”

The eparchy's extension had been requested by the Romanian Catholic synod and Cardinal Muresan, who forwarded the petition to the Congregation for the Oriental Churches.

The Romanian Catholic Church is in the Byzantine-tradition, and so uses the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, like the Melkite, Ruthenian, and Ukrainian Catholic Churches. It is constituted by five eparchies in Romania as well as the Eparchy of St. George in Canton.

The parishes of St. George's eparchy use Romanian or English, depending on whether their communities are long-established or composed primarily of recent immigrants.

“But usually we try to hang onto at least a little Romanian here and there in the liturgy to remain close to our roots, even where we use English,” Bishop Botean explained.

The Romanian Catholic Church was established in 1698, when an Orthodox bishop in Romania entered union with the Bishop of Rome. This decision was confirmed by a synod in 1700, and was done to protect the civil rights of Romanians, who were being oppressed by the ruling Hapsburg Empire.

Bishop Botean explained that the union was also done “as a mean of preserving orthodoxy,” as the ideas of Protestant theologian John Calvin were at the time spreading through the Orthodox churches in Romania.

In 1948, Romania's (Continue next page)

communist government forcibly dissolved the Romanian Catholic Church, and its properties were either seized by the state or given to the Romanian Orthodox Church. The Church existed underground until the fall of communism in Romania in 1989.

The Romanian Catholic Church is “a way of living the diversity that's inherent in the Church by way of God's gift, not by human decision,” Bishop Botean said.

“The fact that the Church has taken shape in different ways...shows that the Gospel wants to take flesh where it is.”

“We have a special role to play not only in manifesting the diversity of the Church, but also in being the bridge Church we're called to be, between Catholicism and Orthodoxy,” he added, “but in a way that's consistent with the Second Vatican Council and by means of a recovery of our own tradition, by being truly and authentically self-governing...and still living the mission that was entrusted to the Church by Christ, as a part of the Catholic Church.”

The mission of the Romanian Catholic Church is “not just a matter of trying to take care of our own folks,” he said, but is “a matter of preaching the Gospel, loving your neighbor, and giving witness to Jesus Christ.”

“And in the West that means to the un-evangelized, de-evangelized, and under-evangelized folks we live in the middle of. Our way of expressing and living Catholicism is a way that speaks to people even in the post-modern age. Not everyone certainly, but to a lot of folks.”

St. George's eparchy also includes two monasteries, one of men and one of women. These communities live an authentic Byzantine monastic lifestyle, accessible to the faithful but not engaged in pastoral ministry or teaching. People seek out spiritual fathers or mothers at the monasteries, “who become the spiritual sources for the people. People go to the monasteries for confession, spiritual advice, spiritual direction, that's pretty much their main charism.”

Bishop Botean concluded by saying he is “certainly grateful” for the extension of the eparchy.

“It's true it's more work, but we have...to become the spiritual force that God would want us to be, and that's my mission in this diocese, to transfer that sense of mission to our people as much as I can.”

Lutheran, Orthodox Churches to Sign Statement on Common Principles

by OCP on APRIL 25, 2013

The Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church and the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church are signing a joint statement on their shared theological beliefs today.

The document stresses the importance of worship in people's lives, ETV reported.

It is the first such appeal to be made by the two churches, which have held bilateral meetings every year since 2006. In their current talks, the churches are focusing on the issue of bioethics and organ donation.

The Lutheran Church is the largest church in Estonia and also has an autonomous branch abroad that traces its roots back to the Soviet era, when organized religion was prohibited.

The Orthodox Church, in which Estonian is the official language, is associated with the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. It is separate from the Estonian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate, where the official language is Russian.

PATRIARCH OF UGCC MAKES PILGRIMAGE TO CONSTANTINOPLE

19 April 2013, 13:13 | Interchurch relations

On 19 April, the Head of the Ukrainian-Greek Catholic Church, Patriarch Sviatoslav (Shevchuk) and Head of the Department of Foreign Relations of UGCC, Bishop Borys Gudziak set off for a pilgrimage to Constantinople. The trip is organized in the context of the celebration of the 1025th anniversary of Baptism of Rus-Ukraine and will end on 22 April.

During the pilgrimage, the delegation of UGCC will meet with Patriarch Bartholomew I. According to Patriarch Sviatoslav, “it is a courtesy visit to the Mother Church of the Christians of the Kyivan Tradition.”

The delegation will also visit the Cathedral of the Holy Sophia, the Greek-Catholic Church of the Holy Trinity and other shrines. So reported the Information

Department of [UGCC](#).

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

Richmond bishop issues directive on unique Anglican-Roman Catholic community

February 22, 2013 By [Deacon Greg Kandra](#) from: <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/deaconsbench/2013/02/richmond-bishop-issues-directive-on-unique-anglican-roman-catholic-community/>



Diocese of

Richmond Bishop Francis X. DiLorenzo has issued a directive to a one-of-its-kind Virginia Beach church to bring its liturgical celebrations, primarily the Mass, into conformity with the universal Roman Catholic Church. At the same time, he has offered options for additional combined worship and prayer services that would affirm the unique character of the 35-year-old ecumenical community.

Bishop DiLorenzo met Thursday evening with the two priests and members of the Vestry Council of the Church of the Holy Apostles, the world's only combined Anglican-Roman Catholic (ARC) Community, to reiterate a plan presented last fall and again in January to Catholic priest Rev. Msgr. Raymond Barton and Episcopal priest Rev. Michael Ferguson. The meeting was held at St. Bede's Catholic Church in Williamsburg.

"I'm grateful to all who were involved in these proceedings, and for the friendly, productive and constructive nature of our conversations," said Bishop DiLorenzo.

The liturgical directive, effective Feb. 28, would bring Holy Apostles back into compliance with the norms established by the Roman Catholic Church for celebrations of the Mass. Namely, the directive requires that the Catholic and Episcopal liturgies be separate. The directive encourages the two communities to come together in an ecumenical spirit for Morning or Evening Prayer before and after the liturgy of the Mass.

Church norms require that a Catholic priest preside over the celebration of the Mass beginning with the *Introductory Rites*; the *Liturgy of the Word*, which includes the reading of the Gospel and a homily, or sermon; and during the *Liturgy of the Eucharist* — the portion of the Mass when Catholics celebrate the Real Presence as the bread and wine are consecrated into Jesus's body and blood.

"As the shepherd of the Diocese of Richmond, it is my prayerful desire that this ecumenical community at Holy Apostles continues and flourishes," Bishop DiLorenzo said. "The work of the Church demands efforts to promote ecumenism, since our Lord expressed his desire that the Church be one body, not divided as it is today. Our coming together with people of other Christian faiths should be motivated by a desire to seek the truth, and unity in prayer is always appropriate."

Currently, the Holy Apostles priests alternate who reads the Gospel and gives the homily. Both Catholic and Episcopal priests celebrate each church's communion liturgy concurrently at separate altars in the same room, a practice contrary to liturgical norms and Church doctrine on the Eucharist, according to a letter from Cardinal Mauro Piacenza, Prefect of the Congregation for Clergy, who advised Bishop DiLorenzo.

Since he was named Bishop of Richmond in 2004 Bishop DiLorenzo had repeatedly sought and received assurance from Holy Apostles' two succeeding Catholic priests that the Church was in compliance with the Church's liturgical norms. However, the issue resurfaced in early 2012 when Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano, the Vatican's Apostolic Nuncio for the U.S. — responding to a letter from a New York man who had read an article written by both priests in an Episcopal magazine — sought a clarification of how Holy Apostles was celebrating its divine worship. A formal study into Holy Apostles' practice was followed by the directive to conform to Church norms, as identified in the Church's *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*, published after the Second Vatican Council.

The fall of Constantinople

Dec 23rd 1999 |From the print edition

http://www.economist.com/node/346800?story_id=346800

1453

GREEKS still consider Tuesday an unlucky day. May 29th 1453, was a Tuesday; the day that Constantinople, the place they called—and often still call—the queen of cities, or simply “the city” was overrun by the Ottoman forces that had bombarded its mighty walls for the past 40 days.

In the history of warfare, this was a watershed. It proved that gunpowder could batter down the strongest walls enough to let the attackers in; the age of immobile, iron-clad soldiers defending big stone fortresses was over. But far more was over than that.

The Byzantine defenders and their Venetian and Genoese allies had noticed portents since the lunar eclipse a week earlier. An icon of the Virgin Mary slipped from its platform as it was carried through the city; then a thunderstorm halted the procession. As dusk fell on May 28th, the Emperor Constantine warned his subjects they might have to sacrifice their lives for the faith, family, country and sovereign. The clergy—bitterly divided by doctrine, as Christianity's 400-year-old east-west schism deepened—put aside their differences to hold an evening service in Saint Sophia, the greatest church of eastern Christendom.

In the small hours next day, the final assault began, with a deafening noise of trumpets, drums and war-cries. The Genoese ran down to the sea after their commander was wounded; eventually a dozen Greek and Italian ships, laden with terrified refugees, reached the open sea. The besiegers—the irregular, ill-trained bashi-bazouks and the elite janissaries—poured in.

Smashing through the great bronze doors, they burst into the morning service at Saint Sophia. The worshippers were massacred or captured; many priests died by the altar. Later Sultan Mehmet, the impulsive 21-year-old who had flouted all his elders' advice in besieging the best-defended city in Europe, walked into the building and ordered an imam to claim it for the Muslim faith. But he stopped a soldier hacking at the marble pavings: looting—for one day, not the usual three—all right, but not vandalism.

Mehmet also took care to preserve intact the city's second most-important church, that of the Holy Apostles, and hand it to the Greek Orthodox patriarch. Though much misused by the temporal authorities, the patriarchate survived as an institution for administering the Greek and other Orthodox Christian communities in the new multinational empire. As a strange side-effect of

the Muslim conquest, the doctrinal integrity of eastern Christendom was preserved: instead of the compromises with the Vatican that might otherwise have been inevitable, the patriarchate was able to hold to its view on the issues, such as the nature of the Trinity, that had led to so much bitter argument.

Nonetheless, the political capital of eastern Orthodoxy moved northwards to Russia, where patriots proclaimed that Moscow had become the third Rome after the conquest of Byzantium, which itself had been known as the new Rome.

The fall of Constantinople brought to a head many trends already under way. One was the slide of the Byzantine empire's power, as the loss of Anatolian lands left it short of revenue and recruits, and thus more dependent on fickle Italian allies; another the flight of Greek scholars (particularly brilliant in Byzantium's final years) to Italy, where they helped to stimulate the Renaissance.

Yet another was the emergent contest in south-eastern Europe between the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires. The Turks were besieging Vienna in 1683 and repeatedly at war with Russia or Austria in the 130 years thereafter. They held southern Greece until 1832, today's Bulgaria, Romania, Bosnia and nominally Serbia until 1878, the lands south of these down to liberated Greece until 1913. Hence the Muslim pockets—Albania, Bosnia—that for most Europeans today are the only reminder that the country they see as a source of cheap, resented, migrant labour was once a mighty power in Europe.

But a part of Europe? Allied with Germany in the first world war, and therefore stripped of their remaining Middle Eastern empire, the Turks by 1922 were strong enough again to drive Greece's troops, and centuries of Greek society, from Anatolia. Old enmities were resharpener by the Turkish invasion of northern Cyprus in 1974. If the European Union still hesitates, despite Turkey's decades inside NATO, about its wish for EU membership too, the real reasons lie centuries deep; not least in 1453

PRAYER OF SOUFANIEH

Unity of Hearts!

Unity of Christians!

Unity of the Feast of Easter!



Catholics and Orthodox recall Constantine's Edict of Milan

(Vatican Radio) Catholic and Orthodox leaders are meeting in the Turkish city of Istanbul this week for a seminar on religious freedom, 1,700 years after Emperor Constantine granted freedom of conscience and ended persecution against Christians in the Roman Empire.

The meeting, jointly organized by the Ecumenical Patriarch of Istanbul Bartholomew 1st, spiritual leader of the Orthodox world, and the Council of European Bishops Conferences or CCEE, will take place on May 17th and 18th, focusing on the historical, legal and political aspects of religious freedom in Europe and beyond.

The Ecumenical Patriarch will open the meeting, which will commemorate the Milan Edict of Toleration in 313 which had such a pivotal impact on the development of European society. Participants will examine current questions of religious freedom from three perspectives: that of the religious communities, including the Jewish, Muslim, Orthodox and Catholic communities; the reality of religious freedom in the world today, and the relationship between religion, politics and contemporary society.

The closed door meeting will conclude with a visit to the site of Constantine's death in May 337.



One key contention between the churches is that the Coptic Orthodox Church does not recognise Catholic baptism.

Catholics converting to marry Coptic Orthodox Christians have to be rebaptised. Such conversions are not unusual, as anyone marrying outside the Coptic Orthodox Church, or one of its sister Oriental Orthodox Churches, is barred from the sacraments.

Rumours in February 2010 that Pope Shenouda III would allow marriage between Catholics and Orthodox, because of the two Churches' theological and doctrinal closeness, were quickly quashed by Coptic Orthodox officials.

During an interview with Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need, Bishop William was asked if he expected movement on the issue of Catholic baptism being recognised. He replied: "Yes, Tawadros has said this himself".

Describing the current difficulties, the bishop added: "Pope Shenouda demanded rebaptism because he was of the opinion that unity in faith was a condition for recognising Catholic baptism.

"He quoted the Epistle to the Ephesians, where there is talk of one Lord, one faith and one baptism."

But, Bishop William said that any change in the position on baptism will be far from straightforward.

"The difficulty will be that there are still many of Shenouda's adherents in the Coptic synod.

"But there are also bishops who have gone along with Shenouda's line on rebaptism for reasons of obedience and not conviction.

"I cannot therefore risk a prediction that the line will change – but my

impression is that [Pope Francis's] cordial nature and the openness of Tawadros's curia representatives and his companions, including also disciples of Shenouda, have made a positive impact."

He added that improving relations between the two Churches were being (Continue next page)

Egypt: Hopes Coptic Orthodox may recognise Catholic baptism

Posted by ACN News on 20/5/2013, 1:59 pm

Edited by board administrator 21/5/2013, 10:15 am

By John Newton (Original interview by Oliver Maksan)

A LEADING Coptic Catholic bishop has expressed hopes that a historic meeting between two popes may lead to the Coptic Orthodox Church recognising Catholic baptism.

Bishop Kyrillos William of Assiut described the meeting between Catholic Pope Francis and Coptic Orthodox Pope Tawadros II earlier this month as a "watershed" in ecumenical relations – and expressed optimism that the two Churches would grow closer.



driven by the common problems Catholic and Orthodox Christians were experiencing in Egypt.

“When the revolution broke out two years ago spontaneous consultations arose between us Catholics and the Orthodox Church as well as Protestants. We wanted to speak with one voice.” And according to Bishop William, the new Coptic Orthodox Pope’s actions reveal a commitment to ecumenism.

He said: “Pope Tawadros has shown from the very beginning that he wishes to come closer to the other Churches.

“Just after the election of Pope Francis he pushed for a meeting on 10th May – that is the 40th anniversary of the meeting between Pope Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III.

“Now it isn’t easy to obtain an audience in the Vatican at short notice. But great efforts were made to meet Tawadros’ wishes.

“I think that this really is a watershed. Tawadros is quite different from his predecessor Shenouda as far as the ecumenical movement is concerned.”

GREEK CATHOLIC HEAD ‘OUR CHURCH IS A THORN IN THE SIDE FOR THOSE WHO DO NOT SEEK TRUE UNITY’

14 May 2013,



10:28 | UGCC http://risu.org.ua/en/index/all_news/catholics/ugcc/52

“Reconciliation between our churches will help the Russian and Ukrainian people understand one another. As often happens between neighbors, we have many mutual historical problems, but we cannot build a future without Christian communication. The process of reconciliation will also help overcome Ukrainophobia in Russia and stop the Russification of Ukraine,” Patriarch Sviatoslav Shevchuk, head of the Ukrainian Greek

Catholic Church (UGCC), said in an interview with KAI (Catholic Information Agency).

Talking about the relationship of the UGCC with the UOC-MP, the head of the church said that until now there has only been informal discussion. “Furthermore, we believe that we are the heirs of the same tradition of the Kyivan Church, that we originate from the same Baptism of Rus’, the 1025th anniversary of which we are celebrating this year,” he said.

Now, according to the head of the UGCC, Greek Catholics seek understanding and reconciliation with the Orthodox to “keep to their roots and bear witness to Christ.”

As for ecumenical cooperation of the UGCC, Patriarch Sviatoslav said that in this respect the testimonies of the UGCC martyrs are important because they were “martyrs for the unity of the church.”

“Our church is a thorn in the side for those who do not seek true unity. My predecessor, Cardinal Lubomyr Husar, said that the biggest obstacle to the unity of the church is that not everyone wants it. We feel it is not good when we are separated, in the Catholic Church, and in relations with the Orthodox. Our mission is to remind about our unity,” he continued.

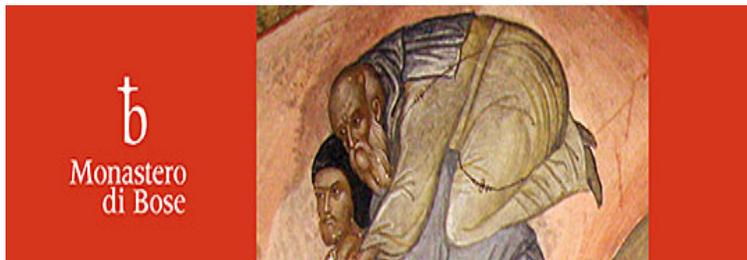
The Primate of the UGCC supported his statement with an example. He said Metropolitan Hilarion, head of the Department for External Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, said that the Orthodox Church is interested in forming a strategic alliance with the Catholic Church to come together and bear witness to traditional moral values. However, according to the metropolitan, we have to tolerate each other, work together, but not unite.

“I was recently in Istanbul, where I met with Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople. I was surprised by his openness and desire to unite our churches. He did not treat us as Uniates that interfere with the Orthodox-Catholic dialogue. We saw the great patriarch and his desire to seek church unity,” said the Patriarch Sviatoslav.

According to the Primate of the UGCC, Greek Catholics should seriously think about how to do the will of Jesus Christ, “so that all may be one.”

Chapter paid dues list for 2013

Br. Dom, Br. Peter, Fr. Rohan, Binsley, Comichista, Limbert, Fr. Manning, Billcheck, Msgr. Appleyard, Knoop, Beri & Chris Berardi, Deckant, Msgr. Siffrin, Benedictine-Byzantine Sisters, Fr. Hilinski, Carchedi, Fr. Gage, Bishop John Michael (Botean), Stanislaw, Peter & Norma Kopko, Nakley & Katz, Mattiussi, Chorbishop Michael Kail, Fr. Rick, Fr. Loveless, Msgr. Spinosa, Hudak, L. Demiduk, Sleever, Elsey, Fr. Edwards, Fr. Mastroberte, Fr. Denas, Fr. Rudjak, Jim & Esther Dershaw, Fr. Witmer, Fr. Schmidt.



Ecumenical Vocation

<http://www.monasterechevetogne.com/index.php?taalkeuze=3>

The community of Chevetogne was founded in 1925 by a pioneer of ecumenism in the Roman Catholic Church, Dom Lambert Beauduin. Ever since its foundation the Abbey strives to be a center of prayer, of meeting and theological study.

The monks are liturgically organized in two groups, one celebrating according to the Western tradition, the other according to the Eastern Byzantine



tradition. This has been the fundamental option from the very beginning, the two rites having been adopted for ecumenical reasons, in view of the reconciliation between the Christian East and West. In this way the community wishes to embody the primacy of prayer. It is prayer that unites every person, through a laborious path of conversion, as it prepares our communities and Churches to receive fully the gift of unity.

Truly if it is necessary to know one another before there can be mutual appreciation, the first step to reconciliation is to learn from the other who he is. From the very beginning the community of Chevetogne has been committed to learning from the Christian East, particularly from the Russian Orthodox Church. The Liturgy is celebrated mainly in Slavonic, and sometimes in Greek.

Close relations with the Oriental Orthodox Churches, with the Anglican Communion and the Protestant Churches allow the monks in their daily prayer to be with all the disciples of Christ in the common supplication for the communion between the Churches.

The Maronite Monks of Adoration

A Catholic community of contemplative monks dedicated to a life of prayer and Eucharistic Adoration.

The Maronite Monks of Most Holy Trinity Monastery are a Catholic community of contemplative monks dedicated to a life of prayer and Eucharistic Adoration—a life of religious reparation and penance for souls—that is, for our brothers and sisters in the world, especially those in most need of our prayers. We are a cloistered, contemplative community in which there is an harmonious fusion of (Continue next page)

Since 1993 for more than twenty years now, the Monastery of Bose in Italy, has been a meeting place for Christians from East and West wishing to discuss aspects of Christian spirituality.

H. H. the Ecumenical Patriarch **Bartholomew I**, faithful friend of our community since longtime, announced that he will visit us once more, together with his delegation, on **Tuesday, 14 May 2013**, in the afternoon.

His arrival at Bose is scheduled for 4:00-4:30 pm. Celebration of vespers in the church of the monastery will follow.

21st INTERNATIONAL ECUMENICAL CONFERENCE ON ORTHODOX SPIRITUALITY

in collaboration with the Orthodox Churches
THE AGES OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE
Monastery of Bose, 4-7 September 2013

Can the Orthodox monastic tradition provide us with useful indications on the relation between the successive ages of human life and the ages of the spiritual life? What relation is there between youth and spiritual fervor, between middle age and service to one's neighbor, between old age and Christian hope, in sickness and death? These are so many questions that the conference will address...

LECTURERS: Iosif of Patara, Maxim of Western America, M. Zeltov, A. Arjakovsky, J. Behr, S. Brock, A. Desnickij, M. Evdokimov,
P. Giorgi, A. Louth, M. Marković,
A. Papanthassiou, M. Van Parys, N. Pavlyk,
S. Paschalidis, A. Plesu, N. Russell,
K. Sigov, V. Thermos, P. Vassiliadis.

PRAY FOR UNITY OF THE APOSTOLIC CHURCHES

cenobitic and eremitical living. This life of adoration and penance overflows to others by making possible to all God's People in the local community the opportunity for:

- Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
- Sharing in the Liturgy of Divine Office

- Participating in the Divine Liturgy of the Mass

“As true sons of the Church and of Our Father, St. Maron, we reverence whole-heartedly and submit unhesitatingly to the teaching of our Holy Father, the Pope, the Patriarch with the Patriarchal Synod of Bishops and the Eparchial Bishop of the Eparchy of St. Maron of Brooklyn, who represent the Magisterium of the Church in diverse degrees.”

(Typicon of Most Holy Trinity Monastery, Article 7)

“The particular goal of the Maronite Monks of Most Holy Trinity is to participate in the hidden and suffering life of Jesus Christ. The spirit of the community is especially to consist in this: that it is joined to Christ as a body appropriated by Him in His love and adoration of the Father and pouring out of Himself in love for His brothers.” (Typicon, from the Introduction)

“The call of the desert, a call to the enclosed, monastic vocation, is its own reason for existence; it needs no other justification. Its contemplative life is essentially a life of intense and habitual companionship with God. It is judged by no other measure than that it be genuinely and truly contemplative.”

(Typicon, Article 17)

Founded in 1978, the Maronite Monks of the Most Holy Trinity were canonically approved by the Vatican and established in the Eparchy of St. Maron on September 8, 1989. The monastery is situated in a quiet part of central Massachusetts bordering the Quabbin Reservoir in the town of Petersham.

Our Eastern Brothers

5/1/2013

An interview with Archbishop Stefan Soroka about Eastern Catholicism, Orthodoxy and traditions by Alton J. Pelowski

A number of Eastern-rite bishops were among the nearly 200 members of the hierarchy who gathered to concelebrate the opening Mass of the Order's 126th Supreme Convention Aug. 5, 2008, in Quebec City.

Since Roman Catholics comprise the vast majority of the world's more than 1 billion Catholics, most



people today think the Catholic Church and the Roman Catholic Church are synonymous terms. However, there are some 22 Eastern Catholic Churches, which have their own ancient traditions and customs. In the early centuries of Christianity, disagreements and controversies regarding authority, traditions and theological nuances began to grow between the Greek-speaking East, centered in Constantinople, and the Latin-speaking West, centered in Rome. This eventually resulted in the East-West Schism, also called the Great Schism, of 1054. Because the Eastern Catholic Churches were once associated with the Eastern Orthodox Church, they share common elements with Orthodoxy in things like language, liturgy and artistic traditions. Nonetheless, they remain in full communion with Rome.

In recent decades, Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI have encouraged a greater appreciation of Eastern traditions among Latin-rite Catholics and have also sought to improve dialogue with Eastern Orthodox leaders. With this in mind Columbia's managing editor, Alton Pelowski, interviewed Archbishop Stefan Soroka of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Eparchy of Philadelphia. Archbishop Soroka is a native of Winnipeg, Manitoba, and a member of Bishop Stephen Soter Orzynsky Council 14088 in Philadelphia.

Columbia: What is the distinction between Eastern and Western Catholicism?

Archbishop Soroka: Essentially, the faith that Eastern Catholics proclaim is the same as that of the larger Catholic Church, but we convey our faith, our spirituality, in a different way. For example, there are differences in the way our liturgy is celebrated and in our liturgical vestments. There are differences in the architectural style of the churches. When our church, the Ukrainian Catholic Church, came back under the Holy Father in 1596, there was a provision in the agreement which stated that the Ukrainian Catholic Church's rites and traditions would be respected.

Columbia: How does Eastern Orthodoxy differ from Eastern Catholicism?

Archbishop Soroka: The major issue pertains to the role of Peter, the Petrine tradition and how the bishop recognizes the primacy of the pope of Rome. There are also minor theological differences. For example, Orthodox don't (Continue next page)

look at purgatory in the same way that Catholics do. Beyond that, the faith that we proclaim is essentially the same.

In fact, the Eastern Ukrainian Catholic Church meets annually with the Ukrainian Orthodox Church for a few days. Theologians focus on what we have in common as opposed to where we're different. It's amazing how our perceptions are perhaps more of a blockade than any real differences.



Columbia: What are some of the more common Eastern Catholic Churches, particularly in North America?

Archbishop Soroka: Interestingly, America is quite unique in the world. We have 18 of the 22 Eastern Catholic Churches, which come from different traditions. Most have bishops, and some of them serve as bishop of all of America, even Canada. Others have a number of eparchies, or dioceses, within the United States. The largest tradition is the Byzantine tradition. There are also the Syro-Malankar and the Syro-Malabar Churches from India, and different smaller churches. We gather annually at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and now have a separate region. We also gather annually for a meeting in April at the Maronite Center in St. Louis.

Columbia: You are currently serving as Ukrainian Catholic archbishop of Philadelphia. Unlike a Roman Catholic diocese, your archeparchy spans a much larger area. How does that work?

Archbishop Soroka: As archbishop, I cover a territory from Eastern Pennsylvania down to Virginia. I'm also the metropolitan for the U.S.A. We have four eparchies. I have 70 parishes spread over six states, so it is more difficult to build a sense

of community. Our communities are also dispersing. With the new immigration that has been coming from Eastern Europe, people have tended to settle in different areas where we often don't have parishes. We're developing some new mission parishes, which is exciting, but we are also seeing that our membership is slowly decreasing in some population centers.

Columbia: Iconography is prominent amid Eastern Christianity's rich liturgical and artistic traditions. What exactly are icons?

Archbishop Soroka: In today's sense of the computer world, everybody knows what an icon is, right? You click on it, and it's a portal to something else. I like to use that imagery even for religious icons, in the sense that they are a portal to the heavenly kingdom, a peek into the divine, a window into heaven. Icons very much invite us, as we sit and meditate and pray before them, to see through them, to see what they're portraying to us. They are teaching images, too. They may portray something from Scripture, a feast or a saint — teaching and evangelizing through the symbolism they depict, while at the same time taking us to the other world, in a sense.

Columbia: The Blessed Virgin Mary seems to play a prominent role in iconography. Are there differences between the portrayal of Mary in the East and West?

Archbishop Soroka: There are some differences, such as the colors that are used to represent Our Lady. In Eastern icons, Mary is usually wearing a blue garment and is covered with a red cape — the blue representing humanity and the red representing divinity. If you look at icons of Christ, he is wearing red, the divinity, and he puts on the blue cape, which represents the humanity that he takes on. In the East, in particular, the Mother of God is portrayed holding Christ Jesus in a way that her arms become the seat of wisdom. In Latin traditions, you will often see her portrayed by herself. In the Eastern churches, however, she almost always has Christ in her arms, and she is always looking to him as he looks to us, to the world. We always see Mary as the Theotokos, the bearer of God.

The tradition to venerate Mary in a special way during the month of May is very much a Latin tradition. Our churches have taken on that tradition, but Mary is always part (Continue next page)

of the entire journey throughout the liturgical year. If you walk into any (Eastern) church, you see that Mary is predominant in all of the imagery and icons. In the liturgy, after the words of consecration, for example, the first prayer is commemorating the Mother of God.

Columbia: Are there other notable differences of emphasis in Eastern iconography and traditions?

Archbishop Soroka: The art of the Latin Church, it might be said, stresses the humanity of Jesus, whereas we stress the divinity of Jesus; it comes across differently.

Even in the feasts, there is a slightly different emphasis. Eastern churches celebrate the Annunciation of the Mother of God, putting emphasis on who is receiving the message. The Latin Church refers to the Annunciation of Our Lord. Similarly, we have the feast of the Conception by St. Anne on Dec. 9, as opposed to the feast of the Immaculate Conception on Dec. 8.

There are some cultural differences even among the Eastern churches. In Eastern Europe, for example, we use gold more often as the background of the icons, stressing the heavenly light of Christ. In the Middle East, on the other hand, you have more use of the color green, which is a sacred color of that area.

Columbia: Pope John Paul II emphasized that the Church must breathe with “two lungs.” What did he mean by this statement?

Archbishop Soroka: I think what Blessed John Paul was trying to get across was the idea that the Eastern and Western traditions are dependent on each other. The Church is richer for it; we have something to offer one another in our spirituality, our prayer and our journey to come closer to our Lord. It’s important for Eastern Catholics to take on our duty to inform the Latin Church more, and for the Latin Church to become more aware of this other “lung” of the Church. This would also then help us ecumenically with the Orthodox world. Many Latin-rite Catholics do not know that, in certain situations, according to the Code of Canon Law, they can receive sacraments from the Orthodox Church. The fact that Catholics are allowed to do this says so much about what we have in common.

Columbia: How have recent popes emphasized dialogue and ecumenism with Eastern Orthodox Churches that are not in communion with Rome?

Archbishop Soroka: I think John Paul introduced much of that dialogue to create mutual understanding and respect between the churches, and Pope Benedict very much encouraged it. As a result, we have come to understand one another better, and have come to understand that our misperceptions are perhaps greater than the real differences.

Pope Francis, during his ministry as cardinal in Buenos Aires, certainly conveyed openness to the Eastern churches. They say that when he was a young student, he would make a point of getting up and serving as an acolyte for a Ukrainian Catholic priest. He learned our tradition, our rite, at a young age. Eventually, he was appointed the bishop for all the Eastern churches in Argentina until, in some cases, their respective bishops were assigned. He is very aware of the Eastern churches, and that’s tremendous.

The presence of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, who is called “first among equals” in the Eastern Orthodox churches, at Pope Francis’ installation Mass was a very hopeful sign. This never happened since the split in 1054. Nearly 1,000 years! And actions sometimes speak a lot louder than words. I think it was a loud proclamation expressing openness to ecumenical dialogue with the Holy Father and with that whole journey that John Paul and Benedict initiated and supported.

Columbia: What has been your involvement with the Knights of Columbus, especially in relation to Eastern Catholics?

Archbishop Soroka: I’m from Canada, and there we had tremendous involvement with Knights. The service they render to the Church is amazing. It has been a little bit more of a challenge for me to persuade Ukrainian Catholics and clergy here about the value of the Order, but I’m making headway on it.

The Knights have been a tremendous support for me and for pro-life programs and vocations. Even when our synod was held here in Philadelphia in 2007, welcoming Ukrainian Catholic bishops from around the world, the Knights came forward and helped. It was the first synod outside of Ukraine, and the Knights assisted all of the bishops who were challenged to pay the airfare, bringing them here for that meeting. They stepped forward far beyond what one could expect. (Continue next page)

I have been a state chaplain and very much value the work of the Knights. I don't think they ask much of us, and frankly I don't think we give them enough love and support for what they do.

And I'm very pleased about how receptive Knights have been to know more about Eastern traditions.

Even at the state convention once, there was provision for our liturgy in English to be celebrated as a state liturgy. That kind of openness is so inspiring. It speaks of breathing with two lungs.

Columbia: Do you plan to be involved with the next World Meeting of Families, which will be in Philadelphia in 2015?

Archbishop Soroka: Very much so. I've written to the cardinal in charge of that gathering and have also met with Archbishop [Charles J.] Chaput. We are very much committed to being fully involved and anticipate walking away from that gathering with even more energy and resourcefulness.

Building Bridges Between Orthodox and Catholic Christians

May 01, 2013

An interview with Archimandrite Robert Taft, SJ, prominent Byzantine liturgical theologian and lifelong healer of Christian relations between East and West

Christopher B. Warner



The April 22nd kidnapping of Syrian archbishops Mar Gregorios Ibrahim of the Syriac Orthodox Church and Paul Yazigi of the Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch, and the killing of their driver, has reminded us once

again of the vulnerability of ancient Christian peoples living in the Middle East. More than 1,000 Christians have been killed to date in the Syrian conflict and more than 80 churches have been destroyed. The majority of **Christians in Syria** are Greek or Syriac Orthodox or Melkite **Greek Catholic**. This recent violence in Syria can remind us to pray for suffering Christians in the Middle East and afford us the opportunity to practice solidarity with our Greek Catholic and Orthodox Christian brothers and sisters.

Catholic World Report had the recent privilege of asking Archimandrite Robert Taft, SJ for his perspective on current Orthodox-Catholic relations. Father Taft has been the leading scholar in Byzantine liturgical studies for decades. Taft has devoted his life to preserving the liturgical treasury of the East and building bridges between Orthodox and Catholic Christians. As a young Jesuit, Taft first became interested in the liturgical traditions of the Christian East while teaching at the Baghdad Jesuit College in Iraq (1956-1959).

In 1963, Taft was ordained a Catholic priest of the Byzantine Slavonic (Russian) Rite. He is Professor-emeritus of Oriental Liturgy at the Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome, where he received his doctorate in 1970 and remained to teach for 38 years. The Oriental Institute is the most prestigious institute in the world for Eastern Christian studies.

A prolific writer, his bibliography comprises more than 800 articles and 26 books, including *A History of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom* (vols. II-VI), *Orientalia Christiana Analecta*, Rome, 1978-2013. Several of his writings have been translated into other languages.

Taft is the personal friend of many prominent Orthodox scholars, living and deceased, like Father Alexander Schmemmann and Father John Meyendorff. He has many friends in and ties to the Russian Orthodox community, where he is admired and respected. For example, he directed the doctoral studies for both of St. Vladimir Seminary's liturgical professors: Paul Meyendorff and Father Alexander Rentel.

CWR: Father Robert, thank you very much for your willingness to share with us some of your recent thoughts on Eastern Christian ecumenism.

Many people who are sensitive to Orthodox-Catholic dialogue noticed that when Pope Francis appeared on the balcony a month ago, he was not only very humble, but spoke of the Church of Rome as the Church "which presides in love" and referred to himself as the bishop of Rome concerned for the Christians of Rome. These past few weeks he has definitely set the tone for his pontificate.

This quotation from the second-century letter of St. Ignatius of Antioch to the Roman Church, "which presides in love," could not (Continue next page)

have been coincidence considering Pope Francis' noteworthy sensitivities to Eastern Christian ecclesiology. Plus, the historically unprecedented response to Francis' election in the form of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew's attendance at the papal installation Mass seems to mark Pope Francis as another welcomed bridge-builder between East and West. As an aside, I think it is beautiful that *pontifex* means "bridge-builder" in Latin. Perhaps Pope Francis will bring a new understanding of that title through his ecumenical dialogue and his local focus on the duties of the bishop of Rome? Could you comment on how you think Pope Francis' humble "style" will be viewed by Orthodox Christians?

Taft: Pope Francesco is making a wonderful impression on most of the world by just being himself, the self of a real Christian in love, not with himself or his image, but with what real Christians love... God and all His creatures He died to save, especially the poor and needy and downtrodden. This has come across clearly to all of us, including Orthodox I know, who as real Christians can spot a fellow-Christian a mile away.

In addition, even more interesting from the ecumenical perspective is Francesco's emphasis on his primary title, "Bishop of Rome." Because a prelate's title to his primacy comes from his local primatial see, not from some personal or super-imposed ecclesiological distinction. I can't imagine that any of our attentive Orthodox observers have missed that!

CWR: Most Catholics probably envision future unity between the Orthodox Churches and the Catholic Church as a re-installment of one world Church organization with the pope of Rome at the top of the governing pyramid. A look at history shows that such a model never existed, so what could Orthodox-Catholic communion actually look like if it were achieved? A renewal of Eucharistic communion? The possibility of an eighth ecumenical council? A resolution for the dating of Pascha/Easter?

Taft: What it would look like is not a "reunion" with them "returning to Rome," to which they never belonged anyway; nor us being incorporated by them, since we are all ancient apostolic "**Sister Churches**" with a valid episcopate and priesthood and the full panoply of sacraments needed to minister salvation to our respective faithful, as is proclaimed in the renewed Catholic ecclesiology since Vatican II and enshrined in numerous papal documents from Paul VI on, as well as in the wonderful *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. So we just need to restore our broken communion and the rest of the problems you mention can be addressed one by one and resolved by common accord.

CWR: According to the most recent joint statement of the **North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological**

Consultation (2010), future communion would include several key elements

Mutual recognition: The numerous Orthodox Churches and the Catholic Church would have to "explicitly recognize each other as authentic embodiments of the one Church of Christ, founded on the apostles";

A common confession of faith: The "*Filioque*" ought to be dropped in order to reflect the common *Confession of Faith* "canonized at the Council of Constantinople in 381";

Accepted diversity: Orthodox-Catholic Christians would "live in full ecclesial communion with each other without requiring any of the parts to forego its own traditions and practices";

Liturgical sharing: "Members of all the Churches in communion would be able to receive the sacraments in the other Chu

Synodality/conciliarity: "Bishops of all the Churches would be invited to participate fully in any ecumenical councils that might be summoned. Synodality would operate at various levels of ecclesial institutions: local, regional, and worldwi

Mission: "As sister Churches, they would also engage in common efforts to promote the realization of a Christian moral vision in the world";

Subsidiarity: "Those elected to major episcopal or primatial offices would present themselves to other Church leaders at their level";

Renewal and reform. They would "commit themselves to continuing [Christian] renewal and growth—together."

The statement goes on to say, "Conscience holds us back from celebrating our unity as complete in sacramental terms, until it is complete in faith, Church structure, and common action." Can you clarify what you mean by "restoring our broken communion" so that the other existing problems "can be addressed one by one and resolved by common accord"? It seems like we already have "mutual recognition," "accepted diversity," and "mission"; what is the next step and how many steps will it take before we get to "liturgical sharing" which is what I think of when you say "broken communion"?

Taft: Yes, much that is put forward in this excellent historic document is already a reality or on the way to being so. For instance there is no "*Filioque*" in the Creed Russian Catholics chant in our Slavonic liturgy, and some years (Continue next page)

ago Rome issued a clarification of its Trinitarian belief about which the late French Orthodox theologian Olivier Clément said if that is the Catholic teaching on the issue then the problem has been resolved. As for “ecumenical councils,” the Catholic Church might specify more clearly its list of those, which as far as I know we have never defined. Are the purely Roman Catholic post-schism councils to be considered ecumenical councils of the undivided Church? If so, says who?

CWR: How could the papal claims of Rome be modified in a way that would be both acceptable to the Orthodox Churches and faithful to the tradition of the Catholic Church? Do you think the jurisdiction issue really is a hang-up for the Orthodox since they also practice cross-jurisdiction throughout Western Europe, the Americas, Australia, and East Asia?

Taft: The new Catholic “Sister Churches” ecclesiology describes not only how the Catholic Church views the Orthodox Churches. It also represents a startling revolution in how the Catholic Church views itself: we are no longer the only kid on the block, the whole Church of Christ, but one Sister Church among others. Previously, the Catholic Church saw itself as the original one and only true Church of Christ from which all other Christians had separated for one reason or another in the course of history, and Catholics held, simplistically, that the solution to divided Christendom consisted in all other Christians returning to Rome’s maternal bosom. Vatican II, with an assist from those Council Fathers with a less naïve Disney-World view of their own Church’s past, managed to put aside this historically ludicrous, self-centered, self-congratulatory perception of reality. In doing so they had a strong assist from the Council Fathers of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church whose concrete experience of the realities of the Christian East made them spokesmen and defenders of that reality.

In this context I would recommend the excellent new book by Robert Louis Wilken, *The First Thousand Years: A Global History of Christianity* (New Haven & London: Yale U. Press 2012). Professor Wilken, a convert to Catholicism who is a recognized expert on Early Christianity and its history and literature, shows that Early Christianity developed not out of some Roman cradle but as a federation of local Churches, Western and Eastern,

each one under the authority of a chief hierarch who would come to be called Archbishop, Pope, Patriarch, or Catholicos, each with its own independent governing synod and polity, all of them initially in communion with one another until the vicissitudes of history led to lasting divisions.

CWR: Many Orthodox theologians claim that even if the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople or the Patriarch of Moscow were to unite with Rome tomorrow, the lay faithful and the monastics would probably not accept it and therefore there would be no actual union. Given the history of Lyons and Florence do you think this is true, or has the Orthodox mood changed recently?

Taft: Part of the problem is that some Orthodox do not instruct their people adequately and update them, so ecumenical progress on the upper level often does not filter down to the ordinary faithful. In addition of course, there is the problem of the bigotry of many of the monastics and others towards anyone who is not Orthodox. On how they square this with what Christianity is supposed to be according to Jesus’ explicit teaching in the New Testament, we still await their explanation. One Catholic remedy for this—its usefulness proven by the rage it provokes in the exposed bigots—is the factual diffusion of their views, objectively and without editorial comment, in publications like *Irénikon* in French, or in English Father Ronald Roberson’s highly informative monthly *SEIA Newsletter on the Eastern Churches and Ecumenism*, distributed gratis to subscribers via email and eventually preserved for permanent reference in the *Eastern Churches Journal*. These publications just give the news without comment, including quotations from the bigots permanently recorded for posterity, thereby exposing them to the public embarrassment they merit. This is especially important for some representatives of Orthodoxy who speak out of both sides of their mouth, saying one thing at international ecumenical venues, and quite another for the consumption of Orthodox audiences or in publications they do not expect the non-Orthodox to read.

CWR: You mentioned the fact that documenting statements from Orthodox representatives has the potential to nail down the real arguments and eradicate equivocation. How has modern technology, especially the Internet, helped (or hindered) ecumenical (Continue next page)

dialogue?

Taft: Anything that helps spread the news and the flood of ever-new documentation on inter-church relations can only be viewed positively. And it is a mistake to think that this is not true in countries of the less-developed so-called “third world,” where those interested in the rest of the world are often more computer-literate than those of us in the West. Some of my Orthodox friends in far away countries are computer whizzes compared to me!

CWR: It seems as though Western Catholic theologians have been interested in Eastern theology for the past 1,500 years and have generally sought to integrate it into their own theology. On the other hand, many modern Eastern Orthodox theologians are very leery about anything Western and have furthermore severed themselves from their roots in Hellenic philosophy. Is this statement accurate? Is this a recent phenomenon? And are there any schools of Eastern Orthodox theology that do not see the integration of Western theology and philosophical inquiry as a threat to Eastern theology?

Taft: First of all, the roots of ALL of us include a Neo-Platonic heritage that no one has abandoned in East or West since it is part of Christianity’s DNA, so drop that notion. As for Orthodox theologians, we must distinguish the second-stringers from the best ones. Lest my list be endless, let me mention just a few in each Orthodox Church who are fully conversant with present western Catholic theology. Among the Greeks: Metropolitans Kallistos Ware and Ioannes Zizioulas, Archpriest Stefanos Alexopoulos, Prof. Pantelas Kalaitzidis of Volos, and the professors of Holy Cross Hellenic Greek College in Brighton, Massachusetts. Among the Russian Orthodox: Metropolitan Ilarion Alfayev, Sr. Dr. Vassa Larin, Protoierej Mixail Zheltov, and numerous others. Then in the USA we have the Professors of St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Seminary of the OCA, and on and on. So there are in fact plenty of top Orthodox theologians *au courant* in modern non-Orthodox theological thought.

About the Author

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The CWR Blog

"Sister Churches": A Clarification

May 02, 2013 12:15 EST

By Michael J. Miller

I met the Right Reverend Archimandrite Robert Taft, S.J., at an Eastern-rite monastery that I was visiting in 1985. The community was still in the refectory, whereas I happened to be near the vestibule, so I was the one who went to the front door when he rang. There was a moment of confusion: I had had no idea that the monks were expecting such a renowned guest, and the guest may have expected a more formal reception. Yet it was fitting that a Jesuit scholar of the Byzantine liturgy should be greeted by a “porter” whose father was Ukrainian Catholic and whose mother was of the Latin rite.

With all due respect to Abouna [Father] Robert, who for decades has served the Catholic Church well as an erudite scholar and a tireless ecumenist, he insistently uses the expression “Sister Churches” in a way that could easily be misleading in his recent interview with Catholic World Report. The editor helpfully linked the expression to a page that thoroughly explains the significance of “particular Churches” in post-Vatican-II ecclesiology. For those who have neither the patience nor the theological training to synthesize the wealth of information on that page, this blog post may help clarify the matter.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church begins its teaching about the article of faith from the Creed, “I believe in the holy catholic Church,” with a few notes on terminology. “In Christian usage, the word ‘church’ designates [1] the liturgical assembly, but also [2] the local community or [3] the whole universal community of believers. These three meanings are inseparable” (CCC 752). In everyday conversation we move easily and without confusion among these different meanings. “We went to church this morning [1].” “I’m registered at the Church of the Annunciation [2].” “Christ promised to be with His Church always [3].” Because a diocese is normally headed by a bishop, who has the fullness of Holy Orders, while a parish is usually headed by a priest, in theological discussion the second usage of “Church” usually refers to a “local Church” or a “particular Church”. In the Latin rite this is called a diocese or an archdiocese; “eparchy” and “archeparchy” are names for it in the Byzantine rite. The relations between this “mid-sized” (Continue next page)

Church [2] and the other two connotations of “Church” can be discerned in the New Testament and are stated clearly as early as the second century in the Letters of Saint Ignatius. The local Church exists—for example, in Philadelphia or in Ephesus—for the sake of liturgical worship, which inaugurates and sustains the life of grace in Christians; moreover the Eucharist and even the sacrament of marriage is always to be celebrated in union with the local bishop (i.e. with his approval if he does not actually preside). The connection between the local Church [2] and the universal Church [3] is evident in Ignatius’ insistence on the unity of faith and the reality of Christ’s [Mystical] Body.

The expression “Sister Churches” is not theological but historical and (in recent years) diplomatic. Fr. Adriano Garuti, O.F.M., a professor of ecclesiology and ecumenism who has served with the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, writes: “The intention behind such language is the establishment of the reality of sister Churches as a possible way to ‘envisage reunion among divided traditions as a family reconciliation’.... One does get the impression, however, that a certain ambiguity and lack of continuity prevail in the use of the term.” The uses and misuses of this expression are examined in depth in his essay “Sister Churches: Reality and Questions” (reprinted in the book *Primacy of the Bishop of Rome and the Ecumenical Dialogue* by the same author.)

The early Church in the East was organized not only by locality but regionally. A “Metropolia” united several local eparchies and/or archeparchies in an administrative unit. Within such a unit, two neighboring eparchies would be regarded as “Daughter Churches” of the Metropolia and therefore “Sister Churches” to one another. Fr. Garuti notes “the special sensibility of the Eastern Christians for the fraternity that exists among the individual [local] Churches [2]”. He immediately goes on to add, however, that “when it is a question of the principles on which to build unity, ... the [Universal Catholic] Church [3] cannot be considered a sister [e.g. to the Orthodox Churches (2)], but rather the Mother of the local Churches.”

When Pope Francis referred to himself as “the Bishop of Rome” in his first public speech on the balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica, he was humbly acknowledging that in the first place he had been elected the Bishop of Rome, a local Church. As Bishop of Rome he can greet Orthodox bishops of other localities as “brother bishops”, since they head “sister Churches [2]”. But the Bishop of Rome is also *ex officio* the Pastor of the Universal Church [3], and there is no corresponding office or “unit” in the Orthodox world, nor could there ever be.

Joseph Ratzinger pointed this out as early as 1966, just after the completion of the Second Vatican Council. At a Catholic Conference in Bamberg he urged caution when speaking about “the Churches” in the plural, warning against “a euphoria ... that forgets to make difficult demands on itself and overlooks the fact that the Catholic Church dares and must dare to take the paradoxical position of attributing to herself in a unique way the singular form, ‘the Church’ [3], despite and in the midst of the plurality [2] she has accepted.” (Quoted in *Joseph Ratzinger: Life in the Church and Living Theology* by Maximilian Heinrich Heim.) Because it can lead to misunderstandings between Catholics and Orthodox, Joseph Ratzinger scrupulously avoided the expression “Sister Churches” in his extensive writings on ecumenism.

In conclusion: the Right Rev. Archimandrite Robert Taft is not the only ecclesiologist on the block. If he had used the expression “particular Churches” in his interview, he would have been more accurate, because that (and not “Sister Churches”) is the expression that has been enshrined in the Catechism and in post-conciliar Catholic ecclesiology.

What is a Skete?

The word skete comes from 'ascetic' and originally meant a place where a number of ascetics lived together. Ascetic is a very ancient term, used to designate people dedicated to prayer and fasting - long before the ascetics became known as monks and nuns.

The two monastic Rules of St. Basil are both called 'Asketicon' - a manual of ascetic practises. The most famous early skete was actually called Sketis.

Why Do We Need Sketes?

The skete is traditionally the link between the coenobium - the monastery where monks and nuns live communally - and the hermitage, where one person lives alone. In the early church, it was the house of formation for the hermits of the monastery.

Today there is a huge gap between monks and nuns living in community and 'freelance' hermits. The skete is the 'missing link' we need to put back into monastic life. Why a Benedictine Skete?

St. Benedict, in Chapter 1 of his Rule, 'The Kinds of Monks,' clearly intends hermits to be formed in community 'and go from the battle line in the ranks of their brethren to the single combat of the desert.' Today cenobitic monasteries normally exclude the eremitic life. Benedict’s Rule is the gold standard of western monasticism. Benedictine sketes can turn his directive into reality, by restoring the tradition of communal foundation for the eremitical life.