

light of the east



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

Dear Members and Friends,
It has been decided for various reasons, including summer vacations, that our chapter meeting schedule will be adjusted. Instead of a July meeting we will have a regular October meeting. The total number of regular meetings will still be six. Special meetings and events can be scheduled at other times. Our next regular meeting will be in September.

Chapter dues 2015 paid: Demiduk, Fr. Conoboy, Fr. Rohan, Br. Calabro, Br. Scalise, Sleever, Tavolario, Billcheck, Sarantopoulos, Limbert, Fr. Gage, Carchedi, Fr. Hilinski, Joan Binsley, Jenna Binsley, Fr. Schmidt, Chorbishop Kail, Msgr. Spinosa, Fr. Bleahu, Jim Dershaw, Esther Dershaw, Beri Berardi, Chris Berardi, Kolitsos, Basista, Jacquet, Borak, Msgr. Siffrin, Fr. Manning, Fr. Feicht, Fr. Witmer, Mattiussi, Fr. Rudjak, Perantinides, Benedictine Sisters, Hudak, Comichista, Chiu, Fr. Fiala, Fr. Loveless, Vasilchek, Nakley, Katz, Democko, Deckant.

MEMORIAL

A monetary contribution has been made to our chapter by Vito and Donna Carchedi in memory of member **Martha Hodges Katz** who passed April 25, 2015. May her Memory be Eternal! (Any future contributions in memory of those you want to commemorate will be listed in our newsletter.)

WHO ARE WE?

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

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

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

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

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

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

PRAY TO THE HOLY SPIRIT FOR UNITY!

Ecumenism of relics

From: Peter Anderson (edited by LOE)



There have been many references recently, especially in view of the martyrdom of Christians in the Middle East, to the “ecumenism of blood.” However, yesterday (Sunday) there was a vivid demonstration of an “ecumenism of relics.” The relics of Saint Great Martyr Barbara were brought from Venice to Greece for a 15-day visit. The relics are normally kept in the chapel of St. Barbara in the Church of St. Martin of Tours on the island of Burano (not to be confused with the island of Murano), an island in the Venetian Lagoon, a few kilometers from Venice. The relics were given by Byzantine Emperor Basil II to the family of the Doge of Venice in approximately 1003. Unfortunately, in recent years these relics have not received the attention that they should. In December 2000, the relics were brought to Rome, were given special honors by the Italian Navy, and were made available for veneration at the Basilica of St. John Lateran. On a trip to Venice in 2007, Metropolitan (now Patriarch) Kirill came to Burano and venerated the relics. Local firefighters have conducted services before the relics. St. Barbara is a patroness of firefighters, sailors, and artillerymen.

The journey of the relics of St. Barbara to Greece is the first occasion that these relics have left Italy in over 1,000 years. It was arranged by the Apostolic Diakonia of the Orthodox Church of Greece with the blessing of Archbishop Moraglia, the Catholic patriarch of Venice. The relics were formally received by a delegation of the Church of Greece in a ceremony at St. Mark’s Basilica in Venice. An honor guard was provided by cadets of the Italian Naval Academy. The relics were then taken by private aircraft to Athens.

The reception of these relics in Greece has been quite amazing. The relics were met at the Athens airport with the honors of a Head of State. The relics were then taken to the Church of St. Barbara located in a suburb west of Athens. The Livestream video of the very large and colorful procession to the church can be seen at. I think that you will enjoy spending a few minutes watching this procession.

Archbishop Ieronymos, primate of the Church of Greece, was present. You can also see Msgr. Andrea Palmieri of the Pontifical Council for



Promoting Christian Unity in the background. There are plans to bring the relics to a cancer

hospital in Athens. The SYRIZA’s parliamentary spokesperson, Nikos Filis, has attacked this action by the Church as conveying a false message to patients that medicine can be replaced.

The relics will depart on 24 May from the port of Piraeus. This will probably involve the participation of the very outspoken conservative Metropolitan Seraphim of Piraeus. (Continue next page)

Here, the “ecumenism of relics” will be subject to a real test as Metropolitan Seraphim considers any form of ecumenism to be a heresy.

The visit of the relics of St. Barbara to Greece has become one of the biggest religious events in that country in recent years. Because of the great number of people seeking to venerate the relics, Archbishop Ieronymos, primate of the Orthodox Church of Greece, has made a special request to the Vatican and to the Catholic Patriarch of Venice to extend the visit of the relics to Greece from May 24 to June 1. A Catholic deacon, who is accompanying the relics during this visit to Greece, has stated in an interview his amazement at the outpouring of piety and devotion that he has with. He stated: “Here I saw faith, because people have been standing here for hours in line under the sun and thirsty in order to arrive and touch the relic for one second and kiss it, and touch their foreheads to it. I saw some people arrive here on their knees, parents bring their young children, I saw many young people, many older people, many disabled, I saw a very impressive people.” Today (Sunday) the relics arrived in Piraeus where they were welcomed with great joy by Metropolitan Serafim and the faithful in a very impressive procession.

Mosque dedicated to Virgin Mary opens in Tartous

The Daily Star

BEIRUT: The Syrian authorities have opened a mosque in the coastal city of Tartous dedicated to the Virgin Mary, state media said, calling it the only place of worship in the Islamic world bearing the name.

A host of officials were on hand for Saturday’s inauguration of the mosque, whose formal name is “al-Sayyida Maryam,” one of several Arabic names of the Virgin Mary.

The minister of awqaf, or religious charitable endowments, said the mosque’s construction symbolized the openness of Islam, in stark contrast to the “deviation” being seen today

thanks to takfiri extremists.

“Naming the mosque after al-Sayyida Maryam is but an expression of belief in the Holy Quran’s verses that bring [people] together and do not divide people based on religion or sect,” Mohammad Abdel-Sattar al-Sayyed said.

The mother of Jesus Christ is mentioned in



several suras of the Quran and a sura bearing her name is one of only eight named after a person.

THANKSGIVING SAID IN ROME, AT THE RELICS OF ST CYRIL, EQUAL-TO-THE-APOSTLES, ON THE NAME DAY OF THE PRIMATE OF RUSSIAN CHURCH



On 24 May 2015, Name Day of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, a thanksgiving was said at the holy relics of St Cyril, Equal-to-the-Apostles, Teacher of the Slavs, in the Basilica of St Clement in Rome. To continue the established tradition, the flock of the Patriarchal parishes in Rome, numerous pilgrims, and representatives of the Bulgarian, Serbian and (Continue next page)

Romanian Orthodox communities in the Italian capital gathered under the vaults of one of the oldest Christian churches in the Eternal City. Metropolitan Antonii of Central and Western Europe (Bulgarian Orthodox Church) officiated at the prayer service at the tomb of the holy enlightener of the Slavs. Concelebrating with him were Archimandrite Antony (Sevryuk), Secretary of the Administration of the Moscow Patriarchate's Parishes in Italy; Archpriest Vyacheslav Bachin, rector of the Church of St Nicholas in Rome; and clerics of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church's diocese in Western Europe. Among those who were praying at the service were Mr. Boyko Borisov, Bulgaria's Prime Minister; ambassadors of Bulgaria, Serbia, Romania and other countries, accredited to the Holy See; and over three hundred pupils studying at the Bulgarian educational institutions all over the world.

After the thanksgiving, "Many Years of Life" was sung in honour of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and His Holiness Patriarch Neofit of Bulgaria, the website of the Church of St Catherine in Rome reports. *DECR Communication Service*

ORIENTALE LUMEN SSJC NATIONAL

1. Marian Pilgrimage

The Orientale Lumen Foundation (past organizers of the Seminary Concert Tours, and the Ecumenical Pilgrimage that met Pope Francis and Patriarch Bartholomew in 2014) is sponsoring a **Marian Pilgrimage to Eastern Europe** on August 7-18, 2015. Because of many inquiries and positive responses to our planned itinerary, we have opened up the previously announced Young Adult Pilgrimage to **ALL age groups**.

The trip will include visits to the Marian Shrines of Litmanova and Lutina in Slovakia, and Mariapocs in Hungary; liturgies in the Cathedrals of Presov and Bratislava; tours of wooden churches and other cultural sites; and

joint fellowship activities with local Europeans. The land package is only \$1995 per person, double occupancy, and includes transportation, accommodations and some meals. Single rooms are available for an extra \$500. Airfare is extra. Registration and **\$500 deposit** is due by **May 15, 2015**.

For more details, and to register online, visit www.olconference.com and click on the **PILGRIMAGE** button. Or call [703-691-8862](tel:703-691-8862).

2. OL XIX in Washington

"The Bishop of Rome: Past, Present and Future"

The Orientale Lumen XIX Conference will be held on **June 15-18, 2015 in Washington, DC** on the theme of **"The Bishop of Rome: Past, Present and Future."** Speakers will discuss the historical dimensions of the papacy, the recent and current changes of Pope Francis, and what the future might be in a united Church. The plenary speakers who have confirmed their attendance include:

Metropolitan Kallistos of Diokleia

Patriarchate of Constantinople, Oxford, England

Bishop Bryan Bayda

Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

Archimandrite Robert Taft, SJ

Professor Emeritus, Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome

Msgr. Paul McPartlan, Acting Dean

The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC

Father Thomas Rosica

Salt and Light Television, Toronto, Ontario
The Holy See Press Office, The Vatican

Dr. Aristides Papadakis

Professor Emeritus, University of Maryland, Baltimore, MD

Father Ron Roberson, CSP (Moderator)

Ecumenical Affairs, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops More details and online registration at: www.olconference.com.

PUTIN, STALIN AND THE CHURCH

by Hannah Gais from Day celebration,
<http://www.firstthings.com/>



On Orthodox Easter, just weeks before Russia's seventieth Victory Russian Patriarch Kirill addressed scores of the faithful, including Russian President Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev. He likened the resurrection of Christ—who, in Orthodox parlance, “trampled down death by death”—to the Russian, née Soviet, victory over the Nazis.

“When spiritual heroism becomes the substance not only of the individual but of an entire people . . . the nation acquires enormous spiritual strength, which no disasters or enemies are capable of overcoming,” he **told** those gathered in Christ the Savior Cathedral in Moscow. “The truth of these words is evidently attested by the Victory in the Great Patriotic War, achieved by the self-sacrificing heroism of our people.”

Kirill's religious praise of Soviet victory is nothing new. Under Josef Stalin, the Soviet Union tried tapping into the nation's “enormous spiritual strength” by reviving the Orthodox Church in Russia, albeit in a limited capacity. Realizing the power the church had to unite Russia and its near abroad—and seeking to bring Nazi-controlled territory back

under Soviet influence, Stalin reinstated an institution he had once tried to destroy.

When Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, Soviet policy had driven the Russian Orthodox Church in Russia to near extinction. The Church had faced systematic oppression since the rise of the Communist state in 1917. Anti-religious campaigns in the 1920s and 1930s eliminated **tens of thousands of clergy** and shuttered theological schools, monasteries and most churches. Aside from the state-sanctioned “living church”—founded as part of a rapprochement with the Soviet state in 1922—religious activity went underground.

Yet, the German advance into Russia saw a religious revival—not least among communities harboring anti-Soviet, pro-nationalist, or even pro-Nazi views.

The church's transition from outcast to strategic tool began almost immediately after the Germans began moving east, when then-Acting Patriarch Sergey, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church and Metropolitan of Moscow, proclaimed the Church's support for the Soviet war effort. Stalin, a former seminarian, was no fan of religion, but he sought to unify those who weren't inspired to take up arms for the cause of Marxism-Leninism, and to eventually reorient these territories back toward Russia.

The Church gathered hundreds of thousands of rubles to fund the war effort. State agencies oversaw and sanctioned the printing of religious materials that were to be distributed in occupied territory. There were even word-of-mouth stories that religiosity had increased among soldiers, as well as one story that claims the icon of Our Lady of Kazan was put on a plane and **flown around Stalingrad to celebrate** the Soviet victory there.

The goal of reviving the Church was multifold. It showed the West that Russians were free to practice religion. It also provided an inclusive narrative. (Continue next page)

When church publications, such as *The Truth About Religion in Russia*, called for Russians to take up arms, they rarely spoke of defending the Soviet state or the Marxist-Leninist system. Rather, the war was a holy war for a fatherland that was not *Soviet* but *Russian*.

Not all were thrilled about returning to the sphere of Soviet, or even Russian, influence. “This presented the Soviets with a problem as they recovered these territories because these churches were nationalist, non-Russian. Some of them, particularly in western Ukraine, [were] ardently Ukrainian nationalist and strongly opposed to the return of Soviet power,” Steven Merrit Miner, author of *Stalin’s Holy War* and a professor at Ohio University, told me. “You want to get those clergy out and replace them with people who would be more obedient. That’s what the Russian Orthodox Church did. It’s a function to some degree of re-occupation of this swath of the Soviet Union that has undergone German occupation.”

So, on September 4, 1943, Stalin summoned Orthodox authorities in the dead of night to re-institute the office of the Moscow Patriarchate, which had been vacant since Patriarch Tikhon’s death in 1925, and prior to that, since Peter the Great. Days later, thousands poured into a Moscow cathedral to see Metropolitan Sergey be named patriarch. The atheistic USSR now had a church that operated under the watchful eye of the state.

Stalin’s instrumentalization of the Church has been revived by Putin. His “Russian world” concept, which views Russia as a transnational entity unconstrained by the Federation’s borders, received the **church’s imprimatur** in 2009. Here, **Kirill used the Kievan Rus’**, the predecessor to imperial Russia, and the coming of Christianity to the region in the tenth century as evidence that Russian identity was tied to the church’s historical jurisdiction.

Putin adapted Kirill’s appeal to imbue his invasion of Ukraine with spiritual significance. Crimea, where Vladimir the Great was said to have been baptized in the 10th century, has,

Putin **said**, sacred meaning “for Russia, like the Temple Mount in Jerusalem for Jews and Muslims.”

That narrative was a sideshow—**only a quarter of Russians are aware** that Christianity came to the region under Vladimir the Great. Still, Putin’s rhetoric, as Mykhailo

Cherenkov **noted** in *FIRST THINGS*, establishes Russian Orthodoxy as the bedrock for national identity. It makes sense for Putin and the church to tie Ukraine’s Orthodox Christian community spiritually and administratively to Moscow.

“For the Russian Orthodox Church in Ukraine, there are no other Orthodox churches—they are all impostors and

schismatics,” **writes** Cherenkov. “The [Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate] confirmed not only its spiritual, but also its political dependence on Moscow.”

Portraying the conflict among rival Orthodox churches in Ukraine as a war against the Ukrainian people has given rise to a movement that uses language redolent of that in texts like *The Truth About Religion in Russia*, where “schismatics” were those acting against the will of the state. The **Kremlin, then and now, is hellbent** on labeling Kiev as a haven for neo-Nazis and fascists.

Even Putin’s logic is similar to that of Stalin’s in the 1940s. Tying the Church to a larger nationalist narrative allows Putin to shift the balance of power away from self-determinist movements. It makes it easier to bring “misbehaving” jurisdictions under one roof while bolstering the church’s credentials as protector of the greater Russian world’s heritage.

In the end, a little help from the Church is crucial for any “**mystical victory**.”

Hannah Gais is a nonresident fellow at Young Professionals in Foreign Policy and assistant editor at the Foreign Policy Association. You can follow her on Twitter @hannahgais.

The family: workshop and training ground for humanity

*Meeting of Eastern Catholic bishops 2015
Prague - Břevnov, Czech Republic, 4-7 June
2015*



The "yes" of the Eastern Catholic Churches to the "family", the situation in Ukraine and of the Churches of Central-Eastern Europe in relations with civil society were the focus of the meeting of the Eastern Catholic bishops of the continent. In Prague more than 40 Eastern Catholic bishops prepared for the Synod on the Family.

The annual meeting of the Eastern Catholic hierarchs of Europe took place this year in Prague (Czech Republic) at the invitation of **His Lordship Mgr Ladislav Hučko**, Apostolic Exarch for Byzantine Rite Catholics resident in the Czech Republic.

In Prague, more than 40 Eastern Catholic bishops in Europe met to examine in depth the relationships of friendship and unity among the continent's Eastern Catholic episcopate, through the exchange of information about the life of the respective churches at the national level and about the sensitive relations between Church and civil society and with the other Christian churches. The meeting was also an opportunity

to prepare for the Synod of Bishops on the family next October. It was precisely the family, its sacramental nature and the challenges laid before it by a rapidly-changing society, which was the object of reflection and examination. From the discussions it emerged that: The whole of the Catholic Church, and especially its expression of a more Eastern tradition represented by the continent's Eastern Catholic Churches, gives its **yes to the family**, the fundamental cell of human society where every person becomes more and more him / herself, not just as a place of cultural and intellectual growth, of emotional and social growth, but above all as a place where God's plan for every person is accomplished. The family, the domestic Church spoken of by Saint John Chrysostom and repeated by the Second Vatican Council, as workshop and training ground for humanity, is not just the place where the transmission of faith happens, but where the fundamental principles of living together are learned. In it each person is called to give him / herself and to accept the other, growing in mutual love. Husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters are called to love each other: everyone in the family has a unique and important role.

The Eastern Catholic Church **says its yes to the family** because in the dark moments of history in numerous countries of Central Eastern Europe it was families which kept alive the freedom of the human person, the various national identities, their rich cultural and spiritual heritage. It was Christian families which kept alive faith in God and hope in a better future. Precisely for this, in preparation for the Synod of Bishops, confirming the priority of the family in the ordinary pastoral work of the respective churches, the episcopal participants at the meeting were committed to promoting an evermore careful preparation for the sacrament of matrimony, so that husband and wife, with the strength of grace, might generate a true communion of life welcoming children and educating them. They committed themselves to spiritually accompanying and guiding families; to supporting and promoting the communities of families, parishes which, with the help of the respective priests, too, seek to continue and

witness to the beauty of being, in the image of God, a communion of people.

Their **yes to the family** leads them to be close to all families, especially those experiencing times of crisis or difficulties, poor families, the needy who feel excluded by society. If every person needs to be loved and helped, it is the family, the privileged place, where that happens, but – the bishops said in Prague – the Church is and always will be beside them, ready to reach out the hand of friendship, to show a neighbourly and compassionate face, bringing the comfort and mercy of God.

In times of great vulnerability and major moral, economic and social crisis, we hope that Governments may become evermore aware of the important role of the social and educative cohesion of the family so that it might legislate on its behalf, on work and on migration.

The situation in Ukraine

In the face of the on-going situation of external aggression in the east of the country, the participants demonstrated their solidarity with the people of Ukraine, above all the Greek Catholics, exhorting them to pursue the path of dialogue and unity between the country's Christian churches which a particular attitude of misinformation – especially at the international level – aims to undermine. At this dramatic moment in the country's history, all the churches are committed to supporting the difficult path of the rebuilding of social cohesion first of all through a path of conversion, the only weapon in the face of those who think of corruption as the only controlling principle of society. Faced with the greatest humanitarian disaster since the fall of the totalitarian regime, His Beatitude Sviatoslav Shevchuk, Major Archbishop of Kyiv-Halyč, thanked his confrères for the prayers and spiritual closeness of the sister churches, and recalled the generosity of the various national Caritas organisations, calling for a renewed solidarity of the international community: hunger and poverty do not take holidays!

The Catholic Church in South-East Europe

Of particular concern is a too "discretionary" attitude – bordering on discrimination – of numerous local administrations which seem to want to attack the Catholic Church under the

administrative, economic and financial profile. While the participants recognised the need of the national and local churches to work for an ever greater transparency in the management of their finances and go along with the management models in force in their respective countries, in the face of the various attempts to discredit the Church in this field and having ascertained the groundlessness of the accusations in the cases reported at the meeting, the participants called on those responsible to enforce justice to act with impartiality and on the basis of a right which must be equal for everyone.

During the meeting, the participants met **His Eminence Cardinal Dominik Duka OP**, Archbishop of Prague, for a friendly discussion about the challenges of the new evangelisation of the Church in the Czech Republic, a country shaped by profound Christian roots, an inheritance sadly often unrecognised.

The meeting also saw a presentation by the local Exarch, **His Lordship Mgr Ladislav Hučko**, on the history and the current challenges of the Greek-Catholic Church in the Czech Republic. Participants at the meeting, facilitated by the Council of European Episcopal Conferences (CCEE), included **His Grace Mgr Giuseppe Leanza**, Apostolic Nuncio to the Czech Republic; **His Grace Mgr Cyril Vasil'**, Archbishop Secretary of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches who brought greetings from the Prefect of the Vatican dicastery, **His Eminence Cardinal Leonardo Sandri**. Also participating were **Fr Lorenzo Lorusso OP**, Under-secretary of the aforesaid Vatican Congregation, and **Mgr Duarte da Cunha**, CCEE General Secretary, who brought greetings from the President of the continental episcopal body, **His Eminence Cardinal Péter Erdő**, Archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest.

The 2016 meeting will take in Fatima (Portugal) in October.

The meeting ended on 7 June with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy in the Greek Catholic Cathedral of St Clement along with the local community.

Finally the bishops entrusted the challenges, expectations and hopes of all families and the work of the Synod to the protection of the Mother of God.

CHURCH OF THE EAST

CIRED 3

Meeting between the delegations of the Assyrian Church of the East and the Ancient Church of the Church for the achievement of a unified Church of the East.

A cordial and fraternal meeting took place in Chicago, IL USA at the premises of St.



Andrew's Assyrian Church of the East on Friday, the 22nd of May 2015.

The representatives of the Ancient Church of the East were:

1. His Beatitude Mar Yakoob Danil, Metropolitan of Australia & New Zealand
2. His Beatitude Mar Zaia Khoshaba, Metropolitan of Canada & the U.S.
3. His Grace Mar Gewargis Younan, Bishop of Chicago, IL

The representatives of the Assyrian Church of the East were:

1. His Beatitude Mar Gewargis Sliwa, Metropolitan of Iraq & Russia
2. His Grace Mar Iskhaq Yousif, Bishop of Nohadra, Erbil, & Russia

3. His Grace Mar Awa Royel, Bishop of California and Secretary of the Holy Synod
The common secretary of this meeting was the Very Rev. William Toma, Archdeacon.

The meeting began with the Lord's Prayer in a singular love, as King David says in the Old Testament: "How very good and pleasant it is, when kindred live together in Unity!" (Psalms 133:1) Representatives of both branches showed sincere love and the desire in fulfilling a

complete unification of the Church of the East, after nearly fifty years of separation within our Holy Church. The recommendations for unity of the Assyrian Church of the East and the Ancient Church of the East were submitted to each other through the representatives chosen by the leadership of each branch. They will be submitted and discussed in their

individual Holy Synods. After the recommendations are discussed, a date and venue shall be designated for a second meeting – for further examination of the responses to the recommendations submitted today.

In conclusion, the meeting came to a close with a positive awareness and belief of both delegations in the fulfillment of unification, as is the will of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Who said, "That they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be one in us" (John 17:21).

+Mar Gewargis Sliwa+Mar Yakoob Danil
Metropolitan Metropolitan May 22, 2015
Chicago, Illinois USA

Martyrdom serves Christian unity, Pope Francis tells Coptic Orthodox patriarch

By [Ann Schneible](#)

Vatican City, May 12, 2015 / [CNA/EWTN News](#).- In a message sent Sunday to the leader of the Coptic Orthodox Church, Pope Francis said advances toward reconciliation are strengthened by the martyrs and that Christians must unite to confront shared global challenges.

“Today more than ever we are united by the ecumenism of blood, which further encourages us on the path towards peace and reconciliation,” Pope Francis wrote

May 10 to Pope Tawadros II of Alexandria. Like the Bishop of Rome, the Coptic Orthodox Patriarch of Alexandria is known as “Pope” to his followers.

Pope Francis' message marked the second anniversary of his meeting with Tawadros in Rome; the day has become an annual celebration of fraternal love between the Catholic and Coptic Orthodox Churches.

The Coptic Orthodox Church is an Oriental Orthodox Church, meaning it rejected the 451 Council of Chalcedon, and its followers were historically considered monophysites – those who believe Christ has only one nature – by Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox.

“With thanksgiving to the Lord, I recall our advances along the path of friendship, united as we are by one baptism,” Pope Francis wrote.

“Though our communion is yet imperfect, what we have in common is greater than what divides us. May we persevere on our journey to full communion, and grow in love and understanding.”

More than 90 percent of the Christians in Egypt are Coptic Orthodox, and 21 Coptic men working in Libya were beheaded by the Islamic State in February. Soon afterwards, the 21 were



recognized as martyrs by Tawadros.

“I assure you and the Christian community in Egypt and throughout the Middle East of my unceasing prayer,” Pope Francis wrote to Tawadros, “and I remember in particular the Coptic faithful recently martyred for their Christian faith. May the Lord welcome them into his Kingdom.”

Pope Francis also made mention of the document recently produced by members of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches.

Entitled “The Exercise of Communion in the Life of the Early Church and its Implications for our Search for Communion Today”, the document was finalized during the commission's twelfth annual plenary meeting, held in Rome this past January.

“I am certain that Your Holiness shares my hope that this vital dialogue will carry on and bear abundant fruit,” Pope Francis said.

The commission's next plenary meeting is set to take place in Cairo, hosted by the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate.

Pope Francis' letter took note of the common challenges facing Christians of separated Churches, particularly in terms of family life, “which require us to work together in confronting these issues.”

The Bishop of Rome told Tawadros, “I appreciate your appointment last year of a delegate to participate in the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops dedicated to the family. It is my hope that our cooperation in this area may continue, especially in addressing matters related to mixed marriages.”

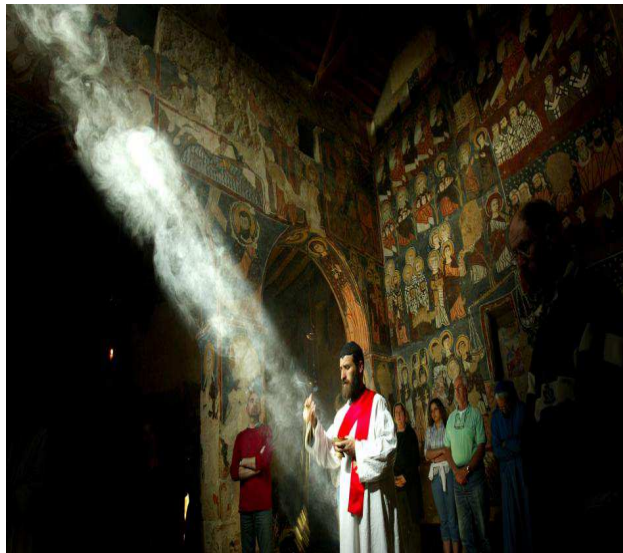
The May 2013 meeting between Pope Francis and Tawadros marked the first visit of a Coptic Orthodox patriarch to Rome in 40 years.

Shenouda III, Tawadros' predecessor, visited Bl. Paul VI in 1973, and St. John Paul II returned the visit to Egypt in 2000.

Pope Francis concluded his message saying that “with these sentiments, and recalling what has rightly become known as the day of friendship between the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church, I exchange with Your Holiness a fraternal embrace in Christ the Lord.”

Fleeing ISIS Into Exile, Syriac Christians Sing the Oldest Music on Earth

BY [GEORGE RICHARDS](#) / APRIL 16, 2015
[HTTP://WWW.NEWSWEEK.COM/](http://www.newsweek.com/)



A Syrian monk swings incense during mass in the monastery Mar Musa al-Habashi in Nebek, north of Damascus GHAITH ABDUL-AHAD/GETTY

The last time they came along the road to the monastery of Mar Mattai in northern Iraq, it was September. Then, there was a queue of cars stretching back to Mosul. There were little girls in white dresses with curly hair tied up in ribbons. Mothers carried sponge-cakes in boxes on their knees. Their husbands, moustaches combed and blazers brushed, were looking forward to an aniseed tot of arak when they arrived.

As they left the city behind, the road climbed into the mountains, dusty, sandy and dotted with oleander bushes. The stickiness of the plain gave way to a cool, dry breeze.

At the end of the road, the monastery was overflowing: this was one of the great festivals for Syriac Christians in Iraq and beyond. There was feasting and prayers, and the singing of Syriac chant, perhaps the oldest extant music in the world, a sacred and archaic call and response in a language that would have been understood by Jesus.

This time, eight months later, they drive by night while, behind them, Mosul burns. The fathers stay eyes-front, following the rear-lights of the car ahead. Children are quiet but awake. There is no laughter and no singing, no cars toot their horns. The monastery is dark, lit only in flashes from the headlamps. Otherwise, it is only by the smell of the oleander, and the steady cooling of the air, that they know they are on the road to Mar Mattai.

Among them is Sarmad Ozan, formerly a young deacon in the cathedral in Mosul, where he sang the daily liturgy. When ISIS captured the city, the cathedral clergy thought they would stay. In a few days, however, ISIS issued its infamous decree: convert to Islam, pay a tax on unbelievers or die. Sarmad, his fellow clergymen and this band of 50 Christian families fled to find sanctuary in their mountain stronghold.

They leave behind the bodies of brothers and fathers, and the shelled-out ruins of their shops and houses. They also leave behind much of what it meant to be a Syriac Christian.

The ancient cities of Nimrud and Nineveh that they visited proudly to show their children the glories of the Assyrian empire from which they claim descent – soon these will be bulldozed by ISIS. They leave behind the treasures of Assyria in the Mosul museum – ISIS will loot the smaller antiquities for the black market and smash the statues too big to sell. And on the way to Mar Mattai, they pass the monastery of Mar Behnam: its gates are already barred by ISIS. From the steeple flies the black flag. In a few months, it will be destroyed.

What they carry with them is their liturgical music. It preserves strains of the earliest religious chants of Mesopotamia and of court songs sung for Assyrian emperors 2,000 years before Christ. Its antiquity is matched by its simplicity: clergy and congregation sing together, dividing between boys with high voices and older, bigger men who sing more deeply. Beyond this there is no distinction of note or pitch, and no melody. The call and response format is thought to enact a conversation between man and God. (Continue next page)

Tonight, they will again sing the old songs. They make for the inner rooms: the hermits' cells burrowed into the cliff-face; the Saints' Room, with its reliquaries set in niches in the rock; the chapels dug deep into the holy mountain. There, crammed into the rough caves, Sarmad and the other deacons push to the front and stand in a line. They are joined by the old monks and the priests, in black cassocks and embroidered skull-caps. The priests start the singing in deep voices, then the deacons and younger men answer at a higher pitch. Now the other men in the congregation fall in, back and forth, call and response, as it has been for millennia. It grows quicker, and louder, filling the small rooms in the belly of the monastery. But Sarmad hears something else – the congregation are weeping as they sing. Because tomorrow, or soon after, they will leave for the Kurdish territories, for the refugee camps and then for abroad, in Sarmad's case for Newcastle in the north of England, where he was when I spoke to him; and they may never hear this music again.

When sacraments conflict with state marriage licenses

April 25, 2015 • TERRY MATTINGLY Universal Syndicate
Father Patrick Henry Reardon's note to his flock at Chicago's All Saints Orthodox Church was short and simple -- yet a sign of how complicated life is becoming for traditional religious believers.

"Because the State of Illinois, through its legislature and governor's office, has now re-defined marriage, marriage licenses issued by agencies of the State of Illinois will no longer be required (or signed) for weddings here at All Saints in Chicago," he wrote in the parish newsletter.

The key words were "or signed." The veteran priest was convinced that he faced a collision between an ancient sacrament and new political realities that define a civil contract. His goal, he said, was not to "put my people in a tough spot," but to stress that believers now face complications when they get married -- period. The question priests must ask, when signing marriage licenses, is "whether or not you're

acting on behalf of the state when you perform that rite. It's clear as hell to me that this is what a priest is doing," said Reardon, reached by telephone.

"Lay people don't face the sacramental question like a priest. They are trying to obtain the same civil contract and benefits as anyone else and they have to get that from the state. It's two different moral questions."

This is a timely question, as the U.S. Supreme Court nears a crossroads on same-sex marriage. The issue of whether clergy should clip this tie to the state is one that is causing tensions -- not just between doctrinal liberals and conservatives, but also between those with differing views of the theology of marriage and approaches to current political realities.

In a recent LifeWay Research survey, 6 in 10 Americans disagreed with the statement that "marriage should be defined and regulated by the state" and 49 percent agreed that "religious weddings should not be connected to the state's definition and recognition of marriage."

However, 71 percent of pastors disagreed with the statement, "Clergy should no longer be involved in the state's licensing of marriage." At the conservative journal *First Things*, 444 clergy and lay leaders had, as of earlier this week, signed "The Marriage Pledge," promising: "We will no longer sign government-provided marriage certificates. We will ask couples to seek civil marriage separately from their church-related vows and blessings."

These debates are about "strategy and timing, not ... faithfulness," stressed evangelical activist John Stonestreet, writing at BreakPoint.org. Clergy will know it's time to exit the "civil marriage business" when they are forced out. "Stay in the game! ... Refuse to render to Caesar authority that does not belong to him," Stonestreet argued. "Get censured! Get sued! Be nice and kind, but firm; keep the witness as long as you can."

The Rev. Russell Moore, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, recently wrote that any church that embraces the sexual revolution is "no longer a church of Jesus Christ." Yet a pastor who signs (Continue next page)

a marriage license is "not affirming the state's definition of marriage," he argued, but bearing witness to "the state's role in recognizing marriage as something that stands before and is foundational to society."

This topic is sure to be discussed as clergy and activists gather in Washington, D.C. for the April 25 March for Marriage. Reardon noted that his church's national leader, while not directly addressing the marriage-license issue, sent a pastoral letter to his bishops, clergy and laypeople noting that marriage debates cannot be avoided.

The upcoming Supreme Court decision could "mark a powerful affirmation of marriage between one man and one woman ... or it can initiate a direction which the Holy Orthodox Church can never embrace," stated Metropolitan Joseph of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America. "Throughout the history of our faith our Holy Fathers have led the Orthodox laity" to unite to "preserve the faith against heresy from within, and against major threats from societies from without."

At his altar, said Reardon, this means, "I cannot represent the State of Illinois anymore. ... I'm not making a political statement. I'm making a theological statement."

Terry Mattingly is the director of the Washington Journalism Center at the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities and leads the GetReligion.org project to study religion and the news.

PRAYER OF SOUFANIEH



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

**BRING A FRIEND TO
OUR MEETING!**

Friday, 1 May 2015

THE SPIRITUAL PATH OF ST. SERAPHIM OF SAROV

[http://fatherdavidbirdosb.blogspot.com/
my source: Pravoslavie/ru](http://fatherdavidbirdosb.blogspot.com/my_source:Pravoslavie/ru)

St. Seraphim of Sarov prayed on a rock for a thousand days.

In the Orthodox Church saints emerge. No central office in an institution checks, qualifies and certifies a person as a saint. On one reading, we are all saints. The word simply means "set apart" and that's how

Christians have understood themselves since ancient times: set apart for service to God in, but not of, the world.

"He who truly loves God considers himself a wanderer and newcomer on earth, for in him is a striving towards God in soul and mind, which contemplates God alone." Certain people

emerge as standouts in the church. Their chief characteristic is the search to live in the presence of God with every fiber of their being, and to recognize God's presence in creation and humanity.

Such a saint was Seraphim of Sarov, author of the saying quoted above. Seraphim was born Prohor Moshnin in 1759 in Kursk, Russia, to a merchant family, and he showed strong spiritual sensitivity from childhood. After recovering from a childhood illness, he entered the monastery at Sarov in 1778. In 1786 he took final vows to become a monk and received the name Seraphim, which means "fire" or "burning," in part because of his zeal at prayer. After 1793, the year he was ordained a priest of the church, he moved to a forest hermitage five miles north of the monastery, and began to see people as a starets, Russian for "elder," meaning a spiritual director. People flocked to him over the last decades of his life. Early in this period he sustained a (Continue next page)



severe beating at the hands of robbers, which left him with a hunchback for the rest of his life. At the trial for these men, who had been captured, Seraphim offered them words of forgiveness. The animals in the forest especially loved Seraphim, and he fed them even as legend says that they fed him, too. Among his animal friends was a bear often depicted with him on one of the icons that commemorate his life. Our annual animal blessing at St Anthony of the Desert Mission this Saturday is in honor of St Seraphim.

St. Seraphim says about faith: "Faith, according to the teachings of St. Antioch, is the beginning of our union with God: the true believers are the stone of the church of God, prepared for the edifice of God the Father, which is raised up to the heights by the power of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Cross and help of the grace of the Holy Spirit. "Faith without works is dead" (James 2:26). The works of faith (fruits of the Spirit) are love, peace, longsuffering, mercy, humility and bearing one's cross. True faith cannot remain without works. One who truly believes will also surely perform good works."

Central to Seraphim's approach to the faith was the acquisition of the Holy Spirit, which he called the "true goal of the Christian life." He gave his life over to this acquisition through prayer and discipline and he urged the same practice on his visitors. His most remembered saying is, "Acquire a peaceful spirit, and thousands around you will be saved." Prayer, ascetic discipline and acts of mercy achieve this, over a long time. Seraphim said, "Only deeds performed for Christ give us the fruits of the Holy Spirit."

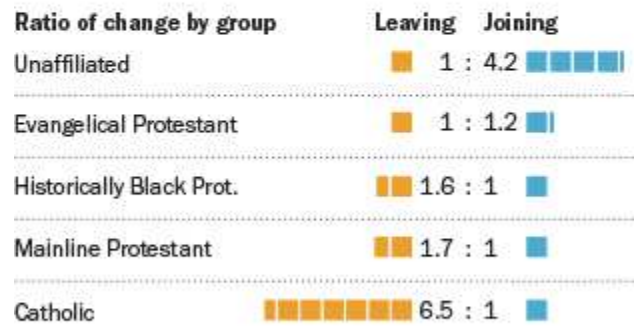
The Orthodox Church in Russia recognized Seraphim as a Saint in 1903, the 70th year after his death. Orthodox churches around the world held a centennial celebration of his recognition as saint in 2003. People continue to come to pray at the grave of St Seraphim and to experience his presence in their lives in many ways for counsel and healing.

**Church of. St. Giovanni
Crisostomo-St. John Chrysostom
(Also known as “ San
Giovanello”-
St. Little
John).
Gerace,
Calabria,
Italy--10th c.**



Religious Switching: “Nones” Make Big Gains, Catholics Experience Big Losses

There are more than six former Catholics for every convert to Catholicism. By contrast, there are more than four people who join the ranks of the unaffiliated for every one person who leaves the unaffiliated and now identifies with a religion.



Source: 2014 Religious Landscape Study, conducted June 4-Sept. 30, 2014.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Vatican announces subtitle of Pope's new encyclical; Orthodox prelate to be present at release

Catholic World News - June 10, 2015

The Holy See Press Office has confirmed that Pope Francis's second encyclical will be entitled *Laudato Si* (Praised Be), a reference to St. Francis of Assisi's Canticle of the Sun. The press office also announced the encyclical's subtitle ("on the care of our common home") and the names of those who will be presenting the encyclical at its June 18 release. Joining Cardinal Peter Turkson, the president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, will be Orthodox Archbishop John Zizioulas of Pergamon, who will represent the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, and Hans Joachim Schellnhuber, the director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and chairman of the German Advisory Council on Global Change.

Laudato Si will be the first papal encyclical to have a non-Latin title since Venerable Pius XII's 1957 encyclical *Le pèlerinage de Lourdes*.

Armenian Catholics and Orthodox seek unity their martyrs enjoy

BY CINDY WOODEN
Catholic News Service

Pope Francis greets Armenian Catholic Patriarch Nerses Bedros XIX Tarmouni during an April 12 Mass in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican to mark the 100th anniversary of the Armenian genocide. (CNS photo/Cristian Gennari)

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — While Catholic and Armenian Orthodox theologians continue discussions aimed at full unity, Pope Francis and Catholicos Karekin II of Etchmiadzin, patriarch of the Armenian Apostolic Church, commemorated the already-

achieved unity of Armenian Catholic and Orthodox martyrs in heaven.

Pope Francis concelebrated Mass April 12 with Armenian Catholic Patriarch Nerses Bedros XIX Tarmouni in the presence of Catholicos Karekin and thousands of Armenian Catholic and Orthodox faithful.

Media attention focused on the diplomatic tensions created between the Vatican and Turkey when Pope Francis used the term "genocide" to describe the deaths of up to 1.5 million Armenians at the hands of the Ottoman-Turkish empire in 1915-18.

While the Mass marked the 100th anniversary of the genocide, Pope Francis also used the occasion to encourage ecumenical relations and to declare St. Gregory of Narek a doctor of the church. The 10th-century Armenian monk is venerated by both Catholics and Orthodox.

At the end of the Mass, Pope Francis handed a message to Catholicos Karekin expressing his hopes that the centennial of the genocide would be "a time of deep prayer" for Catholics and Orthodox. "Through the redemptive power of Christ's sacrifice, may the blood which has been shed bring about the miracle of the full unity of his disciples," the pope wrote.

The fact that those who died in 1915-18 were Christians, both Orthodox and Catholic, is a sign of "the ecumenism of blood," a unity that exists through common suffering, the pope said.

Commemorating their deaths together, he said, "reflects on earth the perfect communion that

exists between the blessed souls in heaven."

Speaking at the Mass, Catholicos Karekin prayed that "the martyrs would unite us as children and servants of the one Lord Jesus Christ so that we would learn and commit ourselves to establishing love, justice and peace in the world."

The Armenian Orthodox officially distanced themselves from Rome and Constantinople in the



sixth century; the churches now commonly referred to as Catholic and Greek Orthodox differed with Armenian church leaders and other Oriental Orthodox bishops over theological explanations of Christ's identity as both human and divine.

But throughout history contacts continued between members of the various Christian communities and, in fact, at the end of the 12th century Armenian Orthodox and Roman Catholic leaders in Cilicia (now in southern Turkey) re-established full unity. But the agreement was not accepted by all Armenian Orthodox.

A new attempt was made at the Council of Florence in the 15th century and the foundation was laid for a formal structure for the Armenian Catholic Church, preserving the liturgical and spiritual heritage of Armenian Christianity. Pope Benedict XIV in 1742 named the first Armenian Catholic Catholicos for the community.

The Armenian Orthodox sent observers to the Second Vatican Council and were seen as early promoters of the modern ecumenical movement. In 1996, the patriarch of the Armenian Apostolic Church and Pope John Paul II signed a joint declaration officially ending more than 1,500 years of doctrinal disagreement over the theological explanation that Christ is one person in two natures, undivided and unconfused. Through dialogue, the churches declared they profess the same faith in Christ and said the differences that drove the churches apart in the sixth century were semantic rather than doctrinal.

The Armenian Apostolic Church has more than 6 million members today. While based at Etchmiadzin, near Armenia's capital, the devastation of the genocide, World War I and decades of Soviet domination led to widespread emigration. The church has dioceses around the world.

The Armenian Catholic patriarchate is based in Beirut, Lebanon; its more than 566,000 members are served by dioceses and other structures in Lebanon, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Turkey, Jerusalem, Ukraine, Greece, Latin America and New York.

Catholics and Orthodox seek to overcome liturgical calendar differences

Rome, June 12, 2015 (Ecclesia) - The Pope said today in Rome that the solution to the Passover joint celebration between Catholics and Orthodox must pass the proposal for a fixed date, leaving aside the current tradition. "We have to put ourselves in line and the Catholic Church is willing, from Blessed Paul VI (Pope from 1963 to 1978) to set a date and renounce the first solstice after the full moon of March," he said at a meeting with a thousand priests held in the Basilica of St. John Lateran.

Easter is the first Christian party in importance and antiquity, as already at the Council of Nicaea in 325, there are provisions on the date of conclusion: first Sunday after the full moon following the spring equinox (March 22 to April 25).

These dates are referenced, in most countries, the so-called 'Gregorian calendar', introduced in 1582 by Pope Gregory XIII.

The Byzantine Rite Churches, however, continue until today 'Julian' solar calendar created in 45 BC by the Roman Emperor Julius Caesar.

According to Francisco, this is a problem that "everyone wants to solve," leaving aside the possibility of use as a reference the date of Passover, 14 nissan.

The Pope praised the role of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople (Orthodox), Bartholomew I, in the search for a common Easter on orthodoxy within, and considered it a "scandal" that the resurrection of Jesus is celebrated on different dates in the various Christian communities.

"A more permanent solution will have to be a fixed date, imagine the second Sunday in April," he added.

Francisco stressed the common commitment to the defense of "fundamental Christian values" and suggested to priests reading some Orthodox theologians to understand the "wealth" of this tradition.

The next encyclical of Pope will be presented on Thursday by a Catholic and an Orthodox and the text includes two numbers dedicated to Bartholomew I, as "great defender of the creation."