

# LIGHT OF THE EAST

**"GLORY BE TO GOD FOR ALL THINGS."**

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

Dear Members and Friends, The first regular chapter meeting of 2014 will be **Tuesday, January 14, 7 pm at St. Edward Catholic Church, 240 Tod Lane Youngstown, OH 44504. Our speaker will be Father Kenneth W. Rick. His topic: Jurisdictional Unity: Can Anglican/Episcopal Restructuring Serve as Model for Orthodox Churches?** Fr. Rick attended undergraduate school at Northern Illinois University in the 1960s, majoring in Chinese History. He subsequently worked for two NGOs providing assistance to orphans and underprivileged communities in the two-thirds world--Compassion International and later World Relief. In the early nineties, he completed graduate work in historical theology, earning an M.A. at Wheaton College. He then served as pastor of several small, rural churches and as Rector of St. Barnabas Episcopal Church in Springdale, Arkansas. In 2004, he worked for his Ph.D. at Liberty University in the Integration of Theology and Psychological Studies. Since retiring from pastoral ministry in 2007, he has taught Church History online at Liberty University. He also teaches World Religions at Grand Canyon University.

The gradual decomposition of The Episcopal Church, over the past fifty years, has resulted in layers of overlapping dioceses. Some of these were developed by bishops and parishes which left The Episcopal Church over the ordination of women, Prayer Book revisions which were perceived as heterodox, the ordination of openly homosexual clergy, the election and consecration of women and later homosexuals to the episcopate, and most recently same-sex marriage. This has resulted in overlapping Ordinary jurisdictions within the Anglican community. The Blessed John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI have taken steps to receive some of these into communion with The Catholic Church. Overseas Anglican Archbishops have done likewise in their



**Our Lady of Walsingham**

individual Provinces. During this period, a new North American Anglican Province has come into being, providing gradually developing unity among the Anglican dioceses which are not in full communion with the Roman See, resulting in liturgical renewal, Anglican evangelism, and plans for the gradual restructuring of diocesan ministry and boundaries. This may serve as a model for Orthodox Churches in North America which seek to follow a similar pattern of growth.

## **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 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 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 *Oriente 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. Officially, 21 members were enrolled.

The goals of the Society and its Chapters are to:  
(Continue next page)

- Make known the history, worship, spirituality, discipline and theology of Eastern Christendom
- Work and pray that all Christians, particularly the Orthodox and Catholic Churches, will attain the fullness of unity which Jesus Christ desires
- Develop educational programs which present information about the Eastern Churches
- Organize and conduct pilgrimages and conferences that encourage ecumenical dialogue
- Contribute to fund-raising activities which support Eastern Christian communities and other programs in need of financial aid
- Publish books, brochures, and other information which help explain Eastern Christianity
- Encourage and support the study of the writings and liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom
- Promote scholarships for the study of Eastern Churches in Catholic and Orthodox seminaries

To become a member of the Youngstown-Warren Chapter send a check for \$20 (family \$25, student \$15) made out to "The Society of St. John Chrysostom c/o Vito R. Carchedi, 35 Schenley Ave. Struthers, OH 44471.

### **UGCC PATRIARCH LED LITURGY AT THE ALTAR OF ST. PETER'S BASILICA IN VATICAN**

Risu 25 November 2013

The patriarch Sviatoslav (Shevchuk) on 25 November with the special permission of Pope Francis led a solemn Pontifical Divine Liturgy at the altar of the Vatican Basilica of St. Peter on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the laying of the relics of St. Josaphat, martyr for Church unity.

Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, almost all the bishops of the Synod of Bishops of the UGCC, Bishop Milan Shashik, Bishop of Mukachiv Eparchy, representatives of other Churches sui iuris and the Apostolic See.

### **New York City "Magnificat" Concert**

Choirs from two local theological schools representing Eastern and Western Christendom will jointly present an a cappella concert titled "Magnificat: Hymns to the Mother of God from the East and West" on Monday evening, November 25, 2013, 7:30 pm, at [St. Jean Baptiste Church](#), 184 East 76th Street, New York City.

The Male Choir from [St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary](#), of the Orthodox Church in America, will join with a Schola from [St. Joseph's Seminary \(Dunwoodie\)](#) of the Roman Catholic

Archdiocese of New York, in praise of the Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, who holds a place of honor in both traditions.

Music selections from the Orthodox tradition for the concert will illustrate the Eastern Church's feasts dedicated to the Theotokos (Greek for "Mother of God"), while music from the Roman Catholic tradition will include time-honored hymns of laudation to the Virgin Mary, taken from ancient chant and from the classical period up until modern times, such as O Sanctissima by Beethoven (1770–1827) and Ave Maria by Biebl (1906–2001).

### **Moscow Patriarchate hopes Putin's Vatican visit will make Orthodox-Catholic ties stronger**

Moscow, November 22, Interfax - The Moscow Patriarchate expects Russian President Vladimir Putin's upcoming meeting with Pope Francis in the Vatican to give an additional impetus to relations between Orthodox people and Catholics.

"We would like to hope that President Putin's meeting with the Pope will help strengthen relations between Russia and the Vatican, as well as relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church," a spokesman for the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations told *Interfax-Religion*.

It will be a meeting of the leaders of two states, the spokesman said, adding that the two churches have been working directly to tackle many religious issues. The Russian president and the pontiff are expected to meet during Putin's visit to the Vatican on November 25. It will be the third visit of the Russian head of state to the Vatican after the establishment of full-scale diplomatic relations in December 2009. In the earlier period, Putin met with Pope John Paul II in 2000 and 2003 and with Pope Benedict XVI in 2007.

### **PRAYER OF SOUFANIEH**

**Unity of Hearts!**

**Unity of Christians!**

**Unity of the Feast of Easter!**



*Come to next meeting and bring a friend.*

# Eastern Orthodox Unity

November 5, 2013 <http://www.firstthings.com/>

Ivan Plis



October was not a month of especial cooperation in the global Eastern Orthodox communion. Protesting the **appointment in March** of an archbishop for Qatar by the Church of Jerusalem, the Church of Antioch **withdrew its participation** from “all the Assemblies of Canonical Orthodox Bishops abroad.” The Antiochian Patriarchate claims sole authority over the small Gulf state though at present it has no parishes of its own there. The assemblies affected by this decision include the **canonical episcopal council** in North America, which counts several Antiochian bishops among its officers.

Meanwhile, following a visit to Indonesia by Serbia’s Patriarch Irinej, the Greek Orthodox Metropolitanate of Singapore **expressed dismay** that “the Church of Serbia never informed the local canonical Orthodox Metropolitan.” This comes after a series of incidents over the summer in which its sister see in Hong Kong **unilaterally excommunicated** clergy of another legitimate Orthodox jurisdiction serving in the Philippines.

A 2009 meeting in Chambésy, Switzerland **appointed** Orthodox regional assemblies to resolve issues like these. Its goal was to reach a modus vivendi in canonically fresh territory through gradual cooperation, seeking to carry out Christ’s commandments and minister to the whole world. Why, despite such good will, have occasional clashes persisted?

Orthodox Christians in the United States (along with Western Europe) enjoy a relatively well-established church infrastructure, and even before Chambésy our hierarchs have collaborated on everything from college ministry to pastoral discipline to social witness. We are learning to overcome the legacy of generations of canonical setbacks, including decades in which sister congregations had broken communion with one another. Many of these outward wounds have been healed, most notably the 2007 restoration of communion between the

Russian Church Abroad and those churches which recognized the Church of Russia during the Soviet era. But despite this reconciliation among local brethren, we still lack a permanent resolution to the patchwork of canonical Orthodox bodies that hold overlapping authority in the Americas, Western Europe, Asia, and Oceania. Chambésy addressed all these lands except Asia, since the existing bishops on the ground were so sparse that they could hardly constitute an assembly of their own. Hence the recent controversy.

Besides violating Orthodox ecclesial order, these disputes also portray Orthodoxy in the most unflattering light imaginable. I have already mentioned over half a dozen Orthodox governing bodies in passing. When he providentially encounters the Church, small in numbers as it is, the unfamiliar American must first navigate all kinds of terminological and organizational hurdles: “Is that church up the street Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, or something else? Why are those different, and why should I care, since my grandparents came to America from Norway and Vietnam?”

I set aside the question of whether he will feel welcome if he does, in fact, choose to visit an unfamiliar church with a strange name. St. Paul has a name for an impediment like those encountered by our hypothetical inquirer: *skandalon*.

There are plenty of obstacles to order and witness on the home front as well. The Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which Antioch has accused of overreach in the Gulf, has long been dominated by ethnically Greek hierarchs; only one Orthodox Palestinian currently holds episcopal office in the Holy Land. This has led to disaffection for the Church among many Orthodox-born Palestinians and Jordanians, some of whom have fled for other churches. And Antioch faces upheaval of its own, as the newly-elected Patriarch John (in Arabic, Youhanna) seeks to lead a Church for all Syrians in the midst of a divisive and deadly civil war. In a bitter twist, the Church of Antioch has just withdrawn from North America’s Assembly of Bishops, which oversees International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC)—one of the only relief agencies still active inside Syria’s borders.

The Chambésy process is the worst form of Orthodox church government for the 21st century, except for all the others. The Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople has the power to bring bishops together, but he cannot force them to accept an unwelcome edict. When disputes arise, they must be resolved honestly by brother bishops and their flocks, even if the solutions are slow to come. Last Saturday the Antiochian Orthodox Church commemorated St. Raphael of Brooklyn. Born in Beirut and educated in Syria, Turkey, and Russia, he humbly and tirelessly served the diverse Orthodox flock in America in the early (Continue next page)

20th century as their bishop. Even if churches of Slavic rite celebrated his memory back in February, he is a reminder to all Orthodox in this land that despite our formal divisions, we remain one body in Christ. While our Church is hampered by human weakness and pettiness, much of the world is still what Protestants would call a mission field. The Orthodox Church has great riches, if like Fr. Raphael we allow ourselves to overcome our own ethnic allegiances and allow Christ to shine forth.

*Ivan Plis is an Orthodox Christian in the Washington, DC area. Image via Wikimedia Commons.*

## Pope expresses hope for reunion with Orthodox Patriarch

By Kerri Lenartowick



**Pope Francis addresses the Bishops of Italy in a solemn Profession of Faith in St. Peter's Basilica for their 65th General Assembly May 23, 2013. Credit: Stephen Driscoll/CNA.**

Vatican City, Nov 30, 2013 (CNA/EWTN News).- Pope Francis sent special greetings to the Archbishop of Constantinople today, expressing his desire for continued dialogue between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches.

“You Holiness, beloved brother in Christ, this is the first time that I address you on the occasion of the feast of the Apostle Andrew, the first-called. I take this opportunity

to assure you of my intention to pursue fraternal relations between the Church of Rome and the Ecumenical Patriarchate,” he wrote on Nov. 30 in the message delivered by Cardinal Kurt Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. Cardinal Koch had led a delegation from the Holy See to Istanbul for the feast of St. Andrew. After taking part in a Liturgy presided over by Patriarch Bartholomew I, the Ecumenical Patriarch of the Eastern Orthodox Church, Cardinal Koch delivered Pope Francis’ message. “It is for me a source of great reassurance to reflect on the depth and the authenticity of our existing bonds, the fruit of a grace-filled journey along which the Lord has guided our Churches since the historic encounter in Jerusalem between Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras,” the Pope’s message said, referencing the momentous event of 1965 in which the leaders of the two churches lifted the excommunications that had been placed on each other in 1054.

Pope Francis explained, “God, the source of all peace and love, has taught us throughout these years to regard one another as members of the same family.”

“For indeed, we have one Lord and Saviour. We belong to him through the gift of the good news of salvation transmitted by the apostles, through the one baptism in the name of the Holy Trinity, and through the holy ministry.”

The Bishop of Rome then reflected on the current state of relationship between the churches and indicated his hope for the future. “United in Christ, therefore, we already experience the joy of authentic brothers in Christ, while yet fully aware of not having reached the goal of full communion.”

“In anticipation of the day in which we will finally take part together in the Eucharistic feast, Christians are duty-bound to prepare to receive this gift of God through prayer, inner conversion, renewal of life and fraternal dialogue.”

Pope Francis also took time to consider the difficulties faced by Christians in the East who are persecuted for their faith.

“The memory of the martyrdom of the apostle Saint Andrew also makes us think of the many Christians of all the Churches and Ecclesial Communities who in many parts of the world experience discrimination and at times pay with their own blood the price of their profession of faith,” he reflected.

“Christians of the East and (Continue next page)

West must give common witness so that, strengthened by the Spirit of the risen Christ, they may disseminate the message of salvation to the entire world.”

Earlier on Saturday, Pope Francis had met with pilgrims from the Greek Melkite Catholic Church, expressing similar concern for Middle Eastern Christians who face serious persecution.

“My thoughts go immediately to our brothers and sisters in Syria, who have been suffering a ‘great tribulation’ for a long time; I pray for the many who have lost their lives and for their loved ones,” he said to those gathered in the Vatican’s Clementine Hall.

“We believe firmly in the strength of prayer and reconciliation,” emphasized Pope Francis.

“For centuries, your church has known how to coexist peacefully with other religions and is called to carry out the task of fraternity in the Middle East.”

Moreover, he insisted, the presence of Christians in the Middle East is crucial: “we are not resigned to thinking of the Middle East without Christians.”

Those Eastern Christians who remain in communion with the Catholic Church, such as those of the Melkite tradition, are a “visible sign to all of our Eastern brethren of the desired communion with the Successor of Peter,” he added.

## **For Patriarch Bartholomew, Pope Francis breathes new life in the "dialogue of love" between "Sister Churches"**

by NAT da Polis

The decision to meet in Jerusalem in the spring of 2014 is particularly important coming on the 50th anniversary of the historic embrace between Pope Paul VI and Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras. "We are very saddened by our failure to reach full communion, cause of so many evils among us Christians". 11/30/2013

(AsiaNews) - During the solemn celebration in the Greek Byzantine rite of Saint Andrew, patron saint of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople the Apostle, Patriarch Bartholomew expressed his willingness to continue the dialogue with the "Sister Church" of Rome as well as his co conviction that with Pope Francis this dialogue will have "new blood". Yesterday, before the meeting, a Vatican delegation visited for the first time in history the Halki Theological School in Istanbul.

As required by tradition, a Holy See delegation was again present at this year's Saint Andrew celebration on behalf of Pope Francis. It included Card Kurt Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, the Council's Secretary Bishop Brian Farrell and its Under Secretary Mgr Andrea Palmieri. In his homily, the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew

said that during his long life, which has had its lot of suffering and persecution, the Church of Constantinople has been able to maintain its faith and bear its witness, spreading the message of our Lord Jesus Christ far and wide on our Earth.

It is necessary to support with fervour the "dialogue of love" between the two sister Churches, Bartholomew noted, by working together on joint initiatives to enhance the Church's mission, which after the election of our brother in Christ, acquired new blood. "We have expressed," he added, "this conviction and desire to the Holy Father Francis the day of his inauguration."

"We are very saddened by our failure to reach full communion, cause of so many evils among us Christians," he said. One of the causes of the lack of full communion lies with those groups who in the history of the Christian Church have claimed to be bearers of truth, and essentially reduced dialogue to a monologue. Even today, there are those who come up with procedural obstacles to slow down the dialogue of love between the two Churches.

Precisely for this reason, said Bartholomew, the decision to meet in the spring of 2014 in Jerusalem is important. Decided at our meeting right after the inauguration of the beloved Pope Francis (*pictured*), who was called to succeed wise Pope Benedict XVI, the meeting will mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the historic embrace between Pope Paul VI and Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras, who by their action removed the secular misunderstandings between Christians, and began the dialogue towards our coveted unity willed by our Lord.

As "two ecclesiastical and spiritual leaders, we shall meet in order to address an appeal and invitation to all people, irrespective of faith and virtue, for a dialogue that ultimately aims at the knowledge of Christ's truth", which is truly useful to human existence.

Finally, turning to Card Kurt Koch, Bartholomew stressed the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople's strong and unwavering will to support dialogue with everyone and with all the means at its disposal, expressing the belief that, together with Pope Francis, the dialogue between the two Sister Churches will be enhanced by new blood "so as to spread peacefully the message of Jesus Christ."

**\*\*\*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 for unity of the Apostolic Churches!*

# Saint Andrew the Protoclete

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2013

<http://idlespeculations-terryprest.blogspot.co.uk/>

Mosaic of St Andrew AD 705  
Left wall of the Chapel of John VII in St Maria Antiqua, Rome  
From Joseph Wilpert *Die römischen Mosaiken und Malereien der kirchlichen Bauten vom IV. bis XIII. Jahrhundert* (Band 4) (1916)



The rediscovery of [the church of St Maria Antiqua](#) on the Palatine in the heart of Rome in 1900

was one of the great art history discoveries of the twentieth century

It contained paintings from the sixth, seventh and eighth centuries which had never been "improved" or "repaired" by the hand of any restorer

They were "originals"

The church had been sealed and virtually forgotten about for about 1000 years

It had been crushed under Imperial buildings which had fallen on the church

One of the earliest studies was by the British Council in Rome through its Director, Gordon Rushforth. See Rushforth G and Ashby T, [The church of S. Maria antiqua](#) (1902)

Three Popes in particular were responsible for the embellishment of the Church: [John VII \(705-07\)](#), Gregory III (731-741) and Leo III (795-816),

But John VII is also the only Pope whose work in the church was explicitly recorded in the *Liber Pontificalis*.

The Church itself followed a Greek plan.

All the saints depicted in the *diakonikon* are Eastern and all inscriptions are in Greek.

The style of the frescoes has been described as "Hellenistic"

The artists are commonly assumed to have been Byzantines.

S. Maria Antiqua was the church of a Greek community closely associated with the Byzantine administration residing on the Palatine.

A Byzantine quarter established itself during the sixth and seventh centuries around the Palatine. Many Byzantine families settled in the city after the re-conquest of Justinian in the mid-sixth century. There

was a major influx of Greek immigrants from Egypt into the city after the Arab conquest of Alexandria in 641

The Pope himself like many Popes of the time was of Greek origin

The liturgy was in Greek not Latin

Therefore it is not surprising to see in this Church the icon of [the first called Apostle](#), the [Protoclete](#), the founder and the first bishop of the Church of Byzantium and the patron saint of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

St Andrew was one of the two Apostles who spoke Greek

It was he who was responsible for introducing Christ to a number of Greek speakers. He acted as mediator between Christ and the Greek speakers.

Pope Benedict recalled this point in [his catechesis on St Andrew in 2006](#). He said:

"[A] third initiative of Andrew is recorded in the Gospels: the scene is still Jerusalem, shortly before the Passion. For the Feast of the Passover, John recounts, some Greeks had come to the city, probably proselytes or God-fearing men who had come up to worship the God of Israel at the Passover Feast. Andrew and Philip, the two Apostles with Greek names, served as interpreters and mediators of this small group of Greeks with Jesus.

The Lord's answer to their question - as so often in John's Gospel - appears enigmatic, but precisely in this way proves full of meaning. Jesus said to the two disciples and, through them, to the Greek world: "The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified. I solemnly assure you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit" (12: 23-24).

Jesus wants to say: Yes, my meeting with the Greeks will take place, but not as a simple, brief conversation between myself and a few others, motivated above all by curiosity. The hour of my glorification will come with my death, which can be compared with the falling into the earth of a grain of wheat. My death on the Cross will bring forth great fruitfulness: in the Resurrection the "dead grain of wheat" - a symbol of myself crucified - will become the bread of life for the world; it will be a light for the peoples and cultures.

Yes, the encounter with the Greek soul, with the Greek world, will be achieved in that profundity to which the grain of wheat refers, which attracts to itself the forces of heaven and earth and becomes bread.

In other words, Jesus was prophesying about the Church of the Greeks, the Church of the pagans, the Church of the world, as a fruit of his Pasch."

POSTED BY TERRY PREST

## **Toward Healing Apostolic Church Disunity: Speaking with One Voice**

Fr. George Morelli

My Fall 2013 [Society of St. John Chrysostom-Western Region \(SSJC-WR\)](#)<sup>ii</sup> newsletter Light of the East

President's message should be understood in the context of St. Paul's instruction to the Romans (12: 4-6). "For as in one body we have many members, but all the members have not the same office: So we being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. And having different gifts, according to the grace that is given us." These comments should also be looked at in terms of the petitions in the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil, as said in the Eastern Churches: "Be mindful, O Lord, of the Priesthood, the Deaconate in Christ and every priestly rank, [and by implied extension to the laity as well] and put not to confusion any one of us who stand about thy holy Altar." The proper teaching role of the Churches is for those specifically ordained to teach, the bishops and the priests in union with them and the laity, as Orthodox theologian Paul Evdokimov (1998, p. 226)<sup>iii</sup> writes, do so as "defenders of the Faith." We each have our own part to play.

At this point in time it has to be acknowledged that there are different ecclesial models of Church governance, among the Apostolic Churches. These models range from the papacy and magisterium of the Catholic Churches to the conciliar model of the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches. We fervently pray that the International and National official dialogues under the guidance of the Holy Spirit bring about a common ecclesial understanding, practice and full unity of the Apostolic Churches. It may even be possible that at such a time a single voice may 'reflect' the mind of the entire Church, which would only help in strengthening Christ's message. Disunity weakens the message of Christ, broadcasts hypocrisy and fosters disparagement and even worse total disregard of Christ and His Church. In psychological terminology disunity nurtures oppositional behavior.

Until, God willing, the disease of disunity is healed, it is so important that we be undivided in the core teaching of Christ and His Church and proclaim these core principles either by our gifts as ordained teachers (the bishops and priests) or baptized "defenders" of Christ. Christ Himself warned: "And if a house be divided

against itself, that house cannot stand." (Mk 3: 25) How unfortunate to see the media report division among some who claim to be members of one of the Apostolic Churches on core issues such as abortion, female ordination or same sex marriage. Even more egregious, some so called 'members' of one of the Apostolic Churches, individuals in public life, proudly endorse and promote programs contrary to Christ's teaching. At the very least, our SSJC members (and all those baptized into the royal priesthood of Christ) can pray for and vigorously prompt those whom they encounter around them (be they hierarchs, clergy, laity or non-Orthodox) to rise to the gifts they have been given to use and not bury them. Let us recall the Parable of the Talents, as told to us by St. Matthew, to the person who squandered his gift: "But he that had received the one, going his way digged into the earth, and hid his lord's money," (25: 18) and the dire consequences of this waste: "And the unprofitable servant cast ye out into the exterior darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (25: 30) Let us all use our gifts with one undivided voice. Some of us as teachers and healers, all of us at least as defenders of the fullness of the mind of Christ and His Church.

## **Pope looks east for possible Church reforms**



Eastern Church leaders discuss self-governing synods with Pope Francis

Picture: AFP Photo/L'Osservatore Romano

Church leaders of independent Catholic communities from Asia, the Middle East (Continue next page)

and Eastern Europe have spent the last week in Rome with Pope Francis and Vatican officials discussing the lives of their Church including a subject of high importance to the Pope – the operation of their self-governing synods.

The Vatican says this meeting is an "opportunity" for the patriarchs and archbishops of Eastern Rite communities to present to the pope the situation of their Churches.

However, the November 19-22 meeting may also be another step for Pope Francis in re-shaping the way the Roman Catholic Church operates and decentralizing the Church government, adopting synod-based administrative systems of these churches.

The gathering follows Pope Francis' suggestion that the universal Church should learn from Eastern and Orthodox Churches' synodal approach to governance and decision-making when he and the Patriarch of Constantinople (Istanbul) Bartholomew met after he became Pope in March. The Patriarch was the first in 600 years to attend a Papal installation.

The formal purpose of the meeting in Rome this week is to consider "The Eastern Catholic Churches: Fifty years after Vatican II." The meeting is not something Pope Francis inherited. It follows a similar event in 2009, when heads of the Eastern Churches met Pope Benedict for the first time.

Those meeting this week in Vatican include leaders of self-governing Catholic Churches—21 churches that are fully Catholic but operate independently of the Roman Curia in matters of their administration, including selection of their patriarchs, archbishops and bishops.

"Except in matters of faith and morals we are completely free from the Vatican," said Bishop Bosco Puthur, known as the Curia bishop who oversees the Curia of Syro-Malabar Church based in Kerala in southern India. This independence is restricted to a small population, as all the Oriental Churches together form only 17 million of the more than one billion Catholics globally. Most of these Churches are also numerically small with three major ones—Ukrainian, Syro-Malabar and Maronite—alone accounting for 12.5 million or 80 percent of the Catholic Orientals.

"Each of these Churches, including the Latin Church, has its own genius. The beauty is to learn from each other without destroying the uniqueness of each one," said Bishop Puthur, emphasizing that the eastern synodal administrative system involves every section of the Church.

Bishop Puthur said religious, laity and clergy are directly or indirectly involved in "every decision" of their Church. "The head of the Church, the Major Archbishop, makes no decision on his own. He merely announces the decision of the synod."

The synod of bishops has only bishops as members, "but our bishops have their ears to the ground, they know the pulse of their people and will not support decisions that will go against the interest of the people," the Curia bishop said.

The synod, which came into effect in 1993, elected its Major Archbishop George Alencherry in 2011. "So the system is new. We earlier followed the system of the Latin Church," he said. The election of the head of the Church now needs to be ratified only by the Vatican.

The elections of individual bishops are left to the synod, which periodically sends a list of people who could be elected bishops to synod members. When need arises, the synod elects one from the approved list.

Bishops prepare these lists and make other vital decisions in consultation with lay leaders, religious and laity, according to the Curia bishop. The Church also has Patriarchal Assembly, which has representatives from all sections of a diocese and meets once in five years to discuss issues affecting the community.

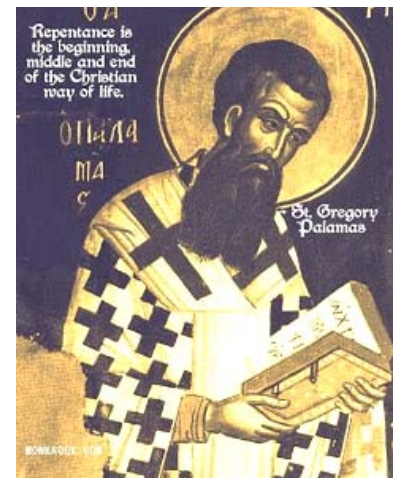
## St. Gregory Palamas and the Place of Paradox in Christianity

Friday, November 15, 2013

<http://ascentofcarmel.blogspot.com>

Yesterday, for Eastern Catholics and Orthodox Christians, was the feast day of St. Gregory Palamas. Though he is little-known in the West, in the East he is a pre-eminent theologian on par with such greats as St. Gregory Nazianzen and St. John of Damascus.

In his lifetime, he defended what is known as the essence/energies distinction in God, something very controversial to (Continue next page)





Western ears; essentially, this means that "God's powers, energies and attributes are uncreated...though it might be possible for a philosopher to conceive of a transcendent One or First Essence without attributes, the data of revelation make it impossible for the Christian God not to be creator and redeemer. Hence, the divine attributes must always have subsisted in the essence, since by nature God is changeless."1(John Meyendorff) For the scholastic West of the time, this appeared to be a dangerous teaching that struck at the very oneness of God.

I ruminated on this teaching of the Christian East for some yesterday. For myself, I have always had great difficulty in understanding St. Gregory and the whole essence/energies issue, though I have poured over the theologians famous work entitled *The Triads in Defense of the Holy Hesychasts* several times. However, as I thought about it all, I was reminded of the paradoxical nature of both his teaching and of Christianity as a whole. Christianity, unlike pretty much every other religion I have ever encountered, seems to have always been highly paradoxical.

C.S. Lewis writes about the Christian teaching on God that "It is something we could never have guessed, and yet, once we have been told, one almost feels one ought to have been able to guess it because it fits so well with all things we know already."2 Though the teaching of the East on God's essence and His qualities/energies/attributes etc. is hard to understand, once it has been encountered, it gradually makes sense. I began to think how paradoxical the other great doctrines on the Holy Trinity throughout the history of the Church have been - not only that there is *one* God in *three* Persons, but that Jesus was *both* man and God, that Jesus had *two* wills not one, and all the rest. When one really sits down to think upon these things, one immediately encounters their paradoxical nature. But just because they appear as paradox does not mean that they are non-sense, as though they were merely oxymorons. Faith is not always defined by what seems most *reasonable* to us, or fits in a rational box. It is precisely because of this paradoxical nature that I think they speak to such Truth. "If Christianity was something that we were making up, of course we could make it easier. But it is not. We cannot compete, in simplicity, with people who are inventing religions. How could we? We are dealing with Fact."3 (C.S. Lewis)

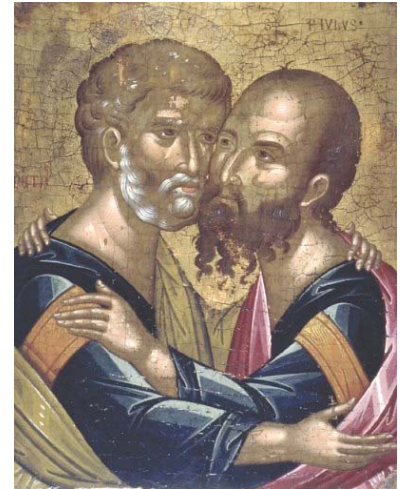
**PLEASE SEND CHECK (\$20, 25 FAMILY, 15 STUDENT) FOR 2014 CHAPTER DUES MADE TO THE SOCIETY OF ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM C/O VITO R. CARCHEDI, 35 SCHENLEY AVE. STRUTHERS, OH 44471.**

## The Consensus of Greek and Latin Fathers

Posted on November 13, 2013

<http://www.orientalelumen.org.uk/>

The famous dialogue between the Greek Nicetas and the Latin Anselm in 1136 divided strongly over the papacy, the Filioque and other things, but concluded that (1) these divisive matters did not hinder salvation (implying that the schism did not exist and they were still one church) and (2) these problems could be resolved by a consensus of the Greek and Latin Fathers.



At Florence, the Greeks were apparently surprised to find that the Latin fathers taught things that appeared to support the Filioque. St. Mark of Ephesos, who famously opposed the union, wrote an entire treatise against the Latin consecration of the elements, in direct opposition to the Latin father St. Ambrose of Milan (d. 397). St. Mark of Ephesos, nor the other Greek detractors of Latin dogmas (such as St. Photios) DID NOT KNOW LATIN, thus their understanding of these teachings is at best inadequate and at worst ignorant.

On the other hand, Latin Christians have for centuries (esp. since Trent) deeply prejudiced the Greek tradition and sought to subsume it into the Latin milieu which is somehow "more Catholic." Despite great efforts at Vatican II to rectify this sin, Eastern Catholics still feel like second class citizens, as even their priests in large areas of the diaspora are restricted from following the Greek tradition of married priests. Thus the Orthodox who refuse communion with Rome are in some sense justified in their caution.

Nevertheless, I wish to exercise the original intent of Nicetas and Anselm to bring a consensus of the two traditions. I believe we can apply this to the two most legitimate divisions between the traditions (as opposed to the illegitimate and shameless sins like beards, yeast, and fasting dates). These are the Papacy and the Filioque.

1. Since the Papacy and the Filioque are based DIRECTLY upon the writings of such Latin Fathers like St. Leo the Great, St. Gregory (Continue next page)

the Great, St. Augustine of Hippo, St. Hilary of Poitiers and St. Ambrose of Milan, both doctrines are AT WORST *theologoumena* to the east and AT BEST *legitimate Christian doctrines*.

2. Since the Papacy and the Filioque are LARGELY ABSENT from such Greek luminaries as St. John Chrysostom, St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory the Theologian, St. Cyril of Alexandria, and St. John of Damascus, both doctrines are AT WORST *theologoumena* (since none of these Greek Fathers condemn these doctrines). They cannot be claimed, based on the Greek fathers, to be legitimate Christian doctrines.
3. But if premise (1) and (2) are correct, it follows that the doctrine of Vatican I on the Papacy is AT WORST a *theologoumenon*. It is certainly not a heresy. Nor is the doctrine of the Filioque.
4. Thus it is a sin against unity to sever communion when no heresy is present. Thus Orthodox should come into communion with Rome.
5. However, just as the Eastern Catholics (especially since Vatican I) have been abused and mistreated and their tradition not respected, Orthodox should also be on their guard against this wickedness. Insofar as this occurs, the Orthodox should look upon the anti-Greek Vatican prelates as the “weaker brother” (Rom. 14) with whom, out of Christian love, the Greeks must be patient.
6. On the other hand, insofar as the Vatican administration provides a MUCH NEEDED PASTORAL UNITY (admitted by all objective Orthodox scholars) to the muddled imbroglio that is Orthodox division, the Orthodox should embrace this ministry. The Orthodox should not be out of communion with Rome, since they were in communion with Rome when it taught the Filioque and Papacy in the first millennium. However, the Orthodox (like the Eastern Catholics) should feel the need to dissent in some pious manner from Roman jurisdiction, insofar as it transgresses the Greek tradition.
7. Finally, with this unity, a TRUE consensus of Greek and Latin Fathers can be brought about between the Churches, and we will understand more fully the one Tradition within and through the two traditions.

“...that they all may be one”

## “Ecumenism from the bottom up: Now Vatican II is coming into effect”

11-19-2013  
**Vatican Insider interviews Major Archbishop Svjatoslav Shevchuk of the Ukrainian Greek Orthodox Church: “Our country’s also feeling the Francis effect”**



ANDREA TORNIELLI  
VATICAN CITY

“We cannot leave ecumenism in the hands of diplomats, politicians or theologians alone: we need to preach it in the parishes,” His Beatitude Svjatoslav Shevchuk, (43), Major Archbishop of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church told *Vatican Insider*. Shevchuk has just arrived at St. Martha’s House in the Vatican, where he will be staying for a month, ahead of the 80<sup>th</sup> Ukrainian Holodomor Remembrance Day, the famine of 1932-1933 which claimed the lives of millions of people.

**What impact has the new pontificate had on your country?**

“Pope Francis is at the centre of Ukrainian people’s attention as well and it is not just Catholics that have been taking an interest in him, but Orthodox faithful and non-believers as well. I had the chance to meet Bergoglio when he was still a cardinal back in 2009, when he was names Bishop of the Eparchy of Santa María del Patrocinio en Buenos Aires: he was my direct superior because the eparchy was suffragan to the Diocese of Buenos Aires. When I left Argentina to take up my position as Major Archbishop, I gave an icon to him as a gift. He saw me in St. Martha’s House a few months ago and recognised me. He invited me to his room to show me that he had brought the icon with him to the Vatican. The most striking thing about him is his simplicity and his ability to get close to people. Many in the Ukraine have been impressed by his sobriety and austerity. Here in the Ukraine, bishops from the various Churches are often accused of being too attacked to wealth and coming across as oligarchs; of protecting a Church for the rich. Francis (Continue next page)

represents a Church that is close to the people, to the poor and which announces the Lord's Gospel."

**What are relations between Catholics and Orthodox faithful like in the Ukraine today?**

"Our situation is a very complex one and our Christianity is very fragmented: only we Catholics are present here with three Churches *sui iuris*. The Latin Bishops' Conference, the Eparchy of Mukachevo which is directly dependent on the Holy See and the Greek Catholic Church. We are trying to be witnesses of unity amongst ourselves above all. As is known, the Orthodox Church is fragmented too: a part from the "canonical" Church which is in communion with the Patriarchate of Moscow, there are two other Orthodox Churches as well. We do all that we can to collaborate. There is a Council of Cardinals and some Ukrainian religious communities which make it possible for Jews, Muslims and the various Christian denominations to adopt common positions. Orthodox Churches in the Ukraine do not often understand why the Greek Catholic Church exists. They see us as a geopolitical project of the past. But there are some positive signs too. Many Christians are tired of divisions and are asking for unity. There is a growing ecumenism from the bottom up."

**Is it true that sometimes Christian Churches do not even recognise the validity of each other's baptism rites?**

"I said some time ago that in the Ukraine we are guilty of leaving ecumenism in the hands of diplomats, politicians or theologians. Now we need to preach it in the parishes and get faithful used to the idea that they must not do anything that may put their Christian brothers in a difficult situation. It needs to be priests and confessors who preach this. Christian Churches in the Ukraine, in the former Soviet Union remained separate from the global ecumenical movement; "frozen" almost. Only now are we Catholics beginning to put the principles of the Second Vatican Council into effect. At the same time, the Orthodox needs to act (on a pastoral level) on decisions that were taken a long time ago, including the mutual recognition of the sacraments. But to go back to your question, it is not rare for Catholics to be baptised a second time in order to marry an Orthodox spouse. But this is not reciprocal and we Catholics certainly do not do this."

**You are a member of the Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops. Pope Francis made public reference to the Orthodox practice of "oeconomia" which allows a second marriage. What is your view on this?**

"This practice reflects the differences in theology and canonical law that exist between the Catholics and the Orthodox. While Catholic theology and law see the two spouses as the marriage celebrants, with both of them making a commitment before God, the Orthodox Church

does not see the two spouses as forming the marriage contract but the priest who celebrates this. Furthermore, on the basis of the Gospel passage in which Jesus says: "Whoever dismisses and repudiates and divorces his wife, except on the grounds of unfaithfulness (sexual immorality), causes her to commit adultery..." the Bishop of the Orthodox Church in question may give permission for a second union to take place. This is after making a pastoral and practical – not a canonical – judgement. I hope that the Synod will help pastors: I do not think it is about changing practices, theology or canonical law. It is above all about trying to find a middle ground with those Christians who really do believe and are asking for their situation to be recognised as "lawful". We need to work out how to help them."

**What is the importance of the celebration which will take place in the Basilica of Santa Sofia – which is a historical reference point for Ukrainians - in Rome on 23 December?**

"Ten years ago, John Paul II said that that genocide which touched the very fabric of humanity was not only an event that regards the Ukraine. It is important to commemorate it, seeing as though these people were denied remembrance. Millions starved to death between 1932 and 1933. But I wish to stress that this famine did not result from natural causes. Soviet troops confiscated all grain and foodstuffs. It was an artificially induced famine. The way I see it, it was a very low cost weapon of mass destruction, an atrocity that makes one's blood run cold even today. The communists sold the grain to Western countries. Some of these countries paid, knowing that the price to pay was the starvation of the Ukrainian people. I hope this will be an occasion for everyone to remember and to reflect on the meaning of justice on an international level too. I have invited all Ukrainians to light a candle in memory of the victims of this enormous human tragedy."

**Heaven and Earth:**

*Art of Byzantium from Greek Collections* Art of Byzantium from Greek Collections Premieres at National Gallery of Art, Washington from October 6, 2013, through March 2, 2014; Travels to the J. Paul Getty Museum, April 9 through August 25, 2014

Byzantine artists drew from pagan and early Christian foundations to fashion the opulent and deeply spiritual world of Byzantium (A.D. 330–1453). The establishment of Christianity as the state religion inspired the creation of luminous icons, textiles, architectural sculptures, frescoes, and mosaics to adorn basilicas throughout the empire. Prosperous monasteries illuminated sacred manuscripts and preserved monuments of Greek literature, while private patronage fostered the embellishment of daily life. The exhibition was organized by the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports, Athens, with the collaboration of the Benaki Museum, Athens, in association with the J. Paul Getty Museum and the National Gallery of Art, Washington.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 03, 2013

## Byzantine Divine Liturgy at Wyoming Catholic College

BY PETER KWASNIEWSKI  
<http://www.newliturgicalmovement.org>



This past weekend, students, faculty, and staff of Wyoming Catholic College had the great privilege and joy of welcoming the Most Reverend Ken Nowakowski, Bishop of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of New Westminster. Bishop Nowakowski was invited as a guest lecturer to share with the college community his wealth of experience as a pastor both in the Old World and in the New World and to speak about the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church's worldwide pastoral plan "Vision 2020: The Vibrant Parish."

More immediately pertinent to readers of NLM, Bishop Nowakowski celebrated the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom on Friday, November 1st. For the benefit of the Roman Catholics who made up most of the congregation, Bishop Nowakowski had chosen beforehand the proper chants and readings for the Byzantine Feast of All Saints.

The singing was led by the Wyoming Catholic College Choir, 40 students strong, which sang mostly the festal Galician settings in three-part harmony. For communion, the Choir sang Arvo Pärt's setting of Psalm 117 (116) in Church Slavonic, as well as other traditional Eastern hymns.

Nearly all students and employees and their families were present at this magnificent liturgy, whose beauty and prayerfulness once again reminded everyone present of the immense riches our Lord Jesus Christ has poured into the Eastern churches. In its theology curriculum and spirituality, Wyoming Catholic College has always striven to "breathe with both lungs," but a visit from a Ukrainian Catholic bishop was a particularly glorious opportunity for us to do so.

## Moscow Synodal Choir performs Russian church music in Rome

4.11.2013 · [The Far Abroad](#)

With a blessing of the chairman of the Department for External Church Relations, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, the Moscow Synodal Choir conducted by Russia's Honoured Artist A. A. Puzakov, took part in the 12<sup>th</sup> International Spiritual Music Festival held from October 29 to November 10, 2013, in Rome. It is organized by the Pro Musica e Arte Foundation in cooperation with the Vatican.

On November 3, the Moscow Synodal Choir conducted a joint rehearsal with the Pontifical Sistine Chapel Choir conducted by Mgr Massimo Palombella. After that the choir met with Pope Francis who expressed joy over the fact that one of the best choirs of the Russian Orthodox Church participated in such a significant cultural event as the annual festival of spiritual music in Rome. As a greeting, the choir on its part performed for the pope several Russian church hymns and sang "Many Years of Life" to the head of the Roman Catholic Church.

In the evening of that day, a joint concert was given by the Moscow Synodal Choir and the Sistine Chapel Choir at the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore. Before the concert, Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, prefect of the Congregation for Oriental Churches, read out a message of greetings from Pope Francis who underscored the importance of the event from the point of view of cooperation between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church in the field of culture.

The Synodal Choir recited Russian church compositions by Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninov, Kastalsky, Chesnokov, Sviridov and Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk. The Sistine Chapel Choir performed Gregorian hymns and compositions by Giovanni Palestrina. In conclusion, the both choirs sang Bortnyansky's "We praise Thee, O God" in Church Slavonic and Palestrina's "Stabat Mater" in Latin.

The audience gave the singers a long ovation. The concert was broadcast live by Vatican TV. The Russian TV network "Rossia-Kultura" shot a report about this significant event.

*DECR Communication Service*

### **Pope: aware of the harm done in the past, Catholics and Lutherans continue on ecumenical journey**

Audience with a delegation of the Lutheran World Federation and members of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission for Unity. "We will continue our path of dialogue and communion, even though there are and will be difficulties".

10/21/2013 Vatican City (AsiaNews)

# Holy Transfiguration Orthodox Church keeps growing

OCTOBER 14, 2013 CLOSE TO HOME



The Rev. Gregory Thompson lights a candle in the Holy Transfiguration Orthodox Church. Thompson has been serving at the church on Washington Street for two years now since he was ordained a priest. – Dave Gossett

Source: [The Herald-Star](#)

By DAVE GOSSETT – Staff writer, The Herald-Star STEUBENVILLE – It is very quiet and peaceful inside the Holy Transfiguration Orthodox Church.

The faint sound of traffic can be heard on nearby Washington Street.

A visitor to the church can often find the Rev. Gregory Thompson sitting in a front pew praying or reflecting on his day as a jobs coach at the county's Board of Developmental Disabilities.

On a sunny day Thompson might be found painting the church's stairway railing with a volunteer.

The spiritual work comes naturally to Thompson and the physical work stems from his 20 years as a steelworker in Youngstown and Warren.

"I actually worked in the steel industry for 20 years before I became an orthodox priest. I had worked at North Star Steel in Youngstown and then Thomas Steel in Warren. I was a millwright in the melt shop at Thomas Steel when a wildcat strike was called. I was out of work looking for a job and thinking about the priesthood. I was able to find work but found it interfered with my work at the church. I was talking to my pastor and was going for the second interview for a job. My priest told me to call our bishop, who accepted my interest in the priesthood. He told me to call the

seminary and within weeks I was attending our seminary in South Canaan, Pa.," said Thompson.

"I talked to my family and they were very supportive. After I was ordained I was contacted by the priest of St. Andrew's Orthodox Church in Mingo Junction who told me there was an orthodox church in Steubenville and one near Amsterdam who needed a priest," Thompson said.

"The first two years I was driving here every week from Warren and would offer the Liturgy in Steubenville one weekend and in Amsterdam the next weekend. Then I was assigned to the Holy Transfiguration Orthodox Church here in Steubenville and another priest was assigned to the church in Amsterdam.

"When I first came here there were 12 people at Holy Transfiguration. The parishioners would hold reader services in the church but there was no priest here for the people. But they came to the church and prayed regularly. The church was on the edge of closing. But we have been able to bring more people back into the church as well as converts and now have a vibrant group of 25 to 30 people in our church," said Thompson.

"We have actually filled the pews on the main floor and have had people sitting in the choir loft. All by the grace of God," observed Thompson.

"Sometimes the neighbors will stop by to visit if they see my car outside. The Franciscan nuns from the nearby convent will also stop in. And, last week a parishioner and I were painting the railing outside of the church," explained Thompson.

That hasn't always been the case in recent years after the church pastor, the Rev. John Voytilla, died.

"Father John was actually my uncle. I had pursued the deaconate in our diocese and was ordained a deacon a week before Father John died," related Thompson.

So through a series of developments, telephone calls and divine guidance, Thompson entered the seminary to pursue the priesthood and, 18 months later, was ordained a priest and is now pastor of the church many local residents simply call the Russian Church.

Since he has arrived Thompson has installed a sign proclaiming Holy Transfiguration Orthodox Church in front of the church.

"I hope in time we can put up a second sign designating the times of our liturgies," Thompson said.

"This is basically a Roman Catholic community. And we have had a number of Catholics come to our church to visit and to participate in a service. And we have been welcomed into the community," said Thompson.

"Steubenville is a blue-collar town very similar to Warren. But you have many more churches in Steubenville than are in Warren. I was at the Dairy Queen recently and met a (Continue next page) young mother with several kids. We started talking and

she asked what I thought of Steubenville. I told her this is a very baptized community,” Thompson said. “This parish is 98 years old and it has history in the community. The church was founded by Russian immigrants and in 1970 we were granted self governance by the Russian Church. We speak English during our services although there are a few times when the old language is spoken. We are now part of the Orthodox Church of America,” he remarked. “We have the same services the immigrants had 98 years ago, and the same services that were held in Russia 1,000 years ago. Today we have children singing in our choir and they also read. We are seeing more young people in the parish these days and that is encouraging,” stated Thompson. “I wear my uncle’s vestments. I look at the altar server robes and see the names of boys who are now men. And today’s children write their names after Gary and Greg Repella. The robes don’t fit Gary today but he still assists me as an altar server,” commented Thompson. “When I first came here I was standing in the front of the church and thought I could feel an indentation in the carpeting where the priest stands. Later on we had the carpet replaced and after they had taken up the old carpeting I saw the indentations were actually in the wooden floor where the previous priests have stood for so many years before me. That was a really neat feeling,” related Thompson. “I don’t think of my 20 years working as a millwright in the steel industry as wasted time. I know what it is like to get up and go to church. One of my seminary teachers told me that my job as a pastor is to take burdens off the backs of people because they have enough to worry about. That is what I try to do,” said Thompson. “We have services every Sunday at 10 a.m. Then we have church school and a meal in our church hall. On Wednesdays we have Vespers at 5 p.m., followed by a Bible discussion. We also offer services on alternating Saturdays at the Laurels and Carriage Inn. I have found the people of our parish and the community to be prayer filled and wonderfully friendly. No one has an agenda,” according to Thompson. “We always invite our neighbors and the community to visit with us. On Sunday at noon we are hosting a pierogi dinner from noon until 3 p.m. We open our doors, we open our hearts and invite you to light a candle,” explained Thompson.

**Book recommendation:** J. Michael Thompson, *Lights From the East: Pray for Us* (Ligouri, 2013), 144pp.

## THE CHURCH IN SOUTHERN ITALY AND SICILY PROUDLY PROCLAIMS APOSTOLIC ORIGINS

by John D. Faris edited by LOE

To most of us, it may come as a surprise that there were and remain Italians who adhere to the rites and traditions of the Byzantine Christian East.

Commonly identified as either “Italo-Greek” or “Italo-Albanian,” the church is now quite small, comprising only two eparchies, an exarchal monastery and a few parishes in the Americas with a total population of approximately 70,000 faithful. However, the history of this 1,500-year-old church – with its highs and lows – offers insights into possible models for church unity between the Catholic West and the Orthodox East. Magna Graecia. The presence of Greeks in southern [Italy](#) and Sicily began nine centuries before Jesus, when Greeks settled along the coast, establishing flourishing colonies. They regarded these colonies as an integral part of their culture, naming the region [Magna Graecia](#) Greater Greece.

“We are so accustomed,” observed Adrian Fortescue, the great historian of [Eastern Christianity](#), “to look on Italy as one land that perhaps we forget what any map of Europe will show – namely, how near the south of Italy is to Greek lands across the water. The cities of the east coast of Italy, at any rate, are much nearer to Macedonia and Epirus than they are to Rome.”

These rich agricultural lands drew many hopeful occupiers. There were the Romans who, by 241 B.C., had conquered the entire peninsula. As was their practice, the Romans imposed their own legal system, but permitted the Greeks of Magna Graecia to retain their own language and culture. And then there were the Christian apostles, Peter and Paul.

The church in southern Italy and Sicily proudly claims apostolic foundations. On an Alexandrian ship bound for Rome, the Apostle Paul stopped at Syracuse for three days and continued on to Rhegium (modern Reggio di Calabria, a port on the Strait of Messina), then sailed to Puteoli (on the Gulf of Naples), where he stayed for seven days with fellow believers, before finally arriving in Rome (Acts 28:11-14). There is no scriptural account of Peter’s travels to Rome, but he probably would have taken a similar route.

Magna Graecia’s early Christians, primarily Greek-speaking, observed the rites that originated in Jerusalem and later were nurtured in the city of [Antioch](#), where the followers of Jesus were first called Christians.

The Greek identity of the region was reinforced in the year 330, when the Roman emperor, Constantine I, moved his government to the small Greek port of Byzantium on the Bosporus. (Continue next page)

Officially christened “New Rome,” the imperial capital of [Constantinople](#) (the city of Constantine, today known as Istanbul) grew in size and wealth. The city also took on a distinct Christian identity, turning its back on pagan Rome. And though Constantinople proudly retained its Roman identity, even until its collapse in 1453, Greek had long since supplanted Latin as the language of state. Though under the ecclesiastical and political governance of Rome, the Greeks of southern Italy and Sicily gravitated to Constantinople, its church, culture and rites. These liturgical practices – which originated in Antioch but, after the sixth century, matured in Constantinople’s Great Church of the [Haghia Sophia](#) – are now commonly referred to as Byzantine. Security and a common language prompted the loyalty of the peninsula’s Greeks to Constantinople. Germanic tribes eventually overran the Italian peninsula, forcing the last Western Roman emperor, Romulus Augustulus, to flee his capital of Ravenna in 476. Led by their king, Theodoric, the Germanic Ostrogoths united the entire peninsula and Sicily. Their kingdom eventually collapsed, however, as the Eastern Romans (Byzantines), under generals Belisarius and Narses and supported by the local Greeks, reestablished imperial authority in the middle of the sixth century. The reassertion of imperial authority, marking the beginning of the Byzantinization of southern Italy and Sicily, was quickly challenged, however, as the Lombards, another tribe from beyond the Alps, invaded Italy, dividing the peninsula into rival spheres. The Byzantines remained strong in Calabria, Puglia and Sicily, while the Lombards ruled from their strongholds, Milan in the north and Benevento, near Naples. Like the Ostrogoths, the Lombards had embraced a different form of Christianity, Arianism, setting them apart from the established church of the empire. A seventh-century pope, St. Gregory I, later received them into the Catholic Church. The ecclesiastical organization of the region reflected the principle that there could be only one bishop in a city. Greek and Latin bishops had faithful from both churches subject to them.

## Carmelite nun from Syria describes pain of civil war

By Carl Bunderson

Denver, Colo., Nov 21, 2013 / 05:56 pm ([CNA/EWTN News](#)).- Mother Agnes Mariam of the Cross, a Lebanese-born nun who has lived nearly 20 years in Syria, is travelling the U.S. advocating for peace and reflecting on how the conflict has affected life in the region.



It is “terribly, tremendously” difficult to be living away from her community in Syria, she reflected Nov. 17.

“We have a very, very familiar way of communitarian life, and our community is in need, it’s a new community. We were founded in 2000, so they need their superior, they need their mother. But the Lord has supplied: they are like heroes; I consider this community to be heroes.”

Mother Agnes is the superior of St. James the Mutilated monastery in Qarah, located 60 miles north of Damascus on the road to Homs.

Qarah, which was captured by the Syrian regime two days after Mother Agnes spoke with CNA, had been under the control of the Free Syrian Army, a moderate rebel group, for over a year.

The monastery is home to 20 nuns of the Unity of Antioch, and is also sheltering 32 Sunni refugees from al-Qusayr, she told CNA. Because of the violent unrest in the area, she cannot return to the monastery.

“They are trapped,” she said. “They cannot go out and I cannot come in, because all over this region we have bandits and undisciplined elements. So they cannot go out and I cannot come in, until the situation is better.”

Before the war, she explained, “we had 25,000 visitors” annually for spiritual retreats and other events. “We were building a new youth hostel to receive pilgrims, and it was our income; we had also a store, to sell what we produce – icons, garments, hand crafts, also agricultural products. All of this has stopped, so we have no income at all.”

During a talk she gave at St. Rafka Maronite parish in Denver, Colo., Mother Agnes explained that the Free Syrian Army “reported to us one night in June there was a plot to abduct me ... it is the FSA who

protected me, and put me outside” the city.

Islamists rebels, such as al-Nusra Front, had infiltrated the area, and were planning her abduction, she said, noting that the armed opposition “is not one faction.”

Because the FSA has not given her “the green light to come back,” she is unable to return to the (Continue next page)

monastery, and the people there are unable to leave, she said. "We are like in a siege."

Mother Agnes said she now works in neighboring Lebanon: "I paint icons...and we have a kind of market outside Syria."

The community at Qarah has been shelled by both helicopters and tanks, and Mother Agnes reflected, "we've had other examples in Syria where convents were destroyed, nuns or monks were killed, but we are praying the Lord to prevent this, to spare it."

The Syrian conflict has now dragged on for 31 months, since demonstrations sprang up nationwide on March 15, 2011 protesting the rule of Bashar al-Assad, Syria's president and leader of the country's Ba'ath Party.

In April of that year, the Syrian army began to deploy to put down the uprisings, firing on protesters. Since then, the violence has morphed into a civil war which has claimed the lives of more than 115,000 people. There are at least 2.2 million Syrian refugees in nearby countries, most of them in Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey.

An additional 6.5 million Syrian people are believed to have been internally displaced by the war.

The Syrian rebels are made up of a large variety of groups, including both moderates and Islamist extremists, as well as Kurds.

Qarah has strategic significance in the war; its location on the road from Homs to Damascus makes it key for supply routes. The Syrian regime's army had begun an offensive to retake the city Nov. 15. Mother Agnes described it as "very dramatic," and said that during the battle, her community was "out of communication. We are praying they remain safe, they have a kind of shelter. We have 50 people there, we hope that we will not hear bad news, we are very worried."

During the conference held at St. Rafka, Mother Agnes said the monastery, since the war began, was "there to help people." It continues to help liberate prisoners held for their beliefs, and provides refuge to displaced Muslims.

Mother Agnes was born in Lebanon, to a Lebanese mother and a Palestinian father, who became a refugee in 1948 when Israel was created. She described herself as "a victim from the Palestinian conflict," as well as the Lebanese civil war, which lasted from 1975 to 1990 and in which Syria was a participant.

She joined the Carmelites in 1971, and in 1992 received permission to serve the Melkite Greek Catholic Church. Two years later, she travelled to Syria to begin establishing a monastic foundation, restoring the monastery, which dates to the 6th century.

Though it was at first hard to be in Syria, which had taken part in the civil war in her homeland, she said, "I have been converted, to talk now on behalf of the Syrian people; it is out of a conversion of love."

"We've lived in Syria for 19 years; we have been, little by little, driven to know the Syrian people, and to love them, because we are serving them."

At St. James the Mutilated monastery, she said, "we work for peace, for unity...we work for the unity of all the sons of Abraham, Jews Christians and Muslims."

Qarah is an apt place to carry out this work for unity. The town has a history of coexistence between Christians and Muslims, and was once home to a Jewish community.

"It's a very antique village," Mother Agnes told CNA. "The mosque was previously a church, and before that a temple; it was made a church by St. Helena. We have another church that was completely looted, where there are frescoes from the 11th century."

Mother Agnes told the conference attendees that the "real victim" of the Syrian civil war is "the Syrian population... the ignored victim of the conflict," whom she said "has completely attracted, and converted us."

She recounted the story of meeting a mother whose son was long-disappeared during the war. After much waiting, the family finally received a call saying he would return, but the next day his body appeared, in a bag, mutilated and cut up.

"This kind of population, I would like to serve. And in our constitution, our rule of contemplative (life), our order, we have one article that says the necessity does not have a law; when something is a necessity, an emergency, there is no law."

"My necessity, my emergency, is the Syrian people. I will help them, I am invested. Even though I am not Syrian, I have asked (for) Syrian citizenship," she concluded.

"In the name of Christ I am completely dedicated to the cause of peace and reconciliation among the Syrian people, that's what I do."