

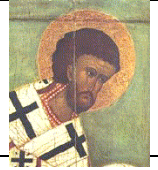
LIGHT OF THE EAST

"GLORY BE TO GOD FOR ALL THINGS."

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY OF SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, YOUNGSTOWN-WARREN OHIO CHAPTER
VOLUME 11, NUMBER 5, SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER, 2012

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FROM THE EDITOR...

Dear Members and Friends, The next regular meeting of the Youngstown-Warren Chapter of the Society of St. John Chrysostom will be **Monday, November 12 at 7 pm. It will be held at St. Mark Antiochian Orthodox Church located at 3560 Logan Way- (Youngstown) Liberty Township OH**. Mailing address:

P.O. BOX 148, Youngstown, Ohio 44501 Priest: V. Rev. Fr. Daniel Rohan

Church Phone: 330-759-8383 Email: fr.danielr@yahoo.com

The speaker will be Fr. Radu Bordeianu, Ph.D. Assistant Professor of Theology at Duquesne University

He was born and raised in Romania, where he went to seminary and undertook Master's studies. He obtained a second Master's degree from Duke University, and his Ph.D. from Marquette University. An ordained Orthodox priest since 1998 and father of three children, Father is in his sixth year teaching at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, PA.

His research focuses on ecumenical ecclesiologies—especially the dialogue between the Orthodox and Catholic churches—the relationship between the Trinity and the Church, theology of creation, and environmental issues. Father is particularly engaged with the ecclesiology of the Romanian Orthodox theologian Dumitru Staniloae, placing special emphasis on Staniloae's contribution in ecumenical discussions on the Church.

His [Dumitru Staniloae: an Ecumenical Ecclesiology](#) has been published by Continuum. His other works appeared in *Pro Ecclesia*, *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, *Downside Review*, *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*, *Theological Studies*, and in book chapters, etc. He has presented numerous academic papers and has lectured nationally and internationally. He has also been



interviewed on television, radio, and in newspapers.

He is the director of the annual Holy Spirit Lecture and Colloquium, an ongoing series intended to encourage the exploration of ideas pertaining to the theology of the Holy Spirit within an ecumenical context and in dialogue with contemporary issues. Father is also the director of the des Places Libermann Award in Pneumatology, which honors the individual who has made the most significant scholarly contribution to the area of pneumatology in the preceding five-

year period.

Fr. Radu is especially honored to serve as president of the Orthodox Theological Society in America ([OTSA](#)). Father Radu's topic:

"Overlapping Jurisdictions: Promises and Pitfalls for Orthodox-Catholic Unity

"The speaker will first explore the current jurisdictional situation within Orthodox and Catholic families (the latter including Roman and Byzantine Catholic Churches), focusing on the existence of various jurisdictions in the same territory of each Church. Then he will speak of the disadvantages of the present situation, as well as the way in which it could provide a model for further unity between Orthodox and Catholics. A brief discussion of the Papacy in a united Church will conclude the presentation."

On this evening our chapter will be celebrating the feast in the Eastern Church of our patron, St. John Chrysostom. St. Mark's church has a relic of St. John which we will be venerating.

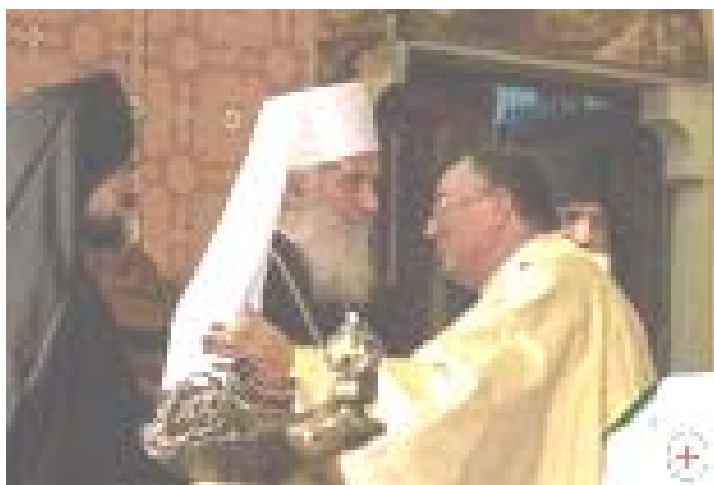
Won't you make a special effort to attend what promises to be a spiritually and intellectually rewarding evening?+++

PRAY FOR THE UNITY OF THE APOSTOLIC CHURCHES!

AN HISTORIC EMBRACE

Sunday September 9, 2012

From: © www.agensir.it edited and translated by LOE



Orthodox Patriarch Irenej with Cardinal Pljic at Mass in the Cathedral

A fraternal embrace between the Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Catholic Archbishop of Sarajevo Cardinal Vinko Puljic. With this gesture of reconciliation the Mass in the Cathedral of Sarajevo was concluded and in which for the first time His Holiness the Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church participated with a delegation representing other Orthodox Churches.

At the conclusion of the Mass, the Patriarch gave final remarks to the Assembly. Then in procession the Cardinal and Patriarch and other bishops exited the cathedral where there were greeted with long applause by those in the cathedral square. All this took place on the eve of the encounter “Religion and Culture in Dialogue” taking place in Sarajevo sponsored by the Community of St. Egidio together with the Catholic Archdiocese and the Islamic and Hebrew communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and with the Serbian Orthodox Church. +++

Papal trip to Lebanon strengthened ties with Orthodox, cardinal reports

CWN - September 21, 2012

The visit to Lebanon by Pope Benedict XVI marked a significant step forward for relations with the Orthodox churches, according to the president of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity.

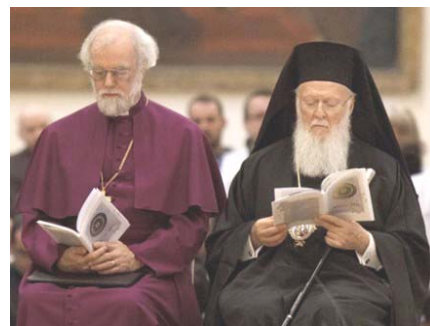
Cardinal Kurt Koch told *L'Osservatore Romano* that although public attention focused on relations with Muslims during the papal voyage, because of the current religious tensions in the Middle East, the Pope's meetings with Orthodox leaders were productive and the Vatican has received “extremely positive comments” on the trip.

The trip also demonstrated the unity within the Catholic Church, despite the differences among the Eastern Catholics of different rites in Lebanon, Cardinal Koch reported. “One could also state that the relations between the Catholic Church and all the Eastern Orthodox churches are getting better,” he added. +++

Archbishop of Canterbury and Orthodox patriarch to join Vatican II celebration

By [Cindy Wooden](#) on Monday, 17 September 2012

Dr Williams and Patriarch Bartholomew
(Photo: CNS)



The Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople and the Archbishop of Canterbury will join Pope Benedict XVI's celebration of the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council, it was announced today. Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople and Dr Rowan Williams will attend the Mass that Pope Benedict will celebrate at the Vatican to mark the anniversary of the opening of the council on October 11, 1962, Vatican officials said.

Representatives from the Orthodox Church and Anglican Communion were observers at the 1962-65 council, which officially embraced and promoted Catholic involvement in the ecumenical movement.

During the January celebration of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Pope Benedict said the Second Vatican Council placed the search for Christian unity “at the center of the life and work of the Church,” because it was Christ's desire that his followers be united.

In addition, the Pope said, “the lack of unity among Christians impedes a more effective proclamation of Christ because it puts our credibility in danger ... How can we give a convincing witness if we are divided?” Ecumenical cooperation in proclaiming the Christian message is expected to be a key topic at the world Synod of Bishops on new evangelisation on October 7-28. +++

Mail check for 2013 dues (\$20, family \$25, student \$15) to name & address in Masthead of this newsletter.
Thanks. +++

MAN–CUSTODIAN OF CREATION

XX International Ecumenical Conference

on Orthodox spirituality

Bose, Wednesday 5 - Saturday 8 September 2012

in collaboration with the Orthodox Churches

Bose, 8 September 2012

by ENZO BIANCHI edited by LOE

To conclude this 20th conference — it seems only yesterday that with great hesitation and trembling we began this adventure twenty years ago — I simply wish to express profound thanks to the Lord. It is the Lord who always accompanies us in these conferences, it is the Lord who is in our midst with his mercy and his love, it is the Lord who allows us to meet, to listen to each other, to exchange gifts, the gifts that our Churches have and that ought to be shared among those who call themselves Christians. We will, of course, express our thanksgiving in prayer, but it is as well a profoundly felt sentiment in our hearts, hence we must by all means express it at the end of our meetings.

The ecumenical patriarch Bartholomew I said last June that “the real crisis is not in the environment, but in men’s hearts”. I believe that this is not only true, but that it is something that ought to engage us in a real and true responsibility, which is that of the Christian life. I try never to forget the words of bishop Ioann (Wendland), later metropolitan of Jaroslavl’ (†1989), representative of the Russian Church at the World Council of Churches. He introduced himself and the Russian Church with these words: “Brethren, we wish to thank you for having welcomed us among you. You will ask what is our contribution. We do not offer a new religious doctrine, we offer the faith of the early Church. Perhaps we have not been capable of living up to it. We offer it to you and we hope that you will be capable and that together we will be capable of producing the fruits that perhaps alone we have not been able to bear.”

These are humble and great words, which reveal what meeting each other, welcoming each other, tending towards communion in Christ can signify. Ecumenism is not a kind of compromise of tactics or of strategy, wrote metropolitan Anthony Bloom, a way of bringing together different Churches and of drawing believers; ecumenism is an attitude of the spirit that recognizes that Christ is the Lord of the world and that our role is to bring to this universe a truth that embraces, exalts it, that leads it to a beauty and a salvation that it did not know. The end of ecumenism is the transfiguration of the world, all together, because “God has conceived our salvation also through the material of the world, the material world, the visible world,” as St John Damascene writes (On the sacred images, 1,16). +++

A MEETING BETWEEN THE POPE AND THE PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW SEEMS CLOSER TODAY

Italian Scholar Living in Russia Speaks On Eastern Orthodox- Roman Catholic Relations

Edited by LOE

ROME, SEPT.19, 2012 (Zenit.org).- It is “an eventuality that was never excluded in the past and which seems closer today.” The much awaited meeting between Benedict XVI and Orthodox Patriarch Kirill might not be far away, on condition that some open questions are resolved, said the hieromonk Giovanni Guaita in an interview with Aid to the Church in Need (ACN). The Italian scholar has lived in Russia for almost 30 years as a collaborator of the secretary for Inter-Christian Relations of the Department for Foreign Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate.

The hieromonk – a title attributed by the Eastern Churches to monks who have received priestly ordination – received the Papal Foundation at the Muscovite monastery of Saint Daniel, a spiritual and administrative center of the Orthodox Church, where the Department headed by the Metropolitan, Hilarion, has its headquarters.

“The hope is that the meeting will mark a moment of effective change in relations between the two Churches, and not limited to a handshake in front of photographers,” he said. First, he explained, some knots must be untied, not so much in Russia as in other countries, for example, Ukraine. +++

Byzantine Carmelite Nuns



Holy Annunciation Monastery belongs to the Order of Discalced Carmelites, whose contemplative charism is the legacy of its founders, Saint Teresa of Avila and Saint John of the Cross. This Order is

dedicated to a life of prayer. We are the only Carmelite Monastery in the Western Hemisphere belonging to an Eastern Catholic Rite.

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Orthodox leader: North America's churches can be example for Ukraine

By Barb Frazee

Catholic News Service

PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE, Manitoba

(CNS) Edited by LOE-- Catholic and Orthodox churches in Canada and the United States can be an example for their counterparts in Ukraine, Canada's top Ukrainian Orthodox leader told the Ukrainian Catholic Synod of Bishops.

Ukrainian Orthodox Metropolitan Yurij of Winnipeg, Manitoba,

addressing the worldwide synod

Sept. 10, told the bishops it was

"evident that our God is blessing us and helping us develop this better relationship."

"We also pray that in Ukraine this same attitude will develop as well," he said at the first meeting of the synod.

The synod is private, but part of its initial session was open to media.

Metropolitan Yurij told several dozen Ukrainian Catholic bishops that the North American Catholic and Orthodox bishops have worked through the "animosity" that once marked relations between their churches, and they now collaborate.

"In Ukraine, they have to go through the same kind of process," he said, and the bishops outside Ukraine must be patient with their brothers.

While the majority of Ukrainians are Orthodox, they are divided into three churches: one in communion with the Russian Orthodox Church, one with a patriarch in Kiev and the third known as the Autocephalous Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

The forced unification of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church with the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church in the 1940s "is one of the principal problems," the metropolitan said.

The 2010 election of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich, a member of the Orthodox Church in communion with the Moscow Patriarchate, appears to have fueled long-standing tensions between Orthodox loyal to Moscow and those who support an independent Orthodox Church in Ukraine. Yanukovich has worked to strengthen ties with Russia.

Metropolitan Yurij did not mention politicians. However, he did note that the Russian-affiliated Ukrainian Orthodox Church is the only one canonically recognized by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. So, for instance, when Patriarch Filaret of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kiev Patriarchate visited Canada in April, Metropolitan Yurij did not meet with him.

"I have directors also," he said, referring to the ecumenical patriarch, considered first among equals of

Orthodox leaders. "I am part of the community of the



Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, major archbishop of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, celebrates the Divine Liturgy at Sts. Volodymyr and Olha Cathedral Sept. 9 in Winnipeg, Manitoba. At the end of the Divine Liturgy, he declared the worldwide Ukrainian Catholic Synod of Bishops officially opened. (CNS/David Lipnowski)

Orthodox, and he (Patriarch Filaret) is not recognized as a patriarch, so I could not meet him."

Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk of Kiev-Halych, Ukraine, the elected head of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, told Metropolitan Yurij he often finds himself caught in the middle of the

delicate situation in Ukraine.

Archbishop Shevchuk deals with leaders of all three Ukrainian Orthodox churches -- for instance, each Orthodox church sent representatives to his March 2011 installation. Yet every time he has contact with someone from one of the noncanonical Ukrainian Orthodox churches, "right away a letter goes from Moscow to Rome" asking why the Ukrainian Catholic Church is collaborating with them.

"Directly or indirectly ... I end up being a kind of a go-between between the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church," he said.

Archbishop Shevchuk said he, like his predecessor, Cardinal Lubomyr Husar, believes that "we can and we must be ambassadors of the whole Kievan Church," a term used to refer to all Eastern churches based in Ukraine.

Archbishop Shevchuk asked Metropolitan Yurij to facilitate a meeting between him and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople.

"I will help in whatever way I can to forward this dialogue," Metropolitan Yurij told him. He also noted that the late Ukrainian Catholic Bishop Isidore Borecky of Toronto once met with the ecumenical patriarch, who thanked him for reaching out in dialogue.

Metropolitan Yurij and another invited guest, Winnipeg Archbishop V. James Weisgerber, thanked the synod members for inviting them to the opening session and to the previous day's Divine Liturgy.

Archbishop Weisgerber, former president of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, told them, "Sometimes we get the impression that -- because the Roman Catholic Church is so large -- that it has nothing to learn from anyone else.

"This is a great, great mistake. Often the smallest have the most important things to say," the archbishop said.

"I am convinced that your exercise of the episcopacy and your exercise of synodality certainly reflect better the teaching of the Second Vatican Council than many other churches," he told them. +++

Both Lungs

August 17, 2012

http://www.catholicworldreport.com/Item/1539/both_lungs.aspx

Both the East and West are necessary to provide enough “oxygen” for the spiritual battle raging in today’s world.

Christopher B. Warner



In an overwhelmingly Muslim Middle East, it is surprising to note that one-tenth of all Syrians are Christian, and even more shocking to discover that almost half of the population of Lebanon is also Christian. It is a wonder there are any Christians left in that part of the world at all. But then, these are no ordinary Christians. Most Christians in the Middle East are not Roman Catholic or Protestant—they are *Eastern* Christians with a unique heritage distinct from Western forms of worship and practice. Perhaps their millennium-old customs make them robust enough to stay in countries where they are surrounded by hostile neighbors.

“It is their faith,” says George Baho, a native of Damascus, Syria. George told *Catholic World Report*, “Without a strong faith, Christians in Syria could not persevere under a Muslim majority.” His parents moved to Damascus from a small village in northern Syria called Mardeen. Mardeen is one of many small, isolated, Christian villages in the Middle East that heroically cling to their Christian culture and identity. The Baho family is Syriac Catholic—one of many Eastern Christian communities in the Middle East. Syriac Catholics have their own distinct monasteries, churches, liturgy, and hierarchy within the Catholic Church.

Lebanon is actually governed by the Christian majority

of that state, the Maronite Catholics. But Syria and Lebanon are home to half a dozen other Eastern Christian communities as well, including Greek, Armenian, Syriac, Assyrian/Chaldean, and Coptic Christians. These communities celebrate liturgies that developed independently of one another more than a thousand years ago. They have preserved a cultural treasury of liturgical beauty and depth that is waiting to be explored by Western Catholics.

Blessed John Paul II called for the Church to breathe with “both lungs,” incorporating the rich traditions of both the East and West. In 2011, Pope Benedict’s general intention for the month of November was “that the Eastern Catholic Churches and their venerable traditions may be known and esteemed as a spiritual treasure for the whole Church.” Most Roman Catholics, however, have yet to discover how this can be practically achieved.

The most obvious difference between East and West is the liturgy. The prayers and actions of the Mass are not the same in the Christian East. The Catholic East practices five distinct rites, or liturgical traditions, that mirror the Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox churches (which are not in union with Rome). To understand the difference in liturgy, it is necessary to look back to the regrettable schisms in the Church.

During the fifth and sixth centuries, the Alexandrian and East Syrian bishops broke away from the Greek and Latin Church, marking the first schism in the Christian Church. These Churches are called the “Oriental Orthodox” (Iraqi Assyrians, Egyptian Copts, etc.) The early part of the second millennium witnessed another significant rupture between the Latin Church of the West and the Greek Church of the East—the gradual, tragic result of linguistic, liturgical, disciplinary, theological, and cultural differences. The Eastern Church took the title “Orthodox,” and the West, “Catholic.” Over time, many Eastern Orthodox Christians resumed communion with the bishop of Rome, and are called Eastern Catholics. These Churches are known as the Alexandrian (Egypt), the East Syriac (Iraq/Iran/India), the West Syriac (Syria/Lebanon/India), the Armenian (Armenia), and—the largest—the Byzantine (Greece, Russia, and the Slavs) Churches.

Most Roman Catholics who are familiar with the East have knowledge of the Byzantine tradition. The Byzantine Catholic Church is made up of 13 “autonomous ritual Churches,” such as the Ukrainian, Ruthenian, Melkite, and Romanian Catholic churches. These Churches have parishes worldwide and are governed by their own hierarchy of bishops who are in full communion with the Pope.

When asked, “**Why are you Byzantine Catholic?**” Shelepets Baumann, (Continue next page)

a parishioner of Sts. Cyril and Methodius Byzantine (Ruthenian) Catholic Church in Fort Pierce, Florida, replied:

I was born into the Byzantine faith and practiced it all of my life. Like most things [I began] to take it for granted. However, I never realized until my adult years how precious the Byzantine Catholic faith is and how beautiful the Divine Liturgy is. As an ex-flight attendant and presently a traveling nurse, my jobs have taken me to many parts of the states and I have not always had the opportunity to go to a Byzantine Catholic church, so I [often attend] the Roman Catholic church...[but] when I go to my Byzantine Catholic church, I am home.

Blessed John Paul II, in his effort to bring together the East and West, issued two distinct challenges. Because Eastern Catholics are a minority, they must faithfully preserve their tradition and not be tempted to “Latinize” their practices. Roman Catholics, on the other hand, should seek out some amount of liturgical and intellectual exposure to the Christian East for spiritual and cultural enrichment.

As John Paul the Great knew, in the current war against secularism, both lungs are necessary in order to provide enough “oxygen” for the spiritual battle raging in today’s world. The Eastern perspective expands the arsenal of the Western Church’s theology and prayer life. So, on the one hand, breathing with both lungs reinforces the Church Militant, but it is also an invitation to broaden one’s horizon through a beautiful encounter with Christ, who is new every morning.

Eastern perspective

The Eastern lung could analogously be called the feminine branch of the Catholic Church. This does not mean saccharine, feel-good Christianity, but rather that the East is notably mystical and contemplative. The Eastern Church provides a nurturing, liturgical environment for its members to encounter the Most Holy Trinity.

The East complements the Western need to act upon the world with missionary zeal by being more singularly focused on the liturgical and interior spiritual life of Christianity than its Roman counterpart.

Christians, East and the West, are all called to holiness and believe the same truths, but the Eastern “feminine” view is different than the analogous masculine perspective. The Eastern Church offers a different vocabulary, a unique lens on the Catholic faith through a liturgical encounter with God.

“There’s not just one way to be Catholic,” says Father Thomas Loya, radio host of “**Light of the East**” and pastor of Annunciation Byzantine Catholic Church in Homer Glenn, Illinois. The different cultural and liturgical practice of Catholics around the world “is what makes the Church truly Catholic.” Father Loya emphasizes the complementarity of the traditions: “You can take the same faith and express it in a variety of ways. This creates unity in diversity.”

The Divine Liturgy (Mass) is the heart of Eastern Christian theology, mysticism, and culture. The old axiom is, “If you want to know what the Eastern Christians believe, attend the liturgy.”

One of the first things Roman Catholics will notice about the liturgy is that there is no quiet meditation. There are no pauses—the chanting never ceases. Yet, the Byzantine liturgy is an active meditation with a very rich vocabulary of prayer. Eastern Christian theology is at the service of prayer, because the entire aim of that theology is to find words fitting for prayer.

Eastern liturgy exhibits an enticing beauty and grace: the smell of incense, the unbroken chant, the striking icons. The senses are transfixed throughout the liturgy, which gives the feeling of timelessness and ascension into glory. Baumann of Fort Pierce, Florida further notes: Our Divine Liturgy is so beautiful that certain parts of it always bring tears to my eyes because of its beauty. There is reverence in our church for God. People respond with enthusiasm and one can feel that you are in a holy place, in the presence of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit... Our other worship services are filled with words of such beauty that are offered to God...not to mention our beautiful music...

This modern-day Byzantine Catholic parishioner is not the first to be awed by the beauty of the Eastern services. A famous 10th-century Russian, after experiencing the Greek Divine Liturgy for the first time, exclaimed, “We no longer knew whether we were in heaven or on earth...such beauty, and we know not how to tell of it!” According to legend, the relation of this experience sparked the conversion to Christianity of the entire Russian people.

Roman Catholics often feel like hobbits among Tolkien’s high elves or travelers in an exotic country upon their first encounter with this liturgy. The East speaks a different language. And, as John Paul II fittingly stated in his letter **Orientalis Lumen**: “The words of the West need the words of the East, so that God’s word may ever more clearly reveal its unfathomable riches.” +++

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



Pope Pius XII, Bishop of Rome and Melkite Patriarch of Antioch, Maximos IV

6 Things You Should Know about the Melkite Catholic Church

by [CL DAVIS](#) on Sep 7, 2012 • <http://www.stpeterslist.com/7796/6-things-you-should-know-about-the-melkite-catholic-church/>

Listers: as you know, the universal Catholic Church is comprised of 23 sui iuris (self-governing) ritual Churches united by their communion with each other and with the See of Rome. Though the Roman Church is the largest, the 22 Eastern Churches play a significant and necessary role in the universality of Catholicism. One of these Churches, the Melkite Greek-Catholic Church, is the ritual Church to which the author of this post belongs. Today, we will examine six historical and theological distinctives of the Melkite Church.

1. Petrine and Patriarchal

The Melkite Church is historically associated with the See of Antioch. This See, established by the Council of Nicaea in AD 325 together with the Sees of Rome and Alexandria, traces its history and episcopal succession to St. Peter. Prior to journeying to Rome and establishing the bishopric there, we know that St. Peter travelled to Antioch and ordained a bishop for that city. St. Paul tells us of this trip in his epistle to the Galatians, and the mediaeval *Liber Pontificalis* claims that St. Peter served seven years as Antioch's primate. Antioch was thus the first Petrine See, and to this day the Patriarchs of Antioch trace their apostolicity to the Prince of the Apostles. Antioch was also part of the original Patriarchal Pentarchy (together with Rome, Constantinople, Jerusalem, and Alexandria). Today, the Melkite Patriarch of Antioch is also titular Patriarch of Alexandria and Jerusalem.

“So that at Antioch the disciples were first named Christians.” Thus writes the author of the Acts of the Apostles, 11:26. The Antiochean Church, already having been established by St. Peter, saw the origin of the term Christian applied to the followers of Christ. It was also here that the third Bishop of Antioch, St. Ignatios, provides us with the first written record of the term catholic used to describe the Church: “wherever the bishop appears, there let the people be; as wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church” (*Letter to the Smyrnaeans*, 8).

3. The King's Men

The origin of the word “Melkite” speaks to the steadfastness of this ancient see in maintaining the Orthodox faith. In the aftermath of the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451), the Byzantine Emperor and many of his subjects readily accepted the decrees of the Council concerning the nature of Christ. The generally-provincial Eastern Christians who opposed these decrees pejoratively referred to those city-dwelling Christians loyal to the Emperor as “King's men,” *malko* in Syriac. It was from this term that the Chalcedonian Christians of Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem became known as “Melkites”. When the Church of Antioch restored full communion with Rome in 1729, it retained the name “Melkite,” whereas those Antiochean Orthodox Christians who did not embrace the communion dropped the term.

4. Quddûsun Allâh!

The Melkite Church, derived as it is from the original Greek-speaking inhabitants of Antioch, spent many hundreds of years under the yoke of Islam. Unlike the Constantinopolitan Church, the Church of Antioch never really adapted much imperial ritual into its early liturgy – preferring instead to retain more Rabbinic and Syrian traditions. As Islam began to subjugate the area, Mohammad and his followers adopted many of the liturgical traditions of the Melkites, as is most notably seen in the Islamic prostrations, which are identical to those of Byzantine Christian practice. In like manner, several Islamic customs influenced the development of the Antiochean Church. Among these is the adoption of the ritual use of Arabic in the Divine Liturgy. From about the middle of the seventh century, Arabic language and culture fused with that of the Greek Melkites, further establishing the uniqueness (Continue next page)

of this Church within Byzantine Christianity. To this day, the official ritual languages of the Church are Greek and Arabic, so it is not uncommon to hear the liturgical use of the word *Allah* in the Divine Liturgy of the Melkites.

5. Sisters in Faith

The Melkite Church, a *sui iuris* patriarchal Church, is not merely a subset of the Roman Church. Indeed, it is a Church with its own history, theology, spirituality, and liturgy. The Melkite Church, being of Eastern origin, thus zealously guards her Byzantine approach to the Faith, seeing herself as a sister of the Roman Church. In times past, this defense of her heritage put some strain on the Church's relationship with Rome. For example, at the First Vatican Council, Melkite Patriarch Gregory II Youssef refused to sign the decree of *Pastor Aeternus* concerning the infallibility of the Roman Pontiff. When questioned by Rome on the matter, the Patriarch determined that he would only sign the decree with this caveat added: "except the rights and privileges of Eastern patriarchs," as he knew he must protect the prerogatives of the Eastern hierarchy. Though this action won him the enmity of Pope Pius IX, the Patriarch was vindicated by Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical *Orientalium Dignitas*, as well as in his expansion of the Melkite patriarchate's jurisdiction in the Middle East. In the century that followed, relations with Rome improved considerably. Those Melkite parishes that previously had been forcefully Latinized saw the beginning of a return to their authentic traditions, and the Church expanded into North and South America. At the Second Vatican Council, Melkite Patriarch Maximos IV spoke on behalf of the "absent members" of the Council: the Orthodox Churches. He did this with the complete approbation of Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople. Maximos argued against the Latinization of the Eastern Churches, and in favour of the use of vernacular languages in all the liturgies of the Catholic Church. For his outstanding work at the Council, he was awarded with the Cardinalate. Following the Council, the Roman Church returned to the more ancient ecclesiological perspective of viewing its relationship with the Eastern Churches as one of sisters, rather than of mother and daughters.

6. Voice for Orthodoxy

As one of the oldest Sees in Christendom, the Antiochean Church has inherited a long and rich theological tradition distinct from (though complementary to) that of the Latin Churches. Because of the unfortunate events of the eleventh century, the Melkites were for a period out of communion with Rome, and as such continued to develop their ecclesial

life within the Greek/Arabic tradition. When this communion was restored in the 18th century, the Melkites took great pains to ensure that their particular Byzantine theological and spiritual structures remained relatively free of Latin influences. Thanks to the efforts of the Patriarchs and Popes Benedict XIV, Leo XIII, Pius XII, John XXIII, Paul VI, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI, the Melkite Church has come to be an outspoken voice of Eastern Orthodoxy in the midst of the Catholic communion. In 1995, through the tireless work of Archbishop Elias Zoghby, a two-point profession of faith was presented to the Melkite Synod of Bishops. Known as the "Zoghby Initiative," it states the following:

I believe in everything which Eastern Orthodoxy teaches.

I am in communion with the Bishop of Rome, in the limits recognized as the first among the bishops by the holy fathers of the East during the first millennium, before the separation.

The initiative was put up for vote, and all but two bishops supported its application and provided their signatures. Furthermore, the initiative was embraced by Melkite Patriarch Maximos V and Orthodox Antiochean Patriarch Ignatius IV. While there is still much to be done in re-establishing full intercommunion with the Antiochean Orthodox Church, the acceptance of this initiative demonstrates the degree to which the Melkite Church intends to remain true to her Orthodox heritage. This is a gift of untold treasure for the larger Catholic Church, and one which Rome has in recent times taken great care to ensure is protected and made to flourish. The Melkite patriarchs, striving to be truly "Orthodox in communion with Rome," hope to one day re-establish sacramental participation with the Antiochean Orthodox Church, thus creating a bridge to help restore full union between East and West. *Ut unim sint.*

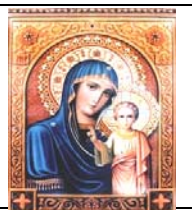
Pray for the peace of Syria. +++

PRAYER OF SOUFANIEH

Unity of Hearts!

Unity of Christians!

Unity of the Feast of Easter!



Seminarian Witnesses “Explosion” of Orthodox Christianity in Guatemala

27 August 2012 • By Seminarian Jesse Brandow • Missionary Travels in Guatemala June 12th through August 9th, 2012
<http://www.svots.edu/headlines/seminarian-jesse-brandow-gives-first-hand-account-explosion-orthodox-christianity-guatemal>



Witnessing the explosion of Orthodoxy in Guatemala (from left) Seminarian Jesse Brandow, Fr. Blas, Fr. John Chakos, Fr. Alexios. Whenever someone speaks of “American Orthodoxy,” there is usually an unspoken understanding that the term refers to North American Orthodoxy: the United States, Canada, and sometimes Mexico. This way of speaking is indeed convenient, considering that the majority of Orthodox parishes in the Western Hemisphere are still located in North America. However, in the past few years a great change has occurred in Latin America that makes it increasingly inaccurate to focus on North America as the western outpost of Orthodoxy. Just two years ago, in 2010, the Orthodox Church received a large group of Guatemalan converts numbering in the hundreds of thousands. Now Guatemala, and possibly all of Latin America, holds tremendous promise of becoming fertile ground for the Orthodox Christian Church.

Prayer from the Divine Liturgy celebrated in the Eastern Churches: *“For peace in the whole world, for the well being of the holy churches of God, and for the union of all, let us pray to the Lord. Lord have mercy!”*



The monastery of the Orthodox nuns in Guatemala. The seed of Orthodoxy in Guatemala was planted by the nuns of the Hogar Rafael Ayau, an Orthodox orphanage in Guatemala City. Many people are familiar with the incredible work of Mother Inés, Mother Ivonne, and Mother María. In fact, just this year a group of seminarians from St. Vladimir's Seminary traveled with the seminary Chancellor/CEO Archbishop Chad Hatfield to see the work of the nuns and to assist at the orphanage. It is through these nuns that the Guatemalan soil was first prepared for the Orthodox Church. Now, with the recent chrismation of a new group of Guatemalan converts that numbers between 100,000 and 200,000, the Orthodox Church is ready to blossom in Guatemala. The magnitude of the event cannot be overstated. Almost overnight, Guatemala has become the most Orthodox country in the Western Hemisphere (by percentage of national population). Furthermore, the Orthodox communities in Guatemala continue to grow rapidly and attract attention throughout Guatemala. There is still, however, little information available to the broader Orthodox world on the history and character of these new communities. For this reason, I traveled to Guatemala this summer, spending two months visiting many of the Orthodox parishes, meeting the leaders of the communities, and accompanying the bishop of the Guatemalan Church—His Eminence, Metropolitan Athenagoras—as he made his historic first visit to the new parishes in Guatemala. I returned to the United States with the desire to share what I saw and the conviction that the Holy Spirit is at work with power in Latin America. (Continue next page)

Perspective: all Eastern Catholics are about 2% of all Catholics. Number 1 is the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (almost four and a half million people)—Source: Anuario Pontificio, 2011.



received into the canonical Orthodox Church under the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople.



Some of the Guatemalan clergy, from left to right: Fr. Mihail, Fr. Evangelos, Fr. Andrés Girón, Fr. José, and Fr. Danil. After Fr. Andrés entered the Orthodox Church, then began the process of ordaining priests, chrismating the faithful, and educating the hundreds of thousands of new Orthodox. Over the last two years, a total of eight priests who were originally ordained non-canoncially have now been ordained as priests in the Orthodox Church. One of those priests spent a year in Greece to learn about Orthodoxy and become an iconographer, and there are plans for other priests to spend time abroad growing in Orthodoxy. The priests have begun to train a large team of catechists to go into all the villages to teach the people about Orthodoxy. In addition, a missionary priest from Pennsylvania, Fr. John Chakos, has begun working in Guatemala to assist the Guatemalan leaders and teach the faithful.

A Guatemalan community greets the metropolitan. The new Orthodox communities are in touch with the nuns of the Hogar, but they are an independent movement with a unique history. These communities are mostly made up of native Mayans and have roots in the Roman Catholic Church. They first began in the 1970s and 1980s as a Roman Catholic renewal movement called the "Charismatic Renewal in the Holy Spirit." For various reasons, including the movement's charismatic prayer practices and emphasis on music in church services, the parishes of the Charismatic Renewal became estranged from the Roman Catholic Church. Many communities went decades without sacraments until, in the 1990s, a former Roman Catholic priest named Fr. Andrés Girón took the movement under his wing. A very prominent figure in Guatemala, Fr. Andrés had served in the Guatemalan senate, acted as an ambassador to the United Nations, and led a large movement for land reform among the rural poor of Guatemala. These activities were part of what caused Fr. Andrés to come into tension with the Roman Catholic Church, eventually leaving the Church before taking leadership of the parishes of the Charismatic Renewal.

It was through Fr. Andrés that the communities of the Charismatic Renewal began to move towards the Orthodox Church. Fr. Andrés first joined a non-canonical Orthodox group called the Society of Secular Clerics, and he was soon ordained a bishop in this group. However, as he became more familiar with broader Orthodox Christianity, Fr. Andrés sought out the canonical Orthodox Church. A number of priests from other countries came to evaluate the situation in Guatemala, and then in April of 2010, Fr. Andrés was



A Guatemalan Orthodox Christian family. While the eight priests of the Guatemalan Orthodox Church are familiar with Orthodox theology and history, the majority of the Orthodox faithful still have much to learn and need time to grow. Many parishes lack basic iconography and essential liturgical supplies, and the communities are still relatively unfamiliar with the Divine Liturgy and other Orthodox services. Nevertheless, the communities have the seed of powerful faith: parishes are always packed on Sundays, sometimes with close to a thousand people; lay leaders are well-versed (Continue next page)

in Scripture and deliver convicting sermons to the congregations; and many communities center all of their activities around the Church, with some villages faithfully tithing ten percent of their crops and money. The Guatemalan Orthodox are indeed still newborns in the Church, but they are already growing in the Orthodox Church and have reacted well to the changes that are being made to bring them closer to the fulness of the faith. These “little ones” of Guatemala, the newborn Mayan Orthodox, will not be turned away by the Lord. As we continue to discuss the future of “American Orthodoxy,” we must not forget that the providence of God often guides the Church in unexpected ways, and His providence is now calling our attention to Latin America. When, in 1867, St. Innocent reflected on the sale of Alaska to the United States, he said, “I see in this event one of the ways of Providence whereby Orthodoxy will penetrate the United States.” These words are often recalled in discussions of American Orthodoxy, along with the stories of the rapid conversion of native Alaskans to the Orthodox Church. Now, in our lifetime, as many as 200,000 native Guatemalans have turned to the Orthodox Church—is this not the continuation of God's Providence in the Western Hemisphere? The Holy Spirit has opened a door for the faith to penetrate Latin America through Guatemala, and this event calls us to recognize and believe in the tremendous potential for the Orthodox Church to flourish in this hemisphere. We are called to stand with the Orthodox Christians of Guatemala: through prayer, through donations of liturgical supplies and monetary support, and through missionaries and teachers who will go to Guatemala to help the people learn and grow. Finally, we are called to once again be inspired by the richness of “American Orthodoxy.” From the small wooden churches of Alaska to the large food festivals of Pittsburgh and Chicago, from the Orthodox parishes that dot South America to the Mayan communities that live under the volcanoes of Guatemala—the beauty of God's Church is alive and growing in the Western Hemisphere. Let us embrace the work of God's Providence, supporting the Guatemalan Orthodox Church and tending to the faith throughout all the Americas, so that the seed of American Orthodoxy will grow and blossom. For more information on the Guatemalan Orthodox Church and my summer travels to the Guatemalan communities, [see my blog](#), which has articles and pictures that give a fuller understanding of Guatemalan Orthodoxy. If you would like to know how you can support the Guatemalan Orthodox Church, please [contact Fr. John Chakos](#), the missionary priest who is serving in Guatemala under the [Orthodox Christian Mission Center](#) (OCMC). +++

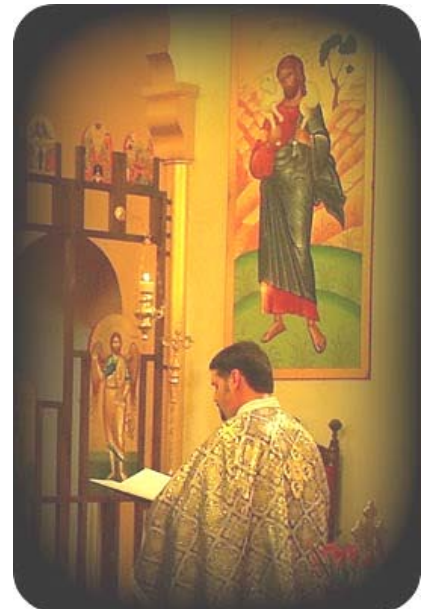
POST-SYNODAL
APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION
ECCLESIA IN MEDIO ORIENTE
OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE BENEDICT XVI
TO THE PATRIARCHS, BISHOPS,
CLERGY
CONSECRATED PERSONS
AND THE LAY FAITHFUL
ON THE CHURCH IN THE MIDDLE EAST:
COMMUNION AND WITNESS

An excerpt, #48: "Mention must also be made of the ministry of married priests, who are an ancient part of the Eastern tradition. I would like to encourage those priests who, along with their families, are called to holiness in the faithful exercise of their ministry and in sometimes difficult living conditions. To all I repeat that the excellence of your priestly life will doubtless raise up new vocations which you are called to cultivate."

He's MARRIED? 7 Quick Takes replay

<http://remnantofremnant.blogspot.ca/2012/09/hes-married-7-quick-takes-replay.html>

Priest-husband has bi-ritual faculties for the local Roman-rite archdiocese. This means that he is available to help 'supply' Roman-rite parishes who might be short on help. He regularly celebrates the 6:30 AM (sometimes 8:30 as well. We don't leave for our Sunday mission until 10) Sunday Mass as well as help with confessions and his hospital weekday Masses. So nowadays, people are surprised that he is married after seeing him in a 'Roman' capacity with no wife or children in tow.



Not much has changed in the two years since I published the following post. I do feel a bit more hostility and/or desperation from those Catholics who are against the possibility for a married priesthood. Roman-rite Catholics (Continue next page)

who do not feel comfortable with *any* married clergy sometimes see my husband as a threat because there are already 10 married deacons at this 'mega-parish' in contrast to 2 priests. Too many married men (and occasionally their wives) are around. But the silent hostility I feel most is with fellow Byzantine Catholics from a different jurisdiction than mine that does not (or very, very rarely- perhaps *sometimes* accepting a man from an old country) ordain married men in the United States. Although some are lovely and friendly, most of the believers from this community ignore me- look me in the eye while I am greeting their priest, frown, and remain silent when they are three feet away from me. My married priest husband replaced their priest for almost 3 months over Advent, Christmas, and the New Year 2 1/2 years ago with nary a stipend, but I can't get a nod or smile. Ah well. The legacy of Bishop John Ireland continues. **In any case- Here's the replayed post from October 2010-** After the initial shock of seeing a guy in clerics with a group of little kids calling him "Daddy"- it usually goes like this with one or more of the following 7 questions or comments:

1. "That's weird."

Well, it is certainly unusual for a Catholic priest (of any rite) to be married in the United States.

2. "That's great! Father John Western-rite should get married, too!"

First of all, ordination to the diaconate and priesthood come after Christian marriage where permissible. So, it's too late for Fr. John to be married unless he asks his bishop to set aside his priestly faculties. In the Eastern rites, married priests cannot remarry after their wives have died. It is the order of the sacraments at play; any man ordained a priest should 'stay the way he is.'

Also, priestly celibacy in the Western-rite is a long tradition- as much as married men being made priest is in the East. This tradition should not be treated flippantly with a "married priesthood, why not?" Books have been written on the gift of celibacy, a concept that we in the East also respect with monastic life.

3. "That's great! Are you a priest, too?"

Um, no. Not possible. You might find us priest's wives more traditional than the average Catholic. We like our incense, altar boys, and our role as women in the Church. Mary the Mother of God, Martha, her sister Mary and Mary Magdalena all had honored roles in the ministry of Jesus. He didn't make them apostles even though He allowed them to sit at His feet and listen to Him preach. I'll remain in the company of these women and try to serve God by their example.

4. "So, you're Orthodox?"

No- and we aren't Anglican, either. The Pope is our boss, and he likes us!

5. "It must be really burdensome on your church to pay

for a family."

Yikes! Are you really discussing money with me, a stranger? Well then, I must tell you that my husband receives a stipend (and no living expenses like house, food, insurance, car) from our 'big' mission and not one farthing from the 'little' mission. He supports himself and his family through his full-time job as a certified chaplain.

6. "That's a bad idea; a priest should have only church and God to be concerned with. Your husband can't possibly be dedicated to God, the Church and family. It's just too much."

Sometimes it does feel like too much. Like many families with a busy life, we have to be flexible. Frequently we celebrate holidays the day before or the day after to accommodate his schedule. Christmas presents are opened in the evening. With three Master's degrees between the two of us, we live in a small house in one of the most expensive areas of the United States so that Fr. can minister at the two missions.

It is not necessarily a good thing, but we have no day off. If Fr. has any time to relax, he'll take the kids fishing or to a movie. While a celibate priest might go golfing with friends or practice another hobby, my husband doesn't have large blocks of time (like a half day) to pursue interests that don't directly correlate to church, work or family.

My husband doesn't want to be 'that priest' that didn't take the time to be a shepherd, so he always makes time for parishioners. He answers his calls. No gate-keeper, we are too small. He will celebrate Mass in your home for your anniversary. Homes are blessed at the New Year and when it is requested. As you see, I think he is doing a stellar job. Even though this life is challenging, I think it is a bit like love for our kids. The love grows. It doesn't diminish. Having two big vocations is difficult, but not impossible through God's grace. Pray for him that he fulfills his priestly vocation well!

7. "Is it hard that his vocation to the priesthood is an eternal one while your marriage is only here on earth?"

Is it possible that I share in the priesthood of my husband? When we were married, we became one. Then, he was ordained deacon and priest, a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. His ordination actually put an eternal mark on his soul while all I got was an overnight, self-led retreat in preparation for this change in my husband and our marriage.

I might share in the practical side of his priesthood. I lead singing when I need to and step aside when another person wants to sing. I prepare food for after the services and try to keep my little ones behaving in church. I have supported his priesthood by moving across the country twice, once with a 4-month old baby and a 4-week pregnancy. (Continue next page)

I try to subdue my feminist tendencies of wanting to be the leader. My husband is the 'important one,' and I wish I could be like Terese of Lisieux who was content to used as a broom and put back into the corner when not needed.

There is a huge part of my husband's life that I can never understand or participate in. This is probably the strongest argument against a married priesthood in any rite. We priest's wives cannot fathom the feelings of being at the altar or the confessional. These experiences are hidden from us. God's grace abounds in these situations, but I suspect the evil one is lurking in the shadows, waiting for us to fail. Evil doesn't like husbands, fathers or priests. So it is a lot to say yes to these vocations. All we wives can do is be positive complements to our priest husbands like any wife. Pray for the wives and children! +++

Catholic University Looks East

Ukrainian Father Mark Morozowich is the first Eastern Catholic to lead CUA's School of Theology.

by JOHN BURGER 08/13/2012

edited by LOE

Father
Mark
Morozowich

– Courtesy
of Catholic
University
of America



There was a time in the history of the Church in America that Eastern-rite Catholics were regarded with some suspicion by the dominant Latin-rite Catholic Church. They were forbidden to continue their tradition of allowing married men to be ordained to the priesthood, and Eastern-rite churches were expected to follow certain liturgical norms, including the installation

of kneelers. (Traditionally, Eastern-rite Catholics stand during a good part of the liturgy, even during the consecration).

The demands led many Eastern Catholics in the United States to leave for the Orthodox Church.

But one of the documents of the Second Vatican Council, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, called upon Eastern Catholics to rediscover their authentic traditions, and Eastern Catholic Churches, though still relatively small, are thriving in the United States and elsewhere.

Now, an Eastern Catholic priest, Father Mark Morozowich, has been appointed head of one of the United States' premiere Catholic schools of theology. Father Morozowich, associate professor in the School of Theology and Religious Studies of The Catholic University of America, was appointed its dean July 1.

...A Western Pennsylvania native, Father Morozowich pursued a vocation to the priesthood in the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of St. Josaphat in Parma, Ohio. He studied at St. Basil's Ukrainian Catholic Seminary in Stamford, Conn., and CUA, and served in parishes in Pittsburgh and in Butler, Pa. +++

Tuesday, September 11, 2012

Was Vatican I a Council of rupture?

From: <http://marymagdalen.blogspot.com/>

There is lots of talk about the Spirit of Vatican II, Fr Henry has "fisked" an interesting interview with the wise Cardinal Piacenza, stating the constant message of this Papacy, "Vatican II was not a Council of rupture".

I have a Greek bishop friend, who teaches theology and is a theological advisor to the Patriarch of Constantinople. I am not sure that much that VII says really interests him, his big problem is Vatican I and what it says about the role of the Pope and the nature of Papal Infallibility. That is the sticking point for any hope of re-union with the East, in the past when I have talked about the possibility of re-union with him, his answer is really "It is impossible", because of Vatican I.

It is interesting that on the Orthodox side there seems to have been developments, though any Orthodox worth his salt would hate that word, so let us speak of a "deepening understanding or of questioning" of the role of "Patriarchates" and their relationships with one another, really because of the preparations for the Pan-Orthodox Synod, which may or may not happen. One of the issues that is on the agenda is the ranking of the Moscow Patriarchate in relation to those of Apostolic origin and especially Moscow's relationship to Constantinople, (Continue next page)

Constantinople's relationship to Athens is another matter. Although it will never be discussed publicly the Roman Patriarchate is actually important for Orthodoxy, both in how it sees itself but also in the claim that Orthodoxy would make about us falling into heresy or having gone into schism, yet if "first Rome has fallen", what about Moscow's claim that it is the third Rome because "Constantinople, the second Rome has fallen". What is meant by "falling"? Why is it that there are several claimants to the Patriarchates of Jerusalem and Alexandria, and yet there is only one unchallenged claimant to the Roman Patriarchate? What is the relationship of Constantinople to other autocephalous Churches, especially Patriarchal ones.

Another issue not unrelated, is the validity of the sacraments of what Orthodoxy sees as schismatic and heterodox Churches and ecclesial communities. This relates to how distant, how fallen, are Protestant communities and their sacraments? Are they the same as Oriental Orthodox Churches who rejected Chalcedon, and what about the sacraments of those in communion with Rome, not only Latins but also Orientals and Byzantines.

But the big problem for Orthodox as far as Rome is concerned are the claims, perhaps perceived claims, "the Spirit of" Vatican I, they at least symbolise the rift. For Catholics there seems to be a blurring of Ordinary and Extraordinary Magisterium. The teaching on artificial birth control and the impossibility of female ordination to the priesthood (and episcopate) are increasingly put forward as "Infallible" teachings, but not so much because they were taught by Pope Paul VI or Pope John Paul II but because they have "always and everywhere" been taught by the whole Church. For all the exalted language surrounding Vatican I, and certainly the "Spirit of Vatican I" hype afterwards, nothing that has been declared as "Infallible" since 1870 is new, everything is found in the first of the first millennium, that is before the break between East and West.

For the last thousand years, since the great schism a the theology of Patriarchate has been unimportant in the West but the more Ecumenical dialogue develops and the more we come value the the East, the more "a theology of chairs" becomes important.

Vatican I speaks of the Pope having "universal" authority over the whole Church, and indeed the first title ditched by Benedict XVI was "Patriarch of the West", which for Orthodox was seem a slight modification of "Universal Patriarch" but in practice what does it mean? Does it actually mean anything different in the second and third millennium than it would have meant in the first? Does it mean more than

occupying the first chair but in fellowship with, rather than dominance of, other Patriarchs. +++

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

MARIAN SYMPOSIUM CONCLUDES IN ROME

Syrian Deacon

Reflects on

Mary's

Significance in

the Middle East



By Ann Schneible
ROME,
OCTOBER 5, 2012

Zenit.org.- Mary is the center of dialogue, not only between Orthodox Christianity and Roman Catholicism, but between Christianity and Islam.

This was one of the themes touched upon during the international symposium entitled "Mary, Sign of Faith (and Only Hope)", which concluded today in Rome. Gathering together experts from around the world, the two-day symposium explored the cultural, theological, and spiritual significance of Mary throughout history. Syrian Deacon Rami Wakim, secretary for Melkite Patriarch Gregorios III of the Damascus diocese, was one of the keynote speakers at the symposium. He spoke with ZENIT about the role of Mary in helping to promote interreligious dialogue throughout the Middle East.

ZENIT: In your talk you will be discussing Mary with regard to the Eastern tradition and Roman Catholic Tradition. Could you speak about the role of Mary as a unifying force between the Eastern and Western Rites and traditions?

Wakim: My speech is going to be about two things: this inter-Christian dialogue and Muslim-Christian dialogue. In everyday life, people meet together at a place of worship, regardless of their background. For example, in the Middle East, Orthodox and Catholics go and [honor] the Virgin Mary. This is the starting point. From the standpoint of the faithful, they don't see the difference: she's the mother of God, she's blessed, she's a very special person, a model for all Christians, and she is always looked at as an intercessor and protector. On a practical level, (Continue next page)

there is no difference. The problem remains at the level of theological expressions and theological settings. The Virgin Mary is gathering everyone around her, and it is a shame that on a theological level we still have unsolved problems, especially [with regard to] the Immaculate Conception. Many studies have been done on this issue, trying to explain where the difference is, and in fact there is no doctrinal difference.

Let me explain: if you look at doctrine, the way that the Eastern Church expresses it, it makes complete sense. It is logical. And if you look at how the Roman Catholic Church explains the Immaculate Conception, as a doctrine, you see that it also makes complete sense.

Where is the problem?

We need a dialogue today to solve this problem, and understand that in the Eastern Tradition there is a theological setting, a different way of expressing how we believe in the immaculate nature of the Virgin Mary, and how in the Western, Roman Catholic tradition, it's a different way. If we understand how the Eastern tradition thinks about the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, we can actually get to a point to where it is not a problem anymore.

In my speech I will take liturgical texts and hymns, and try to explain how in the liturgical year the Virgin Mary is looked at as Immaculate, as intercessor, as protector, as mother of God, and all the names she's given in the Roman Catholic Church.

ZENIT: Turning now to interreligious dialogue between Christianity and Islam, which is so important in this day in age, especially throughout the Middle East. Could you speak about Mary's significance in this dialogue, taking into account that both Catholics and Muslims have a devotion to Mary?

Wakim: This is very important, the role of the Virgin Mary in bringing both together. In the Koran, it's really striking the [honor] and veneration of the Virgin Mary. She's the only woman to have a chapter named after her in the Koran, and her name is brought up 34 times. Her miraculous birth is recognized by the Koran, as is the annunciation by the angel, and the miraculous birth of Christ. There are so many things in common.

Also, visiting our Muslim friends, you see in their houses they have a special place for the Virgin Mary. She's someone special. She's not like any other woman on earth. She's more honorable than every other woman in Islam.

[One example of this commonality is that the Annunciation is a national holiday]. You can take time off work, and give time to [honor] the Virgin Mary – Muslims and Christians alike. On this day every year, Christians and Muslims go on pilgrimage together to visit a Marian monument.

The Virgin Mary has a central role in bringing Christians and Muslims together.

ZENIT: You were in Lebanon during the Holy Father's visit. Could you share your impressions? Also, as a Syrian during this time of conflict, how was Pope Benedict's visit significant not only to Lebanon, but to the Middle East as a whole?

Wakim: As you said, it was a visit physically to Lebanon, but in a bigger [context] it was for all the Christian Middle East, and the Muslim Middle East. The fact that it happened is significant because a few days before the visit there was speculation that the Pope would cancel, and people were suggesting that he shouldn't go, but the Pope insisted. And this in and of itself sends a very good message of hope, that the leadership of the Church is not far from the faithful, not far from the problems and conflicts. The Pope is not afraid to come. And it is during these times that we need support, and need to see that [our bishop, our Pope] is not far; he is with you.

It was very touching on a personal level to see all these people gathering just to see His Holiness, to get a blessing. Also Muslims were present just to greet the Pope. To see all these people brought together, gathered in one place, for one purpose, just to be together, sends a great message at this time. +++

Can a dying language revive Lebanon's Christian population?

From: <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2012/1007/>

Lebanon's Maronites used to play a crucial role in the region, but their power and sense of identity are waning. One organization hopes to reverse that by reviving their ancient language, Syriac. By Justin Salhani, *Contributor* / October 7, 2012

Pope Benedict XVI is greeted by the patriarch of Lebanese Christian Maronites, Bishara Boutros al-Rai, as Lebanon's President



looks on upon his arrival at Beirut's airport, in this September 14 fie photo. Jamal Saidi/Reuters/File

BEIRUT, LEBANON (CONTINUE NEXT PAGE)

[Lebanon](#)'s most prominent Christian group, the Maronites, used to be so influential that the late Palestinian leader [Yasser Arafat](#) quipped that "The road to [Jerusalem](#) passes through [Jounieh](#)," referring to a town north of [Beirut](#) that was a stronghold for Lebanese Christian militias.

The quote has a certain poignancy – and nostalgia – more than 30 years later, with Maronites increasingly afraid they will be marginalized. Their population and political power have waned as their numbers dwindle – a result of emigration during the country's civil war – and birth rates rise in the Muslim community.

Lebanon has not had a census since 1932, so exact figures are hard to come by, but experts usually estimate that Maronites make up about 20 percent of the total population today, with other Christian sects making up an additional 19 percent – a huge decline from the 1926 census, which recorded Christians as 84 percent of the population, with Maronites the largest of any of the 17 recognized sects.

With the end of the civil war in 1990 and a reconfiguration of the Lebanese political system, an agreement made the prime minister's office, traditionally held by a Sunni, more powerful than the presidential office, typically held by a Maronite – a flip of the previous arrangement. The agreement also reconfigured parliamentary representation, from six Christians for every five Muslims to a 50-50 arrangement.

The Maronites also fear that the rise of regional Islamic movements will bring discrimination and persecution – [fears shared by Christians elsewhere in the region, like the Copts in Egypt and the Assyrians in Iraq](#) – despite Lebanon's long tradition of freedom of religion.

Language of the land

Some Maronites believe that the best way to slow or end the slide into decline is to bring back Syriac, the ancient language of prayer for Christians across [the Levant](#). The [Maronite Church](#) traces its heritage back to the 4th century and Maronites mostly spoke Aramaic in daily life up until the 13th century.

Haytham Chaer is the president of Bnay Qyomo ("Sons of the Resurrection"), a non-governmental organization working to revive the "language of Christ" in the Lebanese Maronite community. Doing so, he believes, will strengthen their identity.

"In Lebanon we say 'The Lebanese land shouts in Syriac,'" says Mr. Chaer.

Dr. Mario Kozah, a professor at the [American University of Beirut](#) (AUB), says the church identifies with Syriac in terms of not just language, but also culture, history, and geography. Syriac was a dominant language in the region since well before the days of [Jesus Christ](#) and up until the 14th or 15th century.

That the Maronite church's official name is the Syriac Maronite Church shows how integral the language is to their identity, says Dr. Kozah, who teaches Arabic and Syriac (though not connected with Bnay Qyomo) in what he says is probably the largest university class for the Syriac language in the world.

"The name of this church gives you an indication of the way it identifies itself," says Kozah. "Its cultural and linguistic identity is Syriac."

A tool for division

But while the Syriac language may flow through the veins of Maronite history, not everyone believes its revival would strengthen the Maronite community. According to Dr. Sami Nader, a professor of economics at Universite Saint Joseph in Beirut, the Maronite community has flourished the most when it has opened up and expanded economically – something done by speaking a common tongue with neighboring communities.

Kozah agrees. "What is interesting about the Maronites is that they very quickly took up Arabic, much earlier than other Syriac communities and churches, and quickly adapted." While spoken largely in the Levant region and parts of southern [Turkey](#), Syriac spread as far east as [India](#) and parts of [China](#). Today, Syriac survives in Iraq, where it is seen as an official minority language, as well as in some schools in [Sweden](#) and [Israel](#).

Kozah believes that one of the reasons Maronites survived in such relatively large numbers in comparison with other Syriac churches is because of their early adoption of Arabic "Only in Lebanon do you still have some kind of strength and vibrancy left in minority communities," he says, noting that the Syriac communities in Iraq have all but disappeared, half of them in the last five or six years, as have most of those in southeast Turkey.

This vibrancy may be at least partially due to the delicate Lebanese political structure, which ensures that each religious community has fairly equal representation in the government. The complicated arrangement has mostly kept a lid on any simmering religious tensions that tore the country apart in the 1980s.

Chaer says the Maronite Church has not put enough support behind Bnay Qyomo, likely because of the political implications and concerns that the revival is a guise for drawing divides between Lebanon's various religious communities.

"We are not trying to say that we are against (other religious sects and communities in Lebanon)," says Chaer. "This is false. We want to work together."

"We don't have a religion problem. We just need people to understand our culture." +++