

# light of the east



NEWSLETTER OF THE YOUNGSTOWN-WARREN CHAPTER OF THE SOCIETY OF SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM  
VOLUME 14, NUMBER 5, SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER, 2015  
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## FROM THE EDITOR...

Dear Members and Friends, The next regular chapter meeting will be Tuesday, October 27, 7pm at St. Mary Byzantine Catholic Church, 7782 Glenwood Avenue, Boardman 44512. Our speaker will be His Grace, Bishop John Michael (Botean), Eparchy of St. George for the Romanians, Canton. His Grace will speak on "Peter, Andrew, and the People in the Pews." The bishop will comment on the Pope's USA visit.

Father Sebastian  
Madathummuriyil, a Syro-Malabar



priest now  
teaching as  
Assistant Professor of  
Theology at Duquesne  
University, will be the speaker  
for our Tuesday, November  
10, 7pm meeting at St. Mark

Antiochian Orthodox Church, 3560 Logan Way  
Youngstown 44505. Father will speak on "The  
Syro-Malabar Church: Liturgy and Pastoral Care  
in the Diaspora." Father exercises his priestly  
ministry in the Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh.



## WHO ARE WE?

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

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

In the United Kingdom and Europe the Society was founded in 1926  
In 1998 the Society was also founded in the United States, where it runs the annual North American and

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

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

# Holy Theophany Monastery

AN EASTERN  
CATHOLIC  
MONASTERY FOR  
WOMEN

## **Holy Theophany Monastery** is

a community of women committed to living an authentic Orthodox monastic life within the communion of the Catholic Church. As such, and by our prayer and witness, we humbly hope to serve as a bridge of understanding and reconciliation between East and West. We pray for that day when all will be one in Christ.

Our guiding vision is to pray for the unity of Christ's Holy Church, to pray for those who have no one to pray for them, and to serve as witnesses before men of the infinite mercy of God.

Holy Theophany Monastery is under the jurisdiction of the eparchial bishop of Canton, His Grace Bishop JOHN MICHAEL of the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church in the United States and Canada. The eparchy belongs to the Holy Synod of the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church and is the only Romanian Greek-Catholic eparchy (diocese) outside of Romania.

The Romanian Greek-Catholic Church is a sui juris self-governing Eastern Catholic Church and is in full communion with the Holy See of Rome. It is one of the more than twenty sui juris self-governing Churches that together constitute the communion of the Catholic Church.



The Romanian Greek-Catholic Church follows the Hellenic Byzantine tradition [many other Greek-Catholic Churches follow the Slav Byzantine tradition].

Unlike our Roman Catholic brothers and sisters, Holy Theophany Monastery follows the revised Julian calendar observed by the Greek-Catholic Church in Romania and by most of the Orthodox Church.

Holy Theophany Monastery is a sister community to the brotherhood of Holy Resurrection Romanian Greek-Catholic Monastery, in Saint Nazianz, Wisconsin.

Founded in the year 2000 and set amidst the towering evergreens of the Pacific Northwest in Olympia, Washington, Holy Theophany Monastery is a community of Catholic women under the auspices of the Romanian Greek-Catholic Eparchy (Diocese) of Canton.

**What is a Monastery?**

**Monasteries have been variously called both havens and battlegrounds, places of refuge and places of combat, schools of Christian living and "the**

**beating heart of Christ's Holy Church."**

Monasteries are havens, inasmuch as they serve as places of solitude and quiet wherein the soul may revel in the presence of the Living God.

Yet, at the same time, monasteries are indeed battlegrounds and places of combat where one is forced to confront the demons that may lie even within ourselves. Far from being a place to hide away from the world, a monastery is the parapet from where one is able to see the whole world from God's perspective - a world intrinsically good, but at the same time "Beset by demonic powers who seek to devour her."

It is said that without monasticism one cannot fully and truly understand the Church. What is true for the Church as a whole is even more so for the Eastern Christian Churches, both Catholic and Orthodox. In his apostolic letter *Orientalis Lumen*, Saint John Paul II exhorted the Eastern (Continue next page)

Catholic Churches to fully restore authentic Orthodox monasticism: "With regard to monasticism, we desire it to flourish once more in the Eastern Catholic Churches, and that all support be given to those called to work for its revitalization."

Who are the Eastern Catholic Churches?

**Not all members of the Catholic Church are Roman Catholics. The communion of the Catholic Church is actually akin to a federation of over twenty equal Churches of which the Roman Church, although the largest, is only one. Most of the non-Roman Churches that comprise the Catholic Church are generically referred to as the Eastern Catholic Churches because of their origins in the ancient apostolic Churches of the Christian East. The largest grouping of these Eastern Catholic Churches, are those known as Greek-Catholic. In common, all the various Greek-Catholic Churches follow the Byzantine rite in their worship and are frequently, although quite erroneously, referred to as Eastern Rite or Byzantine Catholics.**

Unique Ecumenical Vocation

**At His Mystical Supper on the night before His Crucifixion, knowing full well that he was about to die, Jesus prayed for His Holy Church:**

"Father, that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they may be one in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as ne, and that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me."

*-John 17:21-23*

Sadly, the unity for which Christ so fervently prayed is far from reality. The greatest tragedy of the Church is our selfish fragmentation, and there is no more basic divide than which separates Christian East and Christian West, the Orthodox East from the Catholic West.

As Eastern Catholic monastics, however, we refuse to accept this sad fragmentation as fact. We attempt to live an authentic Orthodox monastic life within the unity of the Catholic Church, hopefully serving as a bridge of love and understanding between East and West. To our fellow Catholics we say: "Step out of your self-centeredness and behold the rich fullness of Christ's Holy Church, and what it means to be fully Catholic." At the same time, we say to our Eastern Orthodox brothers and sisters: "See what it means to live in the rich diversity of an undivided Church."

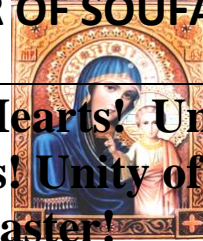
A Vocation of Prayer

Like all Christians, monastics are called to be "partakers of the divine nature" *-II Peter 1:4*. We take seriously the Lord's invitation to theosis and divinization. "For it is through a life of reflection, contemplation and prayer that a person is renewed and unified so completely with God that he becomes by grace what God is by nature."

This life of intensified prayer is found, not only in the constant daily round of our daily liturgical offices, but also in the intimacy of deepened personal prayer.

Additionally, the role of intercessory prayer is never forgotten. It is a stated purpose of our monastic life especially to pray "for those who have no one to pray for them."

## PRAYER OF SOUFANIEH



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

**BRING A FRIEND TO OUR NEXT CHAPTER MEETING. PAY 2016 CHAPTER DUES AT THE MEETING.**

# The Archbishop of Canterbury inducts the first members of the Community of St Anselm

September 19, 2015



Yesterday, Friday, 18 SEP 2015, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Revd Justin Welby, commissioned the first members of the St Anselm Community centered in residence in Lambeth Palace. During a worship service in the palace chapel, 36 young adults from Greater London, the countries of the UK, as well as, different nations of the world, made a commitment to live as a monastic-inspired community dedicated to prayer, study and service.

Sixteen of the members will live full-time in community as residents of the palace. The other 20 will live in London where they will continue secular jobs in a variety of sectors of the world of work, including finance, education, media and civil service. During their year in the Community they will be studying theology and ethics. They will also be engaged in service to one another as those living in residence take on the every day chores of food prep, laundry, housekeeping and gardening in the palace's vegetable gardens. The resident and non-resident members will also be engaged in London and farther afield in service projects, with a

particular emphasis in the disadvantaged and the poor.

The members who were selected after an intensive application process are between the ages of 20 to 35. Required to be baptized Christians, this year they represent the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist and Pentecostal branches of the Church. They will follow a Rule of Life that has been created from the best practices of the Church's monastic heritage. The Community is named for St Anselm, himself a scholarly Benedictine monk starting at age 27, who was also an Archbishop of Canterbury from 1093 to 1114 CE. The Community of St Anselm in the fulfillment of a promise made by Archbishop Welby when he and his family first took residence in Lambeth palace. The Welbys were moving into the family apartment on the top floor of the palace and someone asked +Justin what he would do with the remainder of the palace. He said that he was going to fill it with young people.

We choose to offer our whole persons: body, soul and spirit, to be shaped in the likeness of Christ by a complete openness to His Holy Spirit. We hold nothing back: there is no thought or doctrine or attitude or value that is exempt from the transforming presence of our Lord.

*The Way of Life from The Rule of Life*

*The Community of St Anselm*

The Archbishop serves as Abbot and has called the Revd Anders Litzell to serve as the Prior of the Community of St Anselm. The Revd Litzell was born in Sweden and grew up in the Swedish Pentecostal Church. While attending Wheaton College in IL he was introduced to the Episcopal Church and began worshiping in St Barnabas Episcopal Church, Glen Ellyn in Dio Chicago. After returning to Sweden, Father Litzell worked for a parish of the Church of Sweden (Lutheran) while he was the director of the Alpha Sweden office. He eventually moved to London to work for Alpha International and was later ordained in the Church of England. In this recruitment video, Father Litzell introduces himself and speaks a bit about the Community of St Anselm.

**PRAY FOR THE UNITY OF THE APOSTOLIC CHURCHES!**

## **THE LOCAL CHURCH**

### **Rev. Joseph DiStefano is new pastor at St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church**

Published: Sat, September 26, 2015  
Youngstown Vindicator



The Rev. Joseph Z. DiStefano is the new priest serving St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church, 220 N. Walnut St.

He began his ministry in the parish Sept. 1. He attended Glenoak High School in Canton, and earned a bachelor of arts degree in business at Mount Union College in Alliance. He received a master's degree in business administration from Malone College in Canton. Father DiStefano entered Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Brookline, Mass., in 2001, graduating in May 2005 with a master of divinity degree with distinction. He was ordained to the Holy Diaconate on Dec. 26, 2004, at St. Haralambos Greek Orthodox Church in Canton by Metropolitan Maximos of Pittsburgh.

He served as a deacon at Holy Trinity Cathedral in Lowell, Mass., during his final semester at the seminary.

Father DiStefano was ordained to the Holy Priesthood on July 2, 2005, at the Annunciation Cathedral in Columbus, where he was associate pastor until December 2009.

From 2010-15, he served at St. Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church in Monessen, Pa.

His parents are Joseph W. and Mary DiStefano of Canton. He is married to the former Melanie A. Tsikouris of Campbell, where they live with their son, Michael Seraphim.

### **Pennsylvania monk makes linens to be used for papal Masses**

**By Craig Smith (edited by LOE)**  
*Associated Press* September 21, 2015

LATROBE, Pa. — In a simple St. Vincent Archabbey workshop jammed with bolts of fabric and sewing machines, a world-renowned artist and Benedictine monk spent weeks hunched over a computer, designing what might be his most viewed work — the altar linens Pope Francis will use when celebrating Mass in Philadelphia this week.

The two sets of linens — one for a Mass on Saturday in the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul and another for a Mass on Sunday on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway — will forge an intimate connection between the artist who designed them and the pontiff who will use them, according to their maker, the Rev. Vincent de Paul Crosby, who serves at the archabbey near Latrobe.

### **The Basilica and National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon**

**AD ORIENTEM:** The Facing East during the Celebration of the Divine Liturgy  
Many people are familiar with the practice of the priest facing the altar with his back to the people for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. It was the ancient and time honored practice of the entire church for many centuries. Only in recent years has there been an emphasis on facing the people with the reasons being varied, some good and some not good. It has always been the tradition of the eastern churches to face what we know as “east” for the celebration of the liturgy. Many eastern churches are built with the altar at the east end of the building in order that (Continue next page)

the priest and people face east; the direction of the rising sun and the direction which the sacred scripture tells us the second coming of the Christ will take place. We face the rising sun to greet the second coming of the Messiah.

With this in mind, I asked Bishop Zaidan if he would grant permission for the Divine Liturgy to be celebrated at the Basilica Shrine using the ancient practice of facing east for the Divine Liturgy.

He acknowledged that the faithful who come to the Basilica Shrine are very pious and traditionally minded. With that, he granted permission for the liturgy to be celebrated occasionally facing east.

With the permission of the Bishop, I have decided to celebrate the Sunday, 10 a.m. liturgy “ad orientem”.

This is being done with the awareness of the ancient liturgical traditions of the entire Catholic Church, and I am sure this will enhance the prayers we offer to the Lord, the holy and living sacrifice of praise.

I shall be most happy to offer additional explanation for this decision; all you need to do is ask.

I pray that all of us will derive many spiritual benefits.

God bless you, Msgr. Anthony (Shrine Rector and Chapter member)

## OF MARRIAGE AND ORTHODOX PRIESTS

by Wesley J. Smith 10-02-15 from <http://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2015/10/of-marriage-and-orthodox-priests> *Wesley J. Smith is a senior fellow at the Discovery Institute's Center on Human Exceptionalism. He is a sub-deacon in the Orthodox Church.*

If anyone had asked me what I thought about Eastern Orthodoxy before I converted, I would have said it was basically a popeless Catholic Church, except that its priests can marry. My presumption was mostly wrong. While there are certainly important similarities between the theologies of world's largest and second-largest Christian Churches—for example, our understanding of the nature of Communion—there are also crucial differences that still impede reunification more than a

thousand years after the tragedy of the Great Schism.

Moreover, it is a misnomer to say that Orthodox priests can marry. They can *be* married, and indeed, most Orthodox priests are. But a priest can't marry *while a priest*. If he wishes to have a family life, he must get hitched before he is ordained to the diaconate, the penultimate step before becoming a priest.

I bring this up because of the ongoing debate within Catholic circles—pushed energetically by the Church's internal and external critics—about whether to revoke the rule requiring priest celibacy. The regulation was formally established at the [Council of Trent in 1563](#) after centuries of controversy over the issue of priests and marriage. Prior to Trent, the Catholic Church took the same approach to the question of priestly marriage as the Orthodox Church did (and does today). If the priestly celibacy were no longer required, the Catholic Church would likely return to its former practice. To understand better what that would be, let's look at the Orthodox approach to this important question.

An Orthodox man who feels called to the priesthood has two options. The first, as mentioned above, is to receive the necessary education and, if he is single, delay being ordained until after he is married. The other priestly track requires the ascetic sacrifice of celibacy, perceived in the Church as a form of martyrdom. Almost all such unmarried priests are or become monastics, known in the Church as “Hieromonks.”

The Orthodox Church follows St. Paul's instruction that our spiritual leaders be married to only one woman. Thus, if a priest's wife dies (or there is a divorce), he can never remarry and remain a priest; in such circumstances, he is also expected to be celibate. Bishops in the Orthodox Church must be Hieromonks. Some bishops have been married, and entered monastic life after being widowed.

There are several benefits to having married priests. It allows the men who toil in the trenches of parish life to experience the joy of having a wife and children, which makes the priestly call easier to (Continue next page)

follow. Many believe that having a family helps a priest better understand the everyday trials of the laity. At the same time, since a married priest must find a mate before being ordained, he is not distracted from his parish duties by the search for love. There are also some burdens associated with the Orthodox practice. In the United States, the priest's parish, not the Church itself, is responsible for his compensation. Some parishes are too small to pay wages and benefits adequate to support a family. Thus, unlike their Catholic counterparts, some of our priests serve their church part-time while pursuing secular means of earning a living. In addition, the married priest has dual responsibilities to the Church and to his family, which can cause tensions in both areas. All of this raises some interesting issues should Trent's priestly celibacy requirement ever be revoked.

1. Would former priests, voluntarily laicized when they wanted to marry, be welcomed back into the priesthood? There is already a precedent for that approach: Married clergy from other denominations can be ordained priests after they convert to Catholicism. Allowing a similar mercy to married former Catholic clerics would certainly help ease the current priest shortage in the West.

2. Returning to the two-track approach to priestly ordination, which was followed universally when the Church was unified, would encourage those men called to the virtue of priestly celibacy while increasing the number of men pursuing religious vocations.

3. The most difficult question would be whether to require existing priests to remain true to their vows of celibacy. While that might be seen as discrimination against existing priests, not requiring continued celibacy of those already ordained would open the door to their dating, which might cause a whole new set of problems. One possible solution would be to allow existing priests who want to pursue family life to be temporarily laicized, with the prospect of returning to the priesthood once they marry.

From where I sit, the controversy over the celibacy of Catholic priests looks to be intensifying. I hope my brief description of the

Orthodox—and once Catholic—approach to this issue helps readers interested in the controversy to formulate their thoughts. I am just glad we Orthodox don't face this particular question. We have more than enough boiling pots of our own.

## **"The Synod of Adultery: the Church has been here before"**

**St. Theodore the Studite, and the "Synod of Adultery"**  
**Roberto de Mattei**

*Corrispondenza Romana* 26th August 2015

"The Synod of Adultery" an assembly of Bishops in the 9th century, made history when they wanted to approve the praxis of a second marriage after the repudiation of a legitimate wife. St. Theodore the Studite, (759-826) was the one who opposed it the most vigorously and for this was persecuted, imprisoned and exiled three times.

It all started in January 795, when the Roman Emperor of the East (*Basileus*) Constantine VI (771-797) had his wife Maria of Armenia locked up in a monastery and began an illicit union with Theodora, the lady-in-waiting to his mother, Irene. A few months later the Emperor had her proclaimed "Augusta" Theodora, but being unable to convince the Patriarch Tarasios (730-806) to celebrate the new wedding, he finally found a minister willing to do so in the priest Joseph, hegumen (head) of the Monastery of Kathara on the Island of Ithaca, who officially blessed the adulterous union.

St. Theodore, born in Constantinople in 759, was at that time a monk in the Monastery of Saccudium in Bithynia, where his uncle Plato was the Abbot. He was also venerated as a saint. Theodore reports that the unjust divorce produced great perturbation in the entire Christian population: *concussus est mundus* (Epist. II.n. 181, in pg. 99, coll. 1559-1560CD), and along with St. Plato protested energetically, in the name of the indissolubility

of the marriage-bond. He wrote: “the Emperor must consider himself an adulterer and consequently, the priest, Giuseppe, must consider himself guilty for having blessed the adulterers and for having admitted them to the Eucharist”. By “crowning adultery, the priest, Giuseppe, is in opposition to the teachings of Christ and has violated the law of God” (Epist. I. 32, pg. 99, coll. 1015/1061C). For Theodore, the Patriarch Tarasios had likewise to be condemned, since, even if not approving the new marriage, he showed himself tolerant of it, thus avoiding the Emperor’s excommunication and the priest Giuseppe’s punishment.

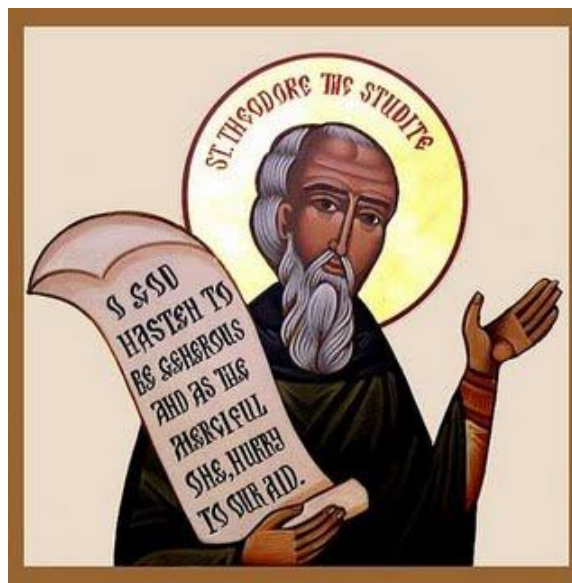
This behavior was typical of a sector in the Oriental Church, which proclaimed the indissolubility of marriage, but in practice, showed a certain submission to the imperial powers, thus, sowing confusion among the peoples and stirring up protest from the most fervent Catholics.

Basing himself on the authority of St. Basil, Theodore claimed the faculty conceded to subjects, of denouncing the errors of their superiors (Epist. I,n.5,PG, 99,coll.923-924,925-926D) and the monks of Saccudium broke communion with the Patriarch because of his complicity in the Emperor’s divorce. This triggered off the so-called “moicheiana question” (from *moicheia* = *adultery*) which placed Theodore in conflict, not only with the imperial government, but with the Patriarchs of Constantinople themselves.

It is not a very well-known story, but some years ago, Professor Dante Gemmiti disclosed it through a careful, historical reconstruction based on the Greek and Latin sources (*Theodore Studite, and the Moicheian Question*, LER Marigliano. 1993) which confirm that ecclesiastical discipline of the Oriental Church in the first millennium, still respected the principal of the indissolubility of marriage.

In September 796, Plato and Theodore, along with a certain number of monks, were arrested,

imprisoned, then exiled to Thessalonica, where they arrived on the 25<sup>th</sup> March 797. In Constantinople, however, the population judged Constantine a sinner who continued to give public scandal and following the example of Theodore and Plato, the opposition increased day after day. Their exile was brief, as the young Constantine, following a palace conspiracy, had been blinded by his mother who had taken upon herself the governing of the Empire. Irene called back the exiles who moved to the urban Monastery of Studios along with most of the community of monks from Saccudium. Theodore and Plato were reconciled with the



Patriarch Tarasios, who, after Irene’s accession to power, had Constantine and the priest Giuseppe publicly condemned for the imperial divorce.

Also Irene’s reign was brief. On the 31<sup>st</sup> October 802, her minister, Nikephoros, following a palace revolt, proclaimed himself Emperor.

When Tarasios died shortly afterwards, the new *basileus* had a

high-ranked imperial functionary elected Patriarch of Constantinople, who was also called Nikephoros (758-829). In a Synod convoked and presided by him, about the middle of the year 806, he reintegrated the hegumen Giuseppe (deposed by Tarasios) to his office. Theodore who was then head of the monastic community in Studios - since Plato had retired to the life of a recluse - strongly protested the rehabilitation of the priest Giuseppe and when the latter took up his sacerdotal ministry again, he broke communion also with the new Patriarch.

The reaction was not late in coming. The Studios Monastery was occupied militarily, Plato, Theodore and his brother Giuseppe (the Archbishop of Thessalonica) were arrested, condemned and exiled. In 808, the Emperor convoked another (Continue next page)



Synod which met in January 809. This was the one Theodore defined “*moechosynodus*” the “Synod of Adultery” in a letter of 809 to the monk Arsenius (Epist. I. n.38, PG 99, coll. 1041-1042). The Synod of Bishops recognized the legitimacy of Constantine’s second marriage, confirmed the rehabilitation of the hegumen Giuseppe and anathematized Theodore, Plato and his brother Giuseppe who was deposed from the office as Archbishop of Thessalonica.

In order to justify the Emperor’s divorce, the Synod used the principle of the “economy of saints” (tolerance in praxis). However, for Theodore there was no motivation that could justify the transgression of a Divine Law. By referring to the teachings of St. Basil, St. Gregory of Nazianzus and St. John Chrysostom he declared the discipline of the “economy of saints”, according to which a lesser evil could be tolerated in some circumstances, devoid of any scriptural basis – as in this case of the Emperor’s adulterous marriage.

Some years later the Emperor Nikephoros died in the war against the Bulgarians (July 25<sup>th</sup> 811) and another imperial functionary ascended to the throne - Michael I. The new *basileus*, called Theodore back from exile and he became the Emperor’s chief adviser. However the peace didn’t last long. In the summer of 813, the Bulgarians inflicted a very severe defeat on Michael I at Adrianople and the army proclaimed Leo V, the Armenian (775-820), the Emperor.

When Leo deposed the Patriarch Nikephoros and had the veneration of images condemned, Theodore took on the leadership of resistance against the iconoclasm. Indeed, Theodore is distinguished in the history of the Church, not only as the opponent of the “Synod of Adultery” but also as one of the great defenders of sacred images during the second phase of the iconoclasm.

So on Palm Sunday of 815, it was possible to witness a procession of a thousand monks of Studios, inside their monastery – but very much in view – carrying the sacred icons to the solemn acclamation chants in their honour.

The monks’ procession triggered off a reaction from the police.

Between 815 and 821, Theodore was whipped, imprisoned and exiled to various places in Asia

Minor. Finally he was able to return to Constantinople, but not to his own monastery. He then settled with his monks on the other side of the Bosphorus, at Prinkipo, where he died on November 11<sup>th</sup> 826.

**The “*non licet*” (Mat. 14, 3-11) that St. John the Baptist set against the tetrarch Herod for his adultery, has resounded a number of times in the history of the Church. St. Theodore Studite, a simple religious who dared challenge the imperial power and the ecclesiastical hierarchy of his time, can be considered one of the heavenly protectors of those, even today, who, faced with the threats in changing Catholic practices on marriage, have the courage to repeat an inflexible *non licet*.** [Translation: Contributor Francesca Romana]

## **POPE FRANCIS FOR YEAR OF MERCY GRANTS THAT SSPX PRIESTS CAN VALIDLY ABSOLVE!**

(excerpt from letter from Pope Francis) (from <http://rorate-caeli.blogspot.com/> edited by LOE)

A final consideration concerns the faithful who for various reasons choose to attend churches officiated by priests of the Fraternity of St. Pius X. This Jubilee Year of Mercy excludes no one. From various quarters, several Brother Bishops have told me of their good faith and sacramental practice, combined however with an uneasy situation from the pastoral standpoint. I trust that in the near future solutions may be found to recover full communion with the priests and superiors of the Fraternity. In the meantime, motivated by the need to respond to the good of these faithful, through my own disposition, I establish that those who during the Holy Year of Mercy approach these priests of the Fraternity of St. Pius X to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation shall validly and licitly receive the absolution of their sins.

Trusting in the intercession of the Mother of Mercy, I entrust the preparations for this Extraordinary Jubilee Year to her protection.(Continue next page)

## Communiqué of the General House of the SSPX:

The Society of St. Pius X learned, through the press, of the provisions taken by Pope Francis on the occasion of the upcoming Holy Year. In the last paragraph of his letter addressed September 1, 2015, to Archbishop Rino Fisichella, president of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, the Holy Father writes:

«I establish that those who during the Holy Year of Mercy approach these priests of the Society of St Pius X to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation shall validly and licitly receive the absolution of their sins.»

The Society of St. Pius X expresses its gratitude to the Sovereign Pontiff for this fatherly gesture. In the ministry of the sacrament of penance, we have always relied, with all certainty, on the extraordinary jurisdiction conferred by the *Normae generales* of the Code of Canon Law. On the occasion of this Holy Year, Pope Francis wants all the faithful who wish to confess to the priests of the Society of St. Pius X to be able to do so without being worried.

During this year of conversion, the priests of the Society of St. Pius X will have at heart to exercise with renewed generosity their ministry in the confessional, following the example of tireless dedication which the holy Curé of Ars gave to all priests. Menzingen,

## Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople rebukes Moscow, underlines importance of ties with Rome

[Catholic World News](#) - September 04, 2015

Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople underlined the importance of ecumenical ties with Rome, and criticized the resistance of the Russian Orthodox Church, in an August 29 address. The Ecumenical Patriarch—recognized as the “first among equals” of the world’s Orthodox leaders—stressed the primary importance of ecumenical affairs, and reiterated that his role involves

“protecting the unity of the whole Orthodox Church.” He said that opposition to ecumenical unity reflects a “diabolical” impulse. Patriarch Bartholomew said that his continuing contacts with the Holy See are a critical component of his ecumenical work. He expressed his enthusiasm for the planned worldwide Orthodox council, but conceded that it cannot accurately be described as an ecumenical council “because Western Christians are not invited to participate as members.” The Ecumenical Patriarch—who has frequently sparred in recent years with the leaders of the Patriarchate of Moscow—clearly appeared to be criticizing the Russian Orthodox leadership when he spoke critically about Orthodox bodies that “maintain intimate connections with the government of their land and enjoy abundant financial support,” and advance the political interests of their nations.

## Pope celebrates Santa Marta Mass with Armenian Patriarch

2015-09-07

(Vatican Radio) Pope Francis’ morning Mass in the chapel of the Santa Marta residence on Monday was an extraordinary occasion: it saw the recently-elected Patriarch of Cilicia of the Armenians, His Beatitude Gregory Peter XX Ghabroyan, concelebrate the liturgy with the Holy Father, and exchange with the Pope the concrete sign of ecclesial communion *par excellence*.



A statement from the Armenian Patriarchate describes the scene during the Liturgy: “[At the Rite of Communion], the Holy Father ... elevates the paten with the (Continue next page)

Body of Christ and offers it to the Patriarch. The two hold the Host high with their four hands. The Holy Father then raises the chalice with the Blood of Christ, offers it to the Patriarch, and they with their four hands keep it elevated. After a moment of silence, the Holy Father offers the Body of Christ, and together they communicate. The Holy Father takes the Blood of Christ from the chalice, then offers it to the Patriarch.”

“‘Communion’ is a concept held in great honor in the early Church and also today,” the statement explains. “[I]t does not mean some vague sentiment, but an organic reality, which requires a legal form and that is at the same time animated by charity.

The statement goes on to say, “The *Ecclesiastica communio*, which the Holy Father Francis granted to His Beatitude Gregory Peter XX with Letter of July 25, now finds expression in the exchange of the Sacred Species, which confirms the Eucharistic communion between the Bishop and the Church of Rome, who presides in charity, and the Patriarchal Church of Cilicia of the Armenians, through its *Pater et Caput*.

## **From Eastern Christian Churches**

### ***The Syro-Malabar Catholic Church***

*by Ronald Roberson, C.S.P.*

Members of this church are direct descendants of the Thomas Christians that the Portuguese encountered in 1498 while exploring the Malabar coast of India (now the state of Kerala). As mentioned above [see Thomas Christians], they were in full communion with the Assyrian Church in Persia. But they greeted the Portuguese as fellow Christians and as representatives of the Church of Rome, whose special status they had continued to acknowledge despite centuries of isolation.

In general, however, the Portuguese did not accept the legitimacy of local Malabar traditions,

and they began to impose Latin usages upon the Thomas Christians. At a synod held at Diamper in 1599 under the presidency of the Portuguese Archbishop of Goa, a number of such latinizations were adopted, including the appointment of Portuguese bishops, changes in the Eucharistic liturgy, the use of Roman vestments, the requirement of clerical celibacy, and the setting up of the Inquisition. This provoked widespread discontent, which finally culminated in a decision by most Thomas Christians in 1653 to break with Rome. In response, Pope Alexander VII sent Carmelite friars to Malabar to deal with the situation. By 1662 the majority of the dissidents had returned to communion with the Catholic Church.

European Carmelites would continue to serve as bishops in the Syro-Malabar Church until 1896, when the Holy See established three Vicariates Apostolic for the Thomas Christians (Trichur, Ernakulam and Changanacherry), under the guidance of indigenous Syro-Malabar bishops. A fourth Vicariate Apostolic (Kottayam) was established in 1911. In 1923 Pope Pius XI set up a full-fledged Syro-Malabar Catholic hierarchy.

This new autonomy coincided with a strong revival of the church. While in 1876 there were approximately 200,000 Syro-Malabar Catholics, this number had more than doubled by 1931. By 1960 there were nearly one and one half million faithful, and today they number almost four million. Vocations to the priesthood and religious life have been very strong. Statistics issued by the Vatican in 2007 indicate that in India, the church had 3,024 secular priests, 2,258 religious priests, 1,950 religious brothers, and an astonishing 33,365 women religious. There were nine Syro-Malabar male clerical religious orders and three institutes for brothers, along with nine Latin religious orders that had Syro-Malabar provinces. There were also 38 female religious orders. The Syro-Malabar Church has three major seminaries: St. Joseph’s Pontifical Seminary in Mangalapuzha, Aluva; St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary in Vadavathoor, Kottayam; and Good Shepherd Major Seminary in Kunnoth, Tellicherry. There are also eparchial major seminaries in (Continue next page)

Satna and Thrissur, and 11 seminaries under the direction of religious orders.

In 1934 Pope Pius XI initiated a process of liturgical reform that sought to restore the oriental nature of the heavily latinized Syro-Malabar rite. A restored eucharistic liturgy, drawing on the original East Syrian sources, was approved by Pius XII in 1957 and introduced in 1962. Despite a reaffirmation of the main lines of the 1962 rite by the Oriental Congregation in 1985, however, there has been strong resistance to this reform. The majority of Syro-Malabar dioceses still use a rite that in externals is hardly distinguishable from the Latin Mass. In January 1996 Pope John Paul II presided over the opening of a special synod of bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church in Rome which was to attempt to overcome factional disputes that have centered on the proposed liturgical reforms. In 1998 Pope John Paul II gave the Syro-Malabar bishops full authority in liturgical matters in a further effort to facilitate a resolution of the dispute. To promote useful discussion of these questions, the Syro-Malabar Church established a Liturgical Research Center at the Major Archiepiscopal Curia in 1999. By the end of 2006, it had organized 28 research seminars and published a number of scholarly studies on liturgical matters.

Until recently there was no single head of the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church, but two metropolitan dioceses (Ernakulam and Changanacherry) of equal rank. On December 16, 1992, Pope John Paul II raised the Syro-Malabar Church to Major Archiepiscopal rank and appointed Cardinal Antony Padiyara of Ernakulam-Angamaly as the first Major Archbishop. He retired in 1996, and was succeeded by Archbishop Varkey Vithayathil in December 1999. Archbishop Vithayathil, who

was made a Cardinal in 2001, passed away on April 1, 2011. On the following May 24, the Syro-Malabar Bishops' Synod elected Bishop George Alencherry of Thuckalay as the new Major Archbishop. He was confirmed in office by Pope Benedict XVI the following day, and was installed on May 29.

The presence of the Syro-Malabar Church was long restricted to Kerala and surrounding areas. But with the emigration of large numbers of faithful to other parts of India in recent decades, the Holy See began in 1977 to establish Syro-Malabar dioceses in other parts of the country where Latin dioceses already existed. Today there are 15 diocese in the Kerala region that make up the proper territory of the Syro-Malabar Church, all under the authority of the Major Archbishop. The bishops of the 10 Indian dioceses outside Kerala are members of the Syro-Malabar Synod of Bishops, but are suffragans of local Latin archdioceses.



In March 2001 Pope John Paul II erected the diocese of St. Thomas of Chicago of the Syro-Malabars, the church's first diocese outside India. Led by Bishop Jacob Angadiath, who is also Apostolic Visitator for Syro-Malabar Catholics in Canada, the diocese (3009 South 49th Avenue, Cicero, Illinois 60804) has eight parishes and 29 other worshipping communities serving an estimated 100,000 faithful in the country.

**Location:** India, especially Kerala State  
**Head:** Mar George Cardinal Alencherry (born 1945, elected 2011, cardinal 2012)  
**Title:** Major Archbishop of Ernakulam-Angamaly  
**Residence:** Ernakulam, India  
**Membership:** 3,829,000  
**Website:** [www.smcim.org](http://www.smcim.org)

# Ukrainian Catholic leader demands more help from the Vatican

by [Catholic News Service](#)

posted Tuesday, 6 Oct 2015

*'The time for cautious diplomacy is at an end,' Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk has said*

The head of the Ukrainian Catholic Church has urged the Vatican to show greater support for his country, as a senior Vatican

diplomat warned the country risked becoming “a kind of Somalia.”

“I would have expected a lot more involvement by the Vatican — the time for cautious diplomacy is at an end,” said Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk of Kiev-Halych, major archbishop of the Ukrainian Catholic Church.

“The fact that 70 percent of Ukrainian army regulars fighting against separatists and Russian soldiers have Russian as their mother-tongue shows the unity of our people and our army.

What we are seeing is a foreign invasion of Ukrainian territory by Russian troops,” he said. In an interview with Austria’s Kathpress agency, Archbishop Shevchuk said a ceasefire appeared to have held during September in most disputed eastern areas, although a prisoner exchange and other moves still had to be negotiated.

Meanwhile, a former Vatican nuncio to Ukraine warned the country risked becoming “a kind of Somalia in the middle of Europe.”

“Ukraine desperately needs support from abroad, so it doesn’t become a so-called failed state — this risk is unfortunately very great,” US Archbishop Thomas Gullickson, who was



nuncio in Kiev from November 2011 until early September, told Vatican Radio last week.

“I hope the world, and especially the countries of Western Europe, will overcome their resistance and do the same as was done after World War II with the Marshall Plan. No one waited till all Nazis were behind bars — they began immediately to rebuild Europe.”

“There’s a real danger Ukraine will become a kind of Somalia in the middle of Europe — Europe can’t turn its back on the Ukrainians and close its eyes to what’s happening,” said the nuncio, who was reassigned to Switzerland and Liechtenstein.

“Events in Ukraine will have consequences for the rest of the world. You can’t just say goodbye, good luck — keep warm and well-fed. We have to engage,” he said.

Leaders from Ukraine, Russia, Germany and France, meeting on Friday in Paris, agreed to back a withdrawal of tanks and heavy weapons from front-line positions in eastern Ukraine, as a first step toward elections in the rebel-held Donetsk and Luhansk regions. However, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe said it had yet to

monitor the withdrawal and warned on Friday it had seen powerful multiple rocket launchers in Luhansk.

Moscow has denied sending troops to Ukraine, but admitted Russian “volunteers” are fighting alongside the separatists.

Ukrainian Catholic leaders have repeatedly accused Russia of military intervention in the war, in which approximately 8,000 people have been killed and at least 17,800 injured since April 2014, according to September data from the UN human rights office.

Archbishop Shevchuk has previously urged a more forthright Vatican stance on the conflict. In May, he told France’s Catholic La Croix daily Rome was “trying to safeguard its ties with Moscow,” adding that the Pope’s pledge to stand with Ukrainians during a February bishops’ visit had not been “matched by action.”

In June, he told Poland’s Catholic information agency, KAI, Ukrainian Catholics appreciated the Holy See’s “mediating mission,” but counted on Rome to employ “clearer terminology” and describe the conflict as an “act of aggression by Russia” rather than “fratricidal war.”

# What the Catholic Church can learn from Orthodox synods

<http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/>

by Fr Mark Drew

posted Thursday, 24 Sep 2015



*Pope Francis with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople (CNS)*

## ***By strengthening the synod of bishops Pope Francis hopes to boost the chances of unity between Catholics and Orthodox Christians***

Until quite recently, to most of us, the word “synod” probably meant the governing body of the Church of England. Catholics spoke of the councils, worldwide (“ecumenical”) or local, which have met irregularly to fix matters of Church doctrine and governance.

For the Orthodox, meanwhile, the notion of synod presents no novelty. The Greek word *synodos* means meeting or assembly (literally, a “journeying together”). It is the term used for the ecumenical councils that gave the Church her definitive doctrinal teaching and canonical structure between the 4th and the 8th centuries. Indeed, a well-known Orthodox theologian has described his Church as “the Church of the Seven Councils”.

In contemporary Orthodoxy, however, synods continue to exist as the main organ of Church

governance. Authority is seen as vested in the Church as a whole, of which the synod is the normative form, and not in any individual. Each patriarch governs only in union with his brother bishops as “first among equals”. Despite the nominal primacy of the Patriarch of Constantinople, he is not seen as having any authority over other patriarchs, or even bishops. There is no “Orthodox pope”.

Many theologians, in fact, think of the Russian word *sobornost*, which can be translated as “synodality” or “conciliarity”, as expressing the very soul of Orthodoxy. But it is important to note that the term, popularised by the theologian Alexei Khomiakov in the 19th century, in reality has a much broader sense of “spiritual community”. It emphasises that the Church is a living body animated by a common faith, rather than a mere institution.

In the Catholic Church since Vatican II, regular “synods” of representatives of the world’s bishops have met to advise the pope. These synods were meant as a practical application of collegiality, a word the council used for the joint responsibility of the pope and the bishops for safeguarding and transmitting the faith.

Interestingly, Pope Francis has seemed to prefer the term “synodality” to “collegiality” and has explicitly pointed to the Orthodox experience of synods as a model the Catholic Church might adopt.

Pope Francis is undoubtedly concerned to dispel the notion that the Church is a human institution based on power structures, and so the attraction for him of the Eastern model should be self-evident. He hopes to favour the cause of unity with the East and at the same time help the Catholic Church to find pastoral solutions to its own, internal problems.

Decision-making in the Church concerns two levels of her life: the organisational or pastoral on the one hand, and the doctrinal on the other. Next month’s synod brings this distinction to the fore. Advocates of a liberalisation of pastoral practice have sought to allay conservative fears by stressing that doctrine will remain unchanged and any evolution will only concern its practical application on the ground.

Can the Orthodox experience shed any light on this distinction? It would (Continue next page)

be inconceivable to the Orthodox that a synod might have authority to change doctrine. One of the reasons for Orthodox rejection of papal authority is the perception that successive popes and the councils held in the West have added new doctrines. There have been important doctrinal developments in Orthodoxy since the 8th century, often enshrined in synodal decrees. But these were seen as necessary responses to theological developments threatening the ancient faith. To call a theologian an “innovator” was to condemn him. Doctrinally, the principle of synodality exists to preserve tradition, and never to add to it or subtract from it.

As for pastoral practice, the canonical principles laid down by the Seven Councils also remain normative. The much-vaunted principle of “economy” involves adapting to changed circumstance rules which were laid down in a world vastly different from our own. Often this has meant compromising on strict application of the canons, but always in order to preserve their purpose.

In reality, such changes were accepted only gradually. The weight of tradition means that the “standing synods” which govern each autocephalous Church rarely make far-reaching changes and are more concerned with day-to-day matters like choosing bishops. Orthodox bishops steer their churches along well established lines, and have a much more limited sphere of action than their Western colleagues. This can be both an advantage and a problem. The lack of a strong, central authority creates difficulties in achieving consensus in favour of even necessary and limited adaptations – as next year’s “Great and Holy Pan-Orthodox Synod” is likely to demonstrate. But the authority of tradition means that there is rarely confusion over basic doctrine. The Orthodox are undoubtedly less united than we are in terms of structures, but more so in their witness to basic doctrine.

Perhaps we have much to learn from each other. The Catholic experience of strong, central authority could help Orthodoxy to overcome the jurisdictional quarrels and the immobility which seem at times to undermine its capacity to adapt and thrive. The Orthodox insistence that the Church is a living organism animated by the faith as handed down, meanwhile, can help

preserve us from temptations which have sometimes beset Catholicism: to make the institution an end in itself and to forget that Church authorities are the guardians and not the masters of that faith.

Benedict XVI promoted this vision with unrivalled clarity. Pope Francis is more a man of action who sees the synodal process and debate as necessary to transform and renew the Church’s everyday life. Next month’s synod may reveal whether the Catholic Church can successfully learn from the Orthodox ethos as well as their praxis. Perhaps their first lesson for us is that the truth received from Christ, rather than concrete organisational structures, is the essential basis of the unity of the Church and of its effective proclamation of the Gospel.

## Why Stay Catholic?

<http://paraphasic.blogspot.com/> (edited by LOE)

My friend Gabriel Sanchez, of *Opus Publicum* asks:

I intend to give a personal answer, and not an apologetical one. While my thinking may come across as glib, and may not be terribly compelling, readers can at least be assured that it’s sincere.

The most *superficial* reason I’m not flipping Orthodox, psychologically speaking, is mental inertia. I am already Catholic, and I feel no strong impulse to leave the Church and join another. When inertia is the answer to “Why are you where you are?”, the next question is “How did you get to where you are now?” So I should start by running through some of those reasons.

Back in 2009 I met a number of times with an Orthodox convert from Lutheranism, who was very keen on bringing me and another potential convert into the fold. The tradition I was presented with from the Orthodox side of things seemed much less robust than the tradition I had seen on the Catholic side of things. This impression had a few dimensions: first there was the peculiar absence of ecumenical councils since the first seven recognized by the Orthodox. Second, there was the apparent lack of a strong intellectual tradition among the Orthodox—not much interest in philosophy or the integration of revealed truth with human knowledge; hostility toward the more systematic elements of Church Fathers. Third, there was the apparent insularity of the Orthodox Churches, which all seemed very much tied to their particular ethnic backgrounds, in a way that seemed contrary to the evangelical spirit of Christianity. I didn’t like Orthodox ecclesiology, and I found the lack of theological development a sign that the Orthodox (Continue next page)

Churches were stunted in their growth. The Orthodox never had a Vatican II (i.e. a synod of fuzzy wobbliness), but the lack of a "visible principle of unity in faith" (e.g. the Pope) to whom everyone was subject in their profession of faith, made it possible for various high-ranking Orthodox prelates to be all over the place on moral issues, without anyone to say they were wrong. And at that time, whatever might be said about the behavior and beliefs of Catholics on the ground in the United States, the Papacy was still holding the line set down by Paul VI, and defending the existence of absolute moral truths against the tides of relativism. This made the case for Roman orthodoxy stronger to me, and while I was ready to grant that the current state of things in Rome was imperfect, it seemed more *integral* somehow than Orthodoxy with its fragmentation.

So much for my reasons six years ago. Given the state of things today, I'm not sure I would have been able to have all the same thoughts. Francis has so devastatingly undercut the perceived doctrinal authority of the See of Peter over the past two years that I doubt it would have been possible for me, investigating the Church, to have looked at him as a figure of authority holding fast to ancient orthodoxy against the forces of modernity. As time goes on, Francis has come to represent many of the characteristics of American Catholicism that most repulsed me as a Protestant: zeal for integration into all the hip liberal political projects, sentimentalization of religion, consistent refusal to clarify or stand behind the articles of faith, disdain for the "rigidity" of any sort of orthodoxy, regular condemnations of "pharisaical" moralism in people who want to uphold traditional moral beliefs... It would have been hard for me, comparing Orthodoxy to Catholicism today, to instantly recognize Catholicism as the branch of the Church in possession of the Rock of unity and fidelity to the truth. And I suspect, though I don't know, that if I were in that place again today, this fact would make the choice to convert more difficult. This weakness might have undercut my conviction that Orthodox ecclesiology was wrong, and caused the Roman case for its status as true representative of the Apostolic faith to crumble. (It's possible that, given how much *more* I know now than I did then, I am overestimating the extent to which I would have understood all this, and therefore exaggerating retroactively the impact Francis's pontificate would have had. But these things are hard to judge.) So why stay Catholic *now*, if the reasons that motivated you most *then* are not as compelling as they used to be? After all, a large number of high ranking Catholic prelates publicly embrace moral heresies with impunity, and the Rock seems to have

gone all wobbly. Since converting, I've become a little more familiar with the vagaries of ecclesiastical history. The papaltray common among new converts has faded, along with the Magisterial Positivism which mistakes pontifical decrees for acts of divine revelation. I am a Thomist now, and have integrated my cynicism about progressive ("triumphalist") historical narratives on the left or the right into my understanding of Church History. The current state of the Catholic hierarchy is tremendously depressing. It makes me feel abandoned by the Church, both as an individual seeking to grow in holiness, and as a theologian trying to stand up for the deposit of faith. How can you teach the truth, when the man everyone looks to as the visible icon of the Church's indefectibility has *stopped* teaching the truth? It's difficult. The traitors in the Church who slid back into the shadows under Benedict are now bold and enthusiastic in their calls for the further destruction of tradition.

But the state of the Church hierarchy has often been depressing. And the Church has survived enough wicked and stupid popes for me to be confident that it will survive this pope. Which brings me to the real reason I'm not interested in converting to Orthodoxy: I have faith that the Roman Catholic Church is the true Church, established by Christ, which is indefectible, in which the fullness of faith resides, which is anchored visibly in the person of the Pope, who is a sign of continuity and who holds, in the place of Christ, the primacy of jurisdiction over the Church Militant. And while Francis may, for all I know, apostatize and defect from his office, or abandon it by attempting to impose upon the Church what is contrary to the express words of Christ, I believe that the tradition passed down at Rome (even today!) is the true tradition, and I find in the monuments of that tradition—the great councils, the great decrees of the popes, the Roman liturgy, the works of great theologians and preaching of great saints—a clear and consistent commitment to revealed truth, and to God, above everything else in this life.

We are in the midst of a dark century for the Church. Maybe this will be the end. But while the officers of the Church squander their energy and authority on false dialogue, and vain innovations, and the glorification of humanity, the tradition remains clear. And this, by the grace of God, is enough for me not to want to jump ship. Anyway, the original question could be flipped on its head: why become Orthodox, when the Orthodox already have all the same problems, but worse, because they don't even have the resources in their tradition to diagnose them as problems?