

LIGHT OF THE EAST

"GLORY BE TO GOD FOR ALL THINGS."

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY OF SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, YOUNGSTOWN-WARREN OHIO CHAPTER

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FROM THE EDITOR...

The next regular meeting of the Youngstown-Warren Chapter of the Society of St. John Chrysostom will be **Tuesday, March 13, 7 p.m., Bishop John of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Eparchy of Parma** will speak on a topic of interest related to The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. The meeting will be held at Holy Trinity Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, 526 West Rayen Avenue in Youngstown. This will be the first time our chapter has met at Holy Trinity. The parish celebrated its 100th anniversary this past year. Please express your solidarity with the goals of our Society by attending our meetings and officially joining our chapter.



THE FOLLOWING HAVE PAID 2012 CHAPTER DUES: BERI & CHRIS BERARDI, FR. ROHAN, FR WITMER, MSGR. SPINOSA, CARCHEDI, FR. GAGE, LIMBERT, VASILCHEK, SKURICH, CALABRO, HUDAK, MSGR. MIHALIC, CHORBISHOP KAIL, FR. RUDJAK, FR. GALL, MCGRIFFINN, L.DEMIDUK, FR. SCHMIDT, PETER & NORMA KOPKO, FR. DEMAS, MATTIUSSI, FR. HILINSKI, ELSEY, STANISLAW, DECKANT, RENDULIC. WE WANT DUES COLLECTED FOR THEY YEAR BY MAY. PLEASE MAKE A CHECK FOR \$20 (25 FAMILY, 15 STUDENT) PAYABLE TO THE SOCIETY OF ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM AND L TO VITO R. CARCHEDI, 35 SCHENLEY AVE. STRUTHERS, OH 44471. THANK YOU.

Have you read the latest newsletter? Remember you can read it here

<http://www.byzcath.org/stjohnchrysostom/> by clicking on the "Chapter Newsletters" button: Take a few minutes to browse our website's other pages.

Mark your calendars for next meeting:

Tuesday, May 8,, 7 p.m., Dr. Edith Humphrey of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. You will be notified of further details in the future.

Putinism and the Ukrainian Catholic Church

Oct 13, 2011

Tim Kelleher

<http://www.firstthings.com/onthesquare/2011/10/putinism-and-the-ukrainian-catholic-church>

On March 25th of this year, Sviatoslav Shevchuk was elected head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC).

Are those crickets I hear? The sound of one hand clapping, perhaps? Put another way: Why does this matter?

To begin, the election entrusts to his care the souls of some four and a quarter million Christians, all heirs to a lineage of tragedy that spans centuries and includes the Soviet-perpetrated monstrosity of the *Holodomor*, in which an estimated three to ten million people were programmatically starved to death in the single year, 1932-1933. Throughout this and other episodes of national suffering, the UGCC acted largely to protect the people and lead in the resistance to both Nazi and Soviet tyranny.

During the turbulence of the twentieth century, Shevchuk's predecessors distinguished themselves as heroic, sometimes pugnacious leaders—more prophets than princes of the Church—who regularly placed themselves at personal risk. The names Sheptytsky, Slipyj, and Husar come quickly to mind.

(Continue page 6)

[Father Mark](#)

on January 27, 2012 from <http://vultus.stblogs.org/>



A Preacher Unlike Any Other

Would that Saint John Chrysostom, the Patron Saint of Preachers, could stand here in my place today and preach with the golden-mouthed eloquence given him by the Holy Ghost! How would we respond to his preaching? Saint Chrysostom's preaching disturbed the placid, inflamed the tepid, woke up the drowsy, exposed corruption, frightened the indifferent, unsettled the comfortable, and caused the pious to squirm.

His preaching also inspired confidence in the Blood of Christ, gave hope to the hopeless, caused sinners to weep with sorrow for their faults, inspired the rich to give abundantly of their wealth, moved people to detachment from earthly goods, humbled the haughty, brought fornicators to chastity, converted swindlers to justice, and endowed the ignorant with the science of Jesus Christ.

Immersion in the Word of God

The secret of Saint John Chrysostom's eloquence was his total immersion in the Word of God. Centuries later, Blessed Abbot Marmion would say that nothing imparts a penetrating *unction* to preaching as much as a continual reference to the Word of God. On this point the greatest preachers are of one mind: their task is to repeat the Word in other words, to deliver not their

own wisdom, but the wisdom of God revealed in the "Word of the Cross" (1 Cor 1:18).

Take to heart Saint Chrysostom's admonition:

Listen carefully to me, I entreat you. . . . Procure books that will be medicines for the soul. . . . At least get a copy of the New Testament, the Apostle's epistles, the Acts, the Gospels, for your constant teachers. If you encounter grief, dive into them as into a chest of medicines; take from them comfort for your trouble, whether it be loss, or death, or bereavement over the loss of relations. Don't simply dive into them. Swim in them. Keep them constantly in your mind. The cause of all evils is the failure to know the Scriptures well.

The Cause of All Evils

The cause of all evils is the failure to know the Scriptures well. Why does the Golden-Mouthed Doctor say this? Because he who fails to know the Scriptures well fails to know the mind and heart of Christ. He who knows not the mind and heart of Christ receives the Body and Blood of Christ with little fruit. It is the Word, the "Word of the Cross" (1 Cor 1:18), that prepares us for the Holy Sacrifice.

Lectio Divina

It is the Word heard (*lectio*), repeated (*meditatio*), prayed (*oratio*), and held in the heart (*contemplatio*) that prepares the soul to receive the Sacred Body and Precious Blood of Christ, and prolongs the effects of Holy Communion throughout the day.

The Word of the Cross and the Fruits of the Precious Blood

The intensity of our Eucharistic life is directly proportionate to our immersion in the Word of God. Ask Saint John Chrysostom today to pray that we may cleave to the "Word of the Cross" (1 Cor 1:18) and so experience the lasting fruits of the Precious Blood of Christ.

PRAYER OF SOUFANIEH

Unity of Hearts!

Unity of Christians!

Unity of the Feast of Easter!



State of Fear: Syria's Christians Face the Specter of Civil War and Sectarian Violence

by OCP on February 4, 2012



**By Kurt J. Werthmuller
3/2/2012
Will the endangered Christian communities of the Middle East survive?**

On a hill above the ancient, well-worn route between Aleppo and the Syria border with

Turkey, one can easily tramp up to the ruins of what was once a massive basilica complex from Late Antiquity. The now-dilapidated Byzantine structure was originally built around the site of one of the most colorful and influential figures of 5th-century Christianity: Simeon the Stylite, who spent decades—literally—sitting atop a stone pillar to demonstrate his ascetic commitment to Christ. One could easily read within these sad and magnificent ruins a broader symbolism of the fading light of Syrian Christianity, largely forgotten, or perhaps ignored, by Christians elsewhere in the world. To do so with mere resignation, however, is to commit the common mistake of valuing the Middle East only for its antiquities, instead of turning our eyes to those millions of Christ's followers who remain in Syria, comprising some 10 percent of the nation's 20 million inhabitants—and who are at particular risk from the current chaos enveloping the country.

Recognizing the unique religious diversity of Syrian society is the key to understanding the precarious position of the nation's Christian community amidst the present crisis.

Since the Middle Ages, the varied geography of Syria, like its smaller Lebanese neighbor to the west (which were not separate political entities until less than a century ago), has tended to attract the settlement of

religious sects on the fringes of “mainstream” (e.g., Sunni Arab) Middle Eastern society. In this context, the Sunni majority surrounds not just one ethnic or religious minority—unlike the context of the Egyptian Copts—but rather a whole series of historically marginalized communities: Kurds, Druzes, Alawis, Circassians, Ismailis, and others. In Syria, these groups could find isolation when necessary, like Mt. Druze, but still make use of the country's busy commercial routes, bustling urban centers, and fertile countryside.

Christians had understood this dynamic even before the 7th-century Islamic conquests, after which bilad al-sham (“the northern lands,” or Greater Syria) came to represent the borderlands between Muslim and Byzantine rule. Assyrians, Armenians, Nestorians, and other Christian sects had been on the outs with Constantinople since the Council of Chalcedon in 451, and many of them sought refuge in the hills of Syria. They were joined by followers of the Greek Orthodox Church, still the largest proportion of Syria's Christians, and its smaller Greek Catholic (Melkite) offshoot that declared loyalty with Rome in the 18th century.

Kurt J. Werthmuller is a research fellow at the Hudson Institute's Center for Religious Freedom. He is the author of *Coptic Identity and Ayyubid Politics in Egypt, 1218-1250*, and he holds a Ph.D. in Middle Eastern history from the University of California, Santa Barbara (2007), an M.A. in Middle Eastern Studies from Harvard University (2002), and a B.A. in history from Messiah College (1995).



Prayer for Unity

O GOD the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our only Saviour, the Prince of Peace: Give us grace seriously to lay to heart the great dangers we are in by our unhappy divisions.

Take away all hatred, prejudice, and error, and whatsoever else may hinder us from godly union and concord: that, as there is but one Body, and one Spirit, and one hope of our calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all; so we may henceforth be all of one heart, and of one soul, united in one holy bond of truth and peace, of faith and charity, and with one mind and one mouth glorify thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

Will Christians Come Together?

From February 28, 1959

Robert A. Graham | Archived Article from America Magazine, excerpted by LOE



World reaction to the prospect of an ecumenical council on behalf of church unity must have been extremely encouraging to the Pope. The dramatic decision of John XXIII, which burst upon the public on January 25, was in the main interpreted quite favorably by those who have no particular reason to indulge in perfunctory applause. Orthodox and Protestant leaders, as well as editorialists in the secular press, displayed their unmistakable interest in the Pope's plan and their sincere respect for his motives. His announcement was taken as something to be expected from one whose personality had already established itself in the popular mind as that of an amiable man who wants to be friends with everyone.

...On the side of the dissident Eastern Churches, undoubtedly the man to watch is Athenagoras I, Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. This prelate's own subjects are reckoned at only two million (by contrast, for instance, with the 7.35 million Orthodox in Greece, not to speak of the 125 million who recognize the Patriarch of Moscow). But the see of Constantinople is "first among

equals" and bears the prestige of ancient Byzantium, the "New Rome." Athenagoras studied in the United States where, according to reports, he came to know and admire the Catholic Church. In the past few years he has been quite outspoken in advocating an end to the divisions of East and West. In 1952 the late Pope Pius XII sent to the Patriarch, through the Apostolic Delegate in Istanbul, a commemorative medal of the proclamation of the dogma of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. The Patriarch on this occasion warmly received the Delegate and devoutly kissed the medal which, need, it be said, represented a belief particularly dear to the Eastern Churches.

It is doubtful that the Pope has ever met the Ecumenical Patriarch personally. That they have been in communication recently is known from the Patriarch's own declaration. It is possible that the Orthodox leader's reaction to the Pope's Christmas appeal for unity was the deciding factor that led to the decision on the general council. In his own New Year message the Patriarch referred to the Christmas appeal at length: "We gladly welcome," he said, "every sincere appeal for the sake of peace in the Church. And our gladness is naturally the greater when such a Church union appeal comes from a Christian center such as Old Rome." He urged that every call for unity be "accompanied by such concrete deeds and actions as are necessary to prove our intentions in full harmony with our words...." At the time, these words appeared only to reflect the Patriarch's known hope of achieving some common practical action among all Christians in the ideological fight against communism. Now it is necessary to view them in the light of the soundings that Pope John XXIII was at that moment undertaking on the opportuneness of an ecumenical council.

The words of Athenagoras should not be overestimated. Few, if any, other Orthodox leaders are on the record in such terms. It may be wondered, in fact, just how far the Patriarch's views are supported by the clergy and laity of his own jurisdiction. Indeed, even he had to add his own note of caution: "Such a uniting of spiritual forces is, of course, not possible in the present state of division and discord which has existed for centuries."...

01/30/2012

Kirill: “Good relations with the Pope does not imply a meeting between us”



Patriarch Kirill

In an interview with Serbian daily “Novosti Vecherniye” the Patriarch of Moscow cleared a few things up about the

dialogue between the Orthodox and Catholic religions

VATICAN INSIDER STAFF
ROME

Relations “have improved” but it is not time yet for the long awaited encounter: the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, Kirill (Vladimir Michajlovič Gundjaev), has said yet again that the necessary conditions for bilateral talks with the Pope have not been created yet.

In an interview with the Serbian newspaper *Novosti Vecherniye*, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church stated: “I believe there are still certain conflicts to be resolved with greater determination if not completely, in order for this meeting to be successful.” A translation of the interview is available on the Patriarchate’s website. Kirill said the media only emphasised “the scandalous aspect of a potential meeting,” and explained that he did “not want” everything to be reduced to this. According to Kirill, further developments are needed in relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church: “we must work together to radically improve the atmosphere of these relations, resolving problems that exist between us,” the Patriarch declared.

Benedict XVI reflects on "immense richness" of Christ's priestly prayer in John 17

From Vatican Information Service:

VATICAN CITY, 25 JAN 2012 (VIS) - Benedict XVI dedicated his catechesis during this morning's general audience to Christ's priestly prayer during the Last Supper, as narrated in chapter 17 of the Gospel of St.

John. In order to understand this prayer "in all its immense richness", said the Pope, it is important to see it in the context of the Jewish feast of atonement, Yom Kippur, in which the high priest seeks atonement first for himself, then for the order of priests and finally for the community as a whole. Likewise, "that night Jesus addressed the Father at the moment in which He offered Himself. He, priest and victim, prayed for Himself, for the Apostles and for all those who would believe in Him".

The prayer which Jesus prays for Himself is the request for His own glorification. "It is in fact more than a request", the Holy Father said, "it is a declaration of willingness to enter freely and generously into the Father's plan, which is accomplished through death and resurrection. ... Jesus begins His priestly prayer by saying: 'Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that your Son may glorify you'. The glorification Jesus seeks for Himself, as High Priest, is to be fully obedient to the Father, an obedience which leads Him to fulfil His filial status: 'So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed'".

The second part of Jesus' prayer is His intercession for the disciples who have followed Him, and His request that they may be sanctified. Jesus says: 'They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth'. Benedict XVI explained how "To sanctify means to transfer something - a person or an object - to God. This involves two complementary aspects: on the one hand, the idea of 'segregation' ... from man's personal life in order to be completely given over to God; on the other hand there is the idea of 'being sent out', of mission. Having been given to God, the consecrated thing or person exists for others. ... A person is sanctified when, like Jesus, he is segregated from the world, set aside for God in view of a task and, for this reason, available for everyone. For disciples this means continuing Jesus' mission".

In the third phase of the priestly prayer, "Jesus asks the Father to intervene in favour of all those who will be brought to the faith by the mission inaugurated by the Apostles. ... 'I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word'. ... Jesus prays for the Church in all times, He also prays for us. ... The main element in Jesus' priestly prayer for His disciples is His request for the future unity of those who will believe in Him. This unity is not a worldly achievement. It derives exclusively from divine unity and comes down to us from the Father, through the Son and in the Holy Spirit". (Continue next page)

By this priestly prayer Jesus establishes the Church, "which is nothing other than the community of disciples who, through their faith in Christ as the One sent by the Father, receive His unity and are involved in Jesus' mission to save the world by leading it to a knowledge of God".

Benedict XVI invited the faithful to read and meditate upon Jesus priestly prayer, and to pray to God themselves, asking Him "to help us enter fully into the plan He has for each of us. Let us ask Him to consecrate us to Himself, that we may belong to Him and show increasing love for others, both near and far. Let us ask Him to help us open our prayers to the world, not limiting them to requests for help in our own problems, but remembering our fellow man before the Lord and learning the beauty of interceding for others. Let us ask Him for the gift of visible unity among all those who believe in Christ, ... that we may be ready to respond to anyone who asks us about the reasons for our hope".

At the end of his audience, Benedict XVI delivered greetings in various languages to the pilgrims and faithful gathered in the Paul VI Hall, reminding them that today's Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul marks the end of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Addressing Polish faithful he said: "The conversion of the Apostle of the Gentiles near Damascus is proof that, in the final analysis, it is God Himself Who decides the destiny of His Church. Let us ask Him for the grace of unity, which also requires our individual conversion, while remaining faithful to the truth and love of God".

Posted by Carl Olson on Wednesday, January 25, 2012 at 09:03 AM |

ROMANIAN ORTHODOX BISHOP: DIALOGUE GAINING GROUND

On How 'Domestic Faith' Is Building Relationships

By H. Sergio Mora

ROME, JAN. 26, 2012 (Zenit.org).- A Romanian Orthodox bishop ministering in Italy says that ecumenical dialogue is taking great steps forward, particularly at the grassroots level.

This was the assertion made by Bishop Siluan Span when he spoke with ZENIT after Wednesday's celebration of Vespers at St. Paul Outside the Walls. Benedict XVI led the liturgy, and with it, closed the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

The bishop of the Romanian Orthodox diocese for Italy and member of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church reflected on how things are changing.

ZENIT: What is the situation of ecumenical dialogue between Catholics and Orthodox?

Bishop Siluan: I believe, despite voices that say that the ecumenical dialogue is in crisis, that in the last 15 years Christians of Eastern Europe -- we are talking of Romania Bulgaria, Russia, but in particular of the countries that are in the European Union -- having the possibility and the willingness to leave, made contact with the reality of all the Western countries. We must say that the Catholic Church in Italy, Spain and other countries manifested an openness and willingness to help, which was much appreciated by the Churches of the East, by the Orthodox Church.

ZENIT: What kind of relationships have been created?

Bishop Siluan: I speak for the Romanian Orthodox Church and I see that different relations have developed from those of the past. In the sense that the Romanian cleaning lady meets an Italian family in its reality. It is a grassroots ecumenism which was never the case before. The Italian family entrusts to her not only the grandmother or grandfather, but also the children. And when the elderly woman prays at night, she asks the Romanian Orthodox cleaning lady to read the Liturgy of the Hours to her. They go to church together and I see that they commend to me names so that we will pray for the persons they look after.

ZENIT: Hence, in daily life!

PUTINISM-- CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

It is in the stead of such giants that Shevchuk now stands—at the remarkable age of forty. Such youth comes with its share of advantages and liabilities. Among the former, one may assume there is energy. He'll need it.

Shevchuk assumes his role in a world experiencing the Chinese curse of *interesting times*, with paradigms shifting faster than a gear-stick in Mario Andretti's palm.

Russia is host to a still-shifting paradigm, and from his office in Kiev, Sviatoslav Shevchuk need only look out the window to see it.

The history of the Orthodox Church in the land of Kievan-Rus is so complex that to call it Byzantine is both pun and fact. And, to be clear, the UGCC is an Orthodox Church. That it identifies as such while living in communion with the bishop of Rome is an important aspect of that complexity.

In addition to the UGCC, three distinct Orthodox Churches exist in Ukraine, each with claims that challenge the legitimacy of the others. This multiplicity is rooted in the trauma of the Soviet era when the world's largest Orthodox Church, the Moscow Patriarchate, was accused of colluding with the Kremlin. This is sensitive, difficult terrain, and beyond the scope of this essay (**Continue page 12**)

CATHOLICS AND COPTIC ORTHODOX



**Archbishop
Kevin
McDonald
and Bishop
Angaelos of
the Coptic
Orthodox
Church,
United**

Kingdom. Credit: Mazur

London, England, Jan 25, 2012 / 02:54 am ([CNA](#)).

Catholic and Coptic Orthodox leaders in the U.K. are encouraging unity between the two churches as society grows increasingly hostile to religion.

"We're facing serious threats of increased secularism and marginalization of religion in general and Christianity in particular," said Coptic Orthodox Bishop Angaelos.

"As members of first-century churches we really need to both live and introduce people to the wealth, meaning and value of what it means to witness and live our Christianity today," he stressed.

On Jan. 23, Bishop Angaelos and the Catholic Archbishop of Southwark Kevin McDonald met in London to release the book, "Joint Statements between the Catholic and Oriental Orthodox Churches."

Both leaders are co-chairmen of the Catholic-Oriental Orthodox Regional Forum, whose members compiled the statements in an effort to increase awareness on Catholic and Oriental Orthodox similarities, rather than differences.

The book includes remarks by Pope Benedict XVI as well as leaders from the Syrian, Coptic and Armenian Orthodox Churches.

Its release comes during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, which runs from Jan. 18-25, and is being observed by over 300 churches and Christian communities around the world.

"It's very easy to become theoretical about theology and forget that we are talking about our faith in the incarnate Word, in salvation, and in the presence of God," Bishop Angaelos remarked at the event.

"We forget to speak in communion of what we can have in common."

Bishop Angaelos gave the example of the time he sent a letter of support to the Catholic Church when it refused to facilitate adoptions for same-sex couples in the U.K., as both churches hold the same views against it.

"When you're in a dialogue, it's not about compromise, it's about reaching deeply into the biblical routes in such a way that convergence can be developed," Archbishop McDonald said. "The purpose of publishing this book is precisely to engage people in this process at a local, grass-root level."

"We're not talking about agreed statements from theologians that have yet to be ratified," he said. "We're talking about agreed statements to which the Catholic Church is already committed."

Bishop Angaelos observed that these "differences will be resolved because Christ makes one promise about one flock and one shepherd and we will be unified one day." He noted upcoming global events in the U.K., such as the 2012 summer Olympics and Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee of 60 years on the throne, as times when the churches should speak with "a very clear Christian voice."

If "our faithful don't see us working together, it's pointless to preach about love, forgiveness and acceptance from the pulpits," Bishop Angaelos said. He also hopes to hold shared prayer gatherings between the two churches in the future and to involve more locals.

Profession of a Stavrophore Nun in Byzantine Catholic Cathedral of St. John the Baptist.

Saturday,
November 26,
2011
Congratulations,
Mother
Theodora!
The nuns of
Christ the
Bridegroom
Community



would like to wish a big CONGRATULATIONS to Sr. Celeste who made her life profession as a stavrophore nun and is now Mother Theodora!

Christ the Bridegroom Community, Burton, Ohio

In January of 2008, Bishop John Kudrick outlined his vision for the foundation of a monastery in the Eparchy of Parma as a response to Pope John Paul II's call for the revitalization of Eastern Monasticism in the United States in the Pope's apostolic letter *Orientalis Lumen* (Light of the East). We responded to that call. We were blessed with a house and property in Burton, Ohio, from the Social Mission Sisters who formerly resided there, and in the process of renovations undertaken with the help of many volunteers, we moved in on April 3, 2009. On March 29, 2010, (**Continue next page**)

Bishop John received our community into the eparchy. We continue to work towards full canonical establishment as a monastery.

Our Identity

We are a Byzantine Catholic monastic community of women in the Eparchy of Parma dedicated to a vigilant life of prayer and hospitality according to the traditions of the Christian East. Laying down our lives in imitation of the Bridegroom, we joyfully embrace the monastic virtues of poverty, chastity and obedience. We participate in the dynamic love of the Trinity by sharing a life of prayer, work and recreation at our monastery. Meditating on Scripture, especially the Song of Songs, and immersing ourselves in a life of personal and liturgical prayer, we enter into a spousal relationship with Christ the Bridegroom. Looking to the Theotokos as our model, we open ourselves to the Divine life of the Holy Spirit, bearing forth fruit for the Church and the world. Our monastery provides a spiritual garden and a bridal chamber in which we draw others into this same life-giving relationship with Christ the Bridegroom. We are heading out to Otego, New York, for a stay with the nuns of Holy Myrrhbearers Orthodox Monastery. This experience will be a time of preparation for Sr. Celeste as she prepares for her life profession on November 20th of this year, and it will also be an opportunity for all three of us to learn from an established Eastern monastery. We are grateful to the nuns for enthusiastically welcoming us into their home and community life for these three months!

Holy Myrrhbearers Monastery is part of the Orthodox Church of America (OCA), and their website is www.holymyrrhbearers.com.

Glory to Jesus Christ! Thank you so much for your prayers during our three-month stay at Holy Myrrhbearers Monastery in Otego, New York. We learned so much and are so grateful to our sisters in New York for welcoming us into their home.

Thursday, November 17, 2011

Reflecting on our time in New York

Sr. Celeste and Mother Anna
Sister Celeste:
Life is a mystery,
and it was



providential that Holy Myrrhbearers Monastery in Otego, New York, graciously tended to the needs of Christ the Bridegroom Community. The Myrrhbearers mentioned in the Gospels tended to the needs of Christ from their personal means (Luke 8:2-4), and the nuns of Holy Myrrhbearers Monastery opened their home and hearts and shared their personal means with us. The Myrrhbearers in the Gospels displayed unyielding courage and were not intimidated by any animosity and fear that permeated the atmosphere. With love, they forged forward to approach the tomb of Christ. The nuns of Holy Myrrhbearers emulated this courage with the myrrh of love and conviction. Knowing that they could possibly incur some criticism by hosting us, they still forged forward with love and conviction and allowed us to experience a deeper life of Eastern Christian monasticism.

There was an immediate bond between the two communities, and through all the prayer, hard work and oneness of heart that developed between us, each monastery was a gift to the other. At the end of our stay, bittersweet farewells were exchanged with tears and embracing, with both communities knowing they were strengthened in their faith and commitment to Eastern monasticism. The nuns of Christ the Bridegroom Community will always be grateful to the nuns of Holy Myrrhbearers Monastery and we look forward to an ever deepening relationship, to be of one heart and one spirit (Acts 4:32).

Though ecumenism between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches remains in dialogue, there is still much to be undertaken for spiritual understanding and unity, and we hope that the bond that grew between us is one more small step towards this goal. We pray that one day we will be one (John 10:17).

Our typikon confirms this commitment: The nuns of this monastery will pray with their whole beings for the unity of all Christians, "So that they may be One as I and My Father are One" (Jn 17:12). They will pray especially for understanding and reconciliation between the Eastern and Western Churches.

The role of monasteries as meeting places for the East and West was emphasized by Blessed John Paul II: "In this regard, I hope that monasteries will make a particular effort, precisely because of the unique role played by monastic life within the Churches and because of the many unifying aspects of the monastic experience, and therefore of spiritual awareness, in the East and in the West" (Orientale Lumen 25).
Sister Julie: (next pg)



During our time in New York, the word “vigilance” continually resurfaced in my prayer. Maybe it was because of the goats? I didn’t always feel like going out to the barn to do the barn chores, but every morning the goats were still there. The four goats we milked every day were bursting with milk, the kid goats were hungry for their bottles and all of the goats were just plain hungry! (As were the dog and cats.) Then at midday, the goats were hungry again. And in the evening, the four goats we milked were bursting with milk again, and again all of the goats were hungry. You see the routine. And unfortunately, they still produced milk and still got hungry even on Sundays! :)

But I learned that vigilance is more than simply persevering in my daily chores (or “obediences”) and even more than showing up for each of the many monastic prayer services throughout the day. Vigilance is being constantly aware of the presence of Christ and allowing myself to be absorbed in that presence. Doing my chores with Jesus filled me with peace. I experienced a great freedom in carrying out the tasks given to me, especially the physical work. Away from the demands of founding a new monastery, I could simply be a “child”—a novice—and learn how to pray!



I am grateful to the nuns for welcoming us into their home for three months, and I am grateful to God that I have new sisters in New York!

Jessie:

Poverty. Chastity. Obedience. Of the three monastic virtues, I feel like obedience is that last thought about by people outside of a monastery and the most thought about by the nuns in a monastery. I would say that obedience is the most important virtue, out of which the other two virtues flow. In order for a nun to truly live out poverty and chastity, she must first obey the call of her Beloved, who is made visible through the mother of her community, so that she may die to her own desires and become totally fulfilled by her Beloved.

During our time in New York, obedience was a recurring theme for my prayer. In particular, I felt an overwhelming sense of the need to embrace obedience

with JOY. I had a great desire to not only complete the tasks I had been assigned, but to do each task JOYFULLY, as if I were doing each task for my Beloved. For a city girl like me, this desire often challenged me, especially when it came to shoveling poop in the goat barn! But there was such a freedom that came with embracing even the humblest of tasks and doing them totally for Jesus. This freedom came from abandoning my own will and accepting Jesus’ will in everything, trusting that He would give me whatever I needed to do what He asked.

"Obedience is not blind, but deliberately seeks to know God's love and to experience the liberation of freely and continually falling into the arms of the Bridegroom with increasing trust" (Monastic Typikon, Christ the Bridegroom Monastery).

Russian Church Unhappy About Good Relations Between Ukrainian Greek Catholics and Kyivan Patriarchate

29 December 2011, RISU

Representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church are concerned over the statements of Patriarch Sviatoslav Shevchuk that believers of the Kyivan Patriarchate are “the main Orthodox



brethren” of the Ukrainian Greek Catholics, Metropolitan Ilarion (Alfeiev) of Volokolamsk, the head of the Department of External Church Relations of the Russian Orthodox Church, reported to UNIAN-Religion.

“We cannot remain indifferent to the statements of the new head of the UGCC that the believers of the Kyivan Patriarchate are ‘the main Orthodox brethren’ of the Ukrainian Greek Catholics. The close contacts and even concelebration of Archbishop Sviatoslav (Shevchuk) with representatives of that schismatic structure unrecognized by any Orthodox Church are, unfortunately, an indication of the ignorance of the official position of the Moscow Patriarchate and disrespect for the canonical rules of the Orthodox Church,” said Metropolitan Ilarion.

“I am deeply convinced that we cannot reach real mutual understanding and reconciliation between our churches (Continue next page)

without mutual respect, in particular, in the area of the canonical system,” said Metropolitan Ilarion.

He told the correspondent that the Russian Church receives reports “about acts of proselytism of Greek Catholics among the Orthodox in the territories of the Central and Eastern Ukraine.” “Such phenomena can only strengthen the existing problems in the interchurch relations while we would like the words about readiness for the dialogue not to conflict with the real actions,” said the metropolitan.

Metropolitan of Volokolamsk said that after the election of Patriarch Sviatoslav, official contacts were actually for the first time established between the Greek Catholics and Orthodox of the Moscow Patriarchate.

“Subsequent statements of Archbishop Sviatoslav about his will to resolve the existing problems between the Moscow Patriarchate and the UGCC also inspired us with some optimism,” he said.

Metropolitan Ilarion commented on the recent statement of Patriarch Kirill about the “improvement of the relations between the Orthodox and Greek Catholics in Ukraine.” According to him the patriarch’s words do not mean that all the problems in the relations are already regulated. “The questions of construction of the Orthodox churches in western Ukraine remain unsettled. Representatives of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church express concern over the mission of Greek Catholics in eastern Ukraine,” said the metropolitan.

NEW METROPOLITAN

WASHINGTON D.C., January 19 (CNA/EWTN News) .-

Pope Benedict XVI has appointed Bishop William C. Skurla to be the Metropolitan Archbishop of the Byzantine Archeparchy of Pittsburgh.

Bishop Skurla, who currently leads the Eparchy of Passaic, N.J., became the administrator of Pittsburgh



after the death of Metropolitan Archbishop Basil M. Schott in June 2010.

The appointment was announced by Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigan  , apostolic nuncio to the United States, in Washington, D.C. on Jan. 19.

Bishop Skurla was born June 1, 1956 in Duluth, Minn., where he attended both public

and Catholic elementary schools.

In 1981, he earned a bachelor's degree from Columbia University in New York. He later attended Mary Immaculate Seminary in Northampton, Pa., earning a master of divinity degree in 1986 and a master of theology degree in 1987.

Bishop Skurla entered the Franciscan community in Sybertsville, Pa. and was solemnly professed in 1985. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1987 and later served as Vicar of Holy Dormition Monastery in Sybertsville.

He was incardinated into the Eparchy of Van Nuys, Ca. in 1996 and named bishop of the eparchy in 2002. He has served as the bishop of the Eparchy of Passaic since 2007.

The 55-year-old bishop will be enthroned in Pittsburgh on April 18.

The Archeparchy of Pittsburgh, which is home to more than 58,000 people, encompasses all Byzantine Ruthenian Rite Catholics in Western Pennsylvania and several counties in Ohio, as well as the entire states of Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas and West Virginia.

Bishop calls for ecumenical ‘truth and reconciliation commission’

By **STAFF REPORTER** on Friday, 20 January 2012

An English bishop has called for the creation of a “truth and reconciliation commission” to promote Christian unity.

In an address marking the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Bishop Emeritus Patrick O’Donoghue of Lancaster said that if Christians did not recognise their sins against each other then they would be “just playing at ecumenism”.

He said: “I propose that we will only have true ecumenism if Catholics and other Christian churches and communities together look at the bad things we have done to each other in the past. We need a truth and reconciliation commission, otherwise we are just playing at ecumenism by pretending that we haven’t got this past. We cannot airbrush our history out of existence with warm words and a positive spin on things.(Continue next page) ++++++
PRAY FOR CATHOLIC/ORTHODOX UNITY

“For this truth and reconciliation commission to work, the questions we have to ask are: have we truly got enough love to listen to each other? Do we really want to listen to the truth?”

Bishop O’Donoghue, who was speaking in Castlemartyr, County Cork, in the Republic of Ireland, argued that progress towards unity depended on honesty.

“The difference between a functioning family and a dysfunctional family is a healthy, nurturing family that talks openly and honestly about problems, about behaviour that is causing upset and friction,” he said. Sometimes, its important to admit that we love each other, but don’t really like each other at times.”

Bishop O’Donoghue served as Bishop of Lancaster from 2001 to 2009. He retired to his native County Cork, where he now serves as an assistant priest in Bantry.

The bishop is famous for writing a series of frank assessments of the state of Catholicism in the north of England, known as *Fit for Mission?*, earning him the nickname “Prophet of the North”.

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Here’s a quotation taken from Pope Benedict’s homily Jan 22: Christian unity can be more

readily achieved if “we allow God to act, if we let ourselves be transformed in the image of Christ, if we enter into new life in Christ, which is the real victory,” he said. The “visible unity,” of all Christians “is always a work that comes from above, from God, by asking for the humility to recognize our weakness and to accept the gift.”



XX International Ecumenical Conference on Orthodox spirituality

MAN – CUSTODIAN OF CREATION

Bose, Wednesday 5 - Saturday 8 September 2012 in collaboration with the Orthodox Churches

According to the Bible, God in his Word created the universe and saw that his creation was good; he formed man according to his image and likeness and saw that it was “very good” (Gen 1,31). Man’s fall disturbs also the harmony of creation and human relations. The Bible lifts the veil on the mystery of visible creation in placing it in relation to salvation history, when with Paul it affirms that the world groans in labor pangs awaiting final salvation (cf. Rom 8, 22). The incarnation of the Son, his cross, his resurrection, and the gift of the Holy Spirit restore wounded man and the universe; the new humanity in Jesus Christ, with the free obedience of faith, can thus fulfill God’s plan of salvation and responsibly govern the creation that was entrusted to it. The 20th International ecumenical conference on Orthodox spirituality hopes to examine more closely this fundamental tie between creation and salvation by interrogating and being interrogated by the various Orthodox traditions.

With great discernment the Orthodox Churches have been able to arouse awareness that man’s responsibility for all creation is inscribed in God’s commandment. Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople, following an intuition of his predecessor Demetrios, from the beginning of his patriarchate has forcefully promoted initiatives for the safeguarding of creation and has emphasized the spiritual and Christian dimension of ecological commitment.

Although ecology is a recent science, its spiritual foundations have ancient roots. Creation is a book that recounts Gods (Continue next page)

glory and mercy. The fathers meditated on the Biblical account of creation, but also dealt with the scandal of evil and of suffering and contrasted divine providence to astrological fatality. Maximus the Confessor in the seventh century examined man's vocation within creation and his renewed vocation in Christ. The spiritual tradition, thus, has been able, through the purification of the heart, to discern the traces of the Creator Word in the natural world, to the point of contemplating the world immersed in divine light.

ST. PETER'S CHRISTMAS TREE SEEN AS ECUMENICAL SYMBOL

Ukraine Donation Called a Sign of Catholic- Orthodox Collaboration

VATICAN CITY, DEC. 19, 2011 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- The Christmas tree in St. Peter's Square, a practice started by John Paul II and now a firm tradition, was lit last Friday evening. The 30.5-meter (100-foot) spruce, with its 2,500 ornaments, came from the Ukrainian region of the Zakarpattia. Several thousand people watched as the lights were turned on by a small Ukrainian boy dressed in his country's national costume.

Bishops from the Catholic and Orthodox bishops from Ukraine were present at the event.

Those attending included His Beatitude Sviatoslav Schevchuk, archbishop major of Kyiv-Halyc; archbishop Mieczyslaw Mokrzycki of Lviv of the Latins; eparch Milan Sasik of Mukachevo, and representatives of the Orthodox Church led by the archbishop of Poltava and Myrhorod.

"The Christmas tree offered today to the Holy Father is the symbol of the unity of Christmas peace and of Ukraine," said His Beatitude Sviatoslav Schevchuk, but also a "symbol of devotion and union to the Successor of Peter, Pope Benedict XVI."

It is a symbol of the "collaboration between the Catholic and Orthodox Church of Ukraine represented by our Orthodox brothers and by ourselves, present in this ancient Square of St. Peter," he added.

For his part, Archbishop Mieczyslaw Mokrzycki stressed that the gift coincides with the 20th anniversary of Ukraine's independence from the Soviet Union and with the 10th anniversary of John Paul II's visit to the country.

Eparch Milan Sasik said that just as the obelisk of St. Peter's Square witnessed the death of the Apostle Peter, giving witness of his love for Christ as the first Pope of Rome, so this tree was witness of the bishop martyr Theodore Romza, who lived a short distance from the forest where the spruce was. This year marks 100 years

since his birth and the 75th anniversary of his ordination in Rome. He was beatified 10 years ago by John Paul II.

PUTINISM-- CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

. But recent news that former KGB officer Vladimir Putin will likely return to the Russian presidency in 2012, underscores the importance of ecclesial politics in the future of Ukraine and all of Eastern Europe.

George Weigel has been one of few in the U.S. to call attention to this unfolding story. In Ukraine there are many keen on strengthening ties with Moscow, even unto reunification. And some of Putin's critics see in his cultivation of relations with the Moscow Patriarchate, an essential element in a re-imagined imperialism, with Orthodoxy replacing Marxism as the source of its inspiration and broker of its divine mandate. If these critics are on to something, and if history offers a clue, such an agenda would require the elimination of the "competition." Ominous then, is Weigel's account of old-school intimidation tactics deployed against an especially impressive UGCC initiative, The Ukrainian Catholic University.

At the same time, Benedict XVI has made progress toward communion with the Orthodox a priority of his pontificate. There are profound theological reasons for this. There is also the mutual recognition that the Latin and Orthodox Churches must forge a genuine evangelical partnership on behalf of Europe. One might even suggest that the restoration of that continent's soul depends upon the restoration of the unity of the apostolic Church, breathing with "both lungs."

This is a challenge steep enough to be impossible, had it not everything to do with the kingdom of God.

It is my hope that this partnership be engaged, and that it be extended to include the entire West in a coordinated mission to re-present the Gospel to a culture in dire need of it. What then might we expect the UGCC to contribute to this ambitious project?

Since 2001, the bishops of the UGCC have held at least fifteen international synods, at a considerable expense of time and money. From them, one word perennially emerges to express the collective discernment and serve as the clarion call for going forward: *Evangelization*.

I should admit that mine is a somewhat unusual point of view. I wasn't born into the UGCC. Neither was I drawn to it by any outreach on its part. In fact, I stumbled into an intimacy with it that, in addition to reception into the Church, has included the privilege of entering one its seminaries.

There are many things to say from this perspective. Preparing to serve a people whose faith I shared but whose story I did not know has been humbling. But as my appreciation for the Church's gifts has grown, so too has my discouragement when failure to adapt, develop and share them seems willful. **(Continue page 16)**

The 2012 Huffington Ecumenical Symposium

March 16-17, 2012

Loyola Marymount University

Friday: 9:00 am - 5:00 pm
Saturday: 9:30 am - 5:00 pm

Offering much more than ethnic foods and festivals, Orthodoxy is often called America's best-kept secret. Orthodox America's story is not simply about fragrant incense, ancient chants, and holy icons. Rather, Orthodoxy in America is complex mosaic of historical circumstances, struggles for self-identity, and intriguing people.

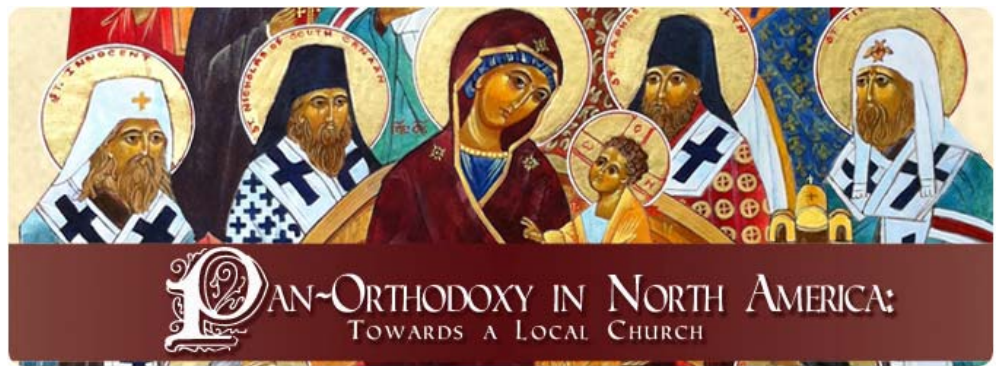
The 2012 Huffington Ecumenical Symposium presents Pan-Orthodoxy in North America: Towards a Local Church on March 16-17, 2012. Come to enjoy food and fellowship, and to hear Orthodox and Catholic experts explain the history of Orthodoxy in North America, discuss the problem of uniting several jurisdictions into one church, and introduce a clear view of North American Pan-Orthodoxy through liturgical music, social justice, and the parish.

Ahmanson Auditorium -- University Hall 1000
1 LMU Drive
Los Angeles, CA 90045 Attendance is free but registration is strictly required.

Links: [Registration](#) [Directions and Parking](#)
[Scheduled Speakers](#)

Schedule of Events - coming soon Student Essay
Competition Photos and Video from Symposium
Proceedings

Check back often for details of the Symposium. To be placed on the conference mailing list, please contact Katherine Lash at hei@lmu.edu or at 310.338.1917.



Orthodox Christians take high-visibility role in the March for Life

by The Editors (edited by LOE)

WASHINGTON, D.C., January 25, 2012, (LifeSiteNews.com) – At a religious event often dominated by massive presence of Roman Catholics, members of the Eastern Orthodox Church played a more visible role in this year's March for Life than ever before. For the first time, the opening prayer in front of the Supreme Court was offered by His Eminence Jonah (Paffhausen), Metropolitan of All America and Canada for the Orthodox Church in America ([OCA](http://OCA.org)), as well as Roman Catholic prelates Daniel Cardinal DiNardo and Cardinal-designate Timothy Dolan.

"We are of one heart and one purpose," he said as he chanted a litany of life before hundreds of thousands of marchers.



Metropolitan Jonah, primate of the Orthodox Church in America (OCA), participates in

Monday's March for Life in Washington D.C.

The Metropolitan was joined by several of his brother bishops, including Bp. Melchizedek of Pittsburgh, Bp. Matthias of Chicago, and Bp. Michael of New York. At least 15 priests were in his company alone. Several individual representatives of the [Carpatho-Russian Orthodox](#), Greek Orthodox, and Antiochian Orthodox Churches also participated.

Ecumenism today and the expectation of its fulfillment

2012-01-17 L'Osservatore Romano

“To work tirelessly to rebuild the full and visible unity of all Christ's followers”. This is the “impelling duty” of the successor of Peter. Already in this first Message after his election to the Papal Throne Pope Benedict XVI spoke these programmatic words. Looking back at the more than six years of his Petrine ministry, we can note with gratitude that the cause of ecumenism is the central thread of his pontificate. Not only does he refer in his numerous homilies and many messages to the necessary “purification of the memory” and see “inner conversion” as the indispensable premise for progress on the ecumenical journey, but from this moment exercises ecumenical primacy in his many meetings with representatives of other Churches and Christian communities.

This clear emphasis in the Holy Father's work cannot come as a surprise if we bear in mind that already as theologian and cardinal Pope Benedict XVI



worked very hard to ensure that the ecumenical dialogue made headway and enriched it with useful theological reflections. It is not of course possible in the context of a brief article to pay homage in detail to the wide range of contributions that Pope Benedict XVI has made to ecumenism. I shall therefore focus on the essential nucleus of his ecumenical action which, in my opinion, is expressed more clearly and deeply in his interpretation of the priestly prayer of Jesus, that all may be one, of which the Pope speaks in part two of his book on Jesus of Nazareth.

The new evangelization which the Holy Father has wanted in a particular way, must therefore have an ecumenical dimension, a dimension to which Pope Benedict XVI made an explicit reference in announcing the establishment of the New Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization at the celebration of First Vespers of the Solemnity of Sts Peter and Paul in 2010: “The challenge of the new evangelization calls into question the universal Church and asks us to continue with commitment our search for full Christian unity”. Since the new evangelization consists in bringing men and women close to the mystery of God and

introducing them into a personal relationship with God, at the centre of all new evangelization must be the question of God that we must take on ecumenically, in the conviction that at the root of all evangelization lies not a “human plan of expansion but rather the desire “to share the inestimable gift that God has wished to give us, making us sharers in his own life” (*Ubcumque et Semper*).

With his ecumenical commitment, Pope Benedict XVI witnesses in an exemplary way to what the ecumenical responsibility of every bishop in the Catholic Church consists of, described by the Code of Canon law in the following words: The diocesan bishop “is to act with kindness and charity toward those who are not in full communion with the Catholic Church, fostering ecumenism as it is understood by the Church” (Can. 383 § 3). It is clear from this in the first place that the promotion of the cause of ecumenism is implicit in the bishop's pastoral ministry itself, which is essentially a service to unity, that is, to the unity which must be understood in a broader way than the simple unity of one's own diocesan community and which also precisely includes the non-Catholic baptized. Secondly, in defining the bishop's approach and ecumenical responsibility as one of “kindness and charity toward those who are not in full communion with the Catholic Church”, there is a clear emphasis on the “dialogue of charity”. Thirdly, since this “dialogue of charity” cannot replace the “dialogue of truth”, but constitutes its indispensable premise, the bishop is bound to promote ecumenism as “it is understood by the Church”.

These three guidelines highlight the fact that the pastoral ministry which the bishop gives to the unity of his particular Church is inseparable from his ecumenical pastoral ministry, which aims for the recomposition of unity in the Church, and that both these dimensions are at the service of faith in Jesus Christ. We can and must be grateful to Pope Benedict XVI, as Bishop of Rome, for having taken on this ecumenical responsibility in such an exemplary and credible manner. To be able to be at the service of ecumenism through his mandate is a joy and an honour, but also a challenge and a duty.

Kurt Koch

CATHOLICS, ORTHODOX UNITE IN DEFENDING RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Note That Christians Are Most Persecuted Group in the World

ROME, DEC. 15, 2011 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)). A two-day conference held in Moscow ended with leaders from the Orthodox and Catholic Churches (**Continue next page**)

agreeing that they need to work together to better help Christians that are persecuted.

The conference on "Religious freedom: the problem of discrimination and persecution of Christians," was hosted by the Russian Orthodox Patriarchate of Moscow, according to a report on it published Wednesday by Aid to the Church in Need.

"We Christians are all in the same boat. At times when Christians are suffering persecution, our solidarity is needed," commented Peter Humeniuk, who was there as a Russian expert from Aid to the Church in Need, which helped fund the conference.

The meeting took place shortly after a report from the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE) showed that at least 75% of all religious persecution is directed against Christians.

Among those present in Moscow were Archbishop Ivan Jurkovitch, apostolic nuncio to the Russian Federation, Archbishop Erwin Josef Ender, retired nuncio to Germany, and the archbishop of the Diocese of Mother of God at Moscow, Paolo Pezzi.

Getting the message

The need for action to protect Christians was also highlighted recently by Bishop Ricardo Ramirez of La Cruces, New Mexico. In his capacity as a member of the U.S. bishops' Committee on International Justice and Peace he gave testimony to the House Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health and Human Rights on Nov. 17. Recent events, he said, clearly showed that religious freedom is under attack in many countries. He cited a Pew study, dated October 2010, which showed that Christians, more than any other group, suffer some form of harassment in 133 countries.

"An August 2011 follow-up Pew study found that restrictions on religion rose between 2006 and 2009 in some of the most populous countries, affecting about a third of the world's population," said Bishop Ramirez. "It behooves leaders of all religions to work together to build a global culture of respect for religious freedom as a guarantor of human dignity and a contributor to justice," he told the committee members.

He also touched on the domestic front. "For our nation to have credibility in addressing religious freedom globally, we must continually work to protect religious freedom at home in the United States," he said.

Bishop Ramirez referred to testimony given in March by Cardinal Theodore McCarrick to the Senate Judiciary Committee. In it Cardinal McCarrick noted there were threats to the identity and integrity of Catholic social institutions as well as those of other traditions. Faith-based organizations need to be allowed to offer their services in a way that respects their religious traditions, the cardinal told the committee.

Defend Tradition in ecumenical work, Pope says

(CWN) Pope Benedict XVI underlined the urgent need to address "a profound crisis of faith," and drew a distinction between true and false ecumenism, in a January 27 address to members of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF).

Speaking to the participants in a plenary session of the Congregation that he headed for nearly 24 years, the Pope warned that "in vast areas of the earth the faith risks being extinguished, like a flame without fuel." The crisis of faith, he said, is "a loss of a religious sense which represents one of the greatest challenges for the Church today."

Pope Benedict reminded the Congregation that he has proclaimed a Year of Faith in a bid to revive that religious sense, and has made the "new evangelization" a priority of his pontificate and the topic of this year's meeting of the Synod of Bishops.

The plenary meeting of the CDF will discuss the challenges of ecumenical work, and the Pope devoted much of his talk to that subject. He welcomed the fruits of ecumenical dialogue, but cautioned against the inappropriate use of that process:

Yet we must also recognize that the risks of indifference and of false Iienicism, completely alien to the mindset of Vatican Council II, require us to be vigilant. Such indifference is caused by the increasingly widespread opinion that truth is not accessible to man and that, therefore, we must limit ourselves to finding rules to improve this world. In this scenario, faith comes to be replaced by a shallow-rooted moralism. By contrast, the core of true ecumenism is faith, in which man encounters the truth revealed in the Word of God.

To guard against false ecumenism, the Pope suggested making a careful distinction between the Tradition of the Church, denoted with a "capital T," and the different ("small t") traditions of Christian denominations. He suggested that *Anglicanorum Coetibus* opened a way for the Catholic Church to accept the distinct traditions of the Anglican community without compromising the Tradition of the universal Church. In ecumenical work, the Pope continued, the (Continue next page)

Catholic Church should work with all interested ecumenical partners to preserve the teachings of Tradition in today's world. Such a united witness is important, he said, on "the great moral questions about human life, family, sexuality, bioethics, freedom, justice and peace."

PUTINISM-- CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

. In countless conversations, cradle-born members of the UGCC have expressed incredulity at my enthusiasm for the Church, while seeming to view their own participation as a form of ethnic fealty.

In many parishes, a sense of desolation is palpable, with services attended by a startling disproportion of elder faithful. This graying—or *ghosting* – of the parishes is a crisis to which innovative remedies seem noble exceptions rather than the broad harvest of episcopal action matching synodal rhetoric.

On the same soil, Orthodox Churches, dealing with formidable challenges of their own, are finding ways to grow communities true to their lineage *and* attractive to those outside it, cooperating in projects designed to engage the wider culture.

To be sure, these impressions are anecdotal. Yet, I can't think of a single person in formation with me who would fault these observations, except perhaps for being too restrained. Within its walls one often hears the frustration that the UGCC is essentially a Latin Church in Byzantine clothing, burying its distinctive gifts like the talents of the Gospel parable. Indeed, not long ago, Rome itself issued a rather stringent exhortation to the Eastern Churches in communion with it to commit themselves to the realization of the charisms unique to their traditions.

Although I have presented what may seem a gloomy forecast, we know how quickly things can change. And I remain hopeful.

The Eastern Churches bear an aspect of the Christian faith that is profound and astonishingly rich, with the power to amaze a culture that wrongly presumes it has seen it all. I also believe our culture is in urgent need of the vast treasure and deep beauty that have been entrusted to these Churches.

This is but a portion of what awaits the considered response of the young man in Kiev now at the helm of a great Church.

In Ukraine, during the celebration of a special occasion, it is customary to sing, *Mnohaya Lita* ("God grant you many years"). And so, may Sviatoslav Shevchuk prove to be a true apostle, one who guides his Church with wisdom, courage and love. And may God grant him many joyful years in which to do it.

Tim Kelleher is the new media editor for FIRST THINGS.

Record of Protest Against the Infringement of Religious Liberty by the Department of Health and Human Services

The Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of North and Central America, which is comprised of the 65 canonical Orthodox bishops in the United States, Canada and Mexico, join their voices with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and all those who adamantly protest the recent decision by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, and call upon all the Orthodox Christian faithful to contact their elected representatives today to voice their concern in the face of this threat to the sanctity of the Church's conscience.

In this ruling by HHS, religious hospitals, educational institutions, and other organizations will be required to pay for the full cost of contraceptives (including some abortion-inducing drugs) and sterilizations for their employees, regardless of the religious convictions of the employers.

The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution guarantees the free exercise of religion. This freedom is transgressed when a religious institution is required to pay for "contraceptive services" including abortion-inducing drugs and sterilization services that directly violate their religious convictions. Providing such services should not be regarded as mandated medical care. We, the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops, call upon HHS Secretary Sebelius and the Obama Administration to rescind this unjust ruling and to respect the religious freedom guaranteed all Americans by the First Amendment.

WE HOPE THAT YOU ENJOY READING THE NEWSLETTER AND WE ASK THAT YOU SUPPORT US BY JOINING OUR CHAPTER AS WE PRAY AND WORK FOR UNITY.
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