

# LIGHT OF THE EAST

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

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

Dear Members and Friends, the next regular meeting of the Youngstown-Warren Chapter of the Society of St. John Chrysostom will be **Tuesday, July 10, 7 pm at St. Mary and St. John the Beloved Coptic Orthodox Convent, 8640 Squires Lane, Warren, Ohio, 44484.**

The Coptic Orthodox Church purchased St. Mary and St. John the Beloved Convent on February 1, 2011. Before the Coptic Orthodox Church, the convent was home to Benedictine sisters of the Byzantine Catholic Church. As the first Coptic convent serving ladies outside of Egypt, this center follows the coenobitic, or communal, monastic life. Consecrated for service, the sisters of St. Mary and St. John the Beloved Convent aid members of the community in addition to offering the prayers and meditations of daily monastic life.

Sitting on 10 acres of land in Warren, Ohio, the convent is capable of accommodating small to medium size groups in its 18,300 sq. ft main building and 4-bedroom guesthouse. The main building is equipped with a Library Media Room, Dining Room/Lounge, and Commercial Kitchen. Prayers are conducted in the church of St. Mary and St. John the Beloved, which contains the relics of St. John. The first liturgy for the convent was held on January 12, 2011 (Tobi 4, 1727 AM), the feast of St. John the Beloved. St. John the Theologian wrote, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God" (1 John 4:7). In the same spirit, the convent wishes to serve the Coptic Orthodox Church and promote outreach through God's love.

**Our speaker for the evening will be Doctor Joseph Ragheb MD, teaching Egyptian Culture and Coptic Orthodox Church History at the U. of Pittsburgh. He'll address these topics in his talk to 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, MCGIFFIN, L.DEMIDUK, FR. SCHMIDT, PETER & NORMA KOPKO, FR. DENAS, MATTIUSI, FR. HILINSKI, ELSEY, STANISLAW, DECKANT, RENDULIC, BENEDICTINE BYZANTINE SISTERS, FR. BONNOT, MSGR. SIFFRIN, DEMOCKO, BILLCHECK, MSGR. APLEYARD, NAKLEY, KATZ, PERANTINIDES, ESTHER & JIM DERSHAW, FR. LAMBERT, S. KOLITSOS, SLEEVEVER, FR. MANNING, REV. RICK. PLEASE MAKE A CHECK FOR \$20 (25 FAMILY, 15 STUDENT) PAYABLE TO THE SOCIETY OF ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM AND MAIL TO VITO R. CARCHEDI, 35 SCHENLEY AVE. STRUTHERS, OH 44471. THANK YOU. +++**

## **Egypt's Copts to choose new spiritual leader in September** CWN - May 02, 2012

The Coptic Orthodox Church will elect a successor to the late Pope Shenouda III in September, a spokesman has announced.

Pope Shenouda, who had served a remarkable 40 years as leader of the Egyptian Christian body, died on March 17 at the age of 88. To date 14 Coptic bishops have emerged as candidates in a complex process to choose his successor.

The choice of a new head will be critical for the Coptic Church, not only because of the inevitable change after 4 decades with a single leader, but also because of the political turmoil in Egypt, where Islamic forces are gaining more control over the country's affairs and the Coptic minority faces mounting insecurity. +++

## Nuns from Belarus

By Charita Goshay [CantonRep.com](http://CantonRep.com) staff writer

Posted Mar 22, 2012

Article edited by LOE. (Your editor spoke to one of the nuns at St. Nicholas Catholic Church in Struthers.)

Ohio is a long way from Belarus, but two young nuns visiting from that country say they feel at home, thanks to Midwestern hospitality. Sister Anna and Sister Maria, two members of the St. Elisabeth order in Belarus.



“They wrote to Bishop (George) Murry and asked if they could come visit some of our churches,” Acker said. “And he welcomed them. It’s part of his great ministry.

“These young ladies are Orthodox Christians, but we’re brothers and sisters with the Orthodox. We share the same beliefs.”

The nuns also visited St. Joseph Catholic Church in Alliance and St. Michael the Archangel parish in Plain Township, as well as churches in Girard and Struthers.

### **SPIRITUAL HELP**

Located in Eastern Europe, the Republic of Belarus was part of the former Soviet Union until 1991. It has a population of 9 million. More than 1 million live in the capital city of Minsk.

The nuns of St. Elisabeth help care for children and adults who are hospitalized in psychiatric facilities. “We assist the nurses in feeding the children” Sister Anna said. “Most importantly, we provide spiritual help.”

She noted that many of the children they serve are orphans.

“It’s a challenge for their parents,” she said. “Some parents do visit, but some are orphans.”

The order is the process of building a Sunday school. It also operates a facility for about 100 homeless adults.

“Most come from prison or are addicted to drugs and alcohol,” Sister Anna said.

### **HELPFUL OHIOANS**

The two also brought with them a number of handcrafted items, which the nuns of St. Elisabeth make and sell to provide support for their ministry.

Sister Anna said it was their first visit to the Midwest. “Ohio reminds us of Belarus,” she said. “We have a lot of countryside and farmland, too. People here are very open and helpful. We like it here.” +++

## Canadian Parliament honors the memory of Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytsky

Posted April 26 at <http://www.orientalelumen.org.uk/>

In the presence of Patriarch Filaret of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Kyivan Patriarchate), Major-Archbishop of Kyiv and all Ukraine, Patriarch Sviatoslav of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, the Chief Rabbi Jacob Dov Bleich of Kyiv and Ukraine, Metropolitan Mefodiy of Kiev and all Ukraine (Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church), the Mufti of Ukraine, Sheikh Ahmed Tamim (Chairman of the Islamyat, Spiritual Board of Muslims of Ukraine) and Archbishop Mieczysław Mokrzycki of Lviv of the Latin Catholics. There was no representative of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (Moscow Patriarchate), as it does not recognise the right to autonomy of other Orthodox communities in Ukraine and relations with them is strained owing to disputes over the ownership of churches, and objections to their seizure and assignment by local groups and the authorities alike. Nor was there a representation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada (Patriarchate of Constantinople), which does not recognise the Orthodox Churches of Ukraine not of the Moscow Patriarchate as canonical. In hope and loving solidarity with all Christians we pray for the resolution of all disagreements, the reconciliation of the Churches and the unity of all the followers of Jesus Christ, "that the world may believe".

The event marked the presence in Canada of twenty religious leaders from Ukraine, Orthodox, Catholic, Jewish, Evangelical, Muslim, Adventist for the Symposium, *Honouring Andrey Sheptytsky: Ethical Action in Extreme Conditions* at St Paul University's Sheptytsky Institute for Eastern Christian Studies.+++

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

### **PRAYER OF SOUFANIEH**

**Unity of Hearts!**

**Unity of Christians!**

**Unity of the Feast of Easter!**



## That They May Be One

May 25, 2012

Tim Kelleher



**Byzantine Catholic Archbishop William C. Skurla of Pittsburgh, Byzantine Catholic Bishop John M. Kudrick of Parma, Ohio, and Romanian Bishop John M. Botean of Canton, Ohio, concelebrate a Divine Liturgy with U.S. bishops from Eastern Catholic churches at the Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome May 16. Bishops from the Chaldean, Ruthenian, Maronite, Ukrainian, Armenian, Melkite, Syriac and Romanian Catholic churches were making their "ad limina" visits to report on the status of their dioceses. (CNS/Paul Haring)**

Gathered for their *ad limina*, Eastern Catholic bishops from the U.S. were addressed last week by Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, Leonardo Cardinal Sandri. His injunction—made not about abortion, the HHS mandate, war, wealth redistribution, or gay marriage—could have a critical influence on the Christian response to all of the above.

Among the Cardinal's remarks was a tersely reiterated expectation of celibacy for priests serving the Eastern Catholic Churches *in diaspora*—in this case the U.S. The message may not have been carried directly from the hand of Benedict but the effect has been unpleasant to say the least.

Enter Thomas Loya, a Ruthenian Catholic priest of the Parma Ohio Eparchy, writing his eparch in response.

In addition to being chillingly reminiscent of the demeaning attitude of the Latin Rite bishops toward the Eastern Catholic Churches during the beginning of the last century in America, the Cardinal's remarks about celibacy seem to confirm what so many Eastern Catholics in America have suspected for too long: Rome and the Latin Rite see the Eastern Catholic Churches in America as essentially inconsequential, perhaps even in

the way of ecumenism between Rome and the Orthodox Churches.

The chilling reminiscence refers, in part, to an exercise in aberrant ecclesiology—more a power play—engineered by Archbishop John Ireland that resulted in an entire body of U.S. Eastern Catholics breaking communion with Rome.

I'm not about to jump into the trenches on the issue of celibacy (I would rather the comments box not turn into a Mixed Martial Arts cage). I'll simply repeat the known fact that celibacy it is not a dogma of the Church but a discipline, and that its normative status in the Latin Church is not of ancient provenance. Moreover, Loya's point is not about celibacy *per se* but ecclesial integrity and mutual respect.

What moves us onto this more sensitive landscape is his suggestion that Rome views the Eastern Catholic churches as "*in the way*" of relations between itself and the Orthodox Churches. I can certainly see why it would occur to him and he's not the first to say it. For centuries, the existence of the so-called Uniate Churches has been a vexed point in those relations.

But I wonder how much help he can realistically expect from the Eastern hierarchs. Too many Eastern Catholic bishops behave as though their mandate actually is to allow their Churches to die a slow, palliated death.

**If Loya is correct, it's difficult to see how Cardinal Sandri's words advance the ecumenical agenda.** In fact, it would seem to do the reverse. For, what possible inducement to deepening trust could the Orthodox find in Rome's insistence that Eastern Churches compromise their traditions the moment they hit the customs line at JFK?

This is, at best, a very mixed signal. When added to other actions, however, it can begin to seem otherwise. In terms of impeding the cause of reunion, perhaps the most inexplicable move in recent years was Rome's decision suddenly to drop the title "Patriarch of the West" from the list of papal honorifics in the 2006 *Annuario Pontificio*.

As Adam DeVille points out in his superb, *Orthodoxy and the Papacy: Ut Unum Sint and the Prospects of East-West Unity*, of all the titles claimed for the Pope, it is the office of Patriarch that is most meaningful to the Orthodox. It is the one most serious ecumenists agree holds the greatest potential to serve as a model for the "new situation" John Paul II invited all Christians to help him imagine and make *real*.

The practical stakes of this are high. As Loya goes on to say,

The Eastern Catholic Churches, and in particular the Ruthenian Church, are actually in a position to indeed supply what is lacking in the whole Church in America and to confront secular (Continue next page)

society with a type of vocabulary and spirituality that we alone can bring to the war on secularism and moral relativism. It seems that Rome understands none of this about us.

I'm not sure why he feels the Ruthenian Church is in the *particular* position he describes. I also wish he hadn't chosen to depict the resistance to secularism as *war*. But, those are fairly minor points. Fr. Loya is doing something important by addressing the tip that reveals the presence of an iceberg—something I earlier suggested could and should have a critical influence on the Christian response to our myriad problems. Others have suggested, as have I, that a quantum leap in cooperation between the Roman and Orthodox Catholic Churches is indispensable to the cause of revitalizing a Western culture suffering as a result of its repudiation of or indifference to the treasure of its Judeo-Christian heritage. Given how things have unfolded in the reformed churches over the last fifty or so years, it is imperative that Rome and its sister churches of the East do all within the scope of their human power to rise to this challenge.

Fr Loya is to be commended on his appeal for ecclesial integrity and mutual respect. They are not easy to come by. The historical and political obstacles are formidable, as those laboring in this cause well know. But without them the world will continue to be deprived of the fullness of the Body of Christ. And we will continue struggling in a sea of resentment, instead of rejoicing beside the *sea of glass*. +++

*Tim Kelleher is the new media editor for FIRST THINGS.*

## NEW BISHOP FOR ITALO-ALBANIANS

Archimandrite Donato Oliverio (56) as the new Eparchial Bishop of Lungro for Italo-Albanians in Continental Italy. Bishop-elect Donato was educated at Cosenza, Grottaferrata, and Rome. He is an alumnus of the Pontifical Greek College, the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum) and the Pontifical Oriental Institute. He has published articles on catechesis and iconology, and has edited the Italian edition of the *Apostolos* (lectionary).

The Bishop-elect was ordained priest in 1982. He has

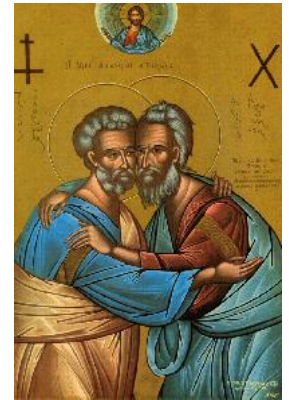


served as parish priest, eparchial director of catechetics, moderator of the curia, and protosyncellus (vicar general). Since 2010 he has been the Delegate of the Apostolic Administrator.

Bishop-elect Donato speaks Albanian and Italian and has a knowledge of French and Greek.

His Episcopal Consacration will be July 1 in the Eparchial Cathedral of Lungro.+++

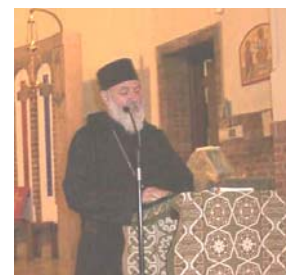
## The Society of Saint Maximus: A Chapter of The Society of Saint John Chrysostom



In this icon the brother apostles Peter and Andrew embrace. Peter, the patron of the Church of Rome; Andrew, the patron of the Church of Constantinople. This beautiful icon was presented by Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras to Pope Paul VI when, after so many centuries of estrangement, they met in Jerusalem in 1964 and exchanged the Kiss of Peace.

In our own Baltimore area, we started in 1995, an ecumenical group, The Society of Saint Maximus the Confessor. The name was suggested by a co-founding then Orthodox priest, Father Chrysostom Frank, since St. Maximus (venerated in both East and West) was the quintessential Byzantine theologian and yet had such a high regard for the Roman Church and also helped the East understand some of the differences with the West, even regarding the controversial use of the Filioque in the Latin tradition. Perhaps St Maximus could be a model of both fidelity (he gave his life for the Truth) and openness of mind and heart, as he mediated between east and west in hours of misunderstandings.

More recently, under the guidance of Father Paschal Morlino, OSB, we have affiliated with the [Society of Saint John Chrysostom](#) (Continue next page)



(which sponsors the excellent Orientale Lumen Conferences in DC and elsewhere).

***Father Paschal is bi-ritual***

Our group, of mostly Catholics and Orthodox, meets several times each season on a Sunday evening at [Saint Benedict Parish](#) in Baltimore (we used to meet at a beautiful home in Catonsville until the hostess became quite ill). If anyone is interested and would like to join us, we'd love to have you! Contact us by [email](#) and we will gladly give details and directions. We are blessed to have among our participants clergy and laity of both the Catholic and Orthodox Churches! Good fellowship, good food, and an experience of unity in Christ! Ut unum sint!+++

## **ESBVM USA will hold meeting, June 16th 2012, in Maryland**

Posted by esbvmsusa on May 6th, 2012

The U.S. branch of the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary will hold its next semi-annual meeting on Saturday, June 16, at Holy Cross Antiochian Orthodox Church, in Linthicum, Maryland. The meeting will begin with coffee and registration at 9 AM and continue until noon. Lunch will be available for a small donation, to be followed by a business meeting of the society. The meeting is open to all (no registration fee) and all are invited to attend the business meeting. The meeting will open with a short ecumenical prayer and feature three presentations. First, Bruce Lawrence, who is completing his M.A. in theology at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, will speak on the Formula of Reunion, a short creedal statement that helped to reunite the Church in 433 AD after a brief schism following the Council of Ephesus. This was the period when the Church officially acknowledged Mary as the Godbearer (Theotokos) and Marian devotion began to develop. Bruce is a member of the Holy Cross Antiochian Orthodox Church where the meeting will be held. Then, the Rev. Warren Tanghe, Associate Pastor at the Church of the Resurrection, Ellicott City, Maryland, will speak on "Preaching Mary." Fr. Tanghe has had a long association with the ESBVM, and can share information on the purpose and founding of the Society to those who are interested. Finally, ESBVM USA president Virginia Kimball will speak on the work of the Rev. Dr. Donald Lacy, his

books, and his overall contribution to the ESBVM. The recently departed Dr. Lacy was a United Methodist minister in Indiana who had long been active in ecumenical activities and the promotion of devotion to Mary – a real embodiment of the goals of the ESBVM. The meeting will have a strong Society of Mary flavor. The Society of Mary is one of several Catholic devotional societies within the Anglican tradition, honoring her whom God has honored, the Virgin Mother of His incarnate Son, Jesus; thus bearing witness to His holy incarnation. (From the website: Society of Mary, American Region) <http://somamerica.org/>." Both Dr. Lawrence and Fr. Tanghe are members of the council of the Society of Mary, and Dr. Lacy was a long-time member of the Society of Mary.

Holy Cross Antiochian Orthodox Church is located at 105 North Camp Meade Road, Linthicum, Maryland, just minutes from the Baltimore-Washington International Airport. More information on the church can be found at <http://www.holycrossonline.org/>. Also, more information on the ESBVM and updated information on this meeting may be found at <http://www.esbvm.org>.

The newly published ESBVM USA book, *Mary for the Love and Glory of God*, will be available at this meeting. The cost is \$25 and \$10 for members. Plan to pick up a few copies for yourself and friends, or for your church or educational institution. +++

### **EAST-WEST SIMILARITIES**

The web-site of Dr. Anthony Dragani. <http://east2west.org/index.htm>

This website is dedicated to highlighting the similarities that are found in the western and the eastern churches. For many years polemics on both sides have misrepresented what the other side believes, it is due to this lack of charity and clarity that the two remain suspicious of one other.

Yet in our own time we have seen much progress being made toward better understanding of one another. The aim of this modest website is to join in the effort toward greater respect and understanding. Glory to Jesus Christ! +++

***We are not at peace with others  
because we are not at peace with ourselves,  
and we are not at peace with ourselves  
because we are not at peace with God.~ Thomas Merton***



## The Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies

Cambridge, United Kingdom

### ENROLMENT FORM

XIII<sup>th</sup> International Summer School

### **The Icon - A bridge between East and West**

**22-27 July 2012**

Since places are limited, you may prefer to reserve a place by a pre-enrolment non-refundable fee of £50. Final deadline for payments in full is 6 July 2012+++

## Anglican and Eastern Churches Association

**ANNUAL CONSTANTINOPLE LECTURE 2012**

**Thursday 22nd November 2012**

The Association's Annual Constantinople Lecture is this year to be given by the Rt Reverend Dr Vahan Hovhannessian, Primate of the Armenian Church in the UK & Ireland

The New Testament Apocrypha and the Armenian Church Canon of the Bible

Venue: Lambeth Palace, London SE1 7JU by kind permission of His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury

5.30pm Evensong followed by the lecture

7.00pm Buffet Supper (carriages at 9pm) +++

## Mormons surge, Catholics decline in US; half of Americans are nonadherents

CWN - May 03, 2012

The number of Mormons in the United States increased by nearly 50% between 2000 and 2010, while the number of "active members" of the Catholic Church declined by 5%, according to the latest decennial religious census published by the Association of Religion Data Archives.

The census--which allows readers to search for data at the state and county levels--found that only 48.8% of Americans are religious adherents, while 158.1 million Americans are "unclaimed." The census estimates the number of Catholics in 2010 at 58.9 million; the latest edition of *The Official Catholic Directory*, using figures provided by dioceses, puts the number at 68.3 million. The census also estimates that there were 50.0 million evangelical Protestants, 22.7 million mainline Protestants (a decline of 13% over ten years), 4.9 million black Protestants, and 1.1 million Orthodox in the US in 2010. The 13.1 million who belong to other religious bodies include 6.1 million Mormons, 2.6 million Muslims, 2.3 million Jews, 990,000 Buddhists, and 640,000 Hindus.+++

## Armenian Ode for Easter and Eastertide



The voice of good tidings sang to the women.

It sounded like the call of the trumpet: -

"The Crucified whom ye seek is risen!

Fear not but be joyful;

Fulfill what is owed by Eve:

Go to Galilee and see;

And proclaim to the world."

I tell of the voice of the lion

Who roared on the four-winged cross.

On the four-winged cross he roared,

His voice resounded to Hades.

The bird, the bird awoke,

And watching the gentiles,

He called, he called out to the turtle-dove,

To his beloved, nurtured in love.

Love is dawning, love is dawning,

In a stately march it is eagerly rising.

The rising sun, the rising sun -

Such is the name of that daystar.

Mary called to the gardener: -

"Didst thou remove my first born, my love?"

- "That bird is risen, the wakeful being,

Did the Seraph trumpet to the Mother

and to those with her,

- "The Saviour of the world, Christ is risen!

And he has delivered mankind from death."

A bright new flower has appeared this day

out of the tomb.

Souls have blossomed and are adorned with divers hues,

and have become green with life.

The florescence of divine light has bloomed

in the spiritual spring.+++

## **Pray for the Unity of the Apostolic Churches**

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

- the Byzantine and Oriental Catholic Churches in communion with the Apostolic See of Rome (especially in their contemporary calling to promote reconciliation and the recovery of union between Catholics and Orthodox)

- the Orthodox Church

- the Oriental Orthodox Churches and

- the Apostolic Church of the East.

The Society is a group of Catholics of the Latin and Eastern Churches, along with our friends in other traditions, promoting awareness and friendship in the Christian West for our fellow Christians of the East - through prayer and liturgy, conferences and lectures, pilgrimage and ecumenical encounters. +++

## **Serbian Orthodox Church will not Invite Pope for Anniversary Celebration**

**CWN - May 18, 2012**

The Serbian Orthodox Church has decided not to extend an invitation to Pope Benedict XVI to attend celebrations marking the 1700th anniversary of the Edict of Milan, which will take place in Nis in 2013.

The celebrations in Nis, the birthplace of the Emperor Constantine, had sparked some speculation that invitations might be extended to both Pope Benedict and Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill. However, a meeting of the Serbian Orthodox Synod concluded with an announcement that plans for the celebration were complete, and would not include an invitation to the Roman Pontiff.

According to the Serbian news agency Tanjug, the Orthodox bishops said that the Vatican had already announced that Pope Benedict would not attend the celebrations in Nis. That is inaccurate. In April the director of the Vatican press office, Father Federico Lombardi, said that the Pope had not yet made any travel plans at all for 2013. While saying that any talk of a papal visit to Nis would be speculative, the papal spokesman did not dismiss the possibility.+++

## **Church of East synod to discuss dialogue with Vatican**

Press Trust of India / Thrissur May 20, 2012 15:25 IST

The Synod of the Assyrian Church of the East (COE), one of earliest Christian congregations which has adherents in many countries, including India, will be held in Chicago, US, from May 24 to discuss topics like resumption of dialogue with the Catholic Church. Three prelates from India would attend the eight-day meet of 15 metropolitans of COE from different continents.

According to Mar Apream, Metropolitan of the church in India, besides himself bishops Mar Yuhannan and Mar Augin from the country would attend the synod.

The Assyrian Church, which flourished in West Asia and whose adherents scattered over different countries over the centuries, has now its headquarters in Chicago. Aprem, who is also the church's Patriarchal Delegate to India, told PTI here that the Synod would take up the key issue of resumption of Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and ACOE.

The dialogue between the Vatican and the COE began in 1985 with a view to ironing out the theological and liturgical differences between the two churches and a common "Christological Declaration" was signed by the head of the Assyrian Church, Mar Dinkha IV and the late Pope John Paul II in 1994.

Mar Apream, who is the Co-chairman of the Dialogue Committee, said the schism in the Church occurred at the council of phesus (Greece) in 431 AD, about 1600 years ago, centring mainly on the vexed issue of Theotokos (Mother of God or Bearer of God) and Christokos (mother of Christ or Bearer of Christ).

The Anaphora (Liturgy) of the Assyrian Church was approved by the Catholic Church, especially by the Syro-Malabar Church and the Chaldean catholic church, which was earlier opposed by a large sections of the Roman Catholic clergy on the ground that it 'chaldeanisation' of Catholic church.

Another area of difference between the two churches concerned the seven sacraments. The Vatican insists on acceptance of the seven sacraments like Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick (Extreme Unction), Holy Orders (Ordination of priests) and Matrimony, Aprem said.

But the COE recognised only five sacraments like ordination, Baptism, Oiling of Unction, Oblation (Eucharist) and Absolution (Penance), he said. Present pontiff of the Catholic Church, Pope Benedict, who headed the Congregation for Faith earlier, had shown keen interest in the ACOE- Vatican dialogue.

Aprem expressed the hope that prelates from other countries like Australia, Canada, USA, Iran, Iraq, Sweden and India would support resumption of the Church of East synod to discuss dialogue with Vatican

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## Orthodox Christians take steps toward unity

By Ann Rodgers / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

As Orthodox Christians celebrate Easter today, they have resurrected a movement toward unity in America, where they are divided into a hodgepodge of overlapping ethnic jurisdictions. On orders from patriarchs in Constantinople, Russia, Serbia and elsewhere, all Orthodox bishops in this country are working on a plan for one American Church.

The patriarchs say they want to approve such a plan at a yet-unscheduled Great and Holy Council of global Orthodoxy. The last such council was in A.D. 787. In 2010, 66 American bishops formed the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of North and Central America, to devise the plan.

"This has great potential," said Bishop Melchisedek of the Diocese of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania in the Orthodox Church in America, which is self-governing but has Russian roots. He cited existing differences on matters such as divorce or re-baptism of converts.

"The canon law of the church allows for only one bishop of a city, but here in Pittsburgh we have four. It's a situation that can create unnecessary conflict. Now we have the potential for the church to speak with one voice."

Skeptics say unity can be achieved immediately if the bishops really want it and that details could be worked out later.

The bishops assembly "is a façade," said Cal Oren, a layman from Baltimore.

"They want us to believe that they are working together and are really unified. If they are really unified, where is the real unity? Why do we have nine bishops of New York? We don't need more joint commissions on youth work. That just creates an excuse for never really unifying."

Orthodoxy is the Eastern wing of a Christian church that split into the Catholic and Orthodox churches in 1054. Its spiritual leader, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople in modern-day Turkey, is first

among equals. He has no authority to tell any other patriarch what to do.

This system of governance that they trace to New Testament times broke down in the New World. Immigrants started churches and then sought priests from the Old Country, giving rise to multiple, overlapping jurisdictions. The Russian Orthodox Church sent a bishop to serve all ethnic groups, but that ended after the communist Revolution of 1917.

In 1970 the Moscow Patriarchate set free its daughter diocese in the United States to become the Orthodox Church in America. But that wasn't recognized by the other patriarchs, who still govern dioceses here. There are now 13 Orthodox jurisdictions in North America, with 800,000 members. The Pittsburgh region is a stronghold, with perhaps 25,000 adherents.

In 1994, when all of the Orthodox bishops in the Americas gathered near Ligonier and called for unity, the ecumenical patriarch accused them of rebellion.

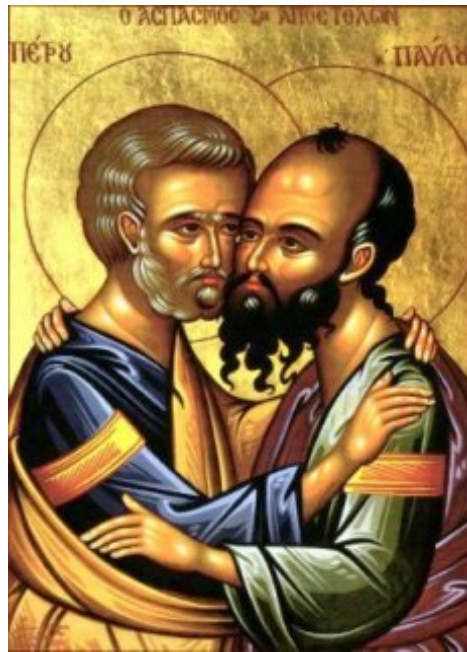
"When we started this work 20 years ago it was anathema to talk about the possibility of administrative unity. Now we're not only talking about it, but hopefully the hierarchs will be looking at what is necessary to accomplish it," said Charles Ajalat, a retired lawyer from Southern California, chairman of the pan-Orthodox social service agency FOCUS.

Planning for a Great Council to redraw boundaries started in 1961. Little progress was made until the Iron Curtain fell. That freed the largest churches from persecution, and sent new waves of emigrants to the West. In 2009 the patriarchs asked the Orthodox bishops in 12 regions of the globe to plan for unity. The American bishops have asked the patriarchs to let them break into separate groups for Canada, the United States and Mexico-Central America.

"The United States is the laboratory where this will work out, because we are the biggest and most developed and most complicated," said Andrew Walsh, a Greek Orthodox layman who is associate director of the Leonard Greenberg Center for the Study of Religion in Public Life at Trinity College in Hartford, Conn.

Both supporters and skeptics of the Bishops Assembly say the problem isn't merely bureaucratic, but spiritual. In 1872 the idea of one bishop planting an ethnic church in another bishop's territory was condemned as a nationalist heresy.

"These divisions are not authentic to our faith and should not be tolerated," said the Rev. Josiah Trenham, an Antiochian priest from (Continue next page)





Riverside, Calif., the media relations officer for the Assembly of Bishops. "If this doesn't work, nothing will," he said of the assembly.

"The mother churches are requiring us to come together. They said we'll give you an opportunity to draw the road map and present it to us, or we will do it for you. That's like lighting a fire under the clerical leadership in America. We don't want someone else solving our problems from elsewhere."

Skeptics believe the assembly will be undermined by rivalry between the overseas patriarchates, particularly Moscow and Constantinople. The latter, with 3,000 resident members, is so constricted by the Turkish government that it needs parishes elsewhere to survive. Moscow, the largest patriarchate with 164 million members, is asserting renewed strength since the fall of communism.

George Matsoukas, executive director of Orthodox Christian Laity, which advocates American unity, said he was once promised that the Great Council would convene by 2000. "Now, you read that they are in disagreement about convening it because they can't agree about who should convene it," he said.

The American assembly "is a step in the right direction, but they're not doing anything. It's mired in the affairs of the Old World."

Metropolitan Savas, the Greek Orthodox bishop of Pittsburgh, said the patriarchs aren't trying to delay the Great Council.

"There are several reasons why it has taken so long. The first is that we don't have an emperor to summon it.

That's how they were all called in the past" when there was still an emperor, he said. "There are questions such as does each bishop get one vote, or do we vote in blocks? Does the Moscow Patriarchate have one vote or 750? They've got something like 500 dioceses."

The Rev. Radu Bordeianu, associate professor of theology at Duquesne University and president of the Orthodox Theological Society in America, believes that Americans sometimes see overseas resistance where none exists. Father Bordeianu, a Romanian Orthodox priest who serves a Greek Orthodox parish, used to accept the axiom that churches overseas want to keep financial support from America.

But after talking to some bishops "I realized that the so-called mother churches are materially supporting the small jurisdictions in the United States," he said. "I was very surprised."

There are tensions between converts -- who have entered the priesthood in large numbers -- and ethnic Orthodox. There has been conflict in and between jurisdictions here. In 2010, the Antiochian diocesan bishops were demoted to auxiliaries stripped of most of their power. Thirty years after declaring the Orthodox Church in

America self-governing, the Russian Orthodox Church began planting parishes in the United States and reunited with the formerly schismatic Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia.

At the Assembly, "a lot of the work right now is simply getting to be comfortable with each other's presence," said Metropolitan Savas. It includes "three different churches that came out of the Russian experience but didn't acknowledge the legitimacy of one another. The fact that they are present and sitting around the same table and communicating is a major advance."

Committees are examining jurisdictional differences in matters from church government to liturgy. They commissioned a study that found they had less than one-third of the 3 million members they once claimed.

Although no one rejoiced, "this means that we might start planning for the real Orthodox Church, not the fantasy Orthodox Church," Mr. Walsh said.

Such work isn't a stalling tactic, Metropolitan Savas said. "Defining our task is important. What is it we want to achieve? How can we better demonstrate our unity of faith? Does it mean that we have to speak the same liturgical language?" he said.

Metropolitan Savas hopes the bishops will begin to form regional synods and work together.

"Right now we are on parallel tracks. We pretty much ignore one another. That has implications for church planting," he said.

Father Trenham says a united church would cut many overall administrative costs by a factor of 10, saving millions of dollars.

"We've done some things to try to collaborate, but it's nothing compared to what it would be if we were one church. This is an incalculable waste of resources that no business would ever tolerate," he said.

Unity is crucial to the church's ability to carry out Christ's mission in America, Mr. Ajalat said.

"Right now people see all of these jurisdictional divisions and they get confused. They think that all of them are separate churches, like Protestant denominations, but they're not," he said. "The Orthodox see themselves as one church. They are one church in doctrine and worship and episcopacy. It's this administrative problem that needs to be solved."+++

**Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, Head of the DECR, Russian Orthodox Church addressed the 50<sup>th</sup> International Eucharistic Congress**  
*The Eucharist: Communion with Christ and with one another 11 June 2012, Dublin*

Wednesday, May 23, 2012

## Cardinal waiting for Pan-Orthodox Council before ecumenical breakthrough

Kardinal Koch: Ökumenisches Warten auf ein gesamtorthodoxes Konzil – kipa/apic

A stumbling block in relations between the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches continues to be the Pope's primacy, Cardinal Kurt Koch said in an interview with the press agency Kipa in Einsiedeln in Switzerland. It is now necessary to wait for the Council before there are any further decisive ecumenical steps. - Cardinal Kurt Koch was staying on 20 May in Einsiedeln on the occasion of an Aid to the Church in Need pilgrimage .

In 2007 in Ravenna (in Italy), there was a meeting of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. On that occasion an agreement on the question of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome was near, Koch said.

For the first time separated churches stated in a common expert document that, according to the tradition of the church that at a universal level there was pre-eminence of a "Primus" as had the Bishop of Rome during the first millennium. - The document was entitled "Ecclesiological and canonical consequences of the sacramental nature of the Church; conciliarity and authority in the Church."

In the 46 points of comprehensive document, both sides agreed in Ravenna that Rome "took first place in the order of the undivided church of the first millennium and that therefore the Bishop of Rome was first among the patriarchs". He was first of the five major Sees of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem. However, what remained unclear was how this primacy should be exercised on a universal level, said the text.

There was "disagreement on the interpretation of historical documents from that time on the privileges of the Bishop of Rome as the Primus." The primacy at local, metropolitan and universal level is a practice firmly grounded in the canonical tradition of the Church said the joint statement. But "while the fact of primacy at the universal level of both East and West, is accepted, there are differences of understanding regarding the manner in which it is to be exercised and also in terms of its biblical and theological basis."

Rejected by the Moscow Patriarch

In March 2011, however, the Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill I declared, according to Cardinal Koch, that he would never approve the document of Ravenna. So there is now no other solution than waiting for the work of the future pan-Orthodox council whose results

would be important for the future of ecumenism, said Koch.

The preparatory work for the implementation of a pan-Orthodox council began half a century ago. A council would gather for the first time for over 1,100 years the 14 Eastern Orthodox Churches.

The Swiss Kurt Koch, former Bishop of the Diocese of Basel has been since 1 July 2010 President of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity at the Vatican. He followed the German Cardinal Walter Kasper. Pope Benedict XVI chose Kurt Koch not least because of his good knowledge of the Reformed churches.+++

### ADDRESS BY METROPOLITAN GENNADIOS TO THE 3RD CATHOLIC-ORTHODOX FORUM

#### "The Unity That We All Seek is a Gift From Above"

LISBON, JUNE 6, 2012 (Zenit.org).- Here is the translation of the address given by His Eminence Metropolitan Prof. Dr. Gennadios of Sassima, Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, to the 3rd European Catholic-Orthodox Forum.

\* \* \*

It is with great joy that the III. Forum of Dialogue between the Council of



European Bishops' Conferences of Roman Catholic Church (CCEE) and the Orthodox Churches in Europe is taking place these days in Lisbon, this unique and lovely historical city and capital of Portugal, where myriads of saints and martyrs confessed and expressed the Christian Faith and Witness of the undivided Church.

We gathered, Catholics and Orthodox, coming from various destinations of this old continent of Europe, under the gracious auspices of His Eminence, Cardinal José da Cruz Policarpo, Patriarch of Lisbon.

I have the particular honour and joy to convey to all of your Eminences, Excellencies, Graces, beloved Fathers and brothers in Christ, the paternal greetings and prayers of His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, wishing a successful and constructive meeting with positive outcomes for the benefit of our Churches and for all other Christians living in this continent.

The theme of this forum, particularly nowadays, is very crucial and touches all peoples' hearts and lives: *The economic crisis and poverty: challenges for Europe today*. Today, the present economic crisis is an unprecedented reality in the history of this continent, where many countries (Continue next page)

and societies are facing the tragic consequences of a financial and social poverty. Millions of peoples lose their jobs, unemployment is rapidly increasing, youth loses even their hopes and are dispersed looking towards an ambiguous and uncertain future. Many are making appeals and try to find refuge in our Churches, asking for help, moral assistance and spiritual encouragement to overcome difficulties. Prayer, faith and hope are the only "spiritual instruments" that we can offer as Churches to those in need, to those struggling to survive and striving for a better future, with dignity and respect to the sacredness and uniqueness of humankind.

The Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew as the first in rank spiritual leader among the other primates of the Orthodox communion, gives a significant attention to any "dialogue" held between the Christian Churches and in particular to the International Roman Catholic-Orthodox Theological dialogue, as well to this European Forum which with God's blessing has its third gathering. Beloved brothers and sisters, the unity that we all seek is a gift from above, which we must persistently pursue as well as patiently; it is not something that depends solely on us, but above all on God's judgment and *kairos*. Nevertheless, this sacred gift of unity is something that also demands of us radical conversion and re-orientation so that we may humbly return to our common roots in the Apostolic Church and the communion of saints, but also that we may entrust ourselves and submit to God's heavenly kingdom and authority.

Let us, then, together renew our commitment to dialogue, collaboration and unity as a road to reflection and renewal. And let our deliberation be a prayerful offering to God in our sincere desire that we "may be one" (John 17.21) in response to our Lord's command and will.+++

## **Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant followers gather to strengthen ties**



By Naomi Nix, Chicago Tribune reporter June 3, 2012  
About a dozen religious leaders gathered with

[Cardinal Francis George](#) on the steps of St. Hedwig Catholic Church on Sunday evening to pose for a picture that could symbolize the goal they had come to promote: Christian unity.

The clergy and about 150 congregants came to the Polish parish for Chicago's 12th annual ecumenical prayer service for Christian unity. It was organized by Ecumenism Metro Chicago, a coalition of Christian communities, in an effort to deepen relationships among members of varying Christian traditions.

"Jesus said if we are not one, the world will not believe," said George, who has previously talked about the need for the Roman Catholic Church to work with other denominations. "We have an obligation to be a united witness."

The challenges to unity among Christian faith traditions are their differing perspectives on religious doctrine and discipleship, George said. Questions of sexual morality and social justice also continue to divide Christians, he said.

Sunday's service was a continuation of the worldwide Week of Prayer for Christian Unity that usually takes place in January.

At St. Hedwig, about 100 people from Roman Catholic, Orthodox and mainline Protestant denominations gathered for a mixer in which they talked in small groups about what made their religious experiences different, their relationship with other Christian traditions and the necessity for of interfaith dialogue.

Denise Renken, 59, who is Catholic, said divisions among Christian denominations are fading.

"I have found the parishes are a little more welcoming now. Before, if someone new walked in, it was like you don't belong here," Renken said. "To me, the Roman Catholic faith is what I believe in, (but) I have no problem with someone believing in something else." John Sandors, 73, who is Greek Orthodox, said Christian unity doesn't have to come at the expense of pride in individual Christian traditions. "If you don't praise your own house, it will fall down," he said. "You should be proud of who you are."

Bishop Demetrios of Mokissos, who also is Greek Orthodox, gave the homily at the service. He said that while diversity is healthy for the Christian faith, Christians are called to love one another regardless of their differences. "This love for one another is often difficult," (Continue next page)

he said "(But) it's possible because God first loved us."

The bishop added that churches should allow God's "transformative" power to heal divisions among various Christian factions.

"If we are open to being moved by the spirit ... our lives with one another will change and change for the better." The Rev. Amos Oladipo, who is Methodist, said the fact that the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is celebrated the same week as Martin Luther King Jr. Day is fitting. "It reminds us to promote reconciliation among races as well as churches," he said.

Toward the end of the service, the attendees exchanged edible wafers as a symbolic gesture of unity. Then, the clergy in robes as colorful and as different as their religious traditions led the congregants out of the church. "This is a start. It's all of us working together toward unity," said Michael Terrien, who works for the [Archdiocese of Chicago](#) and helped organize the event. "That's what's happening now, and we can continue that."

## Christian Arabs trying to revive Aramaic, language of Jesus

Thursday, May 31, 2012 | by diaa hadid associated press  
**jish, israel** | Two villages in the Holy Land's tiny Christian community are teaching Aramaic in an ambitious effort to revive the language centuries after it all but disappeared from the Middle East.

The new focus on what was the dominant language in the region 2,000 years ago comes with a little help from modern technology: an Aramaic-speaking television channel from Sweden, of all places, where a vibrant immigrant community has kept the ancient tongue alive. In the Palestinian village of Beit Jala, an older generation of Aramaic speakers is trying to share the language with their grandchildren. Beit Jala lies next to Bethlehem, where the Christian Bible says Jesus was born.



And in the Arab Israeli village of Jish, nestled in the Galilean hills, elementary school children are now being instructed in Aramaic. The children belong mostly to the Maronite Christian community. Maronites still chant their liturgy in Aramaic but few understand the prayers.

"We want to speak the language that Jesus spoke," said Carla Hadad, a 10-year-old Jish girl.

During the lesson, a dozen children lisped out a Christian prayer in Aramaic. They learned the words for "elephant," "How are you?" and "mountain." Some children carefully drew sharp-angled Aramaic letters. Others fiddled with their pencil cases, which sported images of popular soccer teams.

The dialect taught in Jish and Beit Jala is "Syriac," which was spoken by their Christian forefathers and resembles the Galilean dialect that Jesus would have used, according to Steven Fassberg, an Aramaic expert at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

"They probably would have understood each other," Fassberg said.

In Jish, about 80 children in grades one through five study Aramaic as a voluntary subject for two hours a week. Israel's education ministry provided funds to add classes until the eighth grade, said principal Reem Khatieb-Zuabi.

Several Jish residents lobbied for Aramaic studies several years ago, said Khatieb-Zuabi, but the idea faced resistance: Jish's Muslims worried it was a covert attempt to entice their children to Christianity. Some Christians objected, saying the emphasis on their ancestral language was being used to strip them of their Arab identity. The issue is sensitive to many Arab

Muslims and Christians in Israel, who prefer to be identified by their ethnicity, not their faith.

Ultimately, Khatieb-Zuabi, a secular Muslim from an outside village, overruled them.

"This is our collective heritage and culture. We should celebrate and study it," the principal said.

And so the Jish Elementary School became the only Israeli public school (Continue next page)

teaching Aramaic, according to the education ministry.

Their efforts are mirrored in Beit Jala's Mar Afram school run by the Syrian Orthodox church and located just a few miles from Bethlehem's Manger Square. There, priests have taught the language to their 320 students for the past five years.

Some 360 families in the area descend from Aramaic-speaking refugees who in the 1920s fled the Tur Abdin region of what is now Turkey. Priest Butros Nimeh said elders still speak the language but that it vanished among younger generations. Nimeh said they hoped teaching the language would help the children appreciate their roots.

Aramaic was the vernacular of the area's residents, including its Jews, from 2,500 years ago until the sixth century of the common era, when Arabic, the language of conquering Muslims from the Arabian peninsula, became dominant, according to Fassberg. Modern Jews encounter Aramaic as the language of the Kaddish and much of the Talmud.

Linguistic islands survived through the centuries: Maronites clung to Aramaic liturgy and so did the Syrian Orthodox church. Kurdish Jews on the river island of Zakho, near the Iraq-Turkey border, spoke an Aramaic dialect called "Targum" until fleeing to Israel in the 1950s. Three Christian villages in Syria still speak an Aramaic dialect, Fassberg said.

The two schools teaching Aramaic found inspiration and assistance in an unlikely place: Sweden. There, Aramaic-speaking communities who descended from transplanted Middle Easterners publish a newspaper, "Bahro Suryoyo," pamphlets and children's books, and maintain a satellite television station, "Soryoyosat."

Officials estimate the Aramaic-speaking population at anywhere from 30,000 to 80,000 people.

For many Maronites and Syrian Orthodox Christians living in Israel, the television station was the first time they heard the language outside church in decades.+++

*"Let unity, the greatest good of all goods, be your preoccupation." - St. Ignatius of Antioch (Letter to St. Polycarp)*

## The Ark of the Wilderness prepares to share its treasures online - St Catherine's Mount Sinai enters the digital age

<http://areluctantsinner.blogspot.com/2012/05/ark-of-wilderness-prepares-to-share-its.html>



*St Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai  
(c) Berthold Werner; published under a creative commons licence  
(source: [Wikimedia Commons](#))*

One of the world's oldest Christian monasteries, commonly known as [St Catherine's Mount Sinai](#), is about to enter the twenty-first century by allowing scholars to read its digitalised manuscripts online.

More properly known as the Sacred and Imperial Monastery of the God-Trodden Mount of Sinai, its world-famous library is home to the second largest collection of early codices and manuscripts after the Vatican Library. St Catherine's has also been in continuous use as a monastery for seventeen centuries, making it as ancient, if not more so, as the equally famous Monastery of St Antony, founded by the father of monasticism himself.

According to James Purtill, writing for the [Egypt Independent](#), St Catherine's Texan-born Librarian, Father Justin Sinaites, is currently in the process of digitalising all the monastery's extremely important manuscripts, 'which up until now have been kept under lock and key.' These texts will soon be available on the internet for any scholar wishing to study them – quite a change from the days when it took academics, pilgrims, and relic hunters, over ten days to reach St Catherine's from Suez. These digitalised copies of the monastery's manuscripts will also be kept in a technically advanced and specially constructed library, which should be fully operational in about five years' time. (Cont. next pg.)

Purtill went on to write that the monastery's present Archbishop, called Damianos, who was elected 39 years ago, is fully supportive of Father Justin's efforts to use digital technology and the internet in furthering the community's 'ancient goals to study and preserve the manuscripts'. The article also mentioned Father Justin's observation that 'the monastery stuck deep in the Sinai mountains was once considered one of the safer places in the Holy Roman Empire. In internet terms, it was a backup server, and they sent their most valuable manuscripts there. The Emperor Justinian I sent 50 Greek families to defend and feed the monks. These families have become the modern Jabaliya Bedouin tribe.'

The Monastery of St Catherine's possesses copies of the *Achtiname*, an extremely ancient and historically important document in which Muhammad is claimed to have bestowed his protection upon the monastery. In a well known act of nineteenth century skulduggery, though, the monastic library's most prized possession, known as the *Codex Sinaiticus*, was taken – some would say 'stolen', though others contend that it was legitimately removed – by the buccaneer archaeologist and Biblical scholar, Konstantin von Tischendorf. (Some claim that von Tischendorf got the then librarian drunk and purchased the *Codex* for a bottle of Schnapps!)

This *Codex*, which is now fragmented and housed in four separate locations, including the British Library, is the world's oldest near complete copy of the Bible – dated to the fourth century. In the 1970s further ancient codices came to light under the floor of St Catherine's library, whilst a previously unseen fragment of the *Codex Sinaiticus* – containing text from the Book of Joshua – was discovered in the monastery's library during research carried out in 2009.

The great monastic complex of St Catherine's Mount Sinai is also home to some of the world's earliest and most beautiful works of Christian art. The best collection of early icons as well as liturgical objects, chalices and reliquaries, and church buildings are to be found in this ancient monastery. Some of St Catherine's rarest icons date to the fifth and sixth centuries – thankfully, the Byzantine Iconoclastic controversies of the eighth and ninth centuries never reached the wilderness of Sinai! Despite the fact that the monastery is Orthodox, it owns several works of art that are Western in style – probably created by Latin monks and Crusaders who were attached to St Catherine's prior to the Great Schism and during the Middle Ages.

Although many of the Sacred and Imperial Monastery of the God-Trodden Mount of Sinai's small community of desert monks shy away from having their world shattered by the intrusions of the internet, it seems that

Father Justin is really excited that this holy monastery will soon be opening a state of the art digitalised library. Whilst preserving its geographical isolation, St Catherine's, he said, would be "keeping these texts for the whole world" – a world that is now only a click of a mouse away. In fact, the Texan-born monk is so excited about the Monastery's new online and digital venture that he plans to blog about it! According to Father Justin, "These days everyone has a blog" – and [as I pointed out last year](#), blogging seems to be a particularly attractive means of communication amongst the desert fathers of today!

To read James Purtill's article, called "*In St Catherine, monastery seeks permanence through technology*", please visit the [Egypt Independent](#). To visit the official website for the Sacred and Imperial Monastery of the God-Trodden Mount of Sinai, please click [here](#).+++

## **Ecumenism in Korea: "Unity to bear witness to Christ in the world"**

by Joseph Yun Li-sun

Gwangju Archbishop Hyginus Kim Hee-joong opens the '12th Forum for Christian Unity in Korea' together with the National Council of Churches in Korea and the Orthodox Metropolis of Korea, "seeking and sharing our common heritage rather than focusing on our differences".



Seoul (AsiaNews) - The road of ecumenism in South Korea includes Christian unity, interreligious dialogue "based on the revealed truth of the Gospel," the integrity of creation, practical solidarity, and "the realisation of justice and peace," this according to Gwangju Archbishop Hyginus Kim Hee-joong. With this goal in mind, the prelate opened the '12<sup>th</sup> Forum for Christian Unity in Korea' organised in cooperation with the National Council of Churches in Korea and the Orthodox Metropolis of Korea.

The archbishop, who is also president of the Episcopal Committee for Promoting Christian Unity and Interreligious Dialogue, presented a study to the forum titled (Continue next page)

*Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct*, the result of collaboration between the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue (PCID), the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) and the World Council of Churches (WCC).

For Rev Lee Hyeoung-ki, professor emeritus in a Presbyterian college, "Christians and believers of neighbouring religions" in Korea must find a shared guideline for interreligious dialogue. "Christian unity, interreligious dialogue based on the revealed truth of the Gospel, the integrity of creation, practical solidarity, and the realisation of justice and peace" remain important goals, he added.

For his part, Archbishop Kim said, "When we Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox bear witness to Christ, seeking and sharing our common heritage rather than focusing on our differences, we shall propagate more strongly the Gospel in the world."+++

## **Bulgarian Relics of John the Baptist are Probably Authentic**

June 15, 2012 By [Thomas L. McDonald](#) from <http://www.patheos.com/>



First it's [vampire graves](#), and now the relics of John the Baptist: Bulgaria is just totally cornering cool archaeological news for the month of June. *Go Bulgaria!* It almost makes us want to forgive you for trying to kill Bl. John Paul the Great. Almost.

Two years ago, in an altar in the ruins of a 5th century monastery on Sveti Ivan Island the Black Sea, Bulgarian archaeologists found a small reliquary made of hardened volcanic ash. The Greek inscription on the reliquary included the name of John the Baptist and the date of his birth, June 24th. Scientists naturally dismissed the claims, because scientists all know that Catholic relics are completely fake. They read it ... somewhere. They don't know where. They'll get back to you on that one. (It's just like the "fact" that, if you put all the relics of the true cross together, you'd have enough wood to build Noah's Ark, which is just a plain old lie. You wouldn't even have enough wood to make a baseball bat.)

In any case, the pieces of bone they discovered—a tooth, a knuckle bone, and pieces of a skull, jaw, and arm—have been tested and, whaddayaknow, [they come from a 1st century guy who lived in the Middle East](#):

Many sites around the world claim to hold relics of the saint, including the Grand Mosque in Damascus which says it has his head. Countries around the Mediterranean claiming to have remains include Turkey, Greece, Italy and Egypt.

The right hand with which the prophet allegedly baptised Jesus in the River Jordan is also claimed to be held by several entities, including a Serbian Orthodox monastery in Montenegro.

"We were surprised when the radiocarbon dating produced this very early age," said Oxford Professor Tom Higham, who led the study.

"We had suspected that the bones may have been more recent than this, perhaps from the third or fourth centuries.

"The result from the metacarpal hand bone is clearly consistent with someone who lived in the early first century AD,"

He added: "Whether that person is John the Baptist is a question that we cannot yet definitely answer and probably never will."

Dr Hannes Schroeder, from the University of Copenhagen, added: "Of course, this does not prove that these were the remains of John the Baptist but nor does it refute that theory."

Thanks for that scrupulous bit of waffling, Hannes. I don't wanna be all non-scientific, but if I have bones in a box labelled "John the Baptist," and those bones were treated with reverence and date to the early first century, with DNA confirming a person of Middle Eastern origin, then, yeah: *those are probably authentic*. Here, I'll even make it sound all official: "I am 92.3% certain these are the real deal." Let the veneration continue!+++

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

## Spectacular find: original Greek sermons by Origen of Alexandria discovered

<http://www.lionelwindsor.net/2012/06/12/origen-sermons/>  
June 12, 2012 Lionel Church History, Greek, Psalms



[My translation of the [original](#)

[article from the Bavarian State Library](#), H/T [Ben Blackwell](#)]:

A spectacular discovery was recently made in the Bavarian State Library, in the process of cataloguing the Greek manuscripts from the collection of Johann Jakob Fuggers. While cataloguing a manuscript, Philologist Marina Molin Pradel identified numerous texts of sermons on the Psalms by Origen of Alexandria (AD 185 – 253/54), the most important theologian of the early Christian church before Augustine—sermons which until now had not been known in the original. The importance of this find cannot be overestimated. The attribution to Origen was confirmed, with the highest degree of certainty, by internationally recognised Origen expert Lorenzo Perrone from the University of Bologna.

Origen is regarded as the founder of the allegorical interpretation of Scripture. His works, which are numerous, yet are often no longer extant or only found in Latin translation, are fundamental for Christian thought. As a philosopher, theologian, philologist and preacher, Origen has made a deep impression on the intellectual history from late antiquity to today. His sermons and interpretations of the Psalms were, until now, only fragmentary and only extant in Latin translation. The inconspicuous-looking, extensive Greek manuscript, whose true contents have now been identified, comes from the 12th century.

“The find is extremely important—both in terms of its age and its extent. It will trigger lively discussion in scholarly and research circles, and will even allow new insights into the text of the Greek version of the Bible. All of the church Fathers had read Origen and received his work in depth. The discovery allows us now to deal

directly with hitherto unknown original texts”, said General Director Rolf Griebel.

The manuscript has already been digitised by the Bavarian State Library and is available to everyone on the Internet:

- [www.digitale-sammlungen.de](http://www.digitale-sammlungen.de) > Type in “Homiliae in psalmos”

The Bavarian State library possesses more than 650 Greek manuscripts, the largest collection in Germany. It has been, and still is, used intensively by scholars. Scholarly analysis takes place at the in-house Manuscript Analysis Centre, funded by the German Research Foundation. The find shows how necessary and important is this detailed and elaborate analysis. The project of cataloguing the Greek manuscripts in the Bavarian State Library celebrates its 20th Jubilee this year; it will last at least fifteen more years until all of the Greek manuscripts have been freshly recorded.+++

### Abbey of Montecassino Byzantine Door



<http://monastica.tumblr.com/page/2>

*The middle of the three doorways to the abbey church is closed by a pair of bronze doors (with silver damask lettering) made in Constantinople around 1066 and donated to the church. The doors have no narrative images, but are an inventory of what the monastery owned in the mid 1000s.+++*