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ON THE EVE OF THE HOLIDAY SEASON, ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW I DELIVERED A MAJOR ADDRESS BEFORE AN HIGHLY QUALIFIED AUDIENCE FROM THE ORTHODOX WORLD, DEFENDING THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE'S CHOICE FOR INTER-FAITH DIALOGUE. "We will insist on dialogue, despite the criticism that we suffer," he said. "There is, unfortunately, a certain religious fundamentalism, a tragic phenomenon, which can be found among Orthodox and Catholics, among Muslims and Jews. These are people who think they alone have the right to exist on earth, almost as if they alone have the right to rule on this our planet according to the Old Testament. And they say there is no room for anyone else, and are therefore opposed to any dialogue."

The Patriarch continued: "We are subject to criticism and attack because we maintain relations with the Pope (because we are strong supporters of the ecumenical dialogue between Orthodox and Catholics), with Islam and the Jewish world. But we will continue to move forward on our journey, according to the path laid by our predecessors, well aware of our actions, regardless of the criticisms of which we are object. These fringes, characterized by extreme positions, are everywhere. It is therefore natural that we suffer their criticisms, according to their ideological dictates, all of us who try to widen our horizons and have a theological view of things. Because we want the peaceful coexistence of all, based on the principles of charity and friendship."

Bartholomew I added: "This is the credo of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and I want to recall that in 1920 the regent of the Patriarchal see, along with the synod, addressed to Catholics and Protestants an encyclical, called 'The community of churches', along the lines of the newly created 'society of nations'. That encyclical is considered today by the World Council of Churches as the 'Charter' of the ecumenical movement of our time. This is a well known fact to insiders, and it is good that it

should be made as widely known to as many people as possible."

Then Bartholomew I went on to highlight: "With regard to interreligious dialogue, it is our belief and our creed. Because we need to know each other better, to work together while respecting the religious beliefs of others, their cultural identity, without oppression. This is the only way to live in peace. For this reason, the Patriarchate, in addition to having a dialogue with other Churches and Christian denominations, has established over the past 25 years a dialogue with Islam and Judaism. We have had several successful meetings. With the Muslims and Jews, our brothers, we do not discuss purely theological issues as it would be difficult. But we talk about social issues, social issues that effect all people, all humanity, all over the world."

Ecology has been one of the favorite themes of the Ecumenical Patriarchate since 1989. The Patriarch said: "Everything that we try to do, we do because we believe it is our duty, because the Church should be actively present in the contemporary world and be sensitive to people's problems, raise awareness and encourage them to love and protect nature like their own homes." He added: "The environment – nature -- is God's creation and does not belong only to us who live today in 2010. It belongs to all future generations."

Bishop Dositheos, spokesman for the Patriarchate, commented on the Patriarch's speech for AsiaNews, "a certain confusion prevails in some sectors of the Orthodox Christian world between the two terms, tradition and traditionalism. Tradition, to which those minorities often refer, is the ongoing search to interpret and understand the truth, while traditionalism, which is a characteristic of these minorities, is an intellectual sterility which often is identified with nationalism in the Orthodox world." – *Asia News*, Dec. 21.

ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW ATTENDED THE INAUGURATION OF THE POPULATION EXCHANGE MUSEUM OPENED IN ISTANBUL'S

CATALCA MUNICIPALITY by the Foundation of Lausanne Treaty Emigrants, the local municipality and the Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture Organization.

It was opened on Monday, 87 years after the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne on Jan. 30, 1923, for the population exchange between Greece and Turkey.

"We have shared the same pains," the Ecumenical Patriarch stated characteristically, stressing that "now the time has come for peace and calm between the two peoples."

On display in the museum are historical documents and objects that belonged to Turks who had to leave northern Greece. Memorabilia that belonged to Greeks who left their homes in Turkey will be added to the museum in January 2011.

The inauguration ceremony was also attended by two descendents of Greek refugees from Asia Minor, who came especially for the occasion from the city of Ptolemaida, northwest Greece, and a UN High Commissioner for Refugees representative. – A. Ambatzis for ANA, Dec. 22.

THE GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA, TOGETHER WITH THE PARISH OF ST. NICHOLAS, SERVED NOTICE on Dec. 6 to the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PA), the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, the Empire State Development Corporation and associated individuals of their intention to sue these agencies over their actions that have prevented the St. Nicholas church, destroyed at Ground Zero on 9/11, from being rebuilt. Under New York State law, a 60-day notice is required before certain claims can be filed against the PA.

The legal papers stated that "This claim arises out of the arrogance, bad faith, and fraudulent conduct of the Port Authority in preventing Saint Nicholas from rebuilding its church at Ground Zero after it was crushed by a falling tower in the attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001." It goes on to state that in March 2009, the PA "summarily disavowed a long-standing agreement" to rebuild the

church at 130 Liberty Street.

On the eve of the Feast of St. Nicholas, Dec. 5, Archbishop Demetrios of America led a vespers service near the site of St. Nicholas at Ground Zero. Despite the very cold weather, the very solemn and moving service was attended by nearly one thousand faithful from the greater New York metropolitan area who joined the St. Nicholas parishioners in a show of solidarity. They came together in worship and prayer to honor their revered Saint and demonstrate their resolve and conviction to rebuild the historic St. Nicholas church at Ground Zero.

Archbishop Demetrios, in his sermon to those gathered at the Ground Zero construction site, expressed this unwavering commitment of the Church in re-building St. Nicholas, and the faith, confidence, and trust that with the help of the Almighty God this awesome endeavor will be realized.

Below is the full text of the Statement of Archbishop Demetrios of America on the occasion of the Vespers Service:

“On the eve of the Feast of St. Nicholas, I take this opportunity to warmly greet and gratefully thank all those people who especially today have witnessed their devotion to St. Nicholas but also expressed in very tangible ways, despite the adversities, their wholehearted support and steadfast resolve for the rebuilding of the Church of St. Nicholas on this most hallowed ground.

Almost 10 years ago, our city and nation suffered a terrorist attack of unparalleled proportions. In addition to the tragic and horrific loss of almost 3,000 innocent victims, a number of whom were members of our own community, the world witnessed the unimaginable collapse of the Twin Towers. When the second Tower fell on the historic St. Nicholas Church, it destroyed almost every trace of the building, the only house of worship destroyed that day.

Opened in 1916 by Greek immigrants, the church not only served the spiritual needs of its parishioners but was also a sacred space in which people of all ethnic and religious backgrounds would stop, light a candle and spend a few moments in prayer and meditation.

The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and the parish of St. Nicholas remain firmly committed to the rebuilding of the church at Ground Zero, honoring the long-standing agreement with the LMDC and Port Authority. On this most solemn occasion, we once again affirm our commitment to rebuild here, in this sacred place, the Church of St. Nicholas which will have a greater scope and outreach than a simple parish house of worship. The re-

building of St. Nicholas on this site will be an appropriate memorial in New York City to the 3,000 innocent people of all Faiths who lost their lives that day and also serve as a center of peace and reconciliation.

Trusting in Almighty God, we are confident that we shall be successful in this awesome endeavor, and we call upon all people of goodwill and faith to join us in the rebuilding of this church which will stand as a dynamic testament to the healing power of love and a symbol of the lofty ideals of this great nation of ours. I convey my warmest paternal greetings and best wishes and invoke upon all of you the abundant blessings of the Almighty.”

+ Archbishop Demetrios of America.
Press Release, Greek Archdiocese, Dec. 15.

HUNDREDS OF FAITHFUL AND CLERGY ATTENDED THE ENTHRONEMENT OF ARCHBISHOP YURIJ AS THE SIXTH METROPOLITAN OF THE UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OF CANADA and as eparch of Winnipeg and the Central Eparchy on November 21 at Holy Trinity Ukrainian Orthodox Cathedral in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Attending the divine liturgy were: Archbishop Soterios, metropolitan of the Greek Orthodox Church in Canada and exarch of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople; Archbishop Lawrence Huculak, metropolitan of the Ukrainian Catholic Church of Canada; Archbishop Antony of the UOC of the U.S.A.; Bishop Alexander of the Antiochian Orthodox Church; Bishop Ilarion, western eparch of the UOC of Canada; Bishop Andriy of the UOC of Canada, bishop-elect of Saskatoon and the Central Eparchy; and Bishop Daniel, western eparch of the UOC of the U.S.A. At the conclusion of the divine liturgy, Metropolitan Soterios read a proclamation of enthronement on behalf of Patriarch Bartholomew I and the Holy and Sacred Synod of bishops. Metropolitan Yurij then received the articles of his new office to the refrains of “Axios – He is Worthy!”

A banquet followed the ceremony, during which, Paul Grod, national president of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, delivered greetings, personally congratulating Metropolitan Yurij. He also delivered greetings on behalf of the Ukrainian World Congress, and its president, Eugene Czolij. Mr. Grod thanked Archbishop Yurij for his leadership and support on a variety of important issues for the Ukrainian community in Canada, including urging the Canadian government to recognize the Holodomor as

a genocide against the Ukrainian people.

“We are very fortunate to have Archbishop Yurij with us as both a spiritual and a community leader. He has incredible intellect, humility and a tremendous sense of humor. I look forward to working closely with His Eminence for many years to come,” said Mr. Grod.

A native of Lachine, Quebec, Archbishop Yurij was born on May 26, 1951, to Petro and Anastasia Kalistchuk and graduated from St. Andrew’s College (the UOC of Canada’s seminary) in Winnipeg in 1973. In 1975 he studied music at McMaster University, graduating in 1980 with a bachelor’s of music in history and theory (magna cum laude), and in 1984 he earned a bachelor of education degree from the University of Toronto (magna cum laude). In 1985 he received a bachelor of theology degree from St. Andrew’s College and on July 16, 1988, Archbishop Yurij was ordained to the diaconate and the following day he was ordained to the priesthood.

He served as assistant pastor at Holy Trinity Cathedral in Winnipeg and worked as professor of church music at St. Andrew’s College. Archbishop Yurij was tonsured as a monastic on September 10, 1989, and on October 15, 1989, Hieromonk Yurij was elevated to the rank of archimandrite by Metropolitan Wasyly at Holy Trinity Cathedral in Winnipeg. Later that month, on October 22, 1989, Archimandrite Yurij was elevated to bishop, with the title bishop of Saskatoon and eparch of the Central Eparchy, with enthronement on December 17, 1989.

He was later installed as bishop of Toronto and the Eastern Eparchy, and in 2001 was elevated to the rank of archbishop. Archbishop Yurij was selected by the Sobor (General Council) of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada to be the Church’s sixth metropolitan on July 18, 2009. The Synod of Bishops of the Patriarchate of Constantinople ratified the Sobor’s decision on August 30, 2010. --*The Ukrainian Weekly*, Dec. 19.

THIRTY REPRESENTATIVES OF ORTHODOX INSTITUTIONS GATHERED IN MID-NOVEMBER 2010 AT THE ANDREI SAGUNA THEOLOGICAL FACULTY IN SIBIU, ROMANIA TO REFLECT ON THE TOPIC “The Ecumenical Movement in Theological Education and the Life of Orthodox Churches.” This discussion was moderated by Metropolitan Gennadios of Sassima (Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople).

According to a communiqué issued at the close of the consultation: “There is a

broad official agreement among the Orthodox churches concerning the general direction of Orthodox ecumenical engagement. However, at many levels of church life there is a wide diversity of opinion among the Orthodox concerning inter-Christian and interfaith issues. This demonstrates that there is as yet no unanimous Orthodox theological understanding of how to relate to other Christians and other faiths. Orthodox churches should use their theological faculties and seminaries as academic laboratories to generate discussion on acute issues debated in ecumenical circles. An attempt should be made to engage all Orthodox voices in this, especially those who may be most opposed to dialogue.”

The communiqué concludes with a recommendation that the World Council of Churches coordinate, in collaboration with Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Boston (USA), a meeting of representatives from a broad spectrum of Orthodox faculties to discuss the further development of an ecumenical ethos in theological education. – WCC Press Release, Dec. 14.

THE WEB SITE OF THE ASSEMBLY OF CANONICAL ORTHODOX BISHOPS OF NORTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA -- FORMERLY KNOWN AS THE EPISCOPAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA -- MADE ITS DEBUT on Friday, December 17, 2010. It may be accessed at <http://www.episcopalassembly.org>.

In addition to information on the Assembly's history, establishment, and current activities, the site provides comprehensive lists of all member Churches and hierarchs; a wealth of informative documents, statements, and addresses highlighting its inaugural meeting; directories of Assembly agencies, endorsed organizations, commissions, consultations, and committees; a soon-to-be expanded directory of parishes and institutions; and a wealth of other information and resources.

This Assembly is the result of the decision of the Fourth Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference, which met in Chambésy Switzerland in June 2009, after the extraordinary Synaxis of all the Heads of the Autocephalous Churches convened by His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. One of twelve assemblies that have been or will be convened around the world in regions where there is no singular Orthodox presence, the Assembly includes all active canonical bishops who reside and minister in North and Central America and will meet annually. The Assembly is the successor of the Standing

Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas [SCOBA]. – OCA Press Release, Dec. 18.

ON DECEMBER 24, 2010, HIS BEATITUDE WELCOMED TO THE PATRIARCHAL MANSION OF THE VICARIATE IN CAIRO ARCHIMANDRITE THEOLOGOS CHRYSANTHAKOPOULOS OF THE NEWLY-ESTABLISHED DIOCESE OF BRAZZAVILLE AND GABON to discuss issues regarding his missionary and pastoral work.

The Holy Diocese of Brazzaville and Gabon was established by Patriarchal and Synodal Decree on 7th October 2010 by the Holy Synod of the Hierarchs of the Patriarchate of Alexandria, following a proposal by His Beatitude. It includes in its jurisdiction the countries of Congo Brazzaville and Gabon.

In the capital of Congo Brazzaville the Orthodox Mission is continually developing. However, the main Orthodox centre is situated in the city of Pointe Noire, where Archimandrite Theologos, assisted by native priest Father Maximos Oumba and Father Dimitrios Otomba, is developing enormous spiritual missionary and humanistic activity.

In the city of Dolisie the churches built are those dedicated to St Irene and St Nicholas, as well as an orphanage and primary school. On 20 September 2007 His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, during his visit to Dolisie inaugurated the Orphanage, “Agios Efstathios.” In the town of Nkayi the work of building the Holy Church of the Transfiguration of the Savior has been completed.

In the neighboring country of Gabon, a missionary group from the Holy Metropolis of the Cameroon catechized and baptized in 2007 the first indigenous Orthodox Christians in the town of Libreville, organized the first Orthodox Community and appointed the first parish Priest, Father Victor Etendi Lissom.

In both countries, which make up the Holy Diocese of Brazzaville and Gabon, there are indigenous communities of Orthodox Christians, Greeks and Lebanese. – Press Release, Patriarchate of Alexandria, Dec. 27.

HIS BEATITUDE PATRIARCH THEOPHILOS III OF JERUSALEM DELIVERED THIS SPEECH BEFORE THE PRESIDENT OF ISRAEL FOR THE NEW YEAR 2011 on December 29:

Mr President,
Honorable Ministers,

Members of Parliament,
Distinguished Guests,

“Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive in the womb, and shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Emmanuel.” (Isaiah 7:14)

We are highly appreciative of what is a traditional gathering in which we share the Season's cheerfulness, in particular the Christmas spirit, and impart our messages of hope. Events and gatherings such as this are of great significance both for celebrating the common bonds of our humanity, and for reminding ourselves of those fundamental moral values that are essential to our common life. Humanity today is confronted and confused on every side with dark forces of disrespect and even humiliation. And unfortunately much of this is being done in the pretence of religious allegiance and in the name of Almighty God.

As we are here today in a clear expression and manifestation of inter-religious and inter-cultural understanding, presence and symbiosis, it should be acknowledged that any form of polarization -- political, social or ideological -- has increasingly posed a serious challenge to our humble efforts and our sincere intentions.

We are thankful to the Authorities' efforts in facilitating the access for pilgrims and worshipers that has enhanced a great number of Christian pilgrims from around the world. We commend them to continue this holy and important provision; and allow us to say: “more can always be done” on the local and regional frame. Also we acknowledge the many positive steps that the State of Israel has taken to evaluate our concerns, and we stress the need for the continuation of progress on:

* Continued free movement of the faithful;

* Availability of entry visas for clerics; and

* Honoring the privileges of Tax exemption sanctioned by the sacred history as well as by the historic standing of the “Ownership of Church Property.”

The ineffective endeavors to attaining peace should not be disregarded this festive season. This should be a reminder amidst our joyful celebrations that God's will is loud and clear for both the political and religious leadership to persevere in our commitment to reaching reconciliation and peace.

It is our mission, as servants of the Lord and thus of our fellow man, to relentlessly enhance our efforts for improving the living and socio-economic conditions which people of the Holy Land are passing

through and to alleviating the suffering of all affected. We are confronted with challenges and raised concerns for our communities over peaceful coexistence and we feel the urgency to address this, diffuse it and channel the positive outcome to achieving peace.

We are worried about the rising negative sentiments fuelled by extremists, and emphasize that we consider all humans to be equal to one another. A perception substantiated in the monotheistic faiths and upheld by the many decent citizens who also feel threatened by the moral decline witnessed today.

Christian institutions and Leadership, in the Holy land, have committed themselves by employing their blessings and resources in constituting peace and reconciliation in the region; for we firmly believe that this enjoins one of the divine commandments of our faith which solidifies our existence and determines our mission.

Our fraternal noble wishes for this happy occasion on the New Year to all Jews, Christians and Muslims, who persistently pursued peace during times of great turmoil, as they set a role model for all those who are inspired by the true and historic prophetic message of the incarnation of the divine logos.

As the custodians and servants of the Holy Places that bare testimony to the sacred history of redemption and salvation of human kind, we time and again commit ourselves to promoting peace and invite every human being to "soul searching"; in order to recognize the other's entitlement to peace, respect and dignity; and we should always remember to behave in the same way as we would like people to behave towards us. For it is written: "... whatever you want man to do to you do also to them for this is the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 7:12)

Your Excellency, we express our sincere thanks to you for this cordial invitation and for your gracious hospitality. We pray to God for his special blessing upon the approaching New Year: may the Divine spirit of this Festive Season warm our hearts, enlighten our minds, and fulfill the lives of all the citizens of the State of Israel. Happy New Year and Hanoucha Samech.

For, as prophet Isaiah says: "... unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. His name will be called the Angel of Great Counsel, for I shall bring peace upon the rulers, peace and health by Him. Great shall be His government, and of His peace there is no end..." (Isaiah 9:6&7). – Jerusalem Patriarchate website, Dec. 29.

THE PRIMATE OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH MADE A SPECIAL STATEMENT TO THE MASS MEDIA ON THE RIOTING ON MANEZH SQUARE, the press office of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia reports. The text is given below:

"It seems to me that the events on Manezh Square have thrust three problems into the spotlight. I shall begin with the simple one, and conclude with the most complicated.

The first is hooliganism, when a person cannot restrain his emotions, starts to destroy everything around him, and is ready for a fight. This problem should be dealt with as prescribed and order should be imposed. If people do not understand words, the upper hand must be used.

The second and a more complicated problem that has become apparent is a political provocation on Manezh Square along with hooliganism. There are certain forces in our society that have an interest in destabilizing the situation. These forces can enhance their activity towards the 2012 election. Inter-ethnic relations are a godsend for these forces. During the Cold War many people who stood in opposition to the Soviet Union used to say that multinationality was its weak spot and, if pressure is put on this spot, the country will be destroyed. This is what happened. There are many people today who want to touch this Achilles' heel to destabilize and wreck Russia using various excuses.

The political provocation carried out on Manezh Square is a simple fact that demands considerate and serious attitude towards it on the part of the authorities, including law enforcement bodies. We should not allow the country's return to the chaos of the early 1990s. We should not allow the destabilization of our political system and public life. Many people may not remember the dreadful years that our middle-aged and senior citizens lived through. We were willing to devote anything to stabilize the situation, to stop the disintegration of the country and the collapse of social relations! How happy we were to see the signs of political stabilization in the late 1990s! It would seem that today we have had too much of it and are ready to wreck the country!

I appeal to all those who hear me. Political stabilization in Russia is a precondition for changing our life for the better. We shall not have any economic benefits if we wreck our social life.

And now the most important thing. Interethnic relations are very complicated. World religions have made a great contri-

tribution to the life of peace of people belonging to these religions. I would like to mention a particular contribution of the Russian Orthodox Church to the preservation of interethnic peace both in the Russian Empire and in present-day Russia. The Church has always nurtured the spirit of peace and the ability to share grief with our neighbors irrespective of their religious belief. It was the nurturing of the spirit of peace that has brought about the lack of interreligious and interethnic wars in Russia.

What is happening today? Radicalisms are clashing. Interethnic relations are communicating vessels. One cannot point at the one, while neglecting the other. The emergence of radicalism in the ethnically united groups and, the more so, in the criminal radical ethnic groups provokes a radical response of the majority. Who is suffering? Ordinary people. When I saw the wounded innocent people who were beaten only because their faces are of another color and their countenance is different, while knowing that they are law-abiding and good people, I felt bitter and ashamed. At the same time one understands that they were victims of the ethnic radical groups existing in diaspora and provoking – I repeat – the disruption of interethnic peace and peace among different nationalities.

Therefore, the struggle against radicalism is the way along which we should go to bring interethnic relations out of their present dangerous state.

It is necessary to create a gap between radical groups and law-abiding people. It is necessary to establish intolerable conditions for all radical groups, both among ethnic minorities and majority population. This task requires the efforts of the authorities, public organizations, the Russian Orthodox Church and the followers of other religions. We should work together to lower the degree of radicalism and to prevent the destruction of interreligious and interethnic peace thanks to which Russia exists as a great state. Any provocation of ethnic discord challenges the very existence of our multinational and great homeland." – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, Dec. 14.

ON 20 DECEMBER 2010, METROPOLITAN HILARION OF VOLOKOLAMSK, CHAIRMAN OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE'S DEPARTMENT FOR EXTERNAL CHURCH RELATIONS AND RECTOR OF THE SS CYRIL AND METHODIUS POSTGRADUATE AND DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH VISITED THE STATE ARCHIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION and met with its director S. Mironenko.

Director Mironenko told the guests the story of the State Archive which was opened in 1920 and reconstituted by Boris Yeltsin's decree in April 1992. In December 2010, there took place an exchange of microfilm copies of some archive materials between the Holy Trinity theological seminary in Jordanville and the State Archive of the Russian Federation. Thus, the researchers in Russia and abroad have gained access to the rare archive materials.

In addition to keeping the archive materials, the Archives' leadership makes documents belonging to the national heritage accessible to the researchers. Hundreds of thousands of documents have been declassified during the last eighteen years, and reference system containing over a half of the archive inventories has been established.

Metropolitan Hilarion was shown some unique documents, for instance, a lot by which Metropolitan Tikhon of Moscow was elected Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia at the All-Russian Local Council in 1917. Metropolitan Hilarion also saw the diaries of the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna and Emperor Nicholas II, as well as the Act of Abdication of the last Russian emperor.

In conclusion of the meeting, the DECR chairman presented Mt. Mironenko with an icon of the Most Holy Mother of God and his book "Disputes over the Name of God. Archive documents of 1912-38" compiled by Metropolitan (then bishop) Hilarion in 2007. The book includes over 300 documents from the Russian State Historical Archive, the State Archive of the Stavropol region, and the archive of the Department for External Church Relations. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, Dec. 21.

ON 22 DECEMBER 2010, HIS HOLINESS PATRIARCH KIRILL OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA CHAIRED AN ANNUAL MEETING OF THE MOSCOW DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY THAT TOOK PLACE IN THE HALL OF CHURCH COUNCILS OF CHRIST THE SAVIOR CATHEDRAL.

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church presented a report, a section of which was about the activities of Patriarch as the ruling bishop of Moscow in 2010.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill also gave some statistics on church life in Moscow.

The total number of churches and chapels is 837. Yet, regular divine services are celebrated only in 271 of them, thus making the capital city to occupy the last place among the regions of the Russian Federa-

tion in ratio of the number of churches to the number of the ethnic Orthodox residents. Divine services have not been resumed in 39 Moscow churches; 19 churches have not been transferred to the Church; 90 churches and chapels are under construction.

According to His Holiness, these numbers vividly show the necessity to build new churches in Moscow, in dormitory suburbs in particular.

1720 clergymen serve under Patriarchal omophorion, including 1150 in Moscow. They are 19 bishops, 860 presbyters, and 271 deacons.

397 priests and 173 deacons serve in the stavropegic monasteries and metochia; 12 clergymen serve abroad, 48 are supernumerary, and 32 are suspended.

The Moscow Theological Academy and Seminary, the Sretenskaya, Perevinskaya and Nikolo-Ugreshskaya seminaries, and St. Tikhon's Orthodox Humanitarian University train clergymen and other church workers to serve in Moscow.

There are 226 Sunday schools, in which 10,738 children and 5,738 adults are studying.

Three clerics from other dioceses have joined Moscow clergy, while one was transferred to another diocese, one was suspended, and six clergymen died. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, Dec. 22.

ON 24 DECEMBER 2010, HIS HOLINESS PATRIARCH KIRILL OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA CHAIRED THE SESSION OF THE HOLY SYNOD OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH held at the Patriarch's working residence, Chisty side street.

The Holy Synod took certain decisions on the life of the Church, relations between the Church and society, and external activities of the Russian Orthodox Church.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia presented a report on his visit to Kiev timed to the 75th birthday of His Beatitude Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev and All Ukraine. Among those taking part in the celebration were Metropolitan Christopher of the Czech Lands and Slovakia, and representatives of other Local Orthodox Churches. His Holiness met with the Ukrainian President Viktor F. Yanukovich. Members of the Holy Synod thanked the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church for his visit to Kiev, and Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev and All Ukraine for his noble ministry he performs with dignity and honour. They offered up prayers to the Lord for helping Metropolitan Vladimir in his archpastoral labors for many years.

The Synod underscored the importance of the address delivered by the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church at the Fourth Assembly of the Russian World for preserving spiritual and cultural unity of fraternal nations whose common history has begun when the Old Russian state was established with its capital in Kiev. Members of the Synod expressed their wish to develop cooperation with the governmental and public organizations of the Russian World in spiritual support of the believers belonging to the Russian Orthodox Church and living beyond the borders of the Moscow Patriarchate's canonical territory.

The work of the Intercouncil Presence of the Russian Orthodox Church in 2010 was approved. The participants in the session endorsed the proposal of the Intercouncil Presence's Presidium to include in the Presidium ex officio Bishop Irinarkh of Krasnogorsk, chairman of the Synodal Department for Prison Ministry; Bishop Ignaty of Bronnitsy, chairman of the Synodal Department for Youth Affairs; and Bishop Kirill of Pavlovsky Posad, chairman of the Synodal Committee for Relations with the Cossacks.

The Holy Synod approved the work of the Sixth International Scholarly Conference of the Russian Orthodox Church on "Life in Christ: Christian Morality, Church Ascetic Traditions, and Challenges of Modern Age" held on 15-18 November 2010 and noted the usefulness of inviting Orthodox theologians from other Local Churches to theological forums as well as the necessity to develop inter-Orthodox relations in the field of church science and theology.

The Synod resolved to release Metropolitan Chrysostom of Vilnius and Lithuania from his duties as head of the diocese of Lithuania and to retire him in compliance with his request and to thank him for his long archpastoral work in many dioceses of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The Holy Synod appointed Archbishop Innokentiy of Korsun to rule the diocese of Vilnius and Lithuania and thanked him for his archpastoral care for the parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church in the countries of Western Europe.

Bishop Nestor of Caffa, a vicar of the Korsun diocese, was appointed Bishop of Korsun and charged with archpastoral care for the parishes in Italy.

The Holy Synod considered a vacancy in the Arkhangelsk diocese opened due to the demise of Bishop Tikhon of Arkhangelsk and Kholmogory and resolved to appoint Bishop Daniel of Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk and the Kuril Island Bishop of Arkhangelsk and Kholmogory.

Archimandrite Tikhon (Dorovskikh), a cleric of the Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk diocese, was nominated Bishop of Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk and the Kuril Islands.

As to the newly established Karaganda diocese, the Holy Synod resolved to nominate archpriest Aleksandr Osokin, a cleric of the Astana diocese, Bishop of Karaganda and Shakhtinsk.

In following up the petitions from the clergymen of the Ungeni-Nisporeni diocese and the report presented by Metropolitan Vladimir of Kishinev and Moldova, the Holy Synod resolved to appoint Bishop Petr of Hincesti, a vicar of the Kishinev metropolia, Bishop of Ungeni and Nisporeni; to take the parishes of the Hincesti district of the Republic of Moldova from the Cahul-Comrat diocese and to include them into the Ungeni-Nisporeni diocese.

The Holy Synod considered the nomination of a bishop to the Edineț-Briceni diocese of the Orthodox Church in Moldova and resolved to nominate archimandrite Nikodim (Vulpe), dean of the Orkhei deanery of the Kishinev metropolia Bishop of Edineț-Briceni.

Members of the Holy Synod resolved to appoint a delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church to the meeting of the Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission to take place in Chambesy, Switzerland, on 21-27 February 2011. The delegation will include Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations (DECRA) – head of the delegation; Archbishop Mark of Berlin, Germany and Great Britain – member of the delegation; and archpriest Nikolai Balashov, DECRA deputy chairman – consultant of the delegation.

Having heard the report of Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk on the work of the Commission on Old Believer Parishes and Relations with the Old Rite done from 2 October 2009 to 19 November 2010, members of the Holy Synod approved of the report.

The DECRA chairman presented a report on the visit of the Moscow Patriarchate's delegation to Georgia to celebrate the 1700th anniversary of the building of the first church on the burial place of the Tunic of the Lord and the 1000th anniversary of the Svetitskhoveli Cathedral. The Divine Liturgy was celebrated by His Holiness and Beatitude Iliya II, Catholicos and Patriarch of All Georgia; His Beatitude Chrysostomos, Archbishop of New Justiniana and All Cyprus; and His Beatitude Metropolitan Christopher of the Czech Lands and Slovakia. Concelebrating were representatives of the Local Orthodox

Churches, and bishops and clerics of the Georgian Orthodox Church. The Primate of the Georgian Orthodox Church met several times with Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's delegation.

The Holy Synod expressed satisfaction with the participation of the Moscow Patriarchate's representatives in the celebration and thanked His Holiness and Beatitude Iliya I, Catholicos and Patriarch of All Georgia for attention and hospitality extended to the delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Having heard the report on the participation of the delegation headed by the DECRA chairman Metropolitan Hilarion in the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the canonization of Nicholas of Japan, the granting of the autonomous status to the Orthodox Church of Japan by the Russian Orthodox Church, and the establishment of the Metochion of the Russian Orthodox Church in Tokyo, the Holy Synod thanked His Eminence Daniel, Archbishop of Tokyo and Metropolitan of All Japan, for attention and hospitality accorded to the delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk reported on the visit to the Holy Mount Athos during which the delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church took part in the celebration of the 95th birthday of archimandrite Jeremiah (Alyokhin), hegumen of the Russian St. Panteleimon's Monastery, visited some Athonite monastery and met with the Protos of the Holy Mountain, monk Peter.

The Holy Synod expressed appreciation for the participation of the delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church in the 7th meeting of the Joint Russian-Iranian Commission for Orthodoxy-Islam Dialogue and considered it useful to continue the dialogue between the Department for External Church Relations and the Muslim community in Iran.

Having heard the report by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk on the participation of the delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church in the workshop on "Promoting Human Rights through a Better Understanding of Traditional Values of Humankind" held in Geneva on 4 October 2010, the Holy Synod members noted the expedience of the DECRA's promotion of the position of the Church expressed in the "Basic Teaching of the Russian Orthodox Church on Human Dignity, Freedom and Rights" at the international organizations, for instance, the United Nations Human Rights Council.

It was resolved to appoint secretary of

the Liaison Office of the Moscow Patriarchate at the World Council of Churches, archpriest Mikhail Gundyaev, representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church at the World Council of Churches and other international organizations in Geneva and charge him with maintaining contacts with the United Nations Human Rights Council.

The Holy Synod considered the results of the seminar on "The Role of Religious Communities in the Management of World Heritage Properties" held in Kiev on 2-5 November and resolved to continue the work of the Church aimed at establishing the international legal grounds for extension of the religious communities' participation in managing these properties.

Having heard the report of Metropolitan Hilarion on the working plan of the Department for External Church Relations for 2011, the participants in the session approved of the plan of external activities of the Russian Orthodox Church for the next year. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, Dec. 25.

HOLY SYNOD OF BISHOPS OF THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH AT THE MEETING HELD ON 16TH OF DECEMBER THIS YEAR ADDRESSED THE CHURCH AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC regarding the anti-church conduct of the former Bishop of Raška and Prizren, now monk Artemije, with the following statement:

1. As is known the Holy Assembly of Bishops at its May session this year, on the basis of a written document related to the proved canonical delicts, permanently and irrevocably dismissed Bishop Artemije from the duty of the Bishop of Raška and Prizren, which he himself accepted and agreed to live at Sisatovac monastery upon his release. Regrettably, from September and October this year, Bishop Artemije in his letters to the Holy Synod expressed his "regret" for accepting the synodal decision, claiming, contrary to common sense, that he was "a lifelong Bishop of Raška and Prizren." This was a reason for the Holy Synod to place him under censure until the next regular session of this year's Holy Assembly of Bishops in November.

Instead of asking from the Assembly the forgiveness for his delicts and violations of the canonical order of the Church, so that his censure could be lifted, Bishop Artemije in a violent manner, with a group of his followers, who had also been censured after ecclesiastical court proceedings, tried to usurp the monasteries and entire Raška and Prizren Diocese, beginning his lawless act by uncanonical and unconstitutional serving of the Liturgy in the monastery of Duboki

potok, though still under a censure. In addition, using a counterfeit seal, he began to issue anti-canonical decisions in the Diocese of Raška and Prizren.

All this was happening while the Holy Assembly was in session, so the Bishops, with deep regret, were forced to deprive the former Bishop of Raška and Prizren Bishop Artemije of his episcopal rank and return him to the order of a monk. The unlawful Liturgy and participation in it, as well as other, additional reasons also contributed to the decision of the Ecclesiastical Court of the Diocese of Raška and Prizren to laicize seventeen hierodeacons and hieromonks, the followers of Artemije. Instead of soberness and repentance, monk Artemije and his laicized followers continued to "serve the Liturgy" in the usurped church of Saint John the Baptist (the Diocese of Žiča), which they turned into "a monastery," thus adding iniquity to iniquity.

2. These were the reasons why the Holy Synod was obliged to inform the public that such conduct by the former Bishop of Raška and Prizren not only put himself on the path towards schism but literally created his own sect, the sect of "Artemians," the first of its kind in the history of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Without losing hope and calling him to repentance, the Holy Synod responsibly brings to the attention of all the clergy and faithful people of St. Sava's Church that "the Liturgy" of former bishop Artemije and his supporters, who have all been dismissed from the clerical state, is not the Holy Liturgy, their "communion" is not the sacred Communion, their "mysteries" are not the holy mysteries of the Church of God, and that all they do serves the spiritual ruin to them and those who follow them and participate in their gatherings and worship. Claiming to serve God, they in fact under the guise of defense of Orthodoxy work on destruction of the unity of the Church of Christ, separating themselves in a sectarian way from her living and salvific Community and depriving themselves and others of eternal salvation. Therefore, all those who still follow them naively should think again whom and what they are following, separating themselves from the Church of Christ, and bringing on themselves and their children the sectarian curse. – Press Release, Serbian Patriarchate, Dec. 20.

THE NATIONAL DAY OF ROMANIA WAS MARKED ON DECEMBER 1 AT THE PATRIARCHAL CATHEDRAL FIRST OF ALL DURING THE DIVINE LITURGY WHEN THE AUTHORS OF THE UNION OF 1 DECEMBER 1918 WERE REMEMBERED,

among whom an outstanding place is held by Miron Cristea, the first Patriarch of Romania, whose grave is in the Patriarchal Cathedral.

At 12.00 o'clock, His Beatitude Daniel, Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church celebrated the Te Deum service in the Patriarchal Cathedral. Hundreds of faithful, and tens of children and young people, among whom a group of students from "Jean Monet" High School of Ploiesti were also present in the Cathedral, where they received the blessing of the Primate of the Romanian Orthodox Church and small icons of the Holy Trinity, the symbol of unity.

During the Te Deum, His Beatitude delivered a sermon entitled, "The Church Blessed and Cultivated the Gift of National Unity and Freedom."

At the end of the Te Deum service, His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel showed that the unity of the Holy Trinity is the symbol the people of our Church used for National Unity throughout the history: "The Holy Trinity has always been, for all those who fought for the union of the principalities and the great union of all the Romanian provinces into a unitary state, a symbol of the union and unity of the three Romanian provinces: Wallachia, Moldova and Transylvania. The most important Cathedrals of Transylvania are dedicated to the "Holy Trinity." The Cathedrals of Sibiu, Alba Iulia, Blaj and the new Cathedral of Arad, are all dedicated to the "Holy Trinity," because the Holy Trinity helps us search for, keep and consolidate our national unity.

His Beatitude has also shown the fact that the great Union of Alba Iulia was considered a joy of the Resurrection too: "We learned from the unity of the Holy Trinity that the blessed life is the life in communion, not in division and isolation. The true freedom is freedom for communion. Yet, the Great Union of Alba Iulia was considered a joy of the Resurrection too. A newspaper of Lugoj titled the event of the union of Alba Iulia on the first page with the words: "We have been resurrected!" So, unity is resurrection, while division is death. When the great union was achieved, the joy was as big as that on the Easter day. Those who asked in 1848: "We want to unite with the country" were the first who expressed the desire of unity through a great joy, so that those from Alba Iulia lived this union. After the Divine Liturgy and Te Deum, they went out in the fields to affirm, just like in a Liturgy, the national unity and lived the joy of the Resurrection." – Press Release, Romanian Patriarchate, Dec. 1.

ON 2 DECEMBER 2010, THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION FOR STATUTES AND REGULATIONS OF THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH MET IN A WORKING SESSION at the Patriarchal Residence. The meeting was held in the synodal room and chaired by His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel. To start the meeting, the members of the Commission held a solemn moment and sang "Eternal Remembrance," at the anniversary of 12 years since the passing away of Father Cleopa, as *Trinitas TV* informs us.

During the meeting, the commission analyzed the amendments of the "Statutes for the Organization and Functioning of the Romanian Orthodox Church" that the Metropolitan synods proposed.

"The metropolitan synods expressed the ecclesiastic conscience regarding the importance and necessity of these Statutes and, to a great extent, the canonical character of the proposals formulated. We must take into account our obligation to be in accordance and full unity with the entire Orthodoxy, with all the sister Orthodox Churches, a fact mentioned just at the beginning of the Statutes. So, the Orthodox Church is defined as autocephalous, but in communion with the other Orthodox Churches and in dogmatic, liturgical and canonical unity with the universal Orthodoxy," also said His Beatitude.

The refined text of the amendments will be submitted to the Holy Synod for debate. – Press Release, Romanian Patriarchate, Dec. 2.

ON 14 DECEMBER 2010, HIS BEATITUDE DANIEL, PATRIARCH OF THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH, RECEIVED IN AN INTRODUCTORY VISIT HIS EXCELLENCY MR. PHILIPPE BEAULNE, AMBASSADOR OF CANADA IN BUCHAREST.

The Ambassador thanked the Patriarch for receiving him and underlined the contribution of the Romanian community to the development of Canadian society during more than a century of permanent presence in this country in the North American continent. In this sense, the Ambassador of Canada emphasized the role of the Romanian Orthodox priests in keeping and promoting the identity of faith and nation and in the integration of the Romanians in Canadian society.

His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel appreciated the support that the Canadian authorities have given to the Romanian community and pointed out the Canadian multicultural example of respect and encouragement of the ethnic, linguistic, cultural

and spiritual aspects of those settled in Canadian territory.

The Canadian Ambassador was very interested in the situation of the Romanian Orthodox Church during the communist regime and in her activity after 1990.

The Patriarch of Romania presented the difficult context in which the Romanian Orthodox Church had to carry out her mission during almost 50 years of communism in Romania and emphasized various aspects of the pastoral-missionary, social-charitable and cultural-educational activity of the Romanian Patriarchate during the last twenty years. His Beatitude mentioned among the priorities of the Romanian Patriarchate the intensification of social work and religious service on behalf of the Romanian Orthodox communities abroad.

In this context, His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel underlined the need to set up an eparchy for the large Romanian Orthodox community in Canada. – Press Release, Romanian Patriarchate, Dec. 14.

ON 15 DECEMBER 2010, HIS BEATITUDE DANIEL, PATRIARCH OF THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH RECEIVED IN AN AUDIENCE, HIS EXCELLENCY MR. BOGDAN TĂTARU CAZABAN, ROMANIAN AMBASSADOR TO THE VATICAN.

The Ambassador conveyed a message of greetings from His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI and described the present state of diplomatic relations between Romania and the Vatican.

During the meeting, the Romanian Ambassador at the Holy See briefly informed His Beatitude of the process of recognition of the statutes of the Romanian Orthodox Diocese of Italy by the Italian authorities.

The Patriarch of Romania mentioned that the Romanian Patriarchate considers it was natural to recognize the statutes of the Romanian Orthodox Diocese of Italy, taking into account both the large number of Romanian Orthodox faithful settled in Italy, and the support that the Romanian State gave to the Catholic Churches of Romania.

As for a possible visit of Pope Benedict XVI to Romania, His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel emphasized the fact that such a visit should be thoroughly prepared in order to be a common witness for defending and promoting the Christian values in contemporary Europe. In this sense, the Romanian Patriarchate and the Roman Catholic Church are to estimate the best time for the Pope's visit to Romania. Because the Pope is the chief of the Vatican State, his visit to Romania must be prepared together with

the Romanian State. – Press Release, Romanian Patriarchate, Dec. 15.

BULGARIAN PATRIARCH MAXIM HAS CONFIRMED HE IS ALIVE AND HEALTHY, IN THE WAKE OF PERSISTENT RUMORS THAT HIS HEALTH IS DETERIORATING.

Speaking for 24 Chasa daily, the 96-year-old Christian Orthodox top cleric, said he is well and whoever wants to make sure of that may see him Sunday morning when he enters the synodal chapel.

Sunday at 9am the St. Boris synodal chapel will hold a special service at which all senior clerics of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church will be present.

The Sofia Metropolitan Bishopric, to which Maxim is the head in addition to being Patriarch of Bulgaria, also released a statement that he is well and actively leading its activities. – Sofia News Agency, Dec. 11.

THE FOUNDING OF A TRADE UNION FOR BULGARIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH PRIESTS AND CHURCH EMPLOYEES HAS ANGERED AT LEAST ONE MEMBER OF THE SENIOR HIERARCHY OF THE CHURCH, WHO DENOUNCED IT AS BEING AGAINST THE CHURCH'S CANON LAW.

According to Bulgarian-language media reports on 13 December, the union will be part of Podkrepa, one of the southeastern European country's two national trade union federations.

In the north-western town of Vratsa, priests said that they had not been paid on time for a long time and their statutory health and retirement insurance had not been paid, the Standart daily newspaper reported. The Vratsa Metropolitan Kipriyan said, however, it is "absurd" for priests to have a trade union and that this is against the church's own law.

The formation of the union follows complaints about the pay of ordinary priests and lay employees being low and often arriving late, a criticism echoed by a Bulgarian Cabinet minister, and coinciding with disclosures about the amount of money earned by the church from the sale of candles.

Bozhidar Dimitrov, the cabinet minister in charge of Bulgarians abroad, had said earlier in December that priests in villages are "living in poverty."

Church employee Hristo Latinov, named as head of the union, was quoted by Bulgaria's Darik Radio as saying on 13 December that it is "unacceptable, immoral and scandalous" that priests are classified in

the same labor law category as gravediggers and people with primary school education.

The same labor classification assigns bishops and metropolitans the status of company directors.

The Standart reported on 14 December that union membership will include priests, sextons, administrative staff and employees who manufacture candles. Media reports did not make it clear how many members the union has attracted.

On 9 December, Bulgaria's mass-circulation Trud daily newspaper reported that the church had disclosed that annually it earns about 12 million leva (about six million euro) from the sale of candles. Bulgarian law exempts the sale of church candles from value-added tax.

The church's income was supplemented by property ownership and "not inconsiderable" donations, the newspaper said. The sale of candles was meant to cover the pay of priests, but in some smaller dioceses, not enough candles were sold to achieve this. The alternative was that priests were paid in kind by being given candles.

"I cannot eat candles," Trud quoted an unnamed priest as saying.

The newspaper reported that in Rousse, a Bulgarian city on the Danube, 80 priests in the diocese were paid an average monthly maximum of around 180 euros.

In Bulgaria's second city of Plovdiv, the sale of candles is sufficient to pay all clergy with enough money left over to support social kitchens for the poor, Trud said, with the church in the city selling more candles than in the capital, Sofia. – Ivan Andreev for *ENI*, Dec. 14.

THE ISTANBUL CITY HALL IS TO RESTORE THE BULGARIAN "ST. STEFAN" CHURCH, THE BULGARIAN NEWS AGENCY BTA REPORTS ON DECEMBER 24, CITING TURKISH MEDIA.

The works are to begin as soon as possible while 60% of the funds will come from Turkey's Regions Directorate and the rest will be financed by the City Hall.

The Bulgarian "Saint Stephen" Church, also known as the Bulgarian Iron Church, is a Bulgarian Orthodox church in Istanbul, Turkey, famous for being made of cast iron. The parts were manufactured in Vienna and then transported via the Danube River to Bulgaria and through the Black Sea to Istanbul. The Church was inaugurated in 1898 by Exarch Joseph and marks the beginning of the Bulgarian exarchate.

According to a legend, Sultan Abdul Aziz was not inclined to let Bulgarians have

their own church, but yielded to the pressure under one condition – that the church be built in only one month. Bulgarians were able to comply by building the church with cast iron.

In the last few years, the Bulgarian State and the Istanbul City Hall have made significant efforts to raise funds for the church's renovation and maintenance, but those funds are still insufficient. The 110th anniversary of the iron church was celebrated at the end of 2008. – Sophia News Agency, Dec. 24.

THIS IS A BRIEF SUMMARY OF DECISIONS MADE AT A MEETING OF THE HOLY SYNOD OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH OF GEORGIA:

1. The Holy Synod session discusses an issue of special importance and makes a historical decision: based on historical documents and current situation the Catholicos Patriarch of all Georgia shall be appointed as the Ruler of historical diocese of Pitsunda and Sukhumi-Abkhazia. And, hereby the Catholicos Patriarch of All Georgia shall be titled: His Holiness and Beatitude Catholicos Patriarch of All Georgia, Archbishop of Mtskheta and Tbilisi, and Metropolitan of Pitsunda and Sukhumi-Abkhazia Iliia II. His Eminence Metropolitan Daniel (Datuashvili) of Sukhumi-Abkhazia was thanked for his service in Sukhumi-Abkhazia Diocese and is appointed as Metropolitan of Chiatura and Sachkhere Diocese.

2. The Holy Synod discusses problems of priests serving at poor villages and rural areas, and makes decision on some financial assistance for them.

3. Those who came to Tbilisi from outlying areas for a theological education are obliged to return to their dioceses after completion of their studies.

4. It is once again emphasized that the Divine Liturgy must be accompanied by polyphonic Georgian church chant in all churches under the jurisdiction of the Georgian Patriarchate. Violation of this requirement shall be subject to canonical penalty.

5. It is ordered to form a Commission to research materials about persons to be canonized. The Commission shall be comprised of Metropolitan Anania (Japaridze), Metropolitan Shio (Mujiri), and Archbishop Ioane (Gamreli).

6. Dedoplistskaro Diocese is ordered to return to its historical name, and its Bishop shall be called ruler of Khojabundi and Hereti Diocese. Bishop Iacob (Iakobashvili) of Tsurtavi Diocese shall be moved to Gardabani and Martkofi Diocese. – Press Release, Georgian Patriarchate,

Dec. 22.

ARCHBISHOP CHRYSOSTOMOS II OF CYPRUS SEES EYE TO EYE WITH A NATIONALIST GROUP ON MANY ISSUES, PAYS LIP SERVICE TO ONGOING REUNIFICATION TALKS THOUGH HE BELIEVES THEY ARE DOOMED, AND CLAIMS THAT FORMER PRESIDENT TASSOS PAPADOPOULOS DID NOT BOTHER TO READ THE WHOLE 2003 UN PEACE PLAN.

Those were some of the highlights of the Archbishop's interview with online publication *Kathimerini* published over the weekend. In it, the Prelate was taken to task over his perceived political meddling and headline views on the Cyprus problem.

But perhaps the most eye-catching part of the interview was his assertion that he identifies a great deal with the views of the nationalist outfit ELAM (National People's Front).

"I find that many of ELAM's views express me. And if they are against illegal immigrants, I dare to say that I, too, am against illegal immigrants. We cannot have all kinds of seeds here," Chrysostomos said candidly.

It was not clear whether the Prelate had done his homework on the nationalist group, which advocates a 'Greek Cyprus' – a racially homogeneous nation, and wants all illegal aliens to be summarily deported.

The interviewer interjected, reminding Chrysostomos of ELAM's motto: "Every foreigner equals one unemployed Greek." The journalist observed that the group were apparently opposed to legally as well as illegally residing foreigners.

Chrysostomos defended ELAM, noting: "I don't think that is the case. On the occasions that I had contact with these fellows, they struck me as educated guys, they care about their country and their views are crystal-clear."

But in the same breath, Chrysostomos dismissed allegations that the premises housing the ELAM offices in Nicosia belong to the Church, which is said to be leasing the property free of charge.

"This is a malicious lie, we do not host ELAM on Church property," he remarked.

The Prelate was next challenged that his rhetoric on political matters is often incendiary, and that he tends to divide people into patriots and traitors, for example by adopting Tassos Papadopoulos' claim that some people were paid off to support the Annan Plan in 2003.

"Some truths, no matter how bitter, need to be said. I don't think the Annan Plan would have solved our national problem, rather it would have dismantled the

Republic," he said.

He was then reminded that he himself had once said that the people never actually read the peace blueprint – in order to form an informed opinion – and that the public had been swayed by then President Papadopoulos into rejecting the plan.

"Of course the people didn't read it [the Annan Plan]. No one did. No one knows it. The Annan Plan was 10,000 pages long," said Chrysostomos.

"Then how was it rejected?" the journalist asked.

"We read about 500 pages. Not even the President knew the plan inside out, and he admitted as much to me. Nobody knew it."

Regarding the pamphlets that were distributed in churches by the Archbishopic slamming aspects of the peace talks – such as the proposal for a weighted vote for Turkish Cypriots – and calling on Greek Cypriots to reject such a peace plan, Chrysostomos insisted this was not political influence, but rather an exercise in "informing the public."

"The Church's rhetoric is national in scope. It is not politics. We wanted to give people some food for thought. You were not forced to take the pamphlet if you did not agree."

Chrysostomos insisted also that the Church did not meddle in politics, despite being reminded that in the last presidential elections he had publicly backed Papadopoulos, and when the latter was defeated in the first round, he switched to Ioannis Kasoulides for the runoff.

The Prelate was also asked about his seemingly incoherent views – on the one hand opposing a federation-based solution because it is unworkable, and on the other accepting the peace talks.

"In our bid to reach a solution, so that the people of Cyprus can return to normalcy and live happily in the land of their fathers, we have agreed to the talks, to find a settlement, even if a federal one, though there does not seem to be solution on the horizon," said Chrysostomos.

"But let us not kid ourselves. Today, it is not a federation that we are discussing, but rather a confederation, or something far worse," he added.

Chrysostomos was repeatedly pressed to resolve another contradiction in his statements, namely that he supports the talks despite the fact he believes the Turkish side cannot be trusted to implement any agreement.

The Prelate also denied accusations that he was meddling in the state's education policy, for example when he urged

pupils at public schools to toss out the new, revised history books which try to weed out the more nationalist content.

He said: "At any rate, I am certain that the students will not wait for the Church to tell them to throw out the books. They will do so on their own." – Elias Hazou for *Cyprus Mail*, Dec. 28.

ARCHBISHOP CHRYSOSTOMOS OF CYPRUS DENIED BEING A CHAUVINIST ON DECEMBER 30, FOLLOWING COMMENTS EARLIER IN THE WEEK THAT HE IDENTIFIED A GREAT DEAL WITH A NATIONALIST EXTREMIST GROUP.

Following the uproar from those comments, the Archbishop said yesterday:

We are neither extremist nor chauvinist, nor are we against illegal immigrants. Every well-intentioned person understands that we do not turn against any of our fellow human beings who, at the end of the day, are God's creations too."

What he was criticizing, Chrysostomos clarified, was the lax handling of the issue of illegal immigrants by successive governments.

Perhaps confusing the terms "illegal immigrant" and "asylum seeker," the Archbishop said the generous benefits paid to these people encouraged more to seek out Cyprus as a haven:

"When someone can live comfortably here, of course they won't want to leave. Not only that, but they will encourage others who also want to come and live in Cyprus, and in this way the illegal immigrants keep increasing.

These are my opinions. And I don't think Europe wants us to have them here. What Europe wants is that we don't throw these people out, we don't keep them starved so that they die of hunger. Rather, we shall give them the means to survive, but not to the point of mollycoddling them and encouraging more to come here."

Chrysostomos also sought to distance himself from the nationalist group ELAM (National People's Front).

He said he has met with a delegation from ELAM, describing them as "educated, down-to-earth kids."

But in an apparent non-sequitur, he added: "Of course the majority of them are extremists. And I don't agree with extremists. Some people tried to brand me a chauvinist. I don't think I am," he said.

The top cleric was busy yesterday meeting with the ambassadors of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council in Nicosia.

Chrysostomos briefed the ambassadors on the Turkish Cypriot side's interruption

and cancellation of services at a church in occupied Rizokarpasso on Christmas Day. He also handed a demarche to the five countries concerned.

"I made it clear to them that we shall not tolerate this sort of thing," Chrysostomos told newsmen later.

The Church has also said it will report the matter to the World Council of Churches and the Pope.

Chrysostomos went on to reveal that, at the suggestion of the US Ambassador to Cyprus, he had planned to meet with Turkish Cypriot leader Dervis Eroglu.

But now, following the Turkish Cypriot authorities' action against the church services in the north, that tête-à-tête was off.

I shall not meet with him unless he first allows our priests to conduct services unhindered in our occupied lands.

If the Turks wish to have a European course, they must behave like Europeans, they must respect human rights and religious freedoms, Chrysostomos noted.

Pressed for details, the Prelate said his scheduled meeting with Eroglu was postponed after the Turkish Cypriot leader was taken ill, but subsequently the church services affair broke out.

But he qualified: "Because there exists an occupation [in the north], and everything emanates from Ankara, it is not the Turkish Cypriots who prohibit Christian liturgies and trample on our human rights; it is Ankara."-- Elias Hazou for *Cyprus Mail*, Dec. 31.

ACCORDING TO A STATEMENT BY THE HOLY SYNOD OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH OF GREECE, "GREECE IS NOT A FREE COUNTRY ANYMORE" and many "expect the Church to talk loudly and clearly on what is happening."

"What is happening to our fatherland is shocking and unprecedented. Along with the spiritual, social and financial crisis we see all kinds of overturning. It is an effort to destroy and uproot everything that we believed was a given in our country's way of life ... These measures are demanded by our lenders. It's like we declare that we are a country under foreign occupation and we obey the orders of those in charge, our lenders."

"The problematic ways of our society and economy that we violently seek to correct today, why haven't we corrected in time? Why did it have to come to this? The political leadership has been the same for decades. How come they used to calculate the political cost of their acts and now feel like they don't have to, since they follow

orders?" the Holy Synod adds.

The Church says that the country's leadership "in practice has undermined the real interests of the country and its people. And on the other hand, the people behaved irresponsibly and indulged in easy wealth, good life, easy profit and deception. We didn't take stock of the truth of things." – *Athens News*, Dec. 16.

ASPOKESPERSON FOR THE HOLY SYNOD OF THE CHURCH OF GREECE ON DECEMBER 19 REBUFFED REPORTS THAT ARCHBISHOP IERONYMOS HAD CHALLENGED THE CONTENT OF A LEAFLET TITLED "TO THE PEOPLE," which was issued to churchgoers across the country by the synod and complains that the country is being constrained by its international creditors.

"The archbishop does not differentiate his stance from that of the synod," said press spokesman, Haris Konidaris. In the leaflet, the synod says: "Our country no longer seems to be free but is essentially being directed by our creditors." The leaflet describes an ongoing austerity drive as "an attempt to uproot many traditions and established rights that had been taken for granted until now." – *KED*, Dec. 20.

LEADERS OF GREECE'S SMALL JEWISH COMMUNITY OBJECTED ON DECEMBER 22 TO TELEVISED REMARKS BY A GREEK ORTHODOX BISHOP WHO BLAMED THE COUNTRY'S FINANCIAL PROBLEMS ON A CONSPIRACY OF JEWISH BANKERS AND CLAIMED THAT THE HOLOCAUST WAS ORCHESTRATED BY ZIONISTS.

The Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece complained to church authorities about the anti-Semitic remarks made by the Metropolitan Seraphim of Piraeus during an interview on Greek television on Monday, according to a statement (in Greek) on the group's Web site.

The Jewish Telegraphic Agency reported that the bishop "said that there is a conspiracy to enslave Greece and Christian Orthodoxy. He also accused international Zionism of trying to destroy the family unit by promoting one-parent families and same-sex marriages."

According to the news agency, when the bishop was then asked, "Why do you disagree with Hitler's policies? If they are doing all this, wasn't he right in burning them?" he replied: "Adolf Hitler was an instrument of world Zionism and was financed from the renowned Rothschild family with the sole purpose of convincing the Jews to leave the shores of Europe and go to Israel to establish the new Empire." He

added that Jewish bankers like “Rockefeller, Rothschild and Soros control the international banking system that controls globalization.”

Greece’s Jewish community is ancient, but only about 10,000 Greek Jews survived the Holocaust.

The president of the European Jewish Congress, Moshe Kantor, called for the bishop to be fired in a statement sent to reporters on Wednesday. He added: “It is completely unacceptable that someone senior in a mainstream European religious denomination can make such repulsive and hate-filled claims.”

The American Gathering of Holocaust Survivors and their Descendants sent this statement to *The Lede*:

“Holocaust survivors are aghast at the hate-filled remarks of Metropolitan Seraphim and call on the Greek Orthodox hierarchy to remove him from his position. We also demand that the Greek government prosecute him under its laws against incitement to hatred. Greece itself, which suffered grievously under Nazi occupation, is slandered by Metropolitan Seraphim’s bigotry. His remarks constitute a brutal assault on the memory of all Nazi victims, Jew and non-Jew.”

Earlier this year, the bishop wrote to Britain’s Queen Elizabeth II to demand that Elton John be stripped of his knighthood for telling Parade magazine, “Jesus was a compassionate, super-intelligent gay man.” The bishop also complained to Britain’s ambassador to Greece about the singer’s “unacceptable and absurd” comment, which, he said, had caused “deep pain and bitterness.” *The Lede* (NY Times), Dec. 22.

IN RESPONSE TO THE RECENT ANTI-SEMITIC RHETORIC THAT HAS BEEN UNFORTUNATELY USED PUBLICLY BY A HIERARCH OF THE CHURCH OF GREECE, THE HOLY ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA condemns any such language, and expresses its sadness that these hurtful words should have been spoken at all. The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America considers the remarks to be gravely offensive and totally unacceptable.

As a leader in Interfaith Dialogue, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese affirms its longstanding and positive relations with the Jewish Community here and abroad, and grieves with them at this incident, which is not expressive of the feelings and attitude of the Greek Orthodox Church in America and worldwide, or of the Greek Nation. In this Holy Season that celebrates peace and good will among all peoples, we pray that, with

God’s grace and help, mutual respect, understanding and love will prevail. – Press Release, Greek Archdiocese, Dec. 23.

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE WELCOMED A LETTER FROM THE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH LEADERSHIP REAFFIRMING THE “LONG-STANDING DIALOGUE” AND “CLOSE COOPERATION” between the church and the Jewish community.

The letter to Rabbi David Rosen, AJC International Director of Interreligious Affairs, came in response to AJC’s condemnation of a high-level priest, Metropolitan Seraphim of Piraeus for his anti-Semitic remarks last week on national Greek TV.

“Such unfortunate comments have no place in our hearts and minds,” wrote Metropolitan Emmanuel of France on behalf of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. “The language of hate and mistrust will find ways to be heard. This, however, should not become an obstacle in our sincere and fraternal cooperation.”

Rabbi Rosen expressed appreciation for the letter, and reiterated that “It is the responsibility of the church leadership to condemn and uproot anti-Semitism.”

The full text of the letter follows:
Dear Rabbi Rosen,

It is with great disappointment that I have received the news regarding the anti-Semitic comments of a Hierarchy of the Church of Greece that have been recently made on a public forum. You are well aware of the respect and sincere cooperation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and of His All Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew himself. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to assure you that such unfortunate comments have no place in our hearts and minds. The Ecumenical Patriarchate believes in our long-standing dialogue and strives to improve and strengthen our close cooperation with the Jewish community worldwide.

Incidents such as the aforementioned will unfortunately take place, and the language of hate and mistrust will find ways to be heard. This, however, should not become an obstacle in our sincere and fraternal cooperation.

Respectfully yours
Metropolitan Emmanuel of France
-- AJC Press Release, Dec. 28.

TWO SENIOR MONKS FROM THE VATOPEDI MONASTERY ON MOUNT ATHOS, WHICH HAS BEEN IMPLICATED IN AN ALLEGEDLY CORRUPT LAND-SWAP DEAL WITH THE STATE, were yesterday given 10-month suspended jail

sentences by an appeals court in Thrace for being moral accomplices to a breach of duty.

Ephraim, the monastery’s former chief monk, and Arsenios, its ex-financial manager, were accused of colluding with Maria Psalti, the former judge of a first instance court in Rhodope, northern Greece, where tracts of land involved in the swap are located. Psalti also received a 10-month suspended sentence for delaying making public a ruling on the ownership of the land. – *KED*, Dec. 23.

DURING A SPECIAL MEETING CALLED BY HIS BEATITUDE, METROPOLITAN JONAH ON TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2010, THE HOLY SYNOD OF BISHOPS OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA DECIDED TO SUSPEND HIS EMINENCE, ARCHBISHOP SERAPHIM OF OTTAWA AND CANADA. This decision was reached after careful deliberations and in accordance with the policies and procedures of the Orthodox Church in America mandated in cases of allegations of sexual misconduct.

The Holy Synod further designated His Grace, Bishop Irene of Quebec City, Administrator of the Archdiocese of Canada. He will be responsible for all aspects of the hierarchical supervision of the Archdiocese.

Concurrently, the Holy Synod issued a detailed Mandate for the Synodal Commission for the Investigation of Allegations against Archbishop Seraphim. – OCA Press Release, Dec. 1.

IN A LETTER DATED DECEMBER 8, 2010, HIS EMINENCE, METROPOLITAN PHILIP, PRIMATE OF THE SELF-RULED ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA, GRANTED A CANONICAL RELEASE TO HIS GRACE, BISHOP MARK [MAYMON] TO ENTER THE CANONICAL JURISDICTION OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA.

This action was a response to an official request made by His Beatitude, Metropolitan Jonah, Primate of the Orthodox Church in America, on behalf of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America.

Upon receipt of the letter from Metropolitan Philip, Metropolitan Jonah expressed his “appreciation for the harmonious relations of the Orthodox Church in America and the Antiochian Archdiocese, as shown most recently in the release of Bishop Mark.... We welcome His Grace, Bishop Mark into the Orthodox Church in America and look forward to close collaboration in ministry and mission.”

Effective January 1, 2011, Bishop Mark will serve as Auxiliary to Metropolitan Jonah with the title "Bishop of Baltimore" and will administer the OCA Diocese of the South. – OCA Press Release, Dec. 13.

HIS BEATITUDE, METROPOLITAN JONAH, MET WITH MEMBERS OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA [ROCOR] at the invitation of His Eminence, Metropolitan Hilarion, ROCOR First Hierarch, in New York City on Wednesday, December 8, 2010.

The meeting marked the first of its kind since December 11, 1950.

Also representing the Orthodox Church in America at the meeting were His Grace, Bishop Tikhon of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania, Archpriest Leonid Kishkovsky, and Mr. Alexis Liberovsky, OCA Archivist, all of whom participated in the drafting of the Joint Statement of the Commissions of the Orthodox Church in America and the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, titled "Relations Between the Orthodox Church in America and the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia."

Metropolitan Jonah addressed the ROCOR hierarchs, after which fruitful and positive discussion took place. Other issues, in addition to the joint statement, touched upon included the continuation of mutual work of OCA and ROCOR Commissions, the concelebration of hierarchs, the Episcopal Assembly, and cooperative efforts in the areas of liturgical translation, publications, and hospital, prison, youth, and other ministries.

The Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia is observing its 90th anniversary in December 2010. – OCA Press Release, Dec. 14.

THESE ARE EXCERPTS FROM THE JOINT STATEMENT OF THE COMMISSIONS OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA AND THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA THAT HAS BEEN APPROVED BY THE HOLY SYNODS OF BOTH CHURCHES:

The Orthodox Church in America (OCA) and the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR) share a single origin – the local Church of Russia – and a long history on the North American continent. It was the Russian Church that first sent missionaries to America, established the first parishes, sent the first bishops and established the first dioceses. Prior to the Bolshevik Revolution, the North American

Diocese of the Russian Church was the principal canonical ecclesiastical authority here, and although there were clergy and parishes of differing cultures and languages, many were in the archpastoral care of the bishop of the Russian Orthodox Church. Therefore, there is no question that the formation of multiple jurisdictions on this continent was largely due to the ecclesiastical chaos that ensued after the Revolution of 1917. [...]

With regard to the situation of the clergy and parishes of the Russian Church that were found abroad, there were two distinct directions that evolved. The first was the striving for a unified central Church Administration which could oversee the ecclesiastical life abroad until conditions would change in the homeland and the Patriarchate, independent of Soviet control, could be restored. The second was the striving toward the establishment of a completely independent self-administered Orthodox Church in North America.

These two directions are the essence of the conflict between the bishops, clergy and parishes which would become the Orthodox Church in America and the bishops, clergy and parishes which would remain part of a central Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia. [...]

Despite these mutual efforts toward establishing brotherly relations, the paths of the Church Outside of Russia and the American Metropolia continued to be separate.

In 1970, by recognizing the self-governing status of the Metropolia with the granting of the Tomos of Autocephaly, eucharistic communion between the Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) and the American Metropolia was restored and reconciliation was achieved.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the deep and extensive changes in Russia with the renewal of church life, the restoration of thousands of churches and monasteries, the freedom to bear public witness to the Gospel in Russian society, a process of dialogue between ROCOR and the Moscow Patriarchate led to the restoration of canonical unity through the Act of Canonical Communion in 2007.

It is now time for the Orthodox Church in America and the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia to declare together in the spirit of mutual repentance and mutual forgiveness that we are committed to living together as brothers in Christ and as sister Churches, and to sharing a common witness to the Gospel of Christ and the Holy Orthodox Faith. This common witness should most clearly and most fully

be expressed in eucharistic communion.

In addition, we see the need to work together in harmony on joint projects, such as pastoral education, parish schools, student outreach, translations of services, ministering to the poor and needy, and missionary efforts. To work in harmony we will need to reflect together on theological, pastoral, and liturgical issues which we face in our ministry in North America. We also affirm the need to examine together and develop a common understanding of the historical record concerning our churches. These hopes and endeavors can be encouraged and advanced through periodic meetings of our first hierarchs, bishops, clergy and laity to discuss matters of mutual concern, including those theological, liturgical and pastoral issues.

We are committed to the processes and goals expressed in the Chambesy accords of June 2009, specifically the active participation of both our Churches in the regional Episcopal Assembly as we strive to achieve Orthodox unity on this continent. [...]

We ask for the intercession and blessing of the Holy Hierarch Tikhon, Patriarch and Confessor of Moscow and Enlightener of North America and all the saints who have shone forth on this continent as we labor "for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4: 12). – OCA/ROCOR Press Release, Dec. 14.

THE HOLY SYNOD OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA ADDRESSED THIS PASTORAL LETTER TO THE CLERGY, MONASTICS, AND FAITHFUL OF THE CHURCH ON DECEMBER 2:

Forty years ago, the Orthodox Church in America received its autocephaly from the Russian Orthodox Church and soon after glorified the first North American saint, our Venerable Father Herman of Alaska. The Holy Synod of Bishops gives thanks to Almighty God for the prayerful intercessions of St Herman and of all the saints who shone forth on this continent and likewise celebrates and affirms the gift of autocephaly. By the grace of God, this great gift was the result of a long process of reconciliation between the Metropolia and the Moscow Patriarchate, whose relations had tragically gone astray, a gift which still stands at the heart of our ecclesial life and serves as the basis for understanding ourselves.

At the same time, much has transpired in the past forty years within the life of the Orthodox Church in America. A most significant event took place on May 25th-27th of this year with the convening of the first

Episcopal Assembly for the region of North and Central America. All of the hierarchs of the Orthodox Church in America participated in this historic gathering of the canonical Orthodox Bishops of this region. Our Holy Synod is grateful to His All-Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, who wisely undertook the task of convening the Fourth Pre-Conciliar Pan Orthodox Conference in Chambésy, Switzerland in June of 2009. This Pre-Conciliar Conference resulted in the establishment, with the blessing of all the Orthodox Patriarchs, of an Episcopal Assembly for our region which has as its goal the “swift healing of every canonical anomaly” [Message of the Patriarchs 3.12] and the working out of a solution to Orthodox administrative unity on this continent.

This event, as well as the recent dialogue with the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, has provided us with an opportunity to enter more fully into the pan-Orthodox process in North America. As such we have reflected on how we understand our life and work and how these can become a means for greater and deeper interrelationship with the other Orthodox Churches as we move towards authentic unity through the process of the Episcopal Assemblies.

As we reflect upon the past forty years, we affirm the following principles:

1. We understand ourselves to be an indigenous, multi-ethnic, missionary Church, laboring to bring Orthodox Christianity to all citizens of this continent.
2. We affirm that our historical reality derives from the Russian Orthodox Church and that we have humbly received and faithfully maintain the inheritance of the Russian Mission of 1794, the Diocese of Sitka in 1843; the Diocese of San Francisco in 1870, and its relocation to New York in 1907, and the Autocephaly of 1970.
3. As directed by the Tomos, we live as other self-governing Churches do: electing our own bishops and Primate, without confirmation by any other Synod, maintaining inter-Church relationships with all other Churches; and consecrating our own chrism.
4. As envisioned in the Tomos, we believe that the autocephaly given to us will be fully realized when the promise of Orthodox unity in North America is fulfilled, and the OCA together with all the Orthodox faithful in North America become one united Autocephalous Church of America, recognized by all other Orthodox Churches.
5. We commit ourselves to work within the Episcopal Assembly in order to realize the goal of unity.

We express our gratitude to all the Patriarchs for their care and ask all of the clergy, monastics and faithful of the Orthodox Church in America to be of one mind and one heart to offer thanksgiving to God for the gift of the Church, whose mission in this world is to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all the people of North America. We ask the clergy and faithful to pray that we be worthy of the heritage of the saints who shone forth in North America in building up the Body of Christ, fulfilling these words of Scripture: “Speaking the truth in love, may [we] grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.” (Ephesians 4:15-16) -- OCA Press Release, Dec. 2.

The Assyrian Church of the East

THE FIRST CHRISTIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN BUILT BY THE ASSYRIAN CHURCH OF THE EAST IN 600AD, HAS BEEN UNVEILED TO THE PUBLIC.

Initially discovered on the 87 square kilometre Sir Bani Yas island in Abu Dhabi during excavations in 1992, the ruins are the first evidence of Christianity in the pre-Islamic period in the UAE and the site marks the farthest east a Christian settlement has been found in the Arabian Gulf.

Dr Joseph Elders, the archaeological director who led the initial surveys of the site in the 1990s, told UAE-based newspaper *The National* that the Assyrian Church of the East was the largest church in the world during that period, with Christianity spreading through the Gulf between 50-350AD.

“Twenty years ago, we had no idea that Christians came this far south and east in the Arabian Gulf.

“This shows that Christianity had penetrated far further than we thought before... We don’t have many monasteries from this period.”

Other Nestorian churches have been discovered in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, but the Sir Bani Yas site is the first to include a monastic settlement.

However, archaeologists have only unearthed one skeleton during their dig.

Dr Elders said it appeared that the whole church may have been built around the body, possibly a holy man or local saint, and may also have been the reason why pilgrims visited the island – with a separate

room for visitors to leave gifts.

Archaeologists found 15 rooms and two courtyards within the monastery, including a chapel decorated with plaster crosses, a main settlement room for the monks which also had a niche for holy water and a brazier for cooking, and a ring of residential houses around the settlement.

Artifacts unearthed so far include more than 15 types of pottery, glass vessels, and ceremonial vases and richly decorated plasterwork stucco, which gives evidence of the boat traffic for trade between Basra in Iraq and India.

Tourists may be allowed to visit the site in the near future, with more buildings expected to be uncovered. – *Assyrian Church News*, Dec. 16.

IN A SHOW OF CHRISTIAN UNITY, THE HOLY APOSTOLIC CATHOLIC ASSYRIAN CHURCH OF THE EAST’S ST GEORGE PARISH IN DAMASCUS HAS COMMUNED WITH THE LOCAL MELKITE GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH TO CELEBRATE HOLY EUCHARIST.

The Holy Eucharist was offered by Archbishop Joseph Absi, Patriarchal Vicar in Damascus, on 19 December, the same day that Syria’s non-Christian majority participated in Eid Abraham.

St George Parish priest Reverend Toma Asitev guided the service, in which deacons and choir members also took part.

Anonymous faithful that were present said: “The atmosphere of the Church, having everyone gather for the praising and glorification of our Lord as it nears to the celebration of His birth, is an awesome feeling!”

The parishioners were also thankful for the aid made available by the not-for-profit Assyrian Church of the East Relief Organization (ACERO) through the years, and gave further thanks to the church for reaching all their needs.

“This communing is a good indication of peace and love between all Christians. We especially thank His Grace Mar Aprem Nathniel, Bishop of Syria, for his support and blessings as a caring and spiritual father,” added some clergy and parishioners. – *Assyrian Church News*, Dec. 26.

The Oriental Orthodox Churches

THE JOINT INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE SYRIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH AND THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH WAS HELD ON DECEMBER 7, 2010, AT MANGANAM SPIRITUALITY CENTRE IN KOTTAYAM. Topics of common interest were discussed

and agreements were reached upon. The following decisions were made:

1. To share Churches and Cemeteries in urgent and unavoidable situations subject to mutually agreed upon conditions.

2. To publish the common understanding reached between the two churches regarding the Primacy of St. Peter.

3. To send the translated copy of the agreement made between the two churches regarding the Holy Matrimony between the members of our two churches to all the Parish vicars along with necessary directives.

4. To include an 'Ecumenical Guideline' in the +1 and +2 Sunday School curriculum of both our churches to create an awareness among the younger generation about the importance of Ecumenism and also to teach them the common traditions and spirituality of the Syrian Christians.

5. To appoint a Commission to look into and study the effects of rising Pentecostalism and the problems arising out of that.

The meeting was presided over by His Eminence Archbishop Brian Farell and His Eminence Kuriakose Mor Theophilose.

The Roman Catholic church was represented by Mar Joseph Powathil, Mar Mathew Moolakkattu, Mar Koorilose Thomas, Bishop Silvester Ponnunmuthan, Rev. Dr. Mathew Vellanikkal, Rev. Dr. Xavier Koodappuzha, Rev. Dr. Jacob Thekkeparambil and Rev. Dr. Philip Nelpuraparambil.

The Syrian Orthodox Church was represented by Mor Gregorios Joseph, Mor Eusebios Kuriakose, Very Rev. Adai Jacob Cor-Episcopa, Very Rev. Moolayil Kuriakose Cor-Episcopa and Rev. Fr. Gregor Kollannur. – *Syriac Christianity*, Dec. 7.

ON DECEMBER 11, UPON THE INVITATION OF HIS HOLINESS KAREKIN II, SUPREME PATRIARCH AND CATHOLICOS OF ALL ARMENIANS, A DELEGATION FROM THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH led by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, Director of the Department of External Church Relations, paid a four-day visit to the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin. The delegation members are: Metropolitan Sergi, Bishop of Solnechnogorsk, Head of the Patriarchate administration; Rev. Fr. Ioan Guayta, Dn. Ioan Kopyki, Mr. Leonid Sebastianov, Mr. and Mrs. Palestin and Mrs. Larisa Monakhova.

His Grace Bishop Yezras Nersissian, Primate of the Armenian Church Diocese of New Nakhijevan and Russia, His Grace Bishop Hovakim Manukian, Director of the Interchurch Relations Department, Mr.

Viachislav Kovalenco, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation accredited to Armenia and Rev. Fr. Arseni Grigorians, Pastor of the Church of St. Mary Russian Orthodox Church in Kanaker, greeted the delegation at the airport.

From the airport, the delegation traveled to the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin where His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians received the representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church.

His Holiness expressed his joy for their visit, stressing the importance of mutual visits as a means of strengthening the cooperation and collaboration of the friendship. The Armenian Pontiff reflected on the existing relationship between the two Churches and Pontiffs, which is contributing to the prosperity of the spiritual life of our two nations and aids in overcoming the various challenges facing the Church and society.

His Holiness also expressed his hope that in the forthcoming year the construction of the Armenian Church complex in Moscow would be finished, and that with the participation of His Holiness Kirill I, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, they would hold the opening ceremony of the new center and offer the consecration of the Church. The new complex is located at the headquarters of the Diocese, and symbolizes the centuries-old friendship between the two nations.

The Armenian Pontiff also informed the delegation that the Presidential Conference of the Interreligious Council of the CIS countries will be held in Armenia, in 2011.

Metropolitan Hilarion conveyed his warm greetings and fraternal love on behalf of His Holiness Kirill I, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, also expressing his appreciation for the invitation and warm reception. He was confident that the visit was a good opportunity for learning of Church activities in different spheres and for strengthening the Interchurch Relations.

During the visit there was a reflection on the mission of the Holy Armenian Apostolic Church, and the problems and challenges of Ecclesiastical life. A series of issues on Interchurch and Interreligious Relations, and the cooperation between the two Churches in the social and educational sphere were also discussed.

Following the meeting, the delegation visited the Museums of the Mother See, the Spiritual center of all Armenians, to view and learn about the spiritual and historical-cultural treasures of the Armenian nation.

They also toured the complex of Holy Etchmiadzin and various departments of the Mother See, to better acquaint themselves with the spiritual-educational programs, and social and Church-building activities of the Armenian Church.

On the same day, the delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church visited Shoghakat TV Studio of the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin where Metropolitan Hilarion gave an interview, reflecting on the activities of the Russian Orthodox Church; the relationship between the other Christian Churches and religions; relations between the Church and State, the Church and Society; and various challenges. – Press Release, Holy Etchmiadzin, Dec. 11.

ON DECEMBER 12TH, THE DELEGATION OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX VISITED ST. MARY RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN KANAKER, WHERE METROPOLITAN HILARION OF VOLOKOLAMSK offered a Divine Liturgy. Following the Liturgy, the representatives of the delegation traveled to the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin where a private meeting was held between the Armenian Pontiff and Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk.

In the afternoon, the delegation traveled to the Vaskenian Theological Academy at Lake Sevan where they were received by Rev. Fr. Shnork Sargsian, Dean of the Seminary. The guests held a meeting with the seminarians and the seminarians presented a musical program in honor of their visit.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Metropolitan Hilarion extended his greetings to the students and held a question and answer session. – Press Release, Holy Etchmiadzin, Dec. 13.

ON DECEMBER 13, THE DELEGATION OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH VISITED SEVERAL HISTORICAL CHURCHES. In the morning, the Russian delegation visited the Monastery of Kecharis in Tsakhadzor.

The delegation then traveled to the Monastery of Geghard. Accompanied by Rev. Fr. Harutiun Kirakosian, Abbot of the Monastery, they toured the grounds of the Monastery, learning about the history and activities of the Church.

On December 14, the delegation led by His Grace Bishop Hovakim Manukian, visited the National Memorial to the Armenian Genocide, located on Tsitsernakaberd Hill in Yerevan, and paid tribute to the memory of the victims of the first Genocide of the 20th Century.

Metropolitan Hilarion, Director of the

Department of External Church Relations of the Russian Orthodox Churches placed floral wreaths at the base of the monument and prayed for the repose of souls of the innocent victims. Metropolitan Hilarion also watered the memorial tree planted by His Holiness Kirill I, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia in the memorial garden of the monument.

Afterwards, the delegation visited the Russian Orthodox Church of Holy Cross being built in Yerevan, where Metropolitan Hilarion toured the construction site.

The delegation ended their official visit in the afternoon, and returned to Moscow. – Press Release, Holy Etchmiadzin, Dec. 14.

BY THE PONTIFICAL BLESSINGS OF HIS HOLINESS KAREKIN II, SUPREME PATRIARCH AND CATHOLICOS OF ALL ARMENIANS, AND BY A HOLY PONTIFICAL ENCYCLICAL, TWO NEW DIOCESES WERE ESTABLISHED IN ARMENIA on December 10. The new Dioceses are the Diocese of Vayk and the Diocese of Tavush.

The Pontifical Encyclical states in part, “For the prosperity of our God-willing mission of our Holy Church, for the efficient organization of the Church-Administrative activities, for the guidance of the spiritual servants, as well as for the professional implementation of regional oversight, by the following Pontifical Encyclical we separate the Ecclesiastical communities of the Vayots Dzor region from the Diocese of Syunik, and the Ecclesiastical communities of Tavush region from the Diocese of Gugark. We establish the foundation of the Diocese of Vayk with its Diocesan Headquarters located in the town of Yeghegnadzor and the Diocese of Tavush with its Diocesan Headquarters located in the town of Ijevan.”

His Grace Bishop Abraham Mkrtchian was appointed to serve as the Primate of the new Diocese of Vayk. Bishop Abraham previously served as the Primate of the Diocese of Siunik. Rev. Fr. Zaven Yazijian, former Vicar General of the Diocese of Siunik was appointed to serve as the Locum Tenens of the Diocese of Siunik.

Very Rev. Fr. Torkom Tonikian, who was serving as the Vicar General of Tavush region in the Diocese of Gougark, was appointed as the Locum Tenens of the new Diocese of Tavush. – Press Release, Holy Etchmiadzin, Dec. 15.

ON DECEMBER 24, HIS HOLINESS KAREKIN II, SUPREME PATRIARCH AND CATHOLICOS OF ALL ARMENIANS, PRESIDED OVER THE GROUND

BLESSING CEREMONY OF A NEW WING OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING ON THE GROUNDS OF THE MOTHER SEE. Participating in the ceremony were members of the Brotherhood of Holy Etchmiadzin.

The new building was designed by the Architecture Department of the Mother See. The Interchurch Relations Department of the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, the Armenia Round Table Foundation of the World Council of Churches and the Ecumenical Church Loan Fund (ECLOF) will be located in the new wing, which is being built through the sponsorship of the Mother See, Round Table Foundation and ECLOF.

During the solemn service, with the singing of hymns and psalms, His Eminence Archbishop Tatevi Sargsian, President of the Trustee Committee of ECLOF International; His Grace Bishop Arshak Khachatryan, Chancellor of the Mother See; and His Grace Bishop Hovakim Manukian, Director of the Interchurch Relations Department of the Mother See; conducted the service of Ground Blessing.

His Grace Bishop Hovakim Manukian read the Pontifical blessing letter on the occasion of the ground blessing ceremony which stated in part, “We extend our Pontifical gratitude and blessings to the Round Table Foundation of WCC and the ECLOF Foundation for accepting the invitation to construct this building with Christian love, under the domes of which the important Interchurch mission of the Holy Armenian Apostolic Church will be implemented.” – Press Release, Holy Etchmiadzin, Dec. 24.

ON DECEMBER 27, IN THE MOTHER SEE OF HOLY ETCHMIADZIN, HIS HOLINESS KAREKIN II, SUPREME PATRIARCH AND CATHOLICOS OF ALL ARMENIANS, PRESIDED OVER BLESSING SERVICE OF THE OLD PONTIFICAL RESIDENCE FOR THE COMMENCEMENT OF ITS RECONSTRUCTION AND RENOVATION. It was last reconstructed in 1958 during the reign of His Holiness Vasken I of blessed memory.

The old Pontifical Residence is being remodeled through the generosity of the benefactors of the Mother See, Mr. Berge Setrakian, President of the Central Board of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) and his wife Mrs. Vera Setrakian. The construction is being undertaken by a local company, “Horizon-95” directed by Mr. Gagik Galstian.

At the conclusion of the service, the Armenian Pontiff reflected on the scope of the reconstruction project. Layers and structures from different periods have been discovered, dating back to the 7th to the 9th

centuries and from the 12th to the 13th centuries. His Holiness stated that they would be preserved intact, and the old Pontifical Residence would sustain its historical-architectural composition. After reconstruction of the old Pontifical Residence, it will be opened as a Museum. Dormitories will also be built in the south-western part of the historical building. —Press Release, Holy Etchmiadzin, Dec. 27.

AT ITS MEETING ON 2 DECEMBER 2010, THE RELIGIOUS COUNCIL OF THE ARMENIAN PATRIARCHATE IN TURKEY DISCUSSED THE MATTER OF THE ELECTION OF THE PATRIARCH, which has become a controversial topic today, and it felt the need once again to inform the public of the truth.

As is known, the attitude shown by some persons is disturbing to some circles, and they are putting all the community, and particularly the Office of the Patriarch, into difficulties with the Government, as well as with internal and external public opinion. Moreover, it must be asked whether it is really proper behavior to use press conferences to communicate the internal problems of our community, by means of baseless and gratuitous claims, to external circles and critics.

According to what we know from the visual and printed media, the declarations made at a press conference held on 1 December 2010 are contrary to reality and do not reflect it. We have in hand the press statements of our Spiritual Council number 9166, dated 30 June 2010, and number 9202, dated 2 August 2010, that pertain to this matter. It appears that those pronouncing on the election matter paid no attention to these statements.

We declare the following points for the attention of the public.

1. The claims about the Government stripping the Armenian Community of its right to choose its Spiritual Leader are totally erroneous and without foundation. The people of our foundations will see that there is no such reference in the official documents sent by the Government. Following the death of His Beatitude the Patriarch, Mesrob II, the Armenian Patriarch of Turkey will be chosen again according to our traditions and customs, as has been the case up until now. There is absolutely no question of anything different.

2. The statement of The Deputy General of the Patriarch, Archbishop Aram Atesyan, that as long as His Beatitude the Patriarch, Mesrob II, is alive, an election of a new Patriarch will not be held, is not his personal view but is a decision taken by our

Religious Council in accordance with its by-laws.

3. It has been asserted that an election of the Patriarch must take place so that the Office of the Patriarchate will not remain empty. It should not be forgotten that His Beatitude the Patriarch, Mesrob II, was elected by the community. He is still alive and cannot resign, and so he continues to carry the title of Patriarch. Therefore, although His Beatitude the Patriarch, Mesrob II, has health problems, the Office of the Patriarch is not vacant, and in accordance with the by-laws, there is no institution that could declare to the Community that the Office is vacant. For this reason it is not possible to hold an election.

4. It has been claimed that with few exceptions, the Patriarchs throughout history have always been removed from office. One should note that there is an institution that could decide things in the name of the Community. This institution can remove a Patriarch from office, can accept his resignation, and can choose a new Patriarch. In addition, during the time of the Republic, all Patriarchs have remained in office throughout their lives.

5. As is known, in accordance with the by-laws, the civilian and clergy Patriarch delegates are elected. In 1961, again following the standing regulations for the Election of the Patriarch, these delegates complete their duties following the election of the Council and are then dismissed. Our Religious Council tries to make its voice heard by various means. However, there is a force that utterly neglects the interests of the Community. In spite of all the accusations, our Religious Council works hard to protect forever the right of the community to hold an election. One should see that those who presume to say the Office of the Patriarch is empty are, by doing so, taking a decision in the name of the Community. In order that the Election of the Patriarch be held in accordance with customary practice when required, the Religious Council has not gone in such a direction at all, in spite of the name it carries. Any move to declare in the name of the Community that the Office of the Patriarchate is vacant exposes the right of the Community to hold a new election of a Patriarch. By making a precedent it opens the way to depriving the Community of its right to an election.

6. It is claimed that the Deputy General of the Patriarch has been appointed by the Government. Before one could make such a claim, it would be necessary to examine our customary practices, the internal administration of the Office of the Patriarchate, and most importantly, the by-laws. At that point

the one intervention concerns the protection of our customary practices and the by-laws. Furthermore, the Government has not established any new system or title. The "Deputy General" system has a place in the internal administrative structure of the Office of the Patriarchate, and it is a temporary "Sub-governor" system. Because of various sorts of interference there was no permanent solution possible, and the "Deputy General of the Patriarch" was implemented as a temporary solution. The selection was carried out in Istanbul by the General Spiritual Council, formed from our active clergy, according to the by-laws and our customary practices. Everyone present had the right to vote regardless of rank. The claim that other candidates were blocked from being elected as Patriarch is utterly baseless.

In making the above statement our Religious Council invites our Community to work to establish harmony. – *Lraper*, Dec. 2.

A GROUP OF TWENTY JOURNALISTS REPRESENTING DIFFERENT MEDIA AGENCIES IN IRAN, MET WITH HIS HOLINESS ARAM I AT HIS OFFICE. DURING THE INTERVIEW, CATHOLICOS ARAM I STATED: "Christian-Muslim dialogue should have practical expressions and consequences. What is the purpose of theological dialogues, when, for example, in Iraq Christians are dying, and in other places they are persecuted or discriminated against as minorities? All these are happening because of rising fundamentalism. Based on these realities, I would insist that the ultimate purpose of any Christian-Muslim dialogue should be to learn about one another, accept each other as we are, and respect our differences. No group has the right to impose its understanding of truth, its faith, its beliefs or values upon another group. Instead, we should emphasize our commonalities and learn to respect our differences."

Referring to the Christian presence and witness in the Middle East, His Holiness Aram I said: "Christianity has existed in this region even before Islam. Christians are part of Middle East history, cultures and civilizations because they have contributed to their formation and development." Then, speaking of Armenians in Iran, he said: "For many centuries, Armenians have been living in Iran and contributing to the development of Iranian society with their specific Armenian Christian and cultural values." His Holiness concluded his remarks recalling that "The challenge today is to build community through cooperation and mutual

understanding." – Press Release, Great House of Cilicia, Dec. 29.

THE INDIAN CONCEPT OF THE SANCTITY OF THE FAMILY IS NOBLE AND ONE SHOULD NOT EMULATE THE WESTERN APPROACH HERE IN INDIA, SAID THE GENERAL SECRETARY OF NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN THE USA REV. DR. MICHAEL KINNAMON. He was replying to the reception that the Catholicos of the East Baselios Marthoma Paulose II offered at the Catholicate Palace, Devalokam, Kottayam.

Dr. Michael Kinnamon, a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) clergyman and a long-time educator and ecumenical leader, is the ninth General Secretary of the National Council of Churches in USA.

"The Indian culture is exemplary and is good to follow for the world. I thankfully remember the Orthodox faithful in the USA, who have contributed commendably to the suffering ones at Haiti at the aftermath of the earthquake," he said.

"The greatest gift that I received from India is my adopted daughter 'Anna Kapila' at the age of five months. At present she is 28 years old and is working as Manager of a Department Store at New York," he said.

Dr. Michael Kinnamon presented a copy of the Green Bible to the Pontiff. Interchurch Relations Committee Secretary Fr. Abraham Thomas, Fr. Dr. Regi Mathew, Fr. John Thomas Karingattil, Fr. P.A. Philip, Fr. M.K. Kurian, Fr. Yuhanon John and Prof. P.C. Aleas attended the visitation. – *The Indian Orthodox Herald*, Dec. 1.

THE HONORABLE HIGH COURT OF KERALA ASKED THE MALANKARA ORTHODOX SYRIAN CHURCH AND THE JACOBITE FACTION TO EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITY OF RESOLVING THE DECADES-OLD FACTIONAL FEUD BETWEEN THEM THROUGH MEDIATION.

Advocates from both factions have to consult with each other as well as with their clients and have to inform the court of the outcome. The court also opined that if unity is not possible, a separation with goodwill and mutual respect should also be possible.

Problems did not subside even after various courts tried to settle the disputes amiably. Disputes within courtrooms that began in 1890 and continued until the PMA Metropolitan case in the honorable Supreme Court in 2001, continue even unto this day.

Seventy cases exist in the First Additional District Court, Ernakulam, a special court established per Government orders, to settle litigations between these two warring

factions. Seventy appeals are pending at the High Court. Various courts at Ernakulam, Trissur, and Idukki have another seventy more pending cases. More cases are possibly pending at other courts in the State of Kerala.

The court does not propose a *modus operandi* to solve the cases. Clients shall find an answer through suggestions and advises from mediators. They shall inform the court within two weeks considering the nature of cases. Who are acceptable mediators is also a matter that interests the court.

Division Bench including Justice Thottathil Radhakrishnan and Justice P. Bhavadasan issued this verdict regarding the case on Sehion Orthodox Church, Onakkoor, Ernakulam District.

Unfortunately there exists a separation also between lay people in the Orthodox and Jacobite factions. Allusions thereto exist in the verdicts from Supreme Court and other courts. Interestingly there is no dispute among Christian priests or laity on the importance or meaning of Jesus Christ or of the Cross, the court observes. – *The Indian Orthodox Herald*, Dec. 1.

THE METROPOLITAN OF THE NORTH EAST AMERICAN DIOCESE, MATHEWS MAR BARNABAS, HAS EXPRESSED HIS DESIRE TO AVAIL RETIREMENT FROM ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES OF THE DIOCESE. This was officially conveyed to the Catholicos and Malankara Metropolitan in a special epistle.

The senior Metropolitan of the North East American Diocese communicated his wish to retire in front of the diocesan council that assembled on December 29 and he has intimated on his decision to all priests of the diocese in a separate Kalpana.

Final decision upon this matter has to come from the Malankara Metropolitan. If the letter gets accepted, the constitutional need will arise to convene the Holy Episcopal Synod to discuss the issue. Thereupon the Church Managing Committee will discuss and conclude upon the appointment of a new Metropolitan of the North East American Diocese. Moreover, if the resignation letter gets accepted, the Malankara Metropolitan will take charge of the diocese. Consequently he can depute one of the Metropolitans to administer the diocese until a Metropolitan is officially appointed. Since there is an Auxiliary Metropolitan for the North East American Diocese, this duty will most probably be bestowed upon him, namely upon Metropolitan Zachariah Mar Nicholavos.

It was in 1993 that the then Malankara Managing Committee released Metropoli-

tan Mathews Mar Barnabas from his responsibilities with the Diocese of Idukki to entrust him with reins of the American Diocese. The Malankara Orthodox faithful in America respectfully received the personality of Mar Barnabas that was clad in prayer and piety. His leadership was very productive and instrumental in many ways. It is definitely his achievement that the initiatives from the times of Dr. Thomas Mar Makarios, the first Metropolitan of American Diocese, were positively guided towards perfection.

The American Diocese found her abodes first in Queens and then after her division into two dioceses, namely the North East American Diocese and South West American Diocese, at Mutton Town, New York. These achievements are golden feathers on the cap of Metropolitan Mar Barnabas. It shall be recorded in the annals of history that through his exceptional ability Metropolitan Mar Barnabas was able to inspire and guide a generation that was born and brought up in the United States towards the leadership of the Church, precisely towards the Holy Priesthood. – *The Indian Orthodox Herald*, Dec. 31.

The Catholic Churches

LEADERS OF THE SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH (SMC), GETTING READY TO CELEBRATE THE BIRTH CENTENARY OF POPE LEO XIII, SAY THE PONTIFF HELPED THEIR CHURCH GROW WITH A NEW IDENTITY.

“The Syro-Malabar Church remembers Pope Leo XIII with a deep sense of gratitude,” says Father Raphael Ambadan, a Church historian in Kerala, where the Oriental Church is based.

Pope Leo XIII gave the Syro-Malabar Catholics independence and freed them from a Latin archdiocese’s control, the priest told ucanews.com yesterday.

In 1887, the Pope set up two vicariates exclusively for the Syro-Malabar Catholics who trace their faith to Saint Thomas the Apostle. For centuries these Catholics had been under Latin jurisdiction.

Father Ambadan says the establishment of the vicariates “had a tremendous impact on the Syro-Malabar Christians.”

The SMC grew rapidly and in 1923 Rome set up a separate hierarchy for the Church.

“Thereafter, numerous dioceses and congregations came up,” Ambadan said, adding that Pope Leo encouraged a missionary spirit among the natives.

SMC now has some 3.5 million people spread across 29 dioceses, including one in

northern America.

Father Ambadan, who teaches in St. Joseph’s Pontifical Seminary, Alwaye, recalled the Pope’s observation about the future of the Indian Church.

“My dear Indians, salvation should come through your own missionaries. You should not depend on Western missionaries at all.”

Father Alex Tharamangalam, rector of St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Kottayam, says the Pope’s conciliatory attitude helped resolve inter-rite disputes in the Indian Church.

“He always solved disputes through dialogue and love. His impact on the Syro-Malabar Church is incalculable,” he told a seminar the Kerala Church organized on Nov. 27 to mark the bicentenary.

Father Stephen Alathara, deputy secretary general of the Kerala Catholic Bishops’ Council, told the seminar that Pope Leo had repeatedly stressed the need for the SMC Catholics to follow their rituals and practices instead of joining the Latin rite. – *ICNS*, Dec. 1.

THE TENTH HOLY EPISCOPAL SYNOD OF THE SYRO-MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH THAT BEGAN ON 29 NOVEMBER, AT THE MAJOR ARCHBISHOP’S HOUSE, TRIVANDRUM CONCLUDED ON 2 DECEMBER 2010. His Beatitude Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis Catholicos presided over the Synod. During the Synod His Grace Thomas Mar Koorilos, Archbishop of Tiruvalla, who completed his term of five years, was re-elected the Secretary of the Holy Episcopal Synod.

The Holy Episcopal Synod deliberated on topics such as the Major Archiepiscopal Assembly, the restructuring of the Synodal Commissions, the act of promulgation of the Code of Particular Canons of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church, rights and obligations of the Curia Bishop, the construction of the Catholicate Centre, the formation of the Permanent Deacons, etc. The pastoral care of the Tamil-speaking Malankara Catholics in Tamil Nadu outside the Eparchy of Marthandom, and of the Malankarites in Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Malaysia was also discussed. It was decided that the Malankara Catholic Priests’ Meeting shall be organized on 1 and 2 March 2011 at St. John’s Cathedral, Tiruvalla. The Holy Synod also decided to hold the first Malankara Catholic Assembly from 21 to 23 September 2011, on the occasion of the 81st Re-union Day Celebrations at the Catholicate Centre, in Trivandrum. – Press Release, Syro-Malankara Catholic Church, Dec. 2.

ARCHBISHOP ROGER L. SCHWIETZ OF ANCHORAGE, ALASKA, AND A SMALL DELEGATION WERE RECENTLY IN RUSSIA TO ATTEND A THREE-DAY CELEBRATION TO MARK THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF A CATHOLIC PARISH IN THE EASTERN SIBERIAN PORT CITY OF MAGADAN.

The Church of the Nativity, a mission parish of the Archdiocese of Anchorage, was established in an area that is the site of the former Soviet gulags. Its pastor is Father Michael Shields.

Retired Archbishop Francis T. Hurley of Anchorage helped establish the mission in 1990, around the time of the fall of the Soviet Union. The city is a four-hour plane ride across the Bering Sea from Anchorage.

The anniversary celebration, held during the first week of November, began with a pro-life conference and included a Mass, attended by more than 150 parishioners and visitors, who included religious and lay guests from Russia, the United States and France.

The local Magadan choir also presented a musical concert honoring the survivors of communist repression in the former Soviet Union. Each of the survivors was given a cross to represent their suffering, as was Bishop Cyril Klimowcz of Irkutsk, whose family had been exiled and suffered for their faith.

Among those who addressed the gathering was the first Catholic bishop of the region, Bishop Joseph Werth of Novosibirsk. The area covered by his diocese extends from the Ural Mountains -- directly north of eastern Iran -- across to the Sea of Japan and up to Alaska; it is 5,000 miles long, 2,000 miles wide and contains nine of the world's 24 time zones. Magadan is 4,000 miles northeast of Novosibirsk.

The Russian Orthodox bishop of the area also hosted a meal for participants.

Representatives of other denominations in Magadan thanked the Catholic community for its "faithfulness and brotherhood."

In January 1991, the Catholics in Magadan, few in number but determined, petitioned and received recognition from the government as a Catholic community. Archbishop Hurley assisted them, saying that one day they would have a bishop and a priest from their own country.

In September 1991, Bishop Werth was named apostolic administrator of Siberia and eastern Russia. In 2002, the Diocese of Novosibirsk was created, with Bishop Werth as its head. He is a native of Kazakhstan, just southwest of Novosibirsk.

Archbishop Hurley, who has made

several trips to Magadan, had planned to attend the anniversary event, but he was still recuperating from heart surgery he underwent in September. *CNS*, Dec. 7.

DECLAN MURPHY, PH.D, HAS BEEN NAMED ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS (USCCB) OFFICE OF NATIONAL COLLECTIONS AND DIRECTOR OF THE COLLECTION FOR AID TO THE CHURCH IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE. Murphy previously served as president of the Eurasian Cultural Fund, a foundation that supported faith-based civil society initiatives in Russia and Eastern Europe, deputy director of the Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies at the Smithsonian Institution and Russia and Eastern Europe special projects manager at the Library of Congress.

"Dr. Murphy will be an excellent addition to the Office of National Collections staff," said Patrick Markey, executive director of the USCCB Office of National Collections. "It will not be easy to replace Father Jim McCann, but Dr. Murphy has deep knowledge of the history and culture of the region, especially the former Soviet Union and the Balkan Peninsula. He also has a great love for the Church in the region, which the USCCB is dedicated to supporting. We are looking forward to the vision and direction he will bring to our work."

Last May, Pope Benedict XVI appointed Father James McCann, SJ, to be rector of the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome. During his seven years of service to the USCCB, Father McCann greatly increased the quantity and the quality of the grant program.

The USCCB Office of National Collections manages eight of the national collections held in Catholic parishes throughout the year. The Collection for the Church in Central and Eastern Europe received over \$7.6 million dollars in donations from 147 U.S. dioceses in 2009. The bishops' Subcommittee on Central and Eastern Europe approved 320 grants for 28 countries in the region for a total of \$6,563,486.

Murphy holds a Ph.D. in Russian history from Princeton University, and a MBA from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. He comes to the bishops' Conference from the University of Sacramento where he was dean of the College of Business Administration. He is fluent in Russian and speaks Serbo-Croatian. Murphy will begin his new position December 13, 2010.

As director of the USCCB work for Aid to the Church in Central and Eastern

Europe, Murphy will be responsible for the bishops' grant initiative for the Church in the region, which includes the former Soviet Union. His responsibilities include supervising the grant making process, assessing the needs of the grantees, and maintaining effective relationships with the appropriate Church leadership in those countries. – USCCB Press Release, Dec. 13.

SYRIAN CATHOLIC PATRIARCH IGNATIUS JOSEPH III YOUNAN CALLED ON THE IRAQI GOVERNMENT TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF ALL IRAQI CITIZENS, ESPECIALLY CHRISTIANS, "WHO ARE DEFENSELESS, HONEST AND PEACEFUL PEOPLE."

In his homily at a Dec. 10 memorial Mass in Baghdad that venerated the "46 new martyrs" of the Syrian Catholic Church, the Patriarch said the presence of government officials at the liturgy "helped to inspire some trust and feelings of some protection" for the faithful, despite a prevailing mood of being anxious for the future "since the cover-up of the terror targeting Iraqi Christians is still going on after such a period of time."

The Patriarch, who fled from Beirut for the Mass, reminded those present of the pleas of all Christians in Iraq and abroad, "that it is the responsibility of the Iraqi government to carry out proper and thorough investigations to uncover the terrorist groups who did plan and finance the carnage, of whatever religious or political allegiance they may be, and to bring them publically to justice."

"We need deeds and not just ... promises, that our Christian faithful feel really safe in their churches, houses and places of work. They also need the government to ensure equality in the work places, since the Christians fear vengeance and harassment from many fundamentalist and self-proclaimed leaders in parts of the city as well in the civil and administrative areas," he said.

Fifty-eight people died in the attack on the Syrian Catholic Church in Baghdad Oct. 31 after military officials tried to end a terrorist siege of the church.

In an e-mail to Catholic News Service, the Patriarch said the December memorial Mass was "a time of grace, sorrow and hope."

He said he experienced "profound consolation to witness the faith of thousands of Iraqi Christians who challenged threats and overcame fear in order to prove their commitment and love for the ultimate sacrifice of their brothers and sisters, including their two young priests ... who gave themselves

courageously as the first martyrs to be savagely slaughtered during Sunday Mass."

The Mass, the Patriarch told CNS, was attended by many prominent Shiite Muslim leaders and government representatives, four ambassadors to Iraq, as well as church officials, including Archbishop Giorgio Lingua, apostolic nuncio to Iraq and Jordan. – Doreen Abi Raad for *CNS*, Dec. 14.

ONLY A UNITED CHURCH, THE FRUIT OF THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT, WILL BE ABLE TO RESPOND TO THE CHALLENGES OF AN INCREASINGLY GLOBALIZED WORLD, TO GIVE ANSWERS WHICH HIGHLIGHT THE ETHICAL FOUNDATION OF SOCIAL COEXISTENCE. It is therefore important that all the faithful feel involved in the ecumenical movement. Speaking to *Asia-News*, the new president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Cardinal Kurt Koch, highlights these points on his return from Istanbul, where he attended celebrations for the apostle Andrew, patron saint of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

The cardinal does not hide the difficulties that exist in dialogue, but emphasizes that the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, as *Sister Churches*, which resumed after the historic meeting between Pope Paul VI and Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras, can now depend on the solid foundations of love and friendship created between Rome and Constantinople. The cardinal also plans to visit other Patriarchs and Orthodox churches.

Q: The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity was founded 50 years ago. What was achieved in this period in dialogue between Catholics and Orthodox?

A: During these 50 years there has been a great effort in Ecumenism, and the meeting between Pope Paul VI and Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras was the turning point of the great beginning of our journey together. Of course we still haven't arrived at full unity and there is still much to do. But it is especially necessary today to deepen the dialogue of charity and truth. I think the dialogue of charity and friendship is the foundation of true ecumenism. Without friendship and love, together, dialogue between the two sister Churches cannot go on. And so I think the great friendship that characterized relations between Rome and Constantinople is now a reason to look at the future with optimism.

Q: On November 30, as head of the Vatican delegation you visited the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, which is the driving force of the ecumenical dialogue in the Orthodox world. This was a visit

of courtesy or was it an attempt to redefine the importance of ecumenical dialogue after the meeting in Vienna?

A: First of all we attended the great liturgy for the patron saint of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Apostle Andrew. It was a wonderful experience, my meeting with Patriarch Bartholomew, whom I respect as a man of deep spirituality and noble kindness, was moving. This was followed by a meeting between the delegation of the Patriarchate and ours and we considered the future of the dialogue. In Vienna there were some difficulties, but I'm sure we can find a way to proceed in a positive way.

Q: It is said that after Vienna dialogue will focus more on the theological rather than historical aspect.

A: About two years ago, we embarked on a mainly historical approach, but we realized that the Orthodox have a different way of dealing with history, than we Catholics. Since the questions are very difficult and there is need for expert historians, the Orthodox have proposed a text on the theological primacy and collegiality. Collegiality is a major theme for the Orthodox, and for Catholics the major theme is the primacy. The great challenge for the future is how to see these two great realities together.

Q: How does the Catholic world view the Orthodox world today?

A: I think that when we meet with the Orthodox, we feel at home. This is because the Orthodox have maintained the structures, the mentality and vision of the ancient Church. We Catholics are in danger of forgetting this reality. Although the break with these ancient Orthodox Churches took place more than a millennium ago, I feel at home when I visit them.

With the Protestants, even though we are separated by just 400 years, it is another reality.

Q: What response should be given to those minority Catholics and Orthodox, who are opposed to any initiative in favor of ecumenical dialogue?

A: Even among Catholics there are those minorities who do not want ecumenism. But I think the first challenge in an increasingly globalized world, is that the Church must breathe, as John Paul II said, with both lungs, that of the East and the West. Therefore ecumenical dialogue is a source of enrichment for all.

Q: In an increasingly globalized world, with a clear social economic and ethical crisis, how can a divided church provide answers?

A: It is important in today's world, a world of globalization, that Christianity be

a global reality. Consequently, even in ecumenism, being able to speak with one language is a specific need of our time, in order to address all the socio-political and ethical challenges. Because if the Church does not have a single language, she will not have anything to say to our society. This is why the very presence of churches in society depends on the ecumenical movement. The foundation of our ecumenism is our faith, our beliefs and our baptism. In this sense, we first need to identify ourselves as Christians and then as Catholic or Orthodox, in the sense of belonging to the two churches - and not the Protestant denominations as they say - which have the apostolic tradition in common. – *Asia News*, Dec. 17.

ARCHBISHOP JOHN BUKOVSKY, WHO HELPED SHAPE VATICAN POLICY IN EASTERN EUROPE FOR DECADES AT THE VATICAN SECRETARIAT OF STATE AND IN DIPLOMATIC ASSIGNMENTS TO ROMANIA AND RUSSIA, DIED DEC. 18 IN TECHNY AT THE AGE OF 86.

A memorial Mass was scheduled for Dec. 22 in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit in the Techny Towers Conference and Retreat Center. The archbishop's funeral Mass and burial was to take place in the church of his baptism in Nitra, Slovakia.

A priest of the Society of the Divine Word since 1950, Archbishop Bukovsky was the first apostolic nuncio in post-communist Romania and the first papal delegate in post-communist Russia. A naturalized U.S. citizen, he spoke nine languages fluently, including Polish, German, Russian, English, French and his native Slovak.

Divine Word Father Thomas Krosnicki, a friend and former student, said Archbishop Bukovsky was well suited for his post in the Secretariat of State, where he worked on the Eastern European desk from 1973 to 1990, because of "his cultural background, his language abilities and his diplomatic talents -- in the best sense of the word."

Born Jan. 18, 1924, in Cerov-Lieskove, Czechoslovakia, John Bukovsky entered the Divine Word high school seminary in Nitra in 1939 at age 15. Recognizing his intellectual abilities, the international religious order of missionary priests and brothers sent him to Chicago to complete his philosophical and theological education for the priesthood.

A few months after his November 1947 arrival, however, a communist government took control in Czechoslovakia, revoked the seminarian's passport and ordered him home. He remained in the United

States and would not be able to return to his homeland for 20 years.

"He never forgot the kindness of (Chicago) Mayor Richard J. Daley," said Divine Word Father Mark Weber, provincial superior of the order's Chicago province, where Archbishop Bukovsky lived for the past five years.

Daley made arrangements for the seminarian to travel to Canada, where he obtained an immigrant's visa, which allowed him to stay in the United States.

Ordained a Divine Word priest in December 1950, he became a naturalized U.S. citizen within a few years.

After earning a graduate degree in theology from The Catholic University of America in 1952, then-Father Bukovsky taught sacred Scripture at St. Mary's Seminary in Techny, pursued postgraduate studies at the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute and studied Scripture at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, completing his second licentiate in 1966.

He was appointed rector of the Techny seminary in 1967 but served only six months before his election to the Society of the Divine Word General Council in Rome. As soon as he completed his six-year term

on the council, Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, then Vatican secretary of state, asked the priest to join his staff.

As a staff member of the Vatican's Council for Public Affairs of the Church, Father Bukovsky frequently traveled to Eastern Europe to assess the needs of Catholics and explore opportunities for diplomacy between the Vatican and the nations visited, including Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Romania.

He made 20 trips to Romania alone to meet with government officials as the Vatican's special East European envoy, and when the Vatican and Romania restored diplomatic relations after more than 40 years, he was named apostolic nuncio to Romania and titular archbishop of Tabahta on Oct. 13, 1990.

In that position, he reclaimed Vatican property, worked closely with the local clergy and re-established the nunciature building, which had been used by the communists as a prison and torture center.

Pope John Paul II named him as papal delegate in Moscow on Dec. 20, 1994, a few years after the Soviet Union was dissolved. He held that post until Feb. 14, 2000, when he reached the mandatory re-

tirement age under church law.

He remained active in retirement, however, serving as a member of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and a consultant to the Secretariat of State's Section for Relations with States. He also published a book in Slovak about his experiences as a Vatican diplomat.

During the early years of his retirement, Archbishop Bukovsky lived near Vienna at the St. Gabriel Mission House of the Society of the Divine Word. He returned to Techny in 2005. – CNS, Dec. 21.

ON DECEMBER 29, HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XVI APPOINTED: - As members of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches: His Beatitude Cardinal Antonios Naguib, Patriarch of Alexandria of the Copts, Egypt; Cardinal Francesco Monterisi, archpriest of the papal basilica of St. Paul's Outside-the-Walls, and Cardinal Kurt Koch.

- As members of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity: Cardinal Donald William Wuerl, and Cardinal Angelo Amato S.D.B. – VIS, Dec. 29.



Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk with Catholicos Karekin II of All Armenians, December 2011

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