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New Primates of the Maronite and Ukrainian Greek Catholic Churches

MARONITE BISHOPS FROM AROUND THE WORLD WILL GATHER BEGINNING MARCH 9 FOR A SYNOD TO ELECT THE 77TH PATRIARCH OF THE MARONITE CATHOLIC CHURCH in Bkerke, Lebanon, the Patriarchal seat of the Maronites.

Pope Benedict XVI officially accepted the resignation of Cardinal Nasrallah P. Sfeir Feb. 26. The still-energetic cardinal, 90, resigned because of his age.

The Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches says the election of a new Patriarch must be completed within two months of a vacancy.

The synod will be presided over by the longest-serving Maronite bishop, in this case Bishop Roland Aboujaoude, Patriarchal administrator. The synod has 41 members, including the Patriarch.

Four rounds of elections will take place on a daily basis over a 15-day period.

A quorum of two-thirds of the attending bishops is needed for a new Patriarch to be elected.

A statement from Patriarchal headquarters said two bishops will miss the synod because of illness: retired Bishops John Chedid of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles and Stephen Doueihy of St. Maron of Brooklyn.

If the synod fails to elect a Patriarch after 15 days, the issue is put before the Vatican and the Pope must make a decision. If a bishop is elected, the synod declares him Patriarch and the Vatican is informed by the new Patriarch formally requesting to enter into communion with the Pope. – Doreen Abi Raad for *CNS*, March 8.

BKERKE, THE SEAT OF THE MARONITE PATRIARCHATE, LOCKED ITS DOORS WEDNESDAY AT 6:30 P.M. IN ISOLATION FROM THE OUTSIDE WORLD TO PREPARE FOR THE ELECTION of a successor

to Patriarch Nasrallah Butros Sfeir, the head of Lebanon's influential eastern Catholic Church.

The first electoral rounds will begin Friday morning or afternoon after a secretary general -- to preside over electoral rounds -- and a committee to sort out votes is elected Thursday by the Synod of Bishops following hours of prayers.

Former Kesrouan MP Farid Haykal Khazen and former ambassador Amin Khazen locked the Patriarchate's doors to visitors. By tradition, members of the Khazen family stand guard in Bkerke until a Patriarch is elected.

The tradition began in 1703 when a member of the Khazen family used to guard the monastery, which was then under construction, before it became the seat of the Patriarchate in 1823.

Before the doors were locked, the bishops, headed by Sfeir, gathered in the Patriarchate's church to voice prayers with the participation of the Vatican's ambassador, Gabriel Caccia.

As the doors were closed, all Bkerke's telecommunications were shut down, including landline phones and Internet access. Special equipment to jam cellular phone signals within the Patriarchate perimeter was also deployed.

When asked about the circumstances governing the electoral process, the bishops were unanimous in calling for the Holy Spirit to inspire them to elect the best candidate.

Earlier in the day, politicians and state officials flocked to Bkerke in farewell visits to Sfeir with Free Patriotic Movement leader Michel Aoun among the high-profile attendees.

Separately, France's ambassador to Lebanon, Denis Pietton, handed the Patriarch a letter from President Nicolas Sarkozy praising Sfeir's role during his 25-year tenure. – *The Daily Star*, March 10.

CHURCH BELLS RANG, HORNS BLASTED AND FIRECRACKERS ECHOED THROUGHOUT LEBANON AS IT WAS ANNOUNCED THAT BISHOP BECHARA RAI

OF JBEIL, LEBANON, HAD BEEN ELECTED THE NEW PATRIARCH OF THE MARONITE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

Patriarch Rai, 71, known for his courage to speak the truth, is seen as someone who can unite Maronite Catholics, who have been divided along political party lines.

The Patriarch's election was announced March 15. Elections began March 11, after the Maronite synod spent two days in spiritual retreat and reflection. He replaces Cardinal Nasrallah P. Sfeir, 90, who retired because of age.

Father Joseph Mouawad, vicar general of Jbeil, predicted Patriarch Rai would unite Maronite Catholics and begin a pastoral renewal of the church.

"I think his first mission will be to confirm us in our faith here in Lebanon and, as head of the church, he will try to unite Christians, the different parties, and to consolidate the communion among the Maronites," Father Mouawad said.

"He has a deep spirituality, and he is very sociable and open to the others, and he has great courage. He says the truth even if someone doesn't want to listen to it," Father Mouawad said.

"I think on a national level in Lebanon, he will work to conserve the country as one of conviviality of all religions -- between Christian and Muslims," the priest added.

Of Lebanon's population of nearly 4 million, approximately 33 percent are Christian. Of the approximately 5.5 million Maronite Catholics worldwide, approximately 1 million live in Lebanon.

Syrian Catholic Patriarch Ignatius Youssef III Younan called the new Patriarch "a good friend, an outstanding leader and well-gifted bishop."

"His intense spirituality, solid formation and openness of heart will be, God willing, a tremendous asset to reunite all Catholic Maronites in Lebanon, in the Middle Eastern countries and in the church," said Patriarch Younan.

Maronite Father Joseph Mouannes, secretary of the communications commission for Catholic bishops of the Middle

East, called the election "really the choice of the Holy Spirit. And a great choice."

"He has done a lot for dialogue between Muslims and Christians. He was always the voice of truth, the voice of dignity, of freedom and respect," Father Mouannes said.

The new Patriarch has served as president of the Lebanese bishops' communications committee and hosted a weekly program on Telelumiere, Lebanon's Christian television station. The program, "Boushra al Rahi," which means "Good News of the Shepherd," provided commentary and teaching on that Sunday's Gospel, and the Patriarch encouraged listeners to live the Scriptures in a practical way.

Maronite Father Camille Mubarak, dean of the faculty of political science at Beirut's Sagesse University, said Patriarch Rai "can resolve many problems, politically and socially." He predicted the Patriarch would "try to make peace between Christians first (the political parties), and then he will try to make peace among all the people of Lebanon."

The priest added, "We know when we go to his office, we can see a simple man, a kind man who can talk with anybody with great attention."

"He's a good teacher and a good diplomat," Father Mubarak said.

Mohammad Sammak, secretary-general of Lebanon's Christian-Muslim Committee for Dialogue, said Patriarch Rai has an ability to transcend divisions.

"I think he can play a very constructive role for the future of Christians in the Middle East," Sammak said.

Patriarch Rai "is known for being very courageous in expressing his point of view, and actually he speaks out what he believes in. That's why it is easy to deal with him, because he's honest with himself," he added.

At his request, Patriarch Rai will officially be installed on the feast of the Annunciation, March 25. Catholic Patriarchs do not have their elections confirmed by the Pope, but the new Patriarch will request and receive spiritual communion from Pope Benedict XVI.

The 77th Patriarch of the Maronite Catholic Church said "Communion and Charity" would be his motto.

He was born Feb. 25, 1940, in Himlaya, Lebanon. He was ordained a priest of the Maronite Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary Sept. 3, 1967, and was made a bishop in 1986. He has served as bishop of Jbeil since 1990. — Doreen Abi Raad for *CNS*, March 15.

THIS IS THE LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XVI TO HIS BEATITUDE BECHARA BOUTROS RAI, PATRIARCH OF ANTIOCH FOR MARONITES, ACCEPTING HIS REQUEST FOR ECCLESIASTICAL COMMUNION:

The election of Your Beatitude to the Patriarchal See of Antioch for Maronites is a very special event for the whole Church and I receive your request for Ecclesiastical Communion with great joy. The whole Church, particularly the Maronite Church, gives thanks to the Blessed Trinity for the gift she has been granted in you, Your Beatitude.

I address to you my most fraternal and cordial congratulations. My fervent prayer is raised to Christ Our Lord and our God, that he may accompany you in carrying out this new mission.

I wholeheartedly grant to you, venerable Brother, the Ecclesiastical Communion, in conformity with the Tradition and the wishes of the Catholic Church. Being united with the Successor of Peter from the beginning is a cause of pride for your Church. Peter was called by Jesus to keep his One Church in unity, truth and love. In accordance with a beautiful and ancient tradition, the name of Peter has been added to the Patriarch's first name.

I am certain, Your Beatitude, that with the good advice of your Predecessor, H.B. Cardinal Nasrallah Pierre Sfeir, and the collaboration of the Fathers of your Patriarchal Synod, in communion with the Episcopal College and above all with the power of Christ who, with his Resurrection triumphed over evil and death, you will have all the zeal, illuminated by wisdom and tempered by prudence, that you need to guide the Maronite Church. She will be able to go forth to the encounter with her Spouse, Our Saviour, clad in the glory of St Maron and of the throngs of Lebanese Saints, St Charbel, St Nimatullah, St Rafqa and Bl. Estéphan.

May the Lord help you in your ministry as "Father and Head" to proclaim the word that saves, so that it may be lived and celebrated in accordance with ancient spiritual and liturgical traditions of the Maronite Church! May all the faithful who are entrusted to you find consolation in your fatherly care!

May the Holy Mother of God, Our Lady of Lebanon, the Virgin of the Annunciation whose baptismal name you bear, make you a herald of unity so that the Lebanese nation — also thanks to the contribution of all the religious communities present in your country and with ecumenical and interreligious enthusiasm — may

play its role of solidarity and peace in the East and throughout the world.

I greet you, Your Beatitude, "with the kiss of love" (1 Pt 5:14), in the Lord Jesus, the Good and Eternal Shepherd, and, as I assure my prayers for the whole Church entrusted to your care, I impart to you and to everyone, Bishops, priests, men and women religious and the faithful, my Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican 24 March 2011
BENEDICTUS P P. XVI

THE NEW PATRIARCH OF THE MARONITE CATHOLIC CHURCH PLEDGED TO WORK WITH MUSLIMS, NOTING THAT LEBANON IS A COUNTRY OF PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN MUSLIMS AND CHRISTIANS.

Patriarch Bechara Rai said that, for the sake of communion and love, he would work "to establish a sincere and complete dialogue" with Muslims "and build together a future in common life and cooperation."

Thousands of people, accepting the open invitation from Bkerke, the Patriarchal seat of the Maronite church, flocked to witness the Patriarch's enthronement.

They came from all over Lebanon, many arriving in convoys of buses decorated with pictures of the new Patriarch, papal flags waving from windows. The Patriarchate said people filled all 16,000 seats outside the domed church on the sprawling grounds.

Crowds cheered and ululated as the new Patriarch made his way on the red carpet followed by his predecessor, 90-year-old Cardinal Nasrallah P. Sfeir, who resigned in February because of his age.

In his homily, Patriarch Rai called attention to the significance of the date, March 25, the feast of the Annunciation, pointing out that it was instituted in 2010 as a national holiday in Lebanon because it is holy to Christians and Muslims.

The Patriarch also noted the special meaning of the Annunciation for him personally, as he was baptized on the feast at the Church of Our Lady of the Annunciation in the village of Chouya, Lebanon, 71 years ago. His name, "Bechara," means "Annunciation" in Arabic.

The new Patriarch referred often to "communion and love," which he chose as the motto for his Patriarchal ministry.

He lamented how Lebanon's diversity of religions had become "tainted by political and partisan colors that have stripped them of their sanctity, the purity of their faith and the spirituality of their religion."

Patriarch Rai takes leadership of the Maronite Catholic Church during a period

of political divisions in Lebanon, particularly among Christians.

The new Patriarch warned that Lebanon "is not for one religion, party or group alone, and it should not be monopolized by any, because the monopolization of Lebanon by a single group would represent humiliation to all and a loss to the country whose greatness lies in the diversity of its spiritual families and their richness."

He said he was following events surrounding the unrest sweeping the Arab region with anxiety and was praying for stability and peace.

Patriarch Rai said his predecessor "struggled with insistence to free both the national decision-making and the land of Lebanon from all forms of tutelage and occupation, worked for reconciliation in Mount Lebanon and realized needed church reforms."

"All of these constitute an extension of the church's springtime started by the Second Vatican Council," he said.

Patriarch Rai called upon the intercession of St. Rafqa -- who, like the Patriarch, was born in Himlaya, Lebanon -- and her mission of suffering. He said he relies on the merits of the blood of the martyrs of Lebanon, the intercession of its saints, and the prayers of the sick, the handicapped and the elderly "who join their suffering to the redemptive suffering of Christ."

The Patriarch also said the youth, and the nation's 1.3 million students are "our future and the hope of our church and homeland."

"Our concern is also the family -- the essential cell of our society and the natural and first school of our values -- and the 'domestic church' which educates in faith and prayer," he said.

Among those seated inside the church for the enthronement Mass were Lebanese President Michel Sleiman, a Maronite Catholic; caretaker Prime Minister Saad Hariri and Prime Minister-designate Nagib Mikati, Sunni Muslims; and Speaker of the House Nabih Berri, a Shiite Muslim; rival politicians, including a representative from Hezbollah; diplomats, dignitaries, Patriarchs and other religious officials; nuns and priests. -- Doreen Abi Raad for *CNS*, March 28.

THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS OF THE UKRAINIAN GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH FOR THE ELECTION OF THE MAJOR ARCHBISHOP BEGINS ITS WORK ON 21 MARCH AT PATRIARCH JOSEF SLIPYJ RETREAT CENTER IN LVIV-BRIUKHOVYCHI. 40 bishops of UGCC from all over the world came here to attend the event.

All the members of the Synod of Bishops have active votes in the election. Each bishop is entitled to one vote. Voting through an assistant or by sending a letter is prohibited. Only members of the synod, the secretary and the counting committee can be present in the election room.

Usually, it is necessary to receive two thirds of the votes in order to be elected. The Particular Law of UGCC reduces this requirement to an absolute majority after twelve futile votes. When the requirement is reduced to the absolute majority, the number of candidates should be reduced to the two with the largest number of votes.

The elected person will have two days to accept or reject the choice. Rejection will lead to complete loss of these rights; however, the person can be reelected. The elected bishop will send his own letter to the Pope for the approval of the election. After receiving the confirmation, he makes the confession of faith and oath to zealously fulfill his responsibility before the Synod of Bishops. After the proclamation of his election, the enthronement of the new head of the UGCC will be held according to the liturgical books. -- *RISU*, March 21.

MOST REVEREND SVIATOSLAV SHEVCHUK HAS BEEN ELECTED MAJOR ARCHBISHOP AT AN ELECTORAL SYNOD OF BISHOPS OF THE UKRAINIAN GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH in Lviv/Bruhovitchi 21-24 March 2011, in accord with the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches and the Particular Law of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC).

His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI confirmed and blessed the election of Bishop Sviatoslav according to the decision of the Electoral Synod of Bishops of the UGCC on 23 March.

Since March 2010, Bishop Sviatoslav, 40 years old, has been the Apostolic Administrator of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy (Diocese) of the Protection of the Mother of God in Argentina.

His Beatitude Sviatoslav, the newly elected Head of the UGCC made his profession of faith and promise to carry out faithfully his office in the presence of the bishops of the Electoral Synod.

The ceremonies of the enthronement of His Beatitude Sviatoslav as Major Archbishop of Kyiv-Halych will take place in Kyiv (Ukraine), on Sunday, 27 March, during the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy at the Patriarchal Sobor of the Holy Resurrection of Christ. This Divine Liturgy will bring to completion the Electoral Synod.

The Electoral Synod followed a day of

prayer and reflection by the membership of the Synod. Sunday, 20 March, Archbishop Ihor along with the bishops celebrated a Divine Liturgy at the Cathedral Sobor of St. George, in Lviv. After the Divine Liturgy the bishops visited the crypt at St. George's Cathedral and prayed at the tombs of the Servant of God Metropolitan Andriy Sheptytsky, Patriarch Josyf Slipij, Major Archbishop Myroslav Ivan Cardinal Lubabivsky as well as other church leaders of the UGCC. Very Rev. Doctor Borys Gudziak, rector of the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv led the bishops in their day of spiritual reflection.

Forty bishops of the UGCC under the leadership of Archbishop Ihor took part in the Electoral Synod. All of the ruling bishops of the UGCC from Ukraine, Poland, Germany, France, Italy, England, Canada, United States of America, Brazil, Argentina and Australia were in attendance. Five emeritus bishops of the UGCC also participated in the Synod. Including the emeritus bishops there are a total of 50 Ukrainian Greek Catholic bishops worldwide, with more than seven and a half million faithful.

The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church is the largest Eastern Church in full union with the Holy See. On 30 March 1991, Major Archbishop Myroslav Ivan Cardinal Lubachivsky ended his exile in Rome and returned to Lviv. The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church ended its forced clandestine existence in 1989 after a period of more than 40 years of persecution by the Soviet authorities.

His Beatitude Sviatoslav was born in Striy, Ukraine on 5 May 1970. Between 1991-1992 he studied at the Don Bosko Center for Philosophy and Theology in Buenos Aires, Argentina and then later at Holy Spirit Seminary in Lviv 1992-1994. He was ordained a deacon for the Archeparchy (Archdiocese) of Lviv on 21 May 1994 by the late Bishop Phileomon Kurchaba C.Ss.R. and a priest of the Archeparchy of Lviv by Major Archbishop Myroslav Ivan Cardinal Lubachivsky on 26 June 1994. He completed his doctoral studies in Theological Anthropology based on the Byzantine moral and theological tradition at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome in 1999 receiving Summa cum laude.

Between the years of 1999 and 2009 he served as prefect, vice rector and rector of Holy Spirit Seminary in Lviv. In 2001 he was appointed vice-dean of the theological faculty of the Lviv Theological Academy (later the Ukrainian Catholic University). From 2002 to 2005 he was the chief of staff and personal secretary of His Beati-

tude Lubomyr Husar and the director of the Patriarchal Curia in Lviv.

On 14 January 2009, His Holiness Benedict XVI, confirmed the decision of the Synod of Ukrainian Greek Catholic Bishops to nominate him auxiliary bishop of the Protection of Mother of God Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy in Buenos Aires, Argentina, titular bishop of Castra di Galba. His Episcopal ordination took place on 7 April 2009 at St. George's Cathedral Sobor in Lviv. The main consecrator was Archbishop Ihor Vozniak along with co-consecrating Bishops Mykhajlo Mykycej (Buenos Aires) and Julian Gbur (Strijj). On 10 March 2010, Bishop Sviatoslav was appointed Apostolic Administrator of the Eparchy of the Protection of the Mother of God in Buenos Aires. He is currently the head of the Synodal Committee for Clergy.

His Beatitude Sviatoslav's native language is Ukrainian. He is fluent in English, Italian, Polish, Russian and Spanish. – Press Release, Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, March 25.

PLEDGING TO HONOR THE LEGACY OF THE THOUSANDS OF UKRAINIAN CATHOLICS WHO DIED FOR THEIR FAITH UNDER COMMUNISM, THE NEW HEAD OF THE UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH -- ITS YOUNGEST BISHOP -- WAS INSTALLED MARCH 27 IN KIEV.

"In the 20th century, our church stayed by our savior to the very end," Archbishop Shevchuk said during his installation liturgy in the Cathedral of the Holy Resurrection of Christ in Kiev.

"The death of hundreds of thousands of our laity, priests, monks and nuns -- led by our bishops -- was a death on the cross and, therefore, a giver of life," said the new archbishop.

The Ukrainian martyrs and the millions who kept their faith despite the risk and passed it on to their children and grandchildren demonstrated the strength and power of the cross, he said.

In an interview with the *Livyi Bereh* daily newspaper March 23, Cardinal Husar said his successor's tasks would include "moralizing public life and bringing God into people's lives" as well as encouraging steps to combat corruption through education.

"Everywhere -- here in Ukraine, in Europe, in North and South America -- our church has things to do, and it's necessary to work on them," said the 78-year-old cardinal, who also ministered in the United States before returning to his native Ukraine as a bishop in 1994.

"If all the churches worked and trained

the people, there would be change," he said. "The main task is to make the church a bigger part of our lives, so that people feel its apostleship and the need for sanctification."

Catholics make up a tenth of the Ukrainian population, which totals about 50 million. About a third of Ukrainians belong to the country's three Orthodox denominations.

Meanwhile, the head of Ukraine's smaller Latin-rite Catholic Church, Archbishop Mieczyslaw Mokrzycki of Lviv, told KAI, the Catholic information agency in neighboring Poland, he welcomed Archbishop Shevchuk's appointment with "joy and understanding." He said the new church leader knew Ukraine's problems well and was also "a man of high culture and very good with contacts." – *CNS* with Jonathan Luxmoore, March 28.

THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS OF THE UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE USA SENT THIS CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE TO HIS BEATITUDE MAJOR ARCHBISHOP SVIATOSLAV SHEVCHUK on March 25:

The month of March in the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Ukraine and beyond her borders will always be treasured in history as the month when the faithful of the Greek-Catholic Church were blessed with a new Spiritual Father in the person of your Eminence.

On behalf of the clergy and faithful of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA, we express to you our most sincere greetings as you begin this certainly difficult, but spiritually and fundamentally important mission in the life of the clergy and faithful entrusted to your spiritual care. Your election takes place just before the third Sunday of the Great Fast – the Veneration of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross, when we come to the halfway point on the journey toward the celebration of our Lord's Resurrection – His victory over sin and death. May the Cross of our Lord always be the sign of His support in your Archpastoral service.

Dear Brother in Christ, we hope in the depth of our hearts that the joyful Light of the Risen Lord will always accompany you in your Service. We pray that your pastoral activity will positively influence the progression of contacts between Orthodox and Catholic Christians and all people of goodwill. We wish you much success in the spiritual mission of the salvation of souls. We know that alone, human strength is insufficient to fulfill this service to which you are called. May your real strength come from God the Creator, for He is Good

and Merciful.

With prayers in Christ our Lord,
+Constantine, Metropolitan
+ Antony, Archbishop
+Daniel, Bishop

DURING HIS FIRST PRESS CONFERENCE TODAY AT UNIAN INFORMATION AGENCY, PATRIARCH SVIATOSLAV SHARED HIS VISION OF THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UKRAINIAN GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH-MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kyivan Patriarchate and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church. He calls it, above all, a constructive dialogue, cooperation and coexistence in an alliance to defend traditional Christian values. It is not about merging.

"Our policy, that is our way of communicating with them, will progress toward a constructive dialogue and cooperation. I would like to share with you my most recent ideas and impressions.

"Right before our synod, I attended an international conference of the very important charitable organization Church in Need in Germany. I was invited to serve a celebratory liturgy according to our rite. Right after the liturgy, a roundtable was held with the participation of the President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Cardinal Koch, as well as with the head of the Department of External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeiev.

"It was a very interesting roundtable where the necessity of a strategic alliance between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church was voiced. Obviously, we feel a part of such a strategic alliance. But in what sense? Metropolitan Hilarion explained that it is not about merging or subordinating to someone. 'Strategic alliance' is rather a military term. What does it mean? That we today should jointly defend traditional Christian values.

"Let me quote Metropolitan Hilarion: 'We do not have to struggle against Islam in Europe. But we must struggle for the strength of Christianity. We do not intend to oppose abortions, but we intend to struggle for human life. We do not so much want to struggle against a distorted view on Christianity as for the traditional Christian Evangelical values, which have been brought by the Church of Christ to the modern human since the times of the Apostles. You know, I personally and our whole Church feel very comfortable in such a 'strategic alliance.'

"Moreover, in his greeting address to me, His Beatitude Volodymyr calls me to

do just that, to build the Ukrainian society together on the basis of Christian values that are held sacred by our churches in their traditions," said the head of the UGCC. – *RISU*, March 29.

METROPOLITAN HILARION ALFEYEV OF VOLOKOLAMSK OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH HAS SENT MAJOR ARCHBISHOP METROPOLITAN SVIATOSLAV SHEVCHUK OF THE UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH CONGRATULATIONS ON HIS ENTHRONEMENT THIS PAST SUNDAY.

In his congratulation Metropolitan Hilarion expressed the hope that the Russian Orthodox and Ukrainian Catholic Churches can "gradually resolve acute and painful problems that accumulated over the years to the [better] welfare and prosperity of the Ukrainian people," stating that "the Moscow Patriarchate is ready to develop constructive discussions with the [Ukrainian] Catholic Church ... aimed at overcoming the existing difficulties." – *RISU*, March 30.

THE NEW HEAD OF THE UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH, ITS YOUNGEST BISHOP, SAID HE BELIEVES THE OTHER BISHOPS ELECTED HIM TO PROMOTE UNITY WITHIN THE CHURCH AND WITH OTHER CHRISTIANS.

The 40-year-old Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk of Kiev-Halych, visiting Rome to meet Pope Benedict XVI, told *Catholic News Service* he believes he was elected "despite my age."

Ukrainian bishops from around the world, who met in a synod in late March to elect a new major archbishop for their church, were looking for a leader who could "unite the church in Ukraine and outside Ukraine," who could "promote the unity of Christians in Ukraine and establish some sort of dialogue with the new Ukrainian government," he told *CNS* March 30 at the Ukrainian church office in Rome.

Archbishop Shevchuk said the suffering -- including imprisonment and martyrdom -- endured by Ukrainian Catholics under the Soviet regime from 1946 to 1989 "was a sacrifice for communion with the See of Peter" and the Catholic Church.

Archbishop Shevchuk said there are tensions between generations of Ukrainian Catholics over relations with the Orthodox, considering the fact that older Catholics risked their freedom and even their lives to remain Catholic.

But, he said, people seem excited by his election, "and I think this is the work of the Holy Spirit, which is the spirit of unity.

And that's why I was so courageous to open my arms to the Orthodox without fear and with great assurance that my church, which I represent, is an open church."

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

All three Orthodox communities sent bishops to Archbishop Shevchuk's enthronement, or installation, liturgy March 27.

"For Eastern Christians, liturgy is the main expression of doctrine and of the life of the church. When we were chanting the creed, I approached each of them saying, 'Christ is among us' -- that is the liturgical greeting -- and each of them responded, 'Yes, he is and will be,'" the archbishop said.

With the exchange of greetings in such a solemn setting, "maybe we started a new moment in our relationship and I hope this new openness in the dialogue will grow," he said.

Archbishop Shevchuk, who was born in Ukraine, was the apostolic administrator of a Ukrainian diocese in Argentina at the time of his election. Being so far from home and from the headquarters of his church, he said he kept in touch and up-to-date through the Internet and the church's website.

He has a Blackberry phone, but no Facebook page. He said that as major archbishop he plans to continue developing a media strategy for his church because communications is key to promoting unity.

Speaking to reporters immediately after a private meeting with the Pope March 31, Archbishop Shevchuk said the purpose of the meeting was to express his communion with the Pope and to thank him. "Confirming the election of such a young bishop is a sign of great trust," he said.

For decades, the heads of the Ukrainian Catholic Church and many of its faithful have been calling on the Vatican to give the major archbishop the title "Patriarch" -- a title that recognizes the holder as the father of a self-governing church and a title which would place him on par with the heads of the Orthodox churches.

Archbishop Shevchuk said that while having the title is important recognition of the maturity of an Eastern church like his, convincing the Pope to grant the title is not his first priority.

"The No. 1 priority for each head of a church is evangelization, preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ in today's world," he

said. "Of course, our church is growing, is developing its structures ... but we are conscious that the decision about the Patriarchate belongs to the Holy Father and we would never press him. We respect his freedom."

Archbishop Shevchuk also said his age is not really so shocking when one considers the fact that the average age of his priests is about 35.

"In our tradition, we do have a married clergy, but a married clergy is not the main reason we have so many young priests," he said.

The large number of priests in their 30s and 40s today is the result of young people looking for strong values when communism fell apart 20 years ago and finding those values in the church, the archbishop said.

Religious orders, which accept only candidates willing to embrace celibacy, were just as full as the seminaries, which accept married men, he said.

"The possibility of being a married priest is not the main cause of an increase or decrease in vocations to the priesthood because this vocation comes from God," he said. – Cindy Wooden for *CNS*, March 31.

The Eastern Orthodox Churches

THE 40-YEAR SILENCE OF THE HALKI (OR HEYBELIADA) SEMINARY MUST END, SAID GREEK ORTHODOX PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW I, REPEATING A LONG-TIME DEMAND OF THE PATRIARCHATE, on Monday night at the premiere of the documentary "The Silent School" commemorating the 50th anniversary of his graduation from the seminary.

Tracing the historical background of the seminary from its establishment in 1844 up to its closure by Turkish authorities in 1971 under a law that put religious and military training under state control, the documentary includes an interview with Bartholomew himself. Alluding to Turkey's bid for European Union membership, Bartholomew said his wish was to have the school reopened. "I want the seminary to reopen, and I want its 40-year silence to come to an end," he said. Bartholomew, who declined to answer journalists' questions, repeated the phrase "The school should open."

Co-produced by the Hellenic History Foundation and the Greek Radio Board (ERT), the film's co-director, Irini Sarioglou, said the documentary was realized with the collaboration of Greek and Turkish historians. "We researched the history with objectivity," she said. "The school is one

that has been declaring its silence for 40 years. Let us now pay attention to its silent screams.”

The EU and the US have frequently criticized Turkey for not reopening the Halki Greek Orthodox seminary -- which experts say is related to Turkey’s interpretation of secularism -- and failing to take measures to protect the Patriarchate’s property rights. The Patriarchate is an institution under the protection of international law as granted by the Lausanne Treaty. The Patriarch has long complained about the status of the seminary, located on the island of Heybeliada near İstanbul, as well as other property issues. The government says it has been assessing a number of legal options to reopen the Halki seminary -- which Bartholomew says is of vital importance for the survival of the Greek Orthodox clergy. – *Today’s Zaman*, March 2.

THE TURKISH POLICE HAVE PREVENTED ANOTHER ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT ON ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE BARTHOLOMEW I, according to the Austrian Catholic news agency.

The Turkish police have arrested two suspects aged 17-18. The assassination attempt was planned in the Fanar district, where the residence of the Patriarch is located.

An expert at the Carnegie Moscow Center, Professor Alexey Malashenko believes that, most likely, those engaged in the assassination attempt are Islamists who are much more radical compared to incumbent Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan.

With respect to the assassination attempt, several Turkish papers referred to a Catholic priest, Armenian journalist Hrant Dink and three Protestants, including a German missionary, who were killed by young people aged 16-20, Sedmitsa.ru reported. – *RISU*, March 9.

ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW SENT THE FOLLOWING LETTER TO THE HONORABLE CONSUL GENERAL OF JAPAN IN ISTANBUL, MR. KATSUYOSHI HAYASHI, on March 21:

It is with heavy heart that we communicate with Your Honor in order to convey our sincerest and fervent sympathy for the tragedy that has befallen your blessed and progressive nation in recent days.

Together with the rest of the world, our attention has been focused on the devastation, death and suffering that resulted from the unprecedented earthquake and powerful tsunami of biblical proportion that so mer-

cilessly struck Japan, with the inconsolable consequences of discovering and mourning the deceased, the overwhelming task of searching for and saving the missing, as well as the frightening prospect of securing and containing the damaged and dangerous nuclear reactors.

Therefore, we write in order, through you, to express to your Government and Prime Minister Naoto Kan, our condolences on behalf of the Ecumenical Patriarchate but also our prayers for continued strength in the painful work of rebuilding the affected areas and restoring the spirit of your suffering nation.

At the Ecumenical Patriarchate, March 21, 2011

Prayerfully yours,
+ BARTHOLOMEW, Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch – Website of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, March 23.

THIS PAST WEEK THE CHAIRMAN OF THE ASSEMBLY OF CANONICAL ORTHODOX BISHOPS OF NORTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA, ARCHBISHOP DEMETRIOS, SENT OUT A FORMAL NOTIFICATION TO ALL THE MEMBER BISHOPS FOR THE NEXT PLENARY SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY. The first meeting was held in New York; this meeting will be held in Chicago, and will convene on May 25-27, 2011.

The Chairman encouraged each committee to begin its work, with the hope of having at least one meeting (via telephone, video conference, or in person) before the Assembly. It is also expected that time will be made available in Chicago for committees to meet, to allow them to prepare their reports to the Assembly.

The Committee for Youth, chaired by Bishop Thomas, has already held two meetings by phone and has compiled initial lists of all Orthodox Christian youth ministries, parochial schools and camping programs. It is in the process of creating a list of Orthodox youth directors in America. The members are united in their hope that the various youth and camping programs can work more closely together, and they discussed ways to facilitate this. They are planning to have another meeting soon, this time in person, to work towards this express goal.

Archbishop Demetrios also apprised the member bishops that the fifth and latest meeting of the Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission was held this past week in Chambésy, Switzerland. It is generally hoped that this meeting will conclude significant work for the Pan-Orthodox Pre-Conciliar process. It was the fourth session of this Commission, held in 2009, that es-

tablished the various Assemblies of Bishops, including the one in North America. Among the final issues to be addressed by the Commission, in advance of the planned Great and Holy Council, are the questions of the diptychs (i.e., the order of seniority among the autocephalous churches) and a unified process for granting and recognizing the autocephaly of dependent churches.

This commission is chaired by Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamum. It is possible that he will be present at the forthcoming meeting of the Assembly in Chicago, and will address the bishops about the progress of the commission’s work, and so provide the Assembly an important context for its own work.

It is the responsibility of our Assembly of Bishops of North and Central America to develop a plan for canonical unity in our region, which our bishops can present to the Great and Holy Council of all Orthodox churches.

The Chairman’s office and the Secretariat are currently working on the agenda for the Assembly meeting in May. It is hoped that this will be presented to the member bishops before Pascha. – Press Release, Orthodox Assembly of Bishops, March 1.

DIPTYCHS, AN ARCANE LITURGICAL TERM THAT DESCRIBES THE ORDER IN WHICH ORTHODOX CHURCHES COMMEMORATE EACH OTHER AT THEIR SERVICES, IS ONE OF THE TANGLED ISSUES BLOCKING PLANS FOR WHAT COULD BE THE FIRST GREAT CHURCH COUNCIL IN 1,200 YEARS.

Some Orthodox leaders say the churches need to get together to discuss common issues and speak with one voice on such important topics as bioethics, sexuality and the environment, but differences over arcane church issues such as diptychs and autocephaly (the independent status of Orthodox churches) run deep.

There are about 250 million Orthodox Christians in the world, belonging to 14 or 15 independent Orthodox churches, depending on which church is counting. The Patriarchate of Constantinople, for example, does not recognize the autocephaly (independence) granted by Moscow to the Orthodox Church in America (OCA) in 1970, and does not commemorate the OCA in its diptychs.

Diptychs are at the heart of church protocol. A leader of the Georgian Orthodox Church cited its founding in the fifth century in explaining why his church won’t back down in its demands for greater recognition.

If the Georgian church agrees to the

current ninth place it holds in the diptychs of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, or Ecumenical Patriarchate, and most other Orthodox churches, Metropolitan Theodore of Akhaltsikhe and Tao-Klarjeti told ENInews, "This means that we cross out our entire history. That is why we cannot agree with this under any circumstances."

The Patriarchate of Georgia is sixth in the diptychs of the Russian Orthodox Church, with which it is very close despite overall Georgian-Russian tensions.

Theodore was among representatives of 14 Orthodox churches who gathered at the Orthodox Center of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Chambesy, Switzerland in late February in the latest attempt to hammer out a consensus in preparation for a pan-Orthodox council. However, the Chambesy meeting ended without further agreements.

Consultations to hold a modern-day council began in the 1970s, with a hiatus following Communism's collapse as churches struggled with newfound freedom and jurisdictional issues.

The post-Soviet Russian Orthodox Church has emerged as the largest in the world and chafes at any suggestion that the Patriarch of Constantinople, also known as the Ecumenical Patriarch for his role as the symbolic leader of Orthodoxy, is comparable to a Pope. The Russian church received its independence from Constantinople in the 16th century. Seven great councils, known as ecumenical councils, at which doctrine was confirmed, are Orthodoxy's foundation. The last was held in 787.

Both Moscow and Constantinople agree that Orthodoxy needs to streamline procedures for making statements and granting independence.

"This is exactly why the Catholic Church had the Second Vatican Council, because it clarified many questions," Metropolitan Emmanuel of France, who represented Constantinople at Chambesy, told ENInews. "It's not because the Catholic Church had its synod that we must have ours, but I think everyone agrees on the need for a clear unanimous position of our church. We cannot just be preparing for 50 years and not come to an agreement."

Archpriest Nikolai Balashov, who represented the Russian church at Chambesy along with Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, told ENInews that statements that are presented as the unified position of Orthodoxy should not come across as solely the initiative of the Ecumenical Patriarch.

"In order for the Ecumenical Patriarch to speak on behalf of all the churches, they should be convened earlier to exchange

opinions," he said. Emmanuel said the procedure for granting independence discussed at Chambesy would have the Ecumenical Patriarch proclaim autocephaly and sign a tomos, or declaration of independence, that would then be forwarded for signing by primates of all the other churches.

He said that not all the churches agreed with the form the signatures would take. That question appeared to raise, once again, tensions between Moscow and Constantinople that seem minor to outsiders but are of great symbolic importance within Orthodoxy and a vestige of its tumultuous history. The Georgian church's 11th century tomos, for example, disappeared during 13th century wars with Turks and Persians.

Balashov said Moscow has no qualms with the Ecumenical Patriarch signing first, but that discussion arose over whether his signature "should in some other way fundamentally stand out from that of all the other primates."

Archbishop Jeremiasz of Wroclaw and Szczecin of the Polish Orthodox Church cautioned that Orthodoxy should not necessarily emulate Rome in articulating positions on politics, sexuality and other social issues. "If each local church is a full, universal, united apostolic church, it means that God's grace is present in it, the Holy Spirit is moving in it, and the Holy Spirit will show the Polish church, the churches of Alexandria, Constantinople and Russia how to act in given conditions," he told ENInews. — Sophia Kishkovsky for ENI, March 22.

HIS EMINENCE, METROPOLITAN NICHOLAS, 75, SPIRITUAL LEADER OF THE AMERICAN CARPATHO-RUSSIAN ORTHODOX DIOCESE OF THE USA, REPOSED IN THE LORD ON SUNDAY, MARCH 13, 2011 AFTER WAGING A COURAGEOUS BATTLE WITH CANCER.

Metropolitan Nicholas was born on February 23, 1936. The son of the late Anna [Totin] and Andrew Smisko, he is a priestly vocation from Saint John the Baptist Church, Perth Amboy, NJ. After graduating from Perth Amboy High School, he entered Christ the Savior Seminary in Johnstown, PA, to study for the Holy Priesthood. Upon graduation, he was ordained on January 11, 1959 by Bishop Orestes in Perth Amboy, NJ. His first pastorate was at Saints Peter and Paul Church in Windber, PA, where he served until 1962.

A new phase of his life began when he embarked on a year's study at the renowned Patriarchal Theological Academy at Halki, Constantinople. During his stay in the city,

the young priest was assigned by the late Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras to serve the spiritual needs of the large Slavic Orthodox community in the Galata section of Istanbul. He also traveled extensively throughout Europe and the Middle East, visiting the sacred sites of the Holy Land and living for a time on Mount Athos, the ancient monastic center of the Orthodox Church.

Upon his return to the US, he resumed studies at the University of Youngstown, OH, and the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown. He was then assigned as Prefect of Discipline at Christ the Savior Seminary in Johnstown, and served several parishes in the Johnstown area, before relocating in 1971 to New York City, where he served as pastor of Saint Nicholas Church.

He was elevated to the rank of Archimandrite in 1976, elected by the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople as Auxiliary Bishop for the Ukrainian Orthodox Diocese of America, and consecrated as Bishop on March 13, 1983.

Following the death of Bishop John [Martin] in September of 1984, Bishop Nicholas was chosen as the third ruling hierarch of the Carpatho-Russian Diocese and enthroned in Christ the Savior Cathedral by His Eminence, Archbishop Iakovos on April 19, 1985.

He was elevated to the rank of Metropolitan by His All-Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I on November 24, 1997.

Over his many years of service to Christ and His Holy Church, His Eminence has proven to be a worthy laborer in the Vineyard of the Lord. In recognition for his labors he was the recipient of the Saints Cyril and Methodius Award, given by the Orthodox Church of Czechoslovakia; the Saint Sava Award from Patriarch Pavel of the Serbian Orthodox Church; and the honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from Holy Cross School of Theology.

His Eminence has been noted for his love for his flock and the liturgical services of the Church, and his devotion to the Mother Church, the Ecumenical Patriarchate. He was well-respected in Orthodox and ecumenical circles as being a promoter of peace and mutual understanding amongst all Christ-loving people. True to his patron Saint, Nicholas the wonderworker, His Eminence was perhaps best known and respected for his pastoral sensitivity, generosity of spirit and compassion for the sick, suffering and the less fortunate. May Metropolitan Nicholas' memory be eternal! — OCA Press Release, March 13.

HIS EMINENCE ARCHBISHOP DEMETRIOS OF AMISSOS NOTED WITH GREAT SORROW THE FALLING ASLEEP IN THE LORD OF METROPOLITAN NICHOLAS OF AMISSOS, THE BISHOP OF THE AMERICAN CARPATHO-RUSSIAN ORTHODOX DIOCESE OF THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE IN THE USA. Metropolitan Nicholas fell asleep in the Lord on Sunday, March 13, 2011, the Sunday of Orthodoxy and the 28th anniversary of his ordination to the episcopacy.

On Saturday, March 12, Archbishop Demetrios traveled to Johnstown, PA (the See of the Carpatho-Russian Church) to visit the Metropolitan on his sickbed. After praying with the Metropolitan and anointing him with Holy Oil, the Archbishop met with the Chancellor of the Carpatho-Russian Church, Protopresbyter Frank Miloro, to offer his advice and support. When he was informed of the Metropolitan's passing on Sunday the 13th, Archbishop Demetrios, as Exarch of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, contacted His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, in order to apprise the Ecumenical Patriarchate of the loss. His All Holiness then by a formal letter, both to the Archbishop and to the Chancellor for the Carpatho-Russian Church, appointed the Archbishop to be the Locum Tenens. Archbishop Demetrios will preside at the funeral at 10:00 a.m., Friday, March 18 at Christ the Savior Cathedral in Johnstown, PA, as well as the burial out of St. John's Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Church in Perth Amboy, NJ on March 21 at 10:30 a.m.

In his letter to the faithful of the Carpatho-Russian Church, Archbishop Demetrios wrote: Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I convey to you my deepest and most heartfelt consolations, as well as those of the Holy Eparchial Synod and the Clergy and Faithful of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, on the passing of your ever-memorable and thrice-blessed spiritual father, the late Metropolitan Nicholas of Amissos. This loss, unbearable at any time, has come quickly upon us all, and we are all now in the midst of grief. But as the Apostle Paul reminds us, our present sorrow is not without hope (I Thessalonians 4: 13). Only a few weeks ago, the beloved and late Metropolitan celebrated his seventy-fifth birthday in the presence of his faithful clergy and flock, and it is certain that he passed from this vale of tears to everlasting joy in the certainty of the love, respect and goodwill of you, the faithful people of the Carpatho-Russian Church.

We have all lost a dear brother, father and friend, and above all, a spiritual leader.

I want all of the faithful to be sure that the integrity, character and spiritual traditions of the Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Church will be safeguarded with utmost respect and attention during the period that I will serve as your Locum Tenens, as per the decision of His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. All regular life of the Diocese will proceed as ever, through the office of the Chancellor.

May the Lord give eternal rest with all the Saints and Righteous to the soul of our beloved Metropolitan Nicholas, and may He keep the blessed Carpatho-Russian Orthodox flock of our Most Holy Ecumenical Patriarchate in peace and spiritual prosperity. – Press Release, Greek Archdiocese, March 15.

THE HOLY EPARCHIAL SYNOD OF THE HOLY ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA CONVENED ITS REGULAR FALL MEETING ON MARCH 16-17 AT THE SYNODAL CHAMBER OF THE HOLY ARCHDIOCESE IN NEW YORK. His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America presided with members of the Synod participating.

Prior to the commencing of the Meeting of the Synod, Members had the opportunity to participate in the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Archdiocesan Council on Tuesday March 15, 2011. During the meeting administrative and other matters were discussed. The Executive Committee affirmed the manner of administration of the Parishes, which is based on the documents of the Holy Canons, the Charter and Regulations of the Holy Archdiocese.

During the next two days the Synod discussed the following:

Canonical Matters: Reviewed and finalized a specific draft for the Regulations for Spiritual Courts which will be submitted to the Ecumenical Patriarchate for approval.

Liturgical Matters: Approved the text of Vespers and Orthros which was submitted by the Synodal Committee on Liturgical Matters, and will submit it to the Ecumenical Patriarchate for final approval. The Synod had also the opportunity to meet in a special session with the Chairpersons of the Committees of the National Forum of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians and discussed among other subjects the following: a) the development of Church Choirs and recruitment of new members, b) the Liturgical Guide Book, c) the cooperation between the Church Choirs and the Chanters, and d) the development of Youth Choirs.

Pastoral Matters: The Holy Eparchial

Synod reviewed new samples of Baptism Certificates, and will proceed with printing for use by the parishes. The Synod discussed special matters for pastoral care for clergy, especially those with special needs.

Administrative Matters: The Holy Eparchial Synod discussed current and urgent administrative matters related to the life and activity of the Church of the Holy Archdiocese. It was noted by all the Members that the responsibility of shepherding the parishes in each Holy Metropolis of the Holy Archdiocese belongs to the respective Hierarch who shepherds them according to the order of the Church, her Canons, the Charter and the Regulations of the Holy Archdiocese.

Inter-Orthodox Matters: There was a report and extensive discussion on the upcoming Meeting of the Episcopal Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of North and Central America, which will take place in Chicago this May 2011. -- From the Office of the Holy Eparchial Synod, March 18.

“WITHOUT ANY DOUBT, ECCLESIOLOGY REMAINS IN OUR TIMES THE CRUCIAL ISSUE IN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY FROM AN ECUMENICAL PERSPECTIVE.” THIS WAS ONE OF THE CONCLUSIONS DRAWN BY A WEEK-LONG CONSULTATION IN CYPRUS AT WHICH FORTY EASTERN ORTHODOX AND ORIENTAL ORTHODOX REPRESENTATIVES provided a common response to The Nature and Mission of the Church, a 2005 ecumenical text published by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches (WCC).

Ecclesiology, or the theological self-understanding of the church, sets out to define the role of the church, its nature and mission, and in the ecumenical setting to explain issues and difficulties that divide churches from one another.

The inter-Orthodox consultation took place from 2 to 9 March and produced an eleven-page report as well as a communiqué detailing highlights of the discussion. It was held at the invitation of the WCC to facilitate the Orthodox churches' discussion of The Nature and Mission of the Church.

Orthodox participants were joined by several members of the Faith and Order Commission and the WCC staff including general secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit.

The consultation noted that the Faith and Order document draws on a variety of ecclesial traditions and is organized in accordance with western philosophical methods. This approach makes the text “diffi-

cult to recognize as characteristically Orthodox” and in the end “it fails to reach the level of a ‘convergence text’,” cautioned the final report.

The communiqué from Cyprus recognizes the 2005 text as a step in the long journey toward the visible unity of the One Church, adding, “We are grateful for the efforts of the Faith and Order Commission and acknowledge all those who worked under difficult circumstances to draft this ecumenical document.”

The consultation stressed the urgency of overcoming separation among churches, quoting St Basil the Great (330-379 A.D.): “I think then that the one goal of all who are really and truly serving the Lord ought to be to bring back to union the churches who have at different times and in diverse manners divided from one another.”

The report of the consultation will be presented to the commission with a compilation of suggestions for re-drafting the study document as the quest continues for ecumenical consensus in matters of ecclesiology. – WCC Press Release, March 14.

ON MONDAY, 14 FEBRUARY, FATHER EDWARD HUGHES, VICAR GENERAL OF THE WESTERN RITE VICARIATE OF THE SELF-RULED ANTI- OCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCH- DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA, and his duly appointed assistant, Father John W. Fenton, met at the Russian Synod chancery with His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion (Kapral), First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (ROCOR); His Grace Bishop Jerome (Shaw), Bishop of Manhattan and vicar of the Eastern- American diocese (ROCOR); and the V. Reverend Anthony Bondi, Pastoral Vicar for the Western Rite (ROCOR).

This meeting was the first between the hierarchy and leadership of the jurisdictions which oversee all canonical Orthodox parishes in North America which are exclusively Western Rite. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the present situation, and to compare visions in order to foster cooperation in furthering Western Rite Orthodoxy in America.

During the meeting, several items of mutual interest were discussed including issues relating to the Western Rite in the committees of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of North and Central America; the reception of parishes and clergy from other ecclesial groups; the education of laity in Western Rite parishes; the education of current and future Western Rite clergy; the liturgical norms and usages in the jurisdictions; and the planting of

Western Rite missions.

A spirit of fraternal openness permeated the meetings, with the often repeated desire that the Western Rite parishes and clergy of both jurisdictions need to grow closer together. Toward this end, Metropolitan Hilarion encouraged Fr. Anthony and Fr. Edward to explore specific ways in which the clergy from both jurisdictions might regularly meet together.

Fr. Hughes and Fr. Fenton wish to express their deepest gratitude to Metropolitan Hilarion and Bishop Jerome for their gracious hospitality and for generously sharing their time. Their interest and desire for Western Rite Orthodoxy was inspiring. They also thank Fr. Anthony Bondi for his many kindnesses, and his earnest desire for increased cooperation. – Press Release, Antiochian Archdiocese, March 9.

LIKE A FIGURE IN A MEDIEVAL DRAMA, THE MONK IRENAEUS I HAS BEEN CLOISTERED FOR THE LAST THREE YEARS IN A THIRD-FLOOR APARTMENT IN THE COMPOUND OF THE GREEK ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE HIGH ABOVE A NARROW, BUSTLING ALLEYWAY OF JERUSALEM’S OLD CITY, unwilling or unable to leave.

Appearing at his barred window one recent morning, clad in the traditional black garb of the Greek Orthodox priesthood, Irenaeus mouthed greetings to some visitors in the street below and waved a silver cross in a silent blessing.

Irenaeus was once the Patriarch of Jerusalem, the highest authority of this ancient branch of the Orthodox Church, until he was ousted from his position in 2005. His refusal to recognize the authority of his successor, Theophilus III, seems to be the reason for his current ordeal.

Yet the warring rivals and their counsels disagree on the question of how much Irenaeus’s confinement has been forced upon him, and how much it is by his own design. Irenaeus, 71, refuses to leave the apartment because, he says, he has no guarantee that he will be allowed to return. Until this is no longer in question, he says, communicating by fax and employing the majestic plural, “in essence, they compel us to remain within our cell.”

Daniel Robbins, a Jerusalem lawyer who is representing Irenaeus in this regard and in the additional matter of some icons in Irenaeus’s apartment that Theophilus wants, said, “Nothing here is self-imposed.”

Irenaeus “will be homeless” if he leaves the compound, Mr. Robbins said. “He has no property.”

Representatives of Theophilus, however, argue that Irenaeus is a captive by choice.

“The fact that he has decided to lock himself up in the apartment is his prerogative,” said Nadir Mughrabi, an adviser to the Patriarchate. “Nobody is asking him to leave.” If he were to leave the compound, Mr. Mughrabi said, “there is no decision to stop him from coming back.”

This Byzantine saga mirrors the struggles over politics and real estate that have bedeviled the Holy Land for centuries. Competing interests within the church’s realm, which includes Israel, Jordan and, now, the Palestinian Authority, have only sharpened what one local member of the community described as a hundred years of infighting and intrigue.

Irenaeus was elected in 2001 as the Patriarch of Jerusalem, normally a position for life. He was removed four years later amid allegations of shady property deals. Among other things, he was accused of selling long-term leases on prime properties owned by the Patriarchate inside the Old City — in territory that Israel annexed after the 1967 war, but where the Palestinians and most of the world do not recognize Israeli sovereignty — to foreign companies acting as fronts for a Jewish settlers group.

As the owner of valuable tracts of land in the region, including prized locations in central Jerusalem, the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem has long wielded power disproportionate to the size of its flock. Israel’s official prime minister’s residence is on Greek Orthodox land.

Defenders of Irenaeus say that he was manipulated by stronger forces on the property deals, which are being contested in the Israeli courts.

Elias Khoury, a Greek Orthodox lawyer in Jerusalem, was one of three members of a committee appointed by the Palestinian Authority to investigate the land deals. The commission concluded that Irenaeus had been misled and was the victim of a conspiracy, Mr. Khoury said.

As a result, Mr. Khoury suggested, Theophilus may have good reason to fear Irenaeus and keep him isolated. Irenaeus enjoyed 24-hour protection from the Israeli police, and with it free movement, until Israel finally recognized Theophilus’s election in the spring of 2007. The appointment has also been ratified by the governments of Jordan and the Palestinian Authority, as required by law and tradition.

Since then, Irenaeus, who was born on the Greek island of Samos and first came to the Patriarchate of Jerusalem at the age of 13, has remained in near total seclusion.

Life in the Patriarchate compound is run along the lines of a strict order, and a doorman guards the entrance. A gate leading from the courtyard to Irenaeus's apartment is usually locked, and he does not have the key. Mr. Robbins, his lawyer, has been able to visit him three times in recent months, but only with a court order.

For food and medicine, Irenaeus says he relies on the good will of a local resident — a Muslim who runs a nearby grocery store, and who places supplies in a basket that Irenaeus lowers to the street at night from a rooftop terrace abutting his apartment.

Mr. Mughrabi said this, too, was “a hundred percent his own doing.” Like the dozens of other priests who reside in the compound, Mr. Mughrabi said, Irenaeus is on the list to receive food from the central kitchen, but “he has chosen to make other arrangements.”

Irenaeus described his confinement as a kind of “martyrdom” imposed by hostile forces “aiming for our psychological and bodily annihilation.” It was the result of a scheme by interest groups, he said, that was “diabolical in its conception.”

He placed sole responsibility for his situation on Theophilos, his nemesis, “to whom ecclesiastical history will ascribe the name traitor!”

For many local members of the church, the goings-on in the Patriarchate, particularly the land issues, have merely confirmed long-held grievances.

“The problem is that the Patriarchs come from Greece,” said Khaled Ikhleif, a Palestinian taxi driver from Bethlehem in the West Bank. “They are foreign, not Arab, and they do not understand our problems.”

Mr. Ikhleif was attending epiphany celebrations at Qasr al-Yahud, a spot on the Jordan River where Jesus was said to have been baptized. The site, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, is in a border area surrounded by minefields. After a procession and a ceremony led by Theophilos, pilgrims immersed themselves in the opaque, khaki-color water, momentarily oblivious to all dissension and discord. — Isabel Kershner for *The New York Times*, March 7.

ON MARCH 2, 2011, HIS HOLINESS PATRIARCH KIRILL OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA RECEIVED AMBASSADOR OF ISRAEL IN RUSSIA MS. DORIT GOLENDER AND HER HUSBAND.

Ms. Golender thanked the Patriarch for the opportunity to meet and noted that she was looking forward to the meeting. Ad-

ressing His Holiness, she stressed the significance of faith for many people and its impact on various aspects of life.

At his guest's request, Patriarch Kirill spoke on interreligious relations in Russia. He underscored that there were no religious wars in the history of the country as people of different traditions and faiths knew how to live side by side, with curiosity towards one another but without aggression. At the same time, there is a threat of radicalism on religious grounds developing to a large extent through foreign influence. His Holiness expressed the conviction that in Russia special attention should be given to the interreligious factor and the need to build relations in a way that will exclude any radicalization and to prevent it if it is brought from outside. ‘I would like to note that our society has very great potential indeed’, the Patriarch said.

Under discussion were also prospects for the development of interreligious dialogue. Stating that the whole society should participate in this dialogue, the both sides expressed their shared conviction that religious education including the teaching of appropriate subjects in schools was an important factor in maintaining peace between people of various religions. His Holiness spoke about the experiment carried out in several regions in Russia, in which school-children are taught either the basics of the culture of a particular traditional religion or the secular ethics at their choice.

Ms. Golender reminded the Patriarch that this year marks the 20th anniversary of the restoration of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Israel. On his part, Patriarch Kirill said that during his repeated visits to the Holy Land during the Soviet time to see to the affairs of the Russian Orthodox Mission there, he saw the great damage that was done by the absence of relations between the two states. The restoration of diplomatic relations also facilitated the organization of Russian pilgrimages to the Holy Land.

The Ambassador of Israel expressed the hope that His Holiness would visit her country. On his part, Patriarch Kirill said that according to tradition, he is to visit Local Orthodox Churches after his Patriarchal enthronement. The visits should be made in the order fixed by the Primates' diptychs. Thus, after a visit to the Patriarchate of Antioch, he is expected to visit the Church of Jerusalem.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and Ambassador Dorit Golender expressed concern over the escalation of violence in a number of Arab countries in Africa and Arabian Peninsula.

— Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, March 2.

ON MARCH 10, 2011, METROPOLITAN HILARION OF VOLOKOLAMSK, HEAD OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE'S DEPARTMENT FOR EXTERNAL CHURCH RELATIONS, VISITED THE RESIDENCE OF THE US AMBASSADOR in Moscow to meet with US Vice-President Joseph Biden who has come to Russia for a working visit. Metropolitan Hilarion was accompanied by Archimandrite Zacchaeus (Wood), representative of the Orthodox Church in America to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

The DECR chairman and the US vice-president had a talk in which Metropolitan Hilarion spoke about the Russian Orthodox Church and its external relations including interrelations with Orthodox jurisdictions in the American continent and about the life of the Moscow Patriarchate's parishes in the USA.

Mr. Joseph Biden expressed a wish to meet with Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk during one of his next visits to the USA so that they could have a more detailed talk on the issues under discussion.

The DECR chairman presented the US vice-president with a copy of his book *Orthodox Witness in Today's World* in English as a token of the meeting. — Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, March 10.

ON 14 MARCH 2011, METROPOLITAN HILARION OF VOLOKOLAMSK, HEAD OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE'S DEPARTMENT FOR EXTERNAL CHURCH RELATIONS (DECR), MET WITH KURT CARDINAL KOCH, PRESIDENT OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNITY.

Discussed during the meeting, which took part at the DECR premises, was a wide range of issues of cooperation between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church, including results and prospects of the work of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue, as well as concrete measures for the settlement of conflict between the Orthodox and the Greek Catholics in Ukraine, the necessity of common witness in the face of challenges of secular society and opposition to xenophobia in Europe and other parts of the world. — Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, March 15.

HIS HOLINESS PATRIARCH KIRILL OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA MET WITH CARDINAL KURT KOCH, PRESIDENT OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL

FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNITY, ON 16 MARCH 2011 AT HIS WORKING RESIDENCE IN CHISTY PEREULOK.

They discussed major areas of cooperation between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church, especially the issues considered by the two Churches' Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue. Since its establishment in 1979 this commission has become the main platform for Orthodox-Catholic dialogue because, among other things, its work involves representatives of all the Local Orthodox Churches. The commission agreed on several documents concerning the teaching on the Sacraments and sacramental nature of the Church.

It was noted that, even if there are theological differences, both Churches can come into close cooperation even now in areas where their positions coincide, namely, defense of traditional Christian values in Europe, advocacy of the Christian position in the socio-economic sphere and in the ethics of scientific research and bioethics. This is the basis on which it is possible to develop cooperation in international organizations, such as the UN, OSCE, and the EU structures.

Patriarch Kirill and Cardinal Koch also discussed the problem of Christianophobia which has affected not only the regions where Christians are subject to open persecution but also European countries with their age-old Christian tradition. In January and February 2011, the European Parliament and the European Union Committee of Foreign Ministers recognized the existence of this problem, and Orthodox and Catholic hierarchs spoke on various platforms setting forth their common stands concerning discrimination against Christians.

Concerning the propaganda of liberal views in no way linked with traditional morality, Cardinal Koch expressed satisfaction at the fact that Pope Benedict and Patriarch Kirill have a shared position on this problem and underscored that these shared views help to further inter-church cooperation.

Patriarch Kirill said he respected the position taken by Pope Benedict who defends the Christian tradition in spite of sometimes sharp criticism from liberal circles. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, March 16.

ON 21 MARCH 2011, THE COMMISSION ON ATTITUDE TO NON-ORTHODOXY AND OTHER RELIGIONS MET at the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations.

The session was chaired by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk.

The participants discussed the results of the work done by the Commission during its first year and a draft document on the Accession of non-Orthodox Christians to the Orthodox Church. The Commission decided to form a working group and invite experts to study various aspects of the practice of accession to the Orthodox Church through the Sacrament of Chrismation and its history. The Commission set up a working group for study and classification of sects. Other working groups will consider the question of the accession rite for the Pentecostals, Baptists, Adventists, Anglicans, the Reformed, Lutherans, and Old Catholics.

Draft documents on the practice of accession to the Orthodox Church will be submitted to the Commission's next session in June 2011. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, March 21.

AT ITS SESSION ON 22 MARCH 2011, THE ROC HOLY SYNOD, CHAIRED BY PATRIARCH KIRILL OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA, CONSIDERED THE CHURCH'S INTERNAL LIFE, EXTERNAL RELATIONS, CHURCH-SOCIETY RELATIONS AND THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION.

It was agreed to establish a Supreme Church Council. The Bishops' Council held in February 2011 resolved the following: 'Supporting the intention of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill to hold regular conferences of heads of Synodal departments, these conferences be given a formal status as Supreme Church Council by analogy with the body that had been established by the 1917 All-Russia Church Council and which had to discontinue in the years of persecution. The Holy Synod be charged with making a decision on the establishment of the Supreme Church Council after all the appropriate normative documents have been developed. The decision of the Holy Synod and the appropriate amendments to the Statute of the Russian Orthodox Church be submitted for approval by the next Bishops' Council'.

The Holy Synod adopted a Provision for the Supreme Church Council of the Russian Orthodox Church and the following membership of the Council to be chaired by the Patriarch:

Metropolitan Varsonofy of Saransk and Mordovia, chancellor of the Moscow Patriarchate

Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Department for External Church Relations

Metropolitan Clement of Kaluga and

Borovsk, chairman of the Publishing Board
Archbishop Ioann of Belgorod and Stary Oskol, head of the Synodal Mission Department

Archbishop Yevgeny of Vereya, chairman of the Synodal Education Committee
Archbishop Feognost of Sergiev Posad, chairman of the Synodal Commission for Monasteries

Archbishop Mark of Yegorievsk, head of the Office for Moscow Patriarchate Institutions Abroad

Bishop Mercury of Zarsk, head of the Synodal Department for Religious Education and Catechism

Bishop Irinarch of Krasnogorsk, head of the Department for Prison Services

Bishop Ignaty of Bronnitsa, head of the Department for Youth

Bishop Sergiy of Solnechnogorsk, director of the Moscow Patriarchate's administrative secretariat

Bishop Tikhon of Podolsk, director of the Moscow Patriarchate's financial and economic office

Bishop Kirill of Pavlov Posad, chairman of the Synodal Committee for Cooperation with the Cossacks

Bishop Panteleimon of Orekhovo-Zuevo, head of the Synodal Department for Charity and Social Service

Archpriest Dimitry Smirnov, head of the Synodal Department for Cooperation with the Armed Forces and Law Enforcement

Archimandrite Tikhon Shevkunov, executive secretary of the Patriarchal Council for Culture

Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin, head of the Synodal Department for Church-Society Relations

Mr. V. P. Legoida, head of the Synodal Information Department.

Two new dioceses have been established in the North Caucasus: the diocese of Pyatigorsk and Cherkessk, which will include parishes in some regions of the Stavropol Krai and in the Republics of Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachaevo-Cherkessia, and the diocese of Vladikavkaz and Makhachkala, which will include parishes in North Ossetia, Dagestan, Ingushetia and Chechnya.

The request of Metropolitan Juvenaly of Krutisy and Kolomna, who has been the chairman of the Synodal Commission for Canonization since 1989, to relieve him of his duty, was granted. He will be replaced by Bishop Pankraty, abbot of the Valamo Monastery of the Transfiguration.

The Holy Synod also relieved Hegumen Philaret (Bulekov) of his duty as Moscow Patriarchate representative to the Council of Europe and dean of the Parish of

All Saints in Strasbourg and appointed him vice-chairman of the Department for External Church Relations. He will be replaced in Strasbourg by Hegumen Philip (Ryabikh).

Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk made a report on the meeting of the Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission in February 2011 in Chambesy, Switzerland, whose task is to make a preliminary study of issues to be put on the agenda of the Pan-Orthodox Council. The commission considered a procedure for signing the Tomos of Autocephaly and the sacred diptychs of the primates of autocephalous Churches. He reported that the commission failed to reach a consensus on both points. The Holy Synod approved the position taken by the Russian Orthodox Church's delegation at that meeting.

Metropolitan Hilarion also reported to the Synod about his visit to Czechia in February 2011 and the visit made to the Russian Orthodox Church by Cardinal Kurt Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, in March 2011. The Synod expressed satisfaction at the metropolitan's fruitful talks.

He also notified the Synod about the theological talks to take place between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Finland in September 2011 in Lahti, Finland. The Synod appointed a delegation for the talks.

After a report by Patriarch Kirill on dioceses and parishes abroad, the Synod made some decisions concerning the dioceses of Sourozh, Argentina and South America, as well as Moscow Patriarchate parishes in Italy and the Patriarchal Parish of Sts Peter and Paul in Dublin, Ireland. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, March 23.

THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE POSTED THIS INTERVIEW WITH METROPOLITAN HILARION OF VOLOKOLAMSK ON MARCH 23:

Q: Your Eminence! You have recently led a delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church at the meeting of the Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission held in Chambesy near Geneva. Which questions did you discuss?

A: The Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission is a working body which prepares the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church. It elaborates items included in the Council's agenda. The catalogue of the items was compiled in 1976 and includes ten topics demanding the elaboration of common position of the Orthodox Church. According to the regulation,

proposals made by the Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission are to be approved by the Pan-Orthodox Pre-Council Conference.

The major part of the mentioned catalogue has been elaborated in the last decades, while in 2009 the Pan-Orthodox Pre-Council Conference approved the decisions on the ordering of cooperation among the Churches in Orthodox diaspora. That same year the Commission formulated the unanimous opinion on the method of granting the autonomy (self-governing) to a church province within a Local Church and considered in part a method of promulgating a new autocephalous (completely independent) Church.

This time the Commission had to complete consideration of the issue of church autocephaly and discuss the topic of the holy diptychs – the lists, according to which the Primates of the Local Churches are commemorated during divine services.

The Commission's meetings, chaired by Metropolitan John of Pergamon from the Patriarchate of Constantinople, took place on 21-27 February 2011. With the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, the Russian Orthodox Church was represented by myself, by Archbishop Mark of Berlin, Germany and Great Britain (the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia), and by my deputy, archpriest Nikolai Balashov.

Q: Was an agreed decision on the mentioned questions taken?

A: The Commission's work has shown that both mentioned questions need serious complementary exploration. The discussion in Chambesy was not an easy one and disclosed different positions, while the decision must be taken only by consensus in accordance with regulations.

The major debate developed on the method of signing a document on the promulgation of autocephaly called "Tomos." Some participants, including those of the Russian Church, made the following proposal: In keeping with the practice of the earlier Ecumenical and Pan-Orthodox Councils, all the heads of the Churches sign their common decision without any distinction, beginning, certainly, with the first among them – the Patriarch of Constantinople.

In the end it was recognized that this topic needs further exploration.

As to the topic of diptychs, the Commission has thoroughly studied all its aspects and analyzed the criteria used for the inclusion of the name of a Primate of a Church into diptychs. Having compared the differences in the present diptychs, the Commission considered it useful to reach a

uniform opinion on this matter.

Also considered were opinions on the place of the Primates of the Orthodox Churches of Georgia, Cyprus, Poland and Albania and the variant reading in the diptychs that exist because of the lack of common opinion on the number of Churches recognized as autocephalous. This refers to the Orthodox Church in America, which is recognized as autocephalous by five Local Churches, including the Russian Orthodox Church, while other Churches do not have the name of its Primate in their diptychs. Unfortunately, mutual consent has not been obtained on all these questions.

Q: Is it really true that convocation of the Holy and Great Council is postponed for an indefinite period? What should be done to reach the unity of sentiment on disputed questions?

A: The situation should not be excessively dramatized. It is true that we have encountered certain difficulties in the process of obtaining consensus on certain questions. However, it only means that we all should seriously ponder over the overcoming of these difficulties. After all, it was difficult to obtain consensus in the past.

Participants in the discussion in Chambesy are aware of their responsibility for the destiny of inter-Orthodox dialogue. They understand the necessity to continue in a constructive way the preparation for the Holy and Great Council. They understand the importance of thorough elaboration of all questions included in the agenda. We should seek to hear those points of view that do not concur with ours and try to comprehend them. In the process of seeking other solutions the voice of each participant in the dialogue should be heard and the opinion of each Local Church should be taken into account. This principle is reflected in the regulations of the Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission and the Pan-Orthodox Pre-Council Conference.

Our common aim is not to convene the Council as soon as possible, but to do all we can to make its decisions show the majesty of the Orthodox faith to the world, to bring witness of the intransigent meaning of the Holy Tradition of the Church, and to confirm the unity of the Church.

I am confident that preparations for the Pan-Orthodox Council will continue in the near future. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, March 23.

ON 23 MARCH 2011, THE PRIMATE OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH MET WITH MR. MAHMOUD ABBAS, PRESIDENT OF THE PALESTINIAN NATIONAL AUTHORITY, at the Patriarch's

residence, Chisty side-street, Moscow.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill welcomed the guests and noted that the contacts between people for whom the Russian Orthodox Church cares and the people of Palestine have been maintained for centuries.

His Holiness said: "In our dialogue we discuss important problems of the Holy Land, peace and justice in this particular region of the world, where people belonging to the three monotheist religions have lived in accord for centuries and where, unfortunately, there is no peace and tranquility at present."

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill underscored that the presence of Christians, including the Orthodox, in the Holy Land, is an important topic of the dialogue and thanked Mahmoud Abbas for constant attention to the life of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Holy Land, adding that "good relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Palestine National Authority is an important factor that facilitates the development of relations between our nations."

His Holiness expressed his deep concern over disturbances in some Arab countries where both the Muslims and Christians live.

President of the Palestinian National Authority Mahmoud Abbas said that he was glad to talk with His Holiness Patriarch Kirill and added that relations between the Russians and the Palestinians are based on sincerity and mutual respect. He expressed his hope for more pilgrims to come to the Holy Land as the people of Palestine are happy to welcome the pilgrims from Russia.

Mr. Abbas informed His Holiness about restoration works in Bethlehem carried out with the mutual consent of Christian Churches and coordinated by the Palestinian National Authority. He hopes that His Holiness Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia will visit Bethlehem at Christmas.

Mr. Abbas mentioned the museum opened on the plot of land given to Russia in Jordan as a symbol of the Russian presence in the Holy Land and assured His Holiness that the Palestinian National Authority attaches great importance and pays special attention to the solution of problems of the church property in Palestine.

He also spoke about the efforts taken for the settlement of the Middle East conflict and the unity of Palestinians. He emphasized the important role of Russia in the peace process in the Middle East. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, March 23.

DURING HIS WORKING VISIT TO SERBIA, RUSSIAN PRIME MINISTER PUTIN VISITED THE CHURCH OF ST. SAVA IN BELGRADE ON 23 MARCH 2011. His arrival at this largest church in Serbia was announced by the ringing of bells.

His Holiness Patriarch Irinej of Serbia conferred on Mr. Putin the Order of St. Sava with the diploma explaining the status of this highest award of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

Then Mr. Putin and His Holiness the Patriarch proceeded into the church, where numerous faithful awaited them in spite of the late hour. The Russian prime minister was welcomed by the congregation's cries 'Long live Russia!' and 'Long live Putin!'

The prime minister and the Patriarch discussed the progress of construction and decoration work, in particular the making of mosaics for St. Sava's. Russian Orthodox societies pledged their help.

'We work with the help of God and hope for the help of Russian brothers', the Primate of the Serbian Orthodox Church said. Mr. Putin, in his turn, said he liked the church very much, adding, 'It is magnificent and worthy of Serbia'.

The head of the Russian Government venerated the main shrine of the church, the icon of St. Sava of Serbia, and put a candle for the health and repose of the victims of 1999 bombing, the press service of the prime minister reports. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, March 24.

ON MARCH 30, 2011, HIS HOLINESS PATRIARCH KIRILL OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA RECEIVED AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF ITALY IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION ANTONIO LANDI, at the Patriarchal residence in Chisty Pereulok.

In response to the Patriarch's warm welcome, Mr. Landi thanked him for the opportunity to meet and talk, saying in particular, 'I make this visit as a representative of the Italian Government, but also as a person who has a profound interest in the Russian Orthodox Church'. He said that he had served for eight years as diplomatic representative of the Republic of Italy to the Vatican. He also represented Italy in Belgrade, where he had an opportunity to meet the late Patriarch Pavle and many other representatives of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

Mr. Landi thanked the Patriarch for solidarity in defending Christian tradition in the case of Lautsi versus Italy at the European Court of Human Rights. 'As a representative of the Republic of Italy, I would like to thank you for the support you gave

to the Italian Government in the case of Lautsi. Eventually this battle we fought together had a positive result. It has helped us to become aware of the things which we have in common and which will continue in the future because clearly the problem of Europe's future is linked inseparably with her past', the Italian ambassador said.

Mr. Landi conveyed to His Holiness the Patriarch greetings from the Italian President and Prime Minister.

The Italian Ambassador also pledged his support for the dialogue of cultures on various issues including morality.

He handed over to the Patriarch a part of the relics of St. Panteleimon he received as a gift of the Russian Orthodox Church from Archbishop Giuseppe Betori of Florence and parts of the relics of the Holy Martyrs of Aquileia.

Accepting the small shrines with the relics, the Patriarch said,

'I am deeply moved by this gift which attests to our common Christian spiritual sources and our common history. When two peoples venerate the same saints it can only be important. The martyrs of Aquileia, the Holy Martyr Panteleimon and St. Nicholas the Wonder-Worker, whose relics rest in Bari – these are saints whose intercession is sought by both Italian believers and the faithful of the Russian Orthodox Church.

'History belongs to the past which comes to us in monuments and manuscripts. But in the Church, history lives a special life, for history is actualized in it when we turn to holy martyrs not as those who lived in the past and venerate them not as heroes and authorities of the past but as those who for us are alive. And through their veneration, history becomes part of our life. Perhaps this is characteristic only of the Church and we believed it happens through the power of the Holy Spirit'.

Recalling the words of Pope John XXIII that the Church is not a museum which preserves things important for science but not very necessary for ordinary life, His Holiness Kirill stressed that 'in the Church, tradition is animated. Indeed, it is not only about the memory of martyrs, not only Christian history but values, primarily moral ones, which live in the Church. The church preaching brings these values to the conscience of the modern man'.

His Holiness noted that in various times in history, moral values in human life were challenged by both the society and the individual. 'But today we are going through a time special in some sense, when people's way of life often becomes a negative challenge to moral values', he said.

The Patriarch also mentioned a special

sympathy the two peoples feel for each other. Relations between them are developing also within the framework of the Russian-Italian Dialogue Forum of the civil societies. According to His Holiness, this forum has a great future.

His Holiness also spoke about the pastoral care of compatriots in Italy, among them Russians, Ukrainians, Moldavians and people of other ethnic origins. He informed his guest about the pastoral work of parishes located in various cities in Italy and pointed out the growing number of pilgrims coming to venerate common Christian shrines from the countries under the pastoral care of the Moscow Patriarchate. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, March 30.

ON MARCH 30, 2011, THE PRIMATE OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH MET WITH AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND TO THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION WOJCIECH ZAJĄCZKOWSKI.

In response to Patriarch Kirill's welcoming remarks, Mr. Zajączkowski thanked His Holiness for the opportunity to meet. Speaking about the life of the Orthodox community in his country and the work of the Polish Orthodox Church, he noted, 'I and my country's authorities are convinced that the Church has a great authority in today's world including Poland and can promote contacts between our nations'. The Polish ambassador also shared his impressions of the celebrations on the Day of Orthodoxy observed on the first Sunday of Lent.

During their talk, Patriarch Kirill reminded his guest that Russia and Poland were countries with a strong Christian tradition and said, 'We have many things in common and we should use the existing potential for reconciling our two nations'.

They also discussed the forthcoming anniversary of the Polish President's death in a plane crash and the participation of church representatives in the commemoration event.

His Holiness Kirill also expressed hope that the Russia-Poland Dialogue Forum of the civil societies would broaden its work.

The meeting was held in a warm atmosphere. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, March 30.

HIS HOLINESS IRINEJ, SERBIAN PATRIARCH RECEIVED YESTERDAY IN THE SERBIAN PATRIARCHATE A DELEGATION OF THE ISLAMIC COMMUNITY OF SERBIA led by deputy Reis-ul-Ulama Muhamed ef. Jusufpahic, Serbian mufti.

Serbian Patriarch and the high delegation of the Riaset of the IC Serbia talked about strengthening and further development of the traditionally good cooperation in the field of peace, tolerance, as well as issues regarding the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Islamic community of Serbia. – Website of the Serbian Patriarchate, March 22.

ON 31 MARCH 2011, METROPOLITAN HILARION OF VOLOKOLAMSK, HEAD OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE'S DEPARTMENT FOR EXTERNAL CHURCH RELATIONS (DECR), CURRENTLY ON A VISIT TO SERBIA, VISITED THE SERBIAN PATRIARCHATE AND MET WITH HIS HOLINESS PATRIARCH IRINEJ and members of the Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

Metropolitan Hilarion conveyed greetings from His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia to the Primate of the Serbian Church. The talk was held in a warm cordial atmosphere. Among other topics, the participants discussed the participation of the Russian Orthodox Church and Russian benefactors in the inner decoration of the Cathedral of St. Sava in Belgrade currently under construction.

After the talk, His Holiness Patriarch Irinej presented Metropolitan Hilarion with a copy of the "Three Hands" icon of the Mother of God, the main holy object of the Hilandar Serbian monastery on the Holy Mount Athos. Addressing Patriarch Irinej, Metropolitan Hilarion said: "Your Holiness, You are leading the Church which has suffered a lot together with its people. At present the life of the Church is beginning to take shape. The Cathedral of St. Sava symbolizes the revival. I believe that through concerted efforts, with a possible participation of the Russian Orthodox Church, the decoration works will be completed and the Cathedral will be a holy place not only for the Serbian Church, but for Orthodoxy as a whole."

"May the Most Holy Mother of God hear these words, and may the Lord bless our work through her almighty intercession," His Holiness Patriarch Irinej replied.

A dinner was given in honor of Metropolitan Hilarion on behalf of the Serbian Orthodox Church. After dinner, Metropolitan Hilarion and Patriarch Irinej met in private. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, March 31.

THE MARCH 18 SESSION OF THE HOLY SYNOD OF THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH (BOR) ELECTED ANDREI ANDREICUT, ARCHBISHOP OF

ALBA IULIA, AS METROPOLITAN BISHOP OF CLUJ, ALBA, CRISANA AND MARAMURES, a position that remained vacant after the death of the previous holder, Metropolitan Bartolomeu. Vicar Bishop Irineu Bistriteanul was the other contender for the position. According to the BOR provisions in force, the Holy Synod elected the metropolitan bishop by secret ballot, with Andreicut gathering 29 of the overall 46 votes, while 17 went to Vicar Bishop Irineu Bistriteanul.

Patriarch Daniel, has recently said that the BOR is the only Orthodox Church worldwide which still consults the clerics and the lay faithful before elections for a Holy Synod member as the Cluj metropolitan is. The enthroning ceremony of the new metropolitan will be held in Cluj-Napoca, on March 25, when Romanian Orthodox believers celebrate the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which this year also marks the fifth anniversary of the enthroning of late Cluj Archbishop, Metropolitan Bartolomeu.

In the first speech after his election, the new metropolitan bishop of Cluj said he is keen to carry on the "exceptional mission" of Metropolitan Bartolomeu, stressing it is the youth on whom the Orthodox Church should focus its attention, given the "country is growing old [...] We should focus our attention on the young people. Our country is growing old, there are increasingly few children, and increasingly many burials. Many go to work abroad on account of material conditions. Holding on to youth is very important, since they are tomorrow's church, tomorrow's Romania, Metropolitan Andrei Andreicut said, and added that he had left Cluj, where he began his clerical career, for Alba Iulia 25 years ago.

Andrei Andreicut was accused of having collaborated with the former Securitate, and in 2007, the National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives (CNSAS) established that he had engaged in political policing. The hierarch challenged the CNSAS decision in court, with the Alba Iulia Court of Appeal ruling in his favor and therefore cancelling the council's decision. The Alba Iulia archbishop has repeatedly said he "did not inform on anybody" and did not engage in political policing, quite the opposite, he was "hunted down" by the Securitate. He maintained that the Securitate had shadowed him for years and even prevented him from travelling for studies abroad, despite having passed scholarship examinations twice, and he had to take his doctoral examination five times. While Andreicut admitted to having signed a pledge with the former Securitate under the

codename "Ionica," as his parishioners knew him as "Father Ionica" while in Turda at the time, he nonetheless denied giving any information notes and "denouncing" anybody. He also wrote a book in which he recounts that period in his life and some of the pressures put on him by the former Securitate. – *Nine O'Clock*, March 21.

ON 23 MARCH 2011, HIS BEATITUDE PATRIARCH DANIEL RECEIVED IN AN AUDIENCE, AT THE PATRIARCHAL RESIDENCE, HIS EXCELLENCY MR. SZÁSZFALVI LÁSZLÓ, STATE SECRETARY FOR RELIGIOUS CULTS IN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE HUNGARIAN REPUBLIC, a Reformed pastor. His Excellency Mr. Füzes Oszkár, Ambassador of the Hungarian Republic in Bucharest was also present.

Mr. State Secretary Szászfalvi László thanked him for the reception and informed the Patriarch of Romania that the Bill for the Religious Cults of Hungary to be debated in the Hungarian Parliament will officially recognize the Romanian Orthodox Diocese of Hungary among the historical Churches of Hungary.

His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel said that the intention of the Hungarian authorities reflect historical reality, taking into account the documentary evidence that the first Romanian Orthodox communities in Hungary date from the beginning of the 14th century, and the first Romanian Orthodox Bishop, Sofronie I of Gyula and Lipova, was mentioned in Hungarian historical documents as far back as the 17th century.

Further on, the Patriarch of Romania made a short presentation of the drafting process of the Bill for the Religious Cults of Romania (2006), in which all the cults recognized in our country were involved. Basically, the Bill of the Religious Cults of Romania provides the autonomy of the Cults towards the State and of the State towards the Cults as basic principles, as well as the cooperation State – Cults for the welfare of the society.

His Beatitude recalled the fact that most of the properties of the Romanian Orthodox communities in Hungary have not been returned to their legal owners.

Therefore, the Patriarch of Romania officially proposed to the Hungarian Government the conclusion of a convention between the Hungarian State and the Romanian Orthodox Diocese of Hungary, according to the pattern of the one concluded with the Serbian Orthodox Diocese, to provide an annual financial support as moral compensation and as an act of justice.

Mr. State Secretary Szászfalvi László

considered the proposal of His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel and affirmed it was possible, because an intensification of cooperation between State and Cults was desired, especially in the social, charitable and cultural field, just like the cooperation between the Hungarian and Romanian communities close to the Romanian – Hungarian frontier.

During the meeting, the fact that secularization, demographic decrease and the economical crisis represent common problems for the religious cults of the two countries was emphasized. In this context, the guest appreciated the initiative of the Romanian Patriarchate to proclaim 2011 as Homage Year of Holy Baptism and Holy Matrimony, and considered that a year dedicated to the situation of the family today should be declared at the European level. – Press Release, Romanian Patriarchate, March 23.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (WCC), REV. DR OLAV FYKSE TVEIT MET WITH ARCHBISHOP CHRYSOSTOMOS II OF THE CHURCH OF CYPRUS AND THE PRESIDENT OF CYPRUS, DR DEMETRIS CHRISTOFIAS, in separate meetings Thursday in Nicosia.

At a meeting with Chrysostomos at the archdiocese, the two spoke about the importance of dialogue and the role of religious leadership, particularly in situations of occupation, division and conflict.

For nearly two generations Cyprus has been a place of separation and conflict. Efforts have continued throughout the years, including many involving the United Nations, to end the conflict.

Tveit is in Cyprus to attend a week-long inter-Orthodox consultation on the nature and mission of the church. The consultation is being held in Ayia Napa.

"Cyprus is an island at the crossroads of civilizations and religions," Tveit said after his meeting with the archbishop. "It has a long experience of peaceful coexistence between people of different confessions and religions."

Tveit said the conflict in Cyprus is not a religious one, but religion has become part of the separation. "The conflict has prevented people from visiting and worshipping in their holy sites."

"I am encouraged that the archbishop has taken initiatives to meet with the Turkish Cypriot religious leadership and is willing to work with them. These are signs of hope for the future," he said.

The WCC has followed the conflict since 1974 and supports a solution of the Cyprus conflict based on the UN resolu-

tions. Over the years, there has been a particular focus of the WCC on the respect for human rights, the right to worship and religious freedom.

"We as churches, sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ, are called to deal with difficult memories of the past and to work for reconciliation with a vision for justice and peace for the future. We need to listen to the pain of one another to pave the way for forgiveness and coexistence. The Church of Cyprus has strong leadership and deep roots in the history and life of this country. Hence, it has the power to bring new visions of a life together in a united Cyprus. I hope and pray that all religious leaders in Cyprus can work together in a way that leads toward the path of justice and peace," the general secretary concluded.

In a meeting with President Christofias, Tveit was able to explain the work of the WCC and its member churches in conflict and post conflict situations. He expressed the WCC hope for peace efforts in Cyprus. The two met at the presidential palace.

"We believe that walls can come down, including the 'wall' which divides Cyprus today. There is however a wall in our souls which also needs to be addressed," said Tveit after the meeting with Christofias.

"We pray for the political leaders of both communities," he continued. "It is encouraging to listen to the president's commitment to finding a just and sustainable peace, acting with wisdom and courage," Tveit said. "Bringing about a viable, peaceful solution to a political conflict can be a long and arduous process, which requires accepting hard compromises and real commitment to peace as well as the patience and goodwill of all parties concerned. On both sides there are people longing for a future together in real peace and justice." – WCC Press Release, March 4.

THE HOLY SYNOD OF BISHOPS OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA, LED BY ITS PRIMATE, HIS BEATITUDE JONAH, ARCHBISHOP OF WASHINGTON AND METROPOLITAN OF ALL AMERICA AND CANADA, MET FOR A PRE-LENTEN RETREAT from February 22-24, 2011, at Santa Fe, New Mexico.

During the retreat it was agreed to grant His Beatitude Jonah's request for a period of 60 days as a time 'for a personal retreat and spiritual renewal'. Archbishop Nathaniel of Detroit was charged with temporary administration of the Orthodox Church in America. The Holy Synod also

accepted the resignation of Archpriest Alexander Garklavs as Chancellor of the Orthodox Church in America and appointed Bishop Melchisedek of Pittsburgh as interim Chancellor.

On February 27, 2011, the Sunday of the Last Judgment, His Beatitude Jonah celebrated the Divine Liturgy at St. Nicholas's in Washington, after which he made the following comments on the above-mentioned decisions of the Holy Synod:

"As many of you know, in line with the longstanding tradition in the church of an intensified prayer life during Lent, I as a diocesan bishop, requested from my brothers on the Holy Synod to set aside a period of time for myself during the Great Fast to spend in personal reflection and renewal... Since my becoming Metropolitan, this will be the first extended period of rest that I have taken in quite some time. I am extremely grateful to my brothers for granting me this request, and for taking on the burden of added responsibility to their already busy schedules: Bishop Tikhon is now the locum tenens of the Diocese of the Midwest, and Bishop Nikon is now the locum tenens of the Diocese of the South.

I had intended, and still plan on doing so, to rest as much as possible during the Great Fast, spending time with loved ones and celebrating and attending the Divine Services at my Primatial Cathedral of St. Nicholas in Washington.

However, due to inaccurate reporting on the Internet stating that I had been deposed, that I had resigned, that I am on a leave of absence, rumors that have spread worldwide and have caused great concern among many. I owe you the faithful of this diocese clarification of the facts.

I am still your Metropolitan. I am still your diocesan bishop. I am still the active primate of the Orthodox Church in America. The reports are not true. I am merely taking a retreat, a time for reflection.

I have requested a time of rest. In line with the Holy Canons, the Statute of the Orthodox Church in America, and the good order of the church, no major decisions will be made without my knowledge and consent. His Eminence, Archbishop Nathaniel will be assisting the officers of the church in day-to-day operations. His Grace, Bishop Melchisedek has been kind enough to offer his support in the role of interim Chancellor of the OCA. In line with the Statute of the OCA, I am postponing the official Spring meetings of the Holy Synod and the Metropolitan Council until the period of time after Pascha. The members of the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America have been informed of this

postponement.

As the Lord said in the midst of His disciples, 'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you... Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.' I love you, I thank you for your continued support and prayers, and look forward to celebrating the Great and Holy Fast with you as we make the journey to the Pascha of Our Lord. Now, let us forget about what lies behind and push forward to what lies ahead. May the Lord bless all of you." -- Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, March 1.

ON MARCH 15, 2011, HIS EMINENCE, METROPOLITAN HILARION OF VOLOKOLAMSK, CHAIRMAN OF THE DEPARTMENT FOR EXTERNAL CHURCH RELATIONS OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE, VISITED THE UNITED STATES with the blessing of His Holiness, Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus.

During his stay in New York, Metropolitan Hilarion visited the Chancery of the Orthodox Church in America at Syosset, where he met with their Graces, Bishop Nikon of Boston; Bishop Tikhon of Philadelphia, Secretary of the Holy Synod of Bishops; Bishop Melchisedek of Pittsburgh, Interim Chancellor; Bishop Michael of New York; and Bishop Mark of Baltimore. Metropolitan Hilarion, who was accompanied by his deputy, Archpriest Nikolay Balashov, also had the opportunity to meet with some senior representatives of the clergy from various dioceses of the Orthodox Church in America. He informed those present about the recent meeting of the Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission for the Great and Holy Council, which took place in Chambésy, Switzerland, February 21-26, 2011.

The main point of discussion was the current situation in the Orthodox Church in America. During the discussion, Metropolitan Hilarion reaffirmed the position of the Russian Orthodox Church with regard to the autocephaly of the OCA, which, as he emphasized, has remained unchanged since 1970. He also stressed that the Moscow Patriarchate will in no way intervene in the internal affairs of the Orthodox Church in America, and yet, as the Church which consistently and actively defends the autocephaly of the OCA on the inter-Orthodox level, the Russian Orthodox Church needed to be directly informed about the details of the current situation.

The conversations were honest and took place in a friendly and cordial atmosphere. The hierarchs of the OCA express their gratitude to Patriarch Kirill for his love and concern for the OCA and to Met-

ropolitan Hilarion for undertaking this visit and for his continued brotherly support.

On his trip to the United States, Metropolitan Hilarion also will meet with His Beatitude, Metropolitan Jonah, at the request of Patriarch Kirill. -- OCA Press Release, March 15.

IN RESPONSE TO NUMEROUS ENQUIRES WITH REGARD TO THE CURRENT SITUATION OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA, Archpriest Eric G. Tosi, OCA Secretary, stated on Friday, March 25, 2011, that the work of the Church, especially with regard to the Holy Synod of Bishops, continues uninterrupted.

"The members of the Holy Synod continue to address issues that have arisen in recent weeks," Father Eric said. "They have maintained close contact with one another and with His Beatitude, Metropolitan Jonah.

"His Grace, Bishop Melchisedek of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania, continues to serve as Interim Chancellor, and is present at the Chancery every Tuesday through Thursday," Father Eric added. "The day-to-day work of the Chancery and the Church's departments, the intensive upgrade of the new OCA web site -- slated to make its debut in May 2011 -- ongoing work on the Strategic Plan, planning for the forthcoming 16th All-American Council, our collective efforts to assist the suffering in Japan, and a host of other ministries also remain 'on track' at this time. The external 2010 audit is underway, and our financial situation is positive. Ongoing internal issues will be addressed at the forthcoming meetings of the Holy Synod and Metropolitan Council."

The Holy Synod of Bishops will meet May 2-4, 2011, while the Metropolitan Council will gather May 4-6. Both meetings will take place at the Diocese of the Midwest's Center in Chicago, in conjunction with the consecration of Bishop-elect Matthias.

"There is no doubt that we are facing challenging times, countless rumors, and less-than-accurate accounts of Church life at this time," added Father Eric. "Despite these, the ongoing work of the Church, and particularly the Chancery, continues unabated. -- OCA Press Release, March 25.

DEACON NICHOLAS DENYSENKO RECENTLY WAS APPOINTED AS THE NEW DIRECTOR OF THE HUFFINGTON ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE AT LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY IN LOS ANGELES.

Deacon Nicholas has taught at the

Catholic University of America, George Washington University, and Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology. He joined LMU in Fall 2010. His areas of current research include the Blessing of Waters in the Byzantine Rite; Orthodox Ecclesiology in Ordination Rites; Contemporary Pastoral Liturgy; Heortology; The Christmas and Lenten Liturgical cycles; Mariology in Liturgy; the Ukrainian Famine of 1932-33; and Faith. He has published many articles in such prestigious journals as *Logos: A Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*, *Studia Liturgica*, *Theological Studies*, and *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*.

Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, Dean, Bellarmine College of Liberal Arts, stated that "I believe this appointment will strengthen the program, as well as offer greater opportunities for collaboration. Both objectives are essential to our interfaith dialogue initiatives." – OCA Press Release, March 23.

The Oriental Orthodox Churches

THOUSANDS OF EGYPTIAN CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS CLASHED ON MARCH 8, WITH ONE CHRISTIAN MAN KILLED AND SCORES WOUNDED AS ANGER ROSE OVER THE BURNING OF A CHURCH IN A CAIRO SUBURB.

It was the second burst of sectarian fighting in as many days and the latest in a string of violent protests over a variety of topics as simmering unrest continues nearly a month after mass protests led to the ouster of President Hosni Mubarak.

The violence erupted after Coptic Christians held protests in several locations in Cairo against perceived persecution by the country's Muslim majority.

The Christians have been angered by last week's burning by a Muslim mob of a church in a Cairo suburb. Egypt's military rulers have since pledged to rebuild the church and Prime Minister Essam Sharaf met Monday with the protesters outside the TV building. But the protesters said they wanted more steps to improve the status of Christians.

About 2,000 of them cut off a main road running along the eastern side of the city and pelted motorists with rocks. Another crowd of about 1,000 protested outside the TV building in downtown Cairo.

The group which included a group of garbage collectors, who are predominantly Christian, demanded equal rights and better quality of life. The clashes broke out when they were confronted by Muslims, witnesses said.

At least one Christian man was killed

and about 100 others wounded in the fighting, according to an Egyptian hospital official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to release the information. – Hadeel Al-Shalchi for *AP*, March 8.

EGYPTIAN COPTIC POPE SHENOUDA III CONTACTED A NUMBER OF PRIESTS INSTRUCTING THEM TO TRY TO CALM THINGS DOWN WITH REGARDS TO THE SECTARIAN CLASHES THAT BROKE OUT AFTER THE TWO MARTYRS CHURCH WAS BURNED IN HELWAN SAID A CHURCH SOURCE. The incident triggered large Coptic demonstrations in Cairo throughout the week that led to clashes on Tuesday resulting in at least 13 deaths and over 100 injuries.

Shenouda is currently in the United States for medical examinations and is scheduled to return to Cairo on Saturday. The source said the Pope had requested a report on the events. Father Salib Matta Sawiris, a member of the Maglis Milli, said a number of church leaders are considering sending a delegation to the protesters outside the Egyptian Television building to convince them to break up their demonstration in order to preserve stability and avoid escalating the situation.

Hundreds of Copts are demonstrating in front of the TV building in Maspairo to protest the burning of the church at Sol, Atfeeh, south of Cairo.

The protesters called for the dismissal of the governor of Helwan—the governorate where the incident took place—and accused him of failing to protect the church. They also called for compensation for those harmed and the restoration of the church at the expense of the state. – *Al-Masry Al-Youm*, March 10.

THE EGYPTIAN ARMED FORCES HAVE BEGUN REBUILDING THE SAINTS MINAS AND GEORGE COPTIC CHURCH SET ON FIRE BY MUSLIMS IN SOUL ON 5 MARCH, sources, anonymous for security reasons, told *AsiaNews*. Reconstruction began today and is being paid by the government.

"The church will be built on the same location and will be as big as the old one, despite opposition by radical Muslims," the source said.

Copts welcomed the news, but announced that they would continue to demonstrate in front of Egyptian TV to demand equal rights for Christians, a principle still denied by Egypt's constitution.

"The rebuilding of the church is a sign of good will on the part of the military," the

source said. "Recently, a delegation from al-Azhar University came to visit Christians in Soul to express their closeness to them."

According to the source, a positive atmosphere now prevails in the capital as no Christian-Muslim clash has been reported. Nonetheless, fear of Islamic extremism remains high.

"The Muslim Brotherhood is the only organized armed group in the country," the source said. "Despite internal divisions, they are united in pushing the ideas of radical Islam in the upcoming parliamentary elections." – *Asia News*, March 14.

THE HEAD OF THE EGYPTIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH, POPE SHENOUDA III, SUGGESTED AN ADDITION TO ARTICLE 2 OF THE CONSTITUTION, WHICH STIPULATES ISLAMIC LAW AS THE MAIN SOURCE OF EGYPT'S LEGISLATION.

Shenouda asked the deputy prime minister, Yehia al-Gamal, to add a clause to the article for other non-Muslim denominations. His request came during a Sunday meeting with al-Gamal at the papal residence at Abbasiya Cathedral. The meeting was attended by members from the holy synod, as well as public Coptic figures.

Al-Gamal promised to study the request, saying that he visited the cathedral to check on Shenouda's health. Shenouda was just back from a 18-day trip to the US where he regularly goes for medical treatment.

The majority of Egyptians are Sunni Muslims, but in addition to Coptic Christians, there are other minorities such as Jews, Baha'is and Shia Muslims.

A referendum on a package of constitutional changes on Saturday showed that more than 77.2 percent of Egyptians supported the amendments, which included limiting presidencies to two four-year terms and imposing restrictions on declaring a state of emergency.

But the changes do not tackle Article 2, which states that Islam is the country's official religion. The article has been in place since the Constitution was applied in 1971. It also says that Arabic is the official language of Egypt and that Islam is the main source of legislation.

Last February Ahmed al-Tayyib, the Grand Sheikh of Al-Azhar, the highest religious institution in the Sunni Muslim world, said changing Article 2 may "provoke sedition," describing the article as an established principle for the state.

But the church's rejection of al-Tayyib's statements has been circulated among several Coptic internet websites, saying they entrench the idea of an Islamic

state. The websites also highlight suggestions by liberal Copts and Muslims, as well as rights activists, to amend the article, proposing a different text saying that “the principles of divine religions and human rights agreements are the main sources of legislation.” – *US Copts Association*, March 21.

FROM MARCH 17 TO 19, THE SUPREME SPIRITUAL COUNCIL CONVENED ITS REGULAR MEETING IN THE MOTHER SEE OF HOLY ETCHMIADZIN UNDER THE PRESIDENCY OF HIS HOLINESS KAREKIN II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians.

The meeting convened with a prayer for the repose of the soul of His Eminence Archbishop Husik Santurian, senior Member of the Brotherhood of the Mother See.

Following the opening, the Pontiff of All Armenians extended his appreciation and blessing to the members of the Supreme Spiritual Council, wishing them a successful meeting. His Holiness also welcomed the presence of His Eminence Archbishop Aram Ateshian, Patriarchal Vicar of the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople.

His Eminence Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America and His Eminence Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America served as co-Chairmen of the meetings.

The 2010 administrative and financial reports for the Mother See were presented to the members of the Council. On the agenda for the meeting were issues related to the Mother See, Hierarchal Sees, Church-State relations, Pontifical and Inter-Church visits of the Armenian Pontiff, and intra-Church issues.

The Members of the Council were presented with information on the relationship between the hierarchal Sees and the Mother See. Co-chairmen of the Committee - His Eminence Archbishop Khajag Barsamian; and His Grace Bishop Arshak Khachatryan, Chancellor of the Mother See; reported on the recent activities of the Canonical and Liturgical Committee of the Catholicosate of All Armenians and the Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia. The Supreme Spiritual Council received the reports with appreciation and satisfaction and encouraged the committee to continue its work in finding resolutions to the current canonical and liturgical issues of the Armenian Church.

His Eminence Archbishop Khajag Barsamian and His Eminence Navasard

Kjoyan, Vicar of the Araratian Pontifical Diocese; presented a report on the outcome of the Brotherhood of St. James General Assembly. It was reported that a Committee elected during the meeting would shortly present to His Beatitude Abp. Torkom Manougian, Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem, a study of the Patriarchate's Constitution on the election of a coadjutor Patriarch.

His Eminence Archbishop Aram Ateshian, Patriarchal Vicar of the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople; reported on the current issues of the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople. His Eminence also presented upcoming events on the occasion of the 550th anniversary of the establishment of the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople. The Supreme Spiritual Council expressed its appreciation to His Eminence, and decided to organize anniversary celebrations in the Homeland in honor of the occasion.

During the meeting there was also a reflection on various intra-Church issues. His Eminence Archbishop Norvan Zakarian, Pontifical Legate of Western Europe and His Eminence Archbishop Yeznik Petrosian, reported on the current issues in the Armenian Diocese of Switzerland. The Armenian Diocese of Switzerland was established by His Holiness Vasken I of Blessed memory in 1992. His Grace Bishop Viken Aykazian was appointed to serve as the first Primate of the Diocese. The local parishes served as a base for the Pontifical Diocese and in Switzerland, where the World Council of Churches and other ecumenical institutions are operating, there was a need to raise the level of representation from the Armenian Church. As a result of discussions, the Supreme Spiritual Council decided to appoint Rev. Fr. Mesrop Parsamian, Vice Chancellor of the Mother See, to serve as a Locum Tenens of the Armenian Diocese of Switzerland and to contribute to the reorganization of the Diocesan life and serve as a Spiritual pastor to the Armenian community in Geneva. It was also decided to invite Rev. Fr. Abel Manoukian, Spiritual pastor of Geneva, to return to the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin for other service.

During the meeting, there was a reflection on the revisions as well as on the results of input received, for the guidelines of the Diocesan-Parish Bylaws.

His Grace Bishop Ararat Kaltakjian presented preliminary details of the visit of the Armenian Pontiff to the Dioceses of South America, scheduled for May 7 to 26, 2011.

There was also a review of the Inter-Church and Pontifical visit of the Armenian

Catholicos to the Georgian Church and to the Armenian Diocese of Georgia which is planned for June 2011. His Grace Bishop Hovakim Manoukian, Director of the Inter-Church Relations Department of the Mother See and His Grace Bishop Vasken Mirzakhanian presented the agenda and outline of the visit.

His Eminence Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, General Secretary of the Pan ACYO, presented a report on activities of the International Pan-Armenian Church Youth Organization (ACYO). He reported that the second meeting of the Governing Board would be held from 7-10 July 2011. The Supreme Spiritual Council expressed its appreciation to His Eminence for the work that has been done, stressing the importance of endeavors directed to the Christian Education of the Youth.

The Supreme Spiritual Council noted with joy that this year would be the 60th birthday of the Armenian Pontiff, and it was decided to officially celebrate the milestone in November – on the day of the anniversary of Enthronement of His Holiness.

The Supreme Spiritual Council decided to create an endowment Fund to specifically be directed towards the preparation of spiritual servants of the Armenian Church. The designated funds would result in a more efficient implementation of programs aimed at education of the younger generation of clergy. A committee has been formed to organize the work for the establishment of the Fund.

During the meeting, there was a presentation of the final reports made by the Diocesan Primates of the Armenian Church. The members of the Supreme Spiritual Council expressed their views on the reports and stated their joy related to the successes of the Dioceses in Spiritual-Ecclesiastical life.

The 3 day meeting closed with His Holiness expressing his appreciation to the Council members for their work and dedication and a final prayer. – Press Release, Holy Etchmiadzin, March 19.

CATHOLICOS OF THE EAST AND MALANKARA METROPOLITAN MORAN MAR BASELIOS MARTHOMA PAULOSE II ISSUED NECESSARY ORDERS TO APPOINT ZACHARIAH MAR NICHOLAVOS AS METROPOLITAN OF THE NORTH EAST AMERICAN DIOCESE. Metropolitan Mar Nicholavos had been serving the North East American Diocese as Assistant to Metropolitan Mathews Mar Barnabas since 2002.

The new Metropolitan had been attending winter sessions of the Holy Epi-

scopal Synod at Sophia Center, Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kottayam. He will return to the United States on March 11.

Decisions on the official welcome to the new Metropolitan will be taken in the Diocesan Council meeting and will be released later, said Fr. John Thomas, the Diocesan Secretary. – *Orthodox Herald*, March 1.

The Catholic Churches

THE PAPAL NUNCIO TO THE PHILIPPINES, ARCHBISHOP EDWARD JOSEPH ADAMS, HAS BEEN REASSIGNED TO GREECE.

Archbishop Adams will be holding the same position in Greece with about 50,000 Catholics or about 0.5 percent of the country's total population.

Rome announced the archbishop's new assignment on Tuesday.

The 66-year-old American prelate was the 15th in the line of apostolic delegates and apostolic nuncios to the Philippines.

Archbishop Adams was named papal nuncio to the Philippines in September 2007. In line with diplomatic tradition in countries with a Catholic majority, he also became the dean of the diplomatic corps.

Archbishop Adams succeeded Archbishop Fernando Filoni who has been reassigned to the Vatican as the city's new undersecretary for general affairs.

Born in Philadelphia, USA in 1944, Archbishop Adams was ordained priest in July 1970 for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

He entered the Vatican's diplomatic service in 1976, working in Rwanda, Kenya, Honduras, Ireland, Denmark and Czech Republic.

The late Pope John Paul II appointed him in 1996 as the Apostolic Nuncio in Bangladesh and elevated him to the dignity of Archbishop with the titular see of Scala. He also served as papal nuncio of Zimbabwe in 2002 to 2007.

A papal nuncio serves as Vatican envoy to the prelates of the Episcopalian Conference and particular churches and strengthens relationships between Pope Benedict XVI and heads of states and bishops. -- *CathNews Philippines*, Feb. 23.

HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XVI HAS GIVEN HIS CONSENT TO THE FOLLOWING CANONICAL ELECTIONS MADE BY THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS OF THE PATRIARCHAL SYRIAN-CATHOLIC CHURCH:

- Fr. Bouros Moshe, "protosincellus" (vicar general) of the archieparchy of Mos-

sul of the Syrians, Iraq, as archbishop of Mossul of the Syrians (Catholics 35,000, priests 36, religious 55). The archbishop-elect was born in Qaraqosh, Iraq in 1943 and ordained a priest in 1968. He succeeds Archbishop Basile Georges Casmoussa, who has been transferred to the Syrian-Catholic Patriarchal Curia in accordance with canon 85 paras. 3 and 4 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches.

- Fr. Yousif Abba, chancellor of the Syrian-Catholic eparchy of the United States of America and Canada, as archbishop of Baghdad of the Syrians (Catholics 18,000, priests 7) Iraq. The bishop-elect was born in Qaraqosh, Iraq in 1951 and ordained a priest in 1978. He succeeds Archbishop Athanase Matti Shaba Matoka, who resigned from the pastoral care of the same archieparchy, in accordance with canon 210 paras. 1 and 2 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches.

- Fr. Jihad Battah, "protosincellus" (vicar general) of the archieparchy of Damascus of the Syrians, Syria, as bishop of the Syrian-Catholic Patriarchal Curia. The bishop-elect was born in Damascus in 1956 and ordained a priest in 1991. – *VIS*, March 1.

THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE INTERPRETATION OF LEGISLATIVE TEXTS MADE THE FOLLOWING NOTE PUBLIC IN MARCH 2011:

I. Premises: With letter N. 20/92 of January 14, 2010, His Eminence Most Reverend Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, asked the advice of this Pontifical Council concerning the request made to the same Congregation by His Excellency Most Reverend Pietro Sambì, Apostolic Nuncio in the U.S.A., about the possibility of inscription in the Latin Church of a child baptized in the Russian Orthodox Church, and then, adopted by Latin parents.

II. General Observations: The Apostolic Nuncio presented the difficulties found in the Code of Canon Law (CIC), which does not contain a norm analogous to that of canon 29 §2, 2°, of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (CCEO). Therefore, he deems that it is not clear how one ought to proceed in the case of inscription in the Catholic Church of a child baptized in the Russian Orthodox Church, and then, adopted by Latin parents.

The fact that the adoptive parents are Latin faithful requires the observance of the norms of the Code of Canon Law (CIC) and not those of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (CCEO).

III. Particular Observations:

1) In the Code of 1917, in the Book II, "*De personis*" ("Of persons"), canon 90 § 1, made a distinction between legitimate children and illegitimate children; the latter did not enjoy the same rights as the former. The same Code did not state anything for adoptive children.

2) The II Vatican Council, in the Decree on the apostolate of the laity ("*Apostolicam Actuositatem*" n° 11, 4) has established: "*Inter varia opera apostolatus familiaris sequuntur enumerare licet: infantes derelictos in filios adoptare ...*" [official English translation: "Among the various activities of the family apostolate may be enumerated the following: the adoption of abandoned infants..."]. It may be noted that the Latin term "*in filios*" has the meaning of true children.

3) In the PCCICR (*Pontificia Commissio Codici Iuris Canonici Recognoscendo*), VI *De personis (libri II)*, *Sessio VII*, of April 26-30, 1971, it was proposed to remove from the new Code the distinction between legitimate children and illegitimate children and to introduce a norm to establish the *status* of adoptive children. As a consequence, in the Code of Canon Law of 1983 (CIC), the distinction no longer exists between legitimate children and illegitimate children, and adoptive children are considered true children.

4) The Code of Canon Law (CIC) has a clear norm in regard to adoptive children. In fact, the text of canon 110 says that children who have been adopted in accordance with the civil law are considered the children of those persons who have adopted them. In our case, this means that the persons who adopt a Catholic child (Latin or Oriental) or a child baptized in a non-Catholic Church or non-Catholic Ecclesial Community become the parents of this child with all the canonical and civil effects. The same can be said of the child who has been adopted: he becomes the child of the persons who have adopted him with all the civil and canonical effects. The adoptive parents, therefore, have all the rights and obligations established by canon and civil law, which draw from the parents' capacity (*patria potestas*).

5) As is known, canon 111 § 1 affirms that children, through the reception of baptism, become members of the Latin Church if the parents belong to that Church.

From the position of canon 111 § 1, that follows canon 110 concerning adoptive children, and from the tenor of its text, it is evident that the Legislator intends to establish a general norm to include in the term "children," without distinction, those legitimate, illegitimate, and adoptive.

6) Consequently, it is obvious in our case that, according to canon 111 § 1, the adopted daughter, baptized in the Russian Orthodox Church, becomes a member of the Latin Church to which her adoptive parents belong.

7) This criterion must be observed in other similar cases.

Vatican City, January 26, 2011

POPE BENEDICT XVI RECEIVED THE BISHOPS OF THE SYRO-MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH IN AUDIENCE ON MARCH 25. THEY WERE IN ROME FOR THEIR *AD LIMINA* VISIT. This is the text of the speech the Pope gave on the occasion:

Dear Brother Bishops,

I welcome all of you here today on the occasion of your pilgrimage *ad Limina Apostolorum*. I thank His Beatitude Basilio Cleemis for the devoted sentiments which he has addressed to me in your name. Through you, I extend greetings to all the priests, religious and lay faithful of your eparchies, and I wish to assure them of my prayers for their spiritual and material well-being. This time together is a privileged occasion to deepen the bonds of fraternity and communion between the See of Peter and the Syro-Malankara Church, happily promoted to Major Archiepiscopal Church by the Venerable John Paul II in 2005.

The apostolic traditions which you maintain enjoy their full spiritual fruitfulness when they are lived in union with the Church universal. In this sense, you rightly follow in the footsteps of the Servant of God Mar Ivanios, who led your predecessors and their faithful into full communion with the Catholic Church. Like your forefathers, you too are called, within the one household of God, to continue in firm fidelity to that which has been passed down to you. All Catholic Bishops share a proper concern for faithfulness to Jesus Christ and are desirous of that unity which he willed for his disciples (cf. Jn 17:11), while preserving their legitimate diversity. So it is that "the Catholic Church wishes the traditions of each particular Church or rite to remain whole and entire, and she likewise wishes to adapt her own way of life to the various needs of time and place" (*Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, 2). Each generation must confront the challenges to the Church in accordance with its capacities and in harmony with the rest of the Mystical Body of Christ. I encourage you, therefore, to foster an affection among your priests and people for the liturgical and spiritual heritage that has come down to you, while steadfastly building upon your communion with the See of Peter.

The deposit of faith handed down from the Apostles and faithfully transmitted to our times is a precious gift from the Lord. It is that message of salvation which has been revealed in the person of Jesus whose Spirit unites believers of every time and place, giving us fellowship with the Father and with his Son so that our joy may be complete (cf. 1 Jn 1:1-4). You and your priests are called to promote this fellowship through word and sacrament, and to strengthen it by a sound catechesis, so that the Word of Life, Jesus Christ, and the gift of divine life - communion with him - may be known throughout the world (cf. *Verbum Domini*, 2). Due to its ancient roots and distinguished history, Christianity in India has long made its proper contribution to culture and society, and to its religious and spiritual expressions. It is through a determination to live the Gospel, "the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith" (Rom 1:16), that those whom you serve will make a more effective contribution to the entire body of Christ and to Indian society, to the benefit of all. May your people continue to flourish by the preaching of God's word and by the promotion of a fellowship based on the love of God.

I note the particular challenges to many of your parishes in providing proper pastoral care and mutual support, especially when there is not always a parish priest at hand. And yet, smaller parishes, bearing in mind the social reality Christians face in the broader cultural context, present their own opportunities for truly fraternal upbuilding and assistance. Small Christian communities have often, as you know, given outstanding witness in the history of the Church. Just as in apostolic times, the Church in our age will surely thrive in the presence of the living Christ, who has promised to be with us always (cf. Mt 28:20) and to sustain us (cf. 1 Cor 1:8). It is this divine presence which must remain at the center of your people's life, faith and witness, and which you their Pastors are called to watch over so that, even if they must live far from their community, they will not live far from Christ. Indeed, it is important to remember that Christian communities are "the proper setting where a personal and communal journey based on the word of God can occur and truly serve as the basis for our spiritual life" (*Verbum Domini*, 72).

One of the ways in which you exercise your role as teachers of the faith to the Christian community is through the catechetical and faith formation programs taking place under your direction. Since "instruction should be based on holy scripture,

tradition, liturgy, and on the teaching authority and life of the Church" (*Christus Dominus*, 14), I am pleased to note the variety and number of programs that you currently employ. Along with the celebration of the sacraments, such programs will help ensure that those in your care will always be able to give an account of the hope which is theirs in Christ. Indeed, catechesis and spiritual development are among the most important challenges which pastors of souls face, and so I warmly encourage you to persevere along the path you have chosen as you seek to form your people in a deeper knowledge and love of the faith, aided by God's grace and by your humble trust in his providence.

With these thoughts, I renew my sentiments of fraternal affection and esteem for you. Invoking the intercession of Saint Thomas the Apostle, India's great patron, I assure you of my prayers and willingly impart to you and to those entrusted to your care my Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of grace and peace in the Lord Jesus Christ. – Vatican website.

THE PONTIFICAL ORIENTAL INSTITUTE HAS THE BEST GENERAL COLLECTION IN THE WORLD ON EASTERN CHRISTIANITY.

It boasts some 184,000 volumes, including rare and precious imprints and manuscripts, documenting centuries of Eastern Christian culture in a multitude of languages.

But the library's oldest and most valuable collections are in a serious state of degradation, including an extremely rare 1581 edition of the Ostrog Bible -- the first complete Bible printed in Slavic.

"For the Slavic churches, this is the Gutenberg" Bible, said U.S. Jesuit Father Robert Taft, former prefect of the library and former vice rector of the institute.

Rome's temperatures swing wildly from bone-chilling cold in the winter to hot, high humidity in the summer. Then add that to the ordinary wear and tear on volumes that are hundreds of years old.

What's left are works whose covers and bindings are disintegrating, metal clasps that are broken, and pages that are fragile, molding, water-damaged or riddled with the boreholes of bookworms.

"Everybody knows that that the only way to preserve material like this is to have a standard uniform temperature with humidity control and climate control throughout the entire year," he said.

"Thank God for Scotch tape," he said sarcastically as he pulled a manuscript of Byzantine liturgical music from a steel gray

fireproof case. Brittle bits of yellowed adhesive tape flaked off the worn binding and large green rubber bands held together other volumes that were completely lacking spines.

"This is a sin against the patrimony of the human race," said the priest.

The institute and library are funded, like all pontifical institutes, by the Vatican. However, the portion they receive is only enough to increase their holdings and keep the place running. Major expenses for modern equipment, renovation, and preservation are just not in the cards, he said.

The institute's rector, U.S. Jesuit Father James McCann, said he is looking for outside funding for its preservation efforts.

Jesuit-run Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., hopes to provide a grant to the library that would pay for a high-tech digitizing machine plus a year's stipend for one person to do the scanning, he said.

Digitizing the collections would help preserve many of the works, especially the most fragile, since scholars could work off the scanned pages, Father Taft said.

The library would also be able to put the content online so scholars could avoid the trouble and expense of traveling to Rome, he added. Having digital copies would mean works would be "preserved permanently in case of stealing or loss or destruction," he said.

While digitizing the collections will save on further wear and tear, funding must still be found for repairing the degraded volumes, which Father Taft said "costs a fortune."

"You just don't send it out to your corner bindery; these have to be handled by experts who work in a lab."

Father McCann said he also wants to look for potential donors outside the church, such as "people who love books or specialists who recognize the value of these materials." One student told the rector he should start an Adopt-a-Book campaign.

A climate-controlled system for the library and its collections could cost a quarter of a million dollars, said Father McCann. Not only would it protect the books from heat and humidity, he said, but the library would also be able to stay open year round instead of having to shutter its doors from mid-July to mid-September because of the stifling temperature.

The institute, which is a graduate school specializing in the study of the Christian East, was founded in 1917 by Pope Benedict XV to demonstrate the Catholic Church's concern for its Eastern heritage and for the communities continuing to live according to the Eastern tradi-

tions.

When Pope Benedict XVI met with staff and students from the institute in 2007, he told them that "drawing from the patrimony of wisdom of the Christian East enriches us all."

The Pope praised the world-renowned library as being a powerful instrument "for eliminating eventual prejudices that could harm cordial and harmonious coexistence among Christians."

On one rainy afternoon in March, the reading room was filled with students from India and Arab, Scandinavian, and European countries. Many students were poring over old volumes while typing away on 21st-century laptops.

Because the institute attracts religious and lay students and experts from many Christian traditions, it plays a key role in the future of ecumenism, Father McCann said.

Fifty of the 360 students enrolled this year are from the Orthodox Churches, he said, including the Coptic, Ethiopian, Greek and Russian traditions.

The Orthodox students finish their studies at the institute with "a positive view of the Catholic Church," he said, and this is important for fostering Christian unity since many of them will be bishops someday. One of the institute's most famous Orthodox alumni is Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople.

More than 9,000 scholars a year peruse the metal stacks. It's a gold mine for people interested in Eastern Christian culture, especially during the Czarist Empire in Russia when religious life and studies were flourishing, said Father Taft.

Soviet scholars used to flock to the institute's collections during the communist era, he said, even though the same texts existed in their own country. Soviet policies restricted people's access to the collections, he said.

Ironically, "access to the archives has become more restricted" again in Russia, which means many scholars are again choosing Rome over Russia for doing their research, said Father McCann.

Unfortunately for scholars, some precious collections are increasingly being put under lock and key or plates of museum glass for reasons of preservation, the two priests said.

The oriental institute, however, "is not an archival library or a museum library. Our things aren't here to be oohed and aahed over; they're here to be put into somebody's hands and used," said Father Taft. – Carol Glatz for *CMS*, March 25.

THE HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE RELEASED THE FOLLOWING COMMUNIQUÉ AT MIDDAY ON MARCH 28:

"This morning Benedict XVI received in audience His Beatitude Chrysostomos II, archbishop of New Justiniana and All Cyprus, primate of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus. His Beatitude was accompanied by Fr. Demosthenis Demosthenous and by Ioannis Charilaou.

"The discussions served to examine, among other things, the situation of Christians in the Middle East, and the question of religious freedom on the island of Cyprus. Subsequently, His Beatitude also went on to meet with Cardinal Secretary of State Tarcisio Bertone S.D.B." – *VIS*, March 28.

THE ARCHBISHOP OF CYPRUS, CHRYSOSTOMOS, HEAD OF A SMALL CHURCH BUT ONE THAT HAS BEEN A HISTORIC BRIDGE BETWEEN EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST, HAS CONCLUDED HIS VISIT TO THE VATICAN. On 28 March, the archbishop had several meetings culminating in an audience with Pope Benedict XVI. The visit, in the words of Chrysostomos, was aimed to raise awareness of the situation among members of the Holy See, so as to coordinate efforts to face the dangers threatening the future and survival of Christians in the Middle East and Cyprus in a region affected by protests and upheaval that have an uncertain outcome.

Regarding the situation of Christians in Cyprus, according to Chrysostomos, the greatest dangers lie in Ankara's continued occupation of the northern part of the island, which began in 1974. The first consequence was the division of the island and the total separation of the two ethnic groups, Greek and Turkish, Christian and Muslim respectively. The second consequence has been arrival of 300 thousand settlers from Turkey in the occupied north with the aim of altering the demography of the island, arriving at a lasting Islamization of that part of the island, thanks to their fertility rates.

All this happens under the watchful eye of 40 thousand Turkish soldiers, thereby reducing the role of the 65 thousand Turkish Cypriots who have remained in the area. Before the invasion they numbered 180 thousand. The Turkish Cypriots are in a permanent state of dispute with the settlers and Ankara; they have always set themselves apart from the settlers through a completely different mentality, characterized by a sense of civic responsibility and tolerant mutual coexistence.

"We made clear to the Holy Father, Chrysostomos continues, that while the

whole world is mobilized in the war for so-called human rights, we do not want any war in our favor, but since there is a country that is a candidate to enter the EU, it would suffice that the latter require Turkey to accept and respect the EU's founding principles, the easiest and most civil way forward."

Chrysostomos firmly rejects our question on whether there is a clash of civilizations between what many see as a Western "Christian vision of the world" and an opposed Eastern Islamic vision. Indeed this crisis, this economic and social stagnation affects all humanity, says the Archbishop of Cyprus, adding that he knows many Muslim leaders who are people of good will. "And I hope they will not be sent away. This is one reason," he says, "why we Christians must coordinate our efforts in order to be useful to people of good will."

As for the dialogue between Catholics and Orthodox, especially in light of an apparent stalemate that occurred during the last meeting in Vienna, Chrysostomos tells

us that he met with Cardinal. Kurt Koch, co-chairman of the Joint Committee on Catholic-Orthodox dialogue, and discussed with him the importance of dialogue. Without giving details, he adds: "The Church of Cyprus is in favor of dialogue and is represented by two high profile figures, the Metropolitans of Paphos and Kostantias. Our church, though it is a small church from the numerical point of view, is held in great esteem within the Orthodox world, and it should be noted that the twenty-first century will be defined as the century of dialogue, because without dialogue with our neighbor, we will never realize a truly human society."

On the issue of pan-Orthodox dialogue, Archbishop Chrysostomos expresses his opinion that the stalemate resulting from the last pan-Orthodox meeting in Chambesy, was born of some positions of the Church of Moscow. "This negative situation in which we have arrived in the Orthodox world, continues Archbishop Chrysostomos, is partly due to the fact that all we

introduce ourselves as national churches. In other words, we are first Greeks, Russians, Arabs, Slavs, etc., and then Orthodox Christians. We should be united by our faith and not our national origin as I said in my last visit to Moscow. So if we want to move forward in the sense of achieving a true single entity, we have to leave aside our national origins and think of ourselves instead in terms of being Orthodox Christians."

Finally, with regard to Europe and evangelization, Chrysostomos recalls a conversation he had with Benedict XVI during the Pope's visit to Cyprus. The pontiff said that Europe needs to be re-evangelized. "This is the reason, the archbishop concludes, why all churches, Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant, must embrace their flock. In short we must understand the demands of our people and hear their cries, if we want to really be Church." – *Asia News*, March 31.



His Beatitude Bechara Boutros Rai, Maronite Patriarch (left) and His Beatitude Sviatoslav Shevchuk, Major Archbishop of Kyiv-Halic, Primate of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church

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