



SEIA NEWSLETTER

On the Eastern Churches and Ecumenism

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The Second Meeting of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of North and Central America

FROM MAY 25-27, THE SECOND ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF CANONICAL ORTHODOX BISHOPS OF NORTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA GATHERED FOR ITS MEETING AT THE CHICAGO O'HARE HILTON. There was a total of 45 bishops in attendance. In addition, nearly all of the members were present at the Assembly: the Ecumenical Patriarchate, including the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, and the Albanian Orthodox Diocese; the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese; the Patriarchate of Moscow, including the Russian Orthodox Church in the USA and the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia; the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese of the Americas; the Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox Church; and the Orthodox Church in America. Not represented were the American Carpatho-Russian Diocese, as they currently have no bishop, owing to the recent repose of Metropolitan Nicholas; the Georgian Orthodox Church, whose bishop resides in Georgia; most of the bishops of Canada and Mexico, as the Canadian bishops anticipate their own assembly, as do those of Mexico and Central America who have requested to join the Assembly of South America. The Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church were detained by the business of their Synod in Belgrade, which was in session at the same time, and by delays in travel caused by the volcanic ash over Europe, and so were not able to attend.

The meetings convened on Wednesday morning with an opening prayer by His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios, the chairman of the Assembly. He asked the Secretary, Bishop Basil, to read to the Assembly a letter from the Patriarch of Serbia, Irinej, extending his blessings, support, and fraternal best wishes for the work of the Assembly in North America and asking the

Assembly's understanding of his need to ask the Serbian bishops to remain in Belgrade for the work of their synod.

Both the agenda for this meeting and the minutes of the last Assembly, held in May 2010, were unanimously approved. The Chairman then delivered his address to the Assembly, in which he remembered the three member bishops who had fallen asleep in the Lord since the last Assembly: Metropolitan Christopher, Metropolitan Nicholas, and Metropolitan Epiphanius. He welcomed also the new members: Bishop John of Caracas, who was appointed by ROCOR to oversee its Old Believer parishes in the USA, and Bishop Matthias of the OCA, who was consecrated shortly after Pascha of this year. He noted also the retirement of Metropolitan John of Winnipeg, the head of the Ukrainian Church in Canada and the election of his successor, Metropolitan Yuri.

At the conclusion of his address the Chairman invited the first Vice-Chairman, Metropolitan Philip, and the second Vice-Chairman, Archbishop Justinian, to address the Assembly. Both hierarchs stressed the need for increased cooperation among all the bishops through the agency of the Assembly.

The Treasurer of the Assembly, Archbishop Antony, presented a report to the bishops on the financial resources available to the Assembly. Each of the churches contributed funds to the Assembly, for the work of its thirteen committees. The cost of the Assembly meeting itself, it was noted, was not funded from these contributions, but will be covered by the contributions of individual donors.

This past year the work of the Assembly focused on the establishing of the Secretariat and the completing of its initial tasks. The Secretariat represents a cross-section of the Church, including bishops, priests, deacons, laity and monastics. Bishop Basil, the Secretary of the Assembly, presented a report on the work accomplished by the eleven-member Secretariat during the course of the past months. This consisted primarily in: i) regular monthly

meetings of the Secretariat; ii) regular communications to the member bishops about the business of the Assembly; iii) the creation of a website to disseminate information about the purpose and work of the Assembly (www.assemblyofbishops.org), and most importantly, iv) the creation of the thirteen committees of the Assembly and the documents and guidelines necessary for their operation. They also created a diverse list of consultants for each of the committees, made up of professional and knowledgeable men and women recommended by their bishops. These consultants are available to assist with their professional expertise the member bishops of each committee. The Assembly expressed its unanimous support and appreciation for Bishop Basil and the staff of the Secretariat for its accomplishments.

The Assembly heard reports from each of its thirteen committees. Nearly all of the committees had either met prior to the Assembly meeting, or were able to meet while in Chicago. Unfortunately, the Secretariat's Coordinator for Committees, Bishop Maxim, who has worked so hard and efficiently for the creation and the guidance of the committees, and who was scheduled to give the reports, was not present, owing to the pressing business of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The reports were instead presented on his behalf by the Secretary, Bishop Basil, and the respective committee chairmen.

Three decisions by the Assembly stand out as particularly important. Firstly, the Assembly expressed its desire to define more carefully its relationship to the agencies and endorsed-organizations which it inherited from SCOBA. It was felt that the bishops should do more to enable the success of these ministries in North America, and they agreed that the guidelines previously used by SCOBA were not adequate for the Assembly. These guidelines will be revised by the Secretariat's Coordinator for Agencies and Endorsed-Organizations, together with the liaison bishops for the various agencies, to allow the Assembly a more active participation in and support of the various ministries under its oversight.

Secondly, the Assembly agreed on the great importance of the role of our military chaplains, who give spiritual support to our dedicated men and women who serve in the armed forces and are subject to the many hardships of deployment and combat. They decided upon the need to develop clear guidelines for Orthodox Christian chaplains, and to create a single, unified endorsing agency for all military chaplains with the Department of Defense. In addition, it is a desired goal of the Assembly to facilitate a gathering of all active Orthodox Christian military chaplains.

And thirdly, the Assembly stressed the great importance of the Church's ministry to the youth, and as a result, has endorsed three projected conferences to bring together Orthodox youth workers from all over North America. It is hoped that this will help to encourage them in their ministry, eliminate redundancy and divided resources among the various churches, and create a common vision for youth ministry in the Church in North America.

The Assembly decided that it was prudent for itself to be incorporated as a legal entity, as this would bring the Assembly a number of benefits and would further its ability to act as a body. It therefore authorized the proper agents to move ahead with the work of incorporation. In addition, the Assembly reaffirmed its petition of last year to the mother churches, for the partition of the Assembly, by establishing Canada as a separate region, and joining Mexico and Central America to the region of South America. This represents also the desire of the Canadian, Mexican and Central American bishops. Lastly, the Assembly drafted and approved an official message to be issued in its name to the all Orthodox Christian faithful living within the region. The complete text of the message appears below.

All of the proceedings over the course of the two days were characterized by a strong fraternal spirit of charity among the brother bishops. This was reflected nowhere more clearly than in the fact that all decisions of the Assembly were made with complete unanimity.

**2011 Message
of the Assembly of Bishops
Friday, May 27, 2011**

Christ is Risen! "Glory to the Holy, Consubstantial, Life-giving, and Undivided Trinity."

By the grace of God, we forty-five Hierarchs gathered in Chicago IL, on May 25-27, 2011, for the second meeting of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of North and Central America. Several Hierarchs were prevented from attending due to personal illness, while our Serbian brothers, participating at a prolonged assembly of bishops meeting in Belgrade, were also unable to attend. All of us experienced what the Psalmist joyfully declares, "how good and pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!" (Ps. 132.1)

We draw inspiration from this resurrectional liturgical period, within which we have assembled, standing at the midpoint between the light of Pascha and the grace of Pentecost, the crossroad between the possibility of new life and the reality of renewed communion, the merging of the melody of unity and the beauty of diversity.

We call to mind our brother Hierarchs who have fallen asleep in the Lord during the past year: Metropolitan Christopher of Libertyville and Chicago (Serbian Diocese), Metropolitan Nicholas of Amissos (Carpatho-Russian Diocese), and Metropolitan Epiphanius of Bryoula (Ecumenical Patriarchate). May their memory be eternal!

In our deliberations as Orthodox Hierarchs, we manifested a spirit of conciliarity, expressing our commitment to proceed on all matters in collegial and collaborative manner reflective of the unity that characterizes the various jurisdictions of the Orthodox Church within our regional Assembly. In this respect, we once again affirm our desire and willingness to work toward "the swift healing of every canonical anomaly that has arisen from historical circumstances and pastoral requirements" (2008 Message of the Primates 13.1-2), following the decisions of the representatives of the Orthodox Autocephalous Churches regarding the "unswerving position and obligation to safeguard the unity of the Orthodox Church" (2009 Chambésy, Rules of Operation, Article 5.1a) and the promotion of "common action to address the pastoral needs of Orthodox living in our region" (2009 Chambésy, Decision 2c).

In accordance with our determination and decision during the 1st Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops (May 26-28, 2010), we focused and acted upon our understanding that we are successors of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA), assuming its agencies and ministries. Therefore, among the items on the agenda was the work of the Assembly's 13 committees, its Secretariat, and its 14 agencies and endorsed organizations.

We offer thanks to God for the positive spirit of cooperation that prevailed during the sessions of the Assembly. We are pleased to report to our faithful what the committees of the Assembly of Canonical

Orthodox Bishops reported to their brother Hierarchs. The work of these committees will constitute the principal service of the Assembly, meeting frequently and regularly in order - with the participation also of lay members - to materialize the remarkable unity of the Orthodox Churches in this region. In this regard, we are inspired by the words of the Risen Lord: As the Father has sent me, I am sending you (John 20.21); and Truly, truly, I say to you: he who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do. (John 14.12)

Thus, in addition to official reports by the Chairman, the Vice-Chairmen, the Treasurer, and the Secretary, the responsibilities of the following committees were discussed extensively: Canonical Affairs, Canonical Regional Planning, Church and Society, Clergy Affairs, Ecumenical Affairs, Financial Affairs, Legal Affairs, Liturgy, Military Chaplaincy, Monastic Communities, Pastoral Practice, Theological Education, and Youth. Moreover, the coordinators of the various agencies and endorsed organizations, formerly under the aegis of SCOBA, will convene with respective Hierarch liaisons in order to determine the criteria of their relationship and establish appropriate channels of communication with the Assembly.

In particular, the Assembly warmly received and unanimously encouraged the creation of a common ministry for our military chaplaincy and our youth.

Our prayers are offered to God at this time for those who have suffered from the extreme weather conditions in the last weeks, especially and most recently the tornadoes and flooding in Missouri and Oklahoma in the United States, and throughout the region of our Assembly, where epic catastrophe has struck numerous people with death, devastation, and damage. May God grant rest to the souls of the departed and may the gentle breeze of His Spirit grant the victims the strength to rebuild their lives. We fervently encourage our parishes to offer generous material, financial, and spiritual support.

We cannot remain silent in the face of atrocities and persecutions committed against Christian minorities by fundamentalists and extremists, in Palestine and Egypt, especially against the Christians caught up in the upheaval of the Arab Spring, which has unleashed long-oppressed diverse sectarian animosities. In particular, the Christian communities in Palestine and the Middle East have been drastically reduced and compelled to emigrate as refugees. We urge political leaders

throughout the world to stop ignoring the manifestations of intolerance, discrimination and open persecution against all religious communities - Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike - living in contentious regions and countries of the world, notably in Northern Africa and the Middle East.

In light of the designation of June as "internet safety month," we exhort our priests and parishioners to raise awareness and secure appropriate protection for our children and communities from the many and diverse prevalent dangers, including pornography, cyberbullying, perils by predators, risks of geotagging, and in particular dissension in the Church. Technology is not sinful; but the abuse of technology is a sin and a crime. We encourage our faithful to disseminate relevant internet safety literature, organize internet safety classes, utilize parental controls, and take rigorous advocacy measures to pressure wireless companies and carriers to mandate protective options.

Finally, we are united in wholeheartedly acknowledging and fervently blessing the tireless ministry of our parish clergy and their families, the honorable presbyters and deacons in the service of Christ, the brothers and sisters of our monastic communities, and all those who do charitable work, those who serve our holy houses of worship, those who labor, teach, and chant, and all the people of God, who await His great and rich mercy.

Truly the Lord is Risen!

-- The Assembly Secretariat, May 27.

The Eastern Orthodox Churches

IN AN ENCYCLICAL LETTER INTENDED TO BE READ IN CONGREGATIONS OF THE CHURCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE AROUND THE WORLD ON SUNDAY 22 MAY, THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE BARTHOLOMEW I WELCOMES "WITH GREAT JOY" THE INITIATIVE OF THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (WCC) in convening the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC) in Kingston, Jamaica from 17 through 25 May 2011.

The Patriarch hails the IEPC as "a fitting conclusion" to the global, inter-church "Decade to Overcome Violence" and an opportunity to inspire and enable the creation of new efforts and networks for peace. His letter was written in response to an invitation extended by the WCC to all member churches to mark a Sunday for Peace on 22 May 2011.

The IEPC is expected to attract approximately 1,000 participants from all

regions of the world. Its theme is "Glory to God, Peace on Earth," with activities organized around four subthemes: Peace in the community, Peace with the earth, Peace in the marketplace and Peace among the peoples.

"Justice and peace are central themes in Scripture," writes the Patriarch in his encyclical letter, adding that "peace always - and ultimately - starts in the heart." Yet true peace will not remain sequestered there, for "this inner peace must be manifest in every aspect of our life and world."

The encyclical offers a confession of sin on behalf of contemporary humanity: "Many of our efforts for peace are futile because we are unwilling to forgo established ways of wasting and wanting. We refuse to relinquish wasteful consumerism and prideful nationalism. In peacemaking, then, it is critical that we perceive the impact of our practices on other people (especially the poor) as well as on the environment. This is precisely why there cannot be peace without justice."

Recalling that Jesus called peacemakers "blessed" (Matthew 5:9), Patriarch Bartholomew adds that "peacemaking is a matter of individual and institutional choice. We have it in our power either to increase the hurt inflicted on our world or to contribute toward its healing. Once again, it is a matter of choice." - WCC Press Release, May 10.

ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW WILL BE IN THE PORT CITY OF KAVALA, GREECE, ON A THREE-DAY VISIT TO BE LAUNCHED ON MAY 18.

Bartholomew will attend the St Lydia of Philippi feast day celebrations on May 20.

On May 19, he will visit the Saint Paul monument and will be declared honorary citizen of Kavala. He will also become honorary professor in the Kavala Technical Educational Institute (TEI).

On May 20, he will preside at the Saint Lydia feast day mass and in the afternoon he will inaugurate a photography exhibition on the Greek Orthodox churches in Istanbul.

A world conference on "Saint Paul-Philippi: Two millennia. The European vision of the Apostle of the Nations" will also take place in Kavala, concluding on Sunday, May 22.

The conference will be attended by roughly 200 delegates and will be addressed by thirty speakers from Greece, the EU and the United States, representatives of Patriarchates and autocephalous Orthodox Churches. - ANA, May 11.

“AS FAITHFUL DISCIPLES OF THE LORD OF PEACE, WE MUST CONSTANTLY PURSUE AND PERSISTENTLY PROCLAIM ALTERNATIVE WAYS THAT REJECT VIOLENCE AND WAR. Human conflict may well be inevitable in our world; but war and violence are not.”

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew shared this message of peace at a Sunday ecumenical prayer service and celebration in Kingston, Jamaica, for the participants of the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC).

Over the past four days, some 1,000 convocation participants have been exploring peace in the community, peace with the earth, peace in the marketplace, and will continue with peace among the peoples on Monday. On Tuesday they will release a convocation message.

The IEPC is co-sponsored by the World Council of Churches (WCC), the Caribbean Conference of Churches (CCC) and the Jamaica Council of Churches (JCC). The convocation is being held on the grounds of the University of the West Indies.

The IEPC participants, who come from more than 100 churches around the world, are completing their work against a global backdrop of unprecedented challenges to peace, Bartholomew said in his video recorded message.

"First, never before has it been possible for one group of human beings to eradicate as many people simultaneously; second, never before has humanity been in a position to destroy so much of the planet environmentally," Bartholomew said, acknowledging the precipice humankind stands on.

As the convocation participants have been pondering the tension and ties between the concepts of peace and justice, the Patriarch stated that most peacemaking efforts fail because we are unwilling to forgo established ways of wasting and wanting.

"In peacemaking, then, it is critical that we perceive the impact of our practices on other people (especially the poor) as well as on the environment," he said. "This is precisely why there cannot be peace without justice."

Despite the growing knowledge at the IEPC of the monumental obstacles blocking the path to peace, songs performed by local Jamaican musicians ushered in a mood of celebration during the service.

The ecumenical service offered the opportunity for the participants to join as one voice both in their praise to God and their hope for the church to be united in

peacemaking. – WCC Press Release, May 23.

SINCE MISINFORMATION AND MYTHS USUALLY PREDOMINATE IN DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THE GREEK ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE OF İSTANBUL, A BOOK HAS BEEN PREPARED THAT IS A COMPILATION OF ARTICLES BY TURKISH AND GREEK EXPERTS in an attempt to shed light on the issue and the historical, political, religious and legal realities of the Patriarchate.

Titled “Ekümenik Patrikhane” (Ecumenical Patriarchate), the book was prepared due to a need for further resources regarding the Patriarchate. Cengiz Aktar, who compiled the articles in the book, said in a panel discussion at the İstanbul Policy Center on Tuesday. The book states that the Patriarchate is portrayed as an entity that is opposed to Islam and a missionary arm of Greece inside Turkey in a considerable number of news reports and publications, which make up the core of the debates surrounding the Patriarchate.

Among the participants on the panel on Tuesday was Greek Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew, who highlighted the limited number of objective works in Turkish about the Patriarchate. “Most of them [the works on the church] are provocative,” he said, and added that the book is for those who want more objective information on the issue.

“There were [almost] no sources in Turkey. Even in Greece, [which was said to protect the Patriarchate] there were [almost] no sources,” researcher Elçin Macar, who contributed to the book with an article on the ignorance of Turkish historiography on the Patriarchate, said as he spoke about his decision to research the issue of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate.

In Turkey, the role of the Patriarchate was discussed during Greek riots in the Peloponnese, which ended in Greek independence from the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish War of Independence, according to Macar. He also argued that several myths regarding the church are purposely repeated by some circles in order to undermine the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in İstanbul. “Since the mid-90’s, many things have changed. Ignorance has decreased and experts have become more competent,” he added.

Samim Akgönül, whose article on the Patriarchate, Bartholomew and Turkish public opinion is included in the book, highlighted that the Patriarchate is seen as a foreign entity in discussions regarding the opening of the Heybeliada Seminary.

Lawyer Cem Murat Sofuoğlu emphasized discussions of the Patriarchate's recognition as a legal entity. The church is accepted as a legal entity “de facto,” and it must be recognized in the same way “de jure” as well, according to Sofuoğlu. The question of legal entity came to public attention when problems erupted in transferring the Büyükdada Orphanage to the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate. The church received the title deed in November 2010.

Turkey is also often criticized for not permitting the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate to refer to itself as “ecumenical”; however, the church has been historically and internationally recognized as ecumenical. The book addresses the topic of ecumenism in several articles, presenting two examples in which both Ottoman authorities and Turkish authorities described the church as “ecumenical” in official documents. – *Today's Zaman*, May 25.

ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW IS TO CARRY OUT A HISTORIC VISIT TO THE CITY OF İZMİR BETWEEN FRIDAY AND SUNDAY, during which he will lead a mass at the Church of the Entrance into the Temple of the Virgin Mother in Alacati on Saturday.

This will mark the first time that a Patriarch leads a mass in Alacati in 90 years, since the disastrous outcome of the Asia Minor war in 1922 that resulted in the expulsion of the majority of the area's sizeable Greek community during the population exchanges of the Lausanne Treaty.

The church had been converted to a mosque but recently stopped being used for that purpose and was officially declared a historic monument of Turkey and quickly restored, revealing many secrets. – *ANA*, May 26.

FROM 23RD TO 26TH MAY 2011, THE INTER-ORTHODOX BIOETHICS COUNCIL CONVENED FOR ITS FIRST MEETING AT THE ORTHODOX ACADEMY OF CRETE, as a guest of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, with participants from all the Orthodox Churches around the world. The Representatives from Bulgaria were not able to attend.

The Bioethics Council was convened following a proposal by His All Holiness Bartholomew, the Ecumenical Patriarch and a unanimous decision taken by the Primate of the Orthodox Churches during their Synaxis at the Phanar in October 2008.

Presiding over the deliberations of the Inter-Orthodox Council was Metropolitan Ioannis of Pergamos, representative of the

Ecumenical Patriarchate. The Secretary was the Very Rev. Archimandrite Makarios Griniezakis from the Ecumenical Throne.

Following the opening and introductory speech by its President, they studied the method and the issues which they were to discuss, so that a uniform opinion of the Orthodox Church's view on Bioethical issues could be achieved.

The Council decided that at every one of its meetings it would examine one particular bioethics issue, which would be chosen according to priority depending on its pastoral, ecclesiological, theological and social necessity.

Given that the issue of reproduction is one of the most vital and burning issues, which creates enormous bioethical dilemmas in the pastoral theology of the Church, the Council decided that at their next meeting they would deliberate on this issue and then appointed speakers from among their members to present its scientific and theological views.

His Eminence Amphilochios of Kisamos and Selinos, President of the Orthodox Academy of Crete hosted an official dinner in the refectory in honor of the delegates, which was also attended by His Eminence Irenaios, Archbishop of Crete and Synodal Metropolitans of Crete.

The Inter-Orthodox Bioethics Council, which will meet again in a year's time, is looking forward with the grace of Jesus Christ to bearing fruit to the glory of the Lord and to fulfilling the obligation and mission of the Orthodox Church in the contemporary world.

It should be noted that the Very Reverend Archimandrite Panteleimon Arathymos, Chief Secretary of the Holy Synod and the Erudite Mr. Gregory Liantas Professor of the Higher Ecclesiastical Academy of Thessaloniki, represented the Second Throne Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa. – *Website of the Patriarchate of Alexandria*, May 26.

THE FIRST MEETING IN THE HISTORY OF HELLENIC COLLEGE - HOLY CROSS GREEK ORTHODOX SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY BETWEEN MEMBERS OF THE HOLY EPARCHIAL SYNOD, AUXILIARY BISHOPS AND FACULTY MEMBERS OF HOLY CROSS WAS CONVENED UNDER THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF ARCHBISHOP DEMETRIOS OF AMERICA, on Thursday May 5, 2011. This truly historic first meeting examined issues concerning the life and progress of the highest educational institution of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese.

The meeting concluded with Archieratical Vespers in Holy Cross chapel. The

participants in the conference included hierarchs of the Holy Eparchial Synod of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, the President, the Dean and the faculty of HC/HC. The conference was held in a very positive and constructive atmosphere of cooperation.

Issues discussed included the admissions process, the curriculum and its further development and aspects of theological, liturgical and language education and training. Other issues considered were the role of worship and the cultivation of high ecclesiastical orthodox convictions and ethos especially for students inclined towards the priesthood and ministry in the Orthodox Church.

During the day-long conference the participants were presented with statistical data about the school and its history and various views were exchanged between hierarchs and professors in the spirit of the common care and love for Hellenic College -Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology. – Press Release, Greek Archdiocese, May 7.

METROPOLITAN EPIPHANIOS (PERIALAS) OF BRYOULA, FORMER METROPOLITAN OF SPAIN AND PORTUGAL, FELL ASLEEP IN THE LORD ON MONDAY, MAY 9, 2011 FOLLOWING A LONG FIGHT WITH CANCER. Funeral services will be held on Saturday, May 14, 2011, at St. Catherine Greek Orthodox Church in Ithaca, New York.

Metropolitan Epiphanius of Bryoula, in the world Constantine Perialas, was born in Ithaca, New York, in 1935. He was a graduate of Syracuse University and Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology. He served for 30 years as a professor of speech and communications at Ithaca College. He also served for a period as a vice president of the college, in charge of student affairs. The college established the Perialas Prize in Epiphanius' honor in 1997. The prize is given to three students annually. In 1984 he was ordained to the priesthood (taking at that time the name Epiphanius) and served in a variety of parishes, including St. Catherine's in Ithaca (for 15 years) and the Assumption (Koimisis of the Theotokos) Greek Orthodox Church in St. Clair Shores, Michigan, from which he was elected Metropolitan.

On April 12, 2003, the Holy and Sacred Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate elected Fr. Epiphanius as the first bishop of the newly-established Metropolis of Spain and Portugal. In March of 2007, Metropolitan Epiphanius informed the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of his intentions to

retire. The Holy Synod then elected him as Metropolitan of Bryoula after which he returned to the U.S. in mid-summer 2007. He passed away on Monday, May 9, 2011. May his memory be eternal. – Press Release, Greek Archdiocese, May 13.

TWO RELIGIOUS FREEDOM RESOLUTIONS HAVE RECENTLY BEEN ADOPTED IN THE TEXAS LEGISLATURE CALLING FOR TURKEY TO UPHOLD AND SAFEGUARD THE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM OF THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE. These resolutions specifically call for the Turkish government to recognize the ecumenical status of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, to respect its rights to property and to ecclesiastic succession, and to grant it the right to train its clergy--including the opening of the Halki Theological Seminary.

The Texas House of Representatives adopted HR 1670 on May 5. The primary sponsor of the resolution was Rep. Dennis Bonnen, who was determined in pursuit of the result, in the face of strong opposition.

Archon Stephen Georgeson, National Coordinator for the State Resolutions Project, said, "Only because of the determination and persistence of Archons Chris Pappas, John Zavitsanos and Frank Mihalopoulos did the issue not die. They coordinated a true grassroots effort that produced almost 1,000 letters from Orthodox Christians from Dallas, Houston and Austin to their state representatives, urging support for the resolution.

"Special thanks and recognition also are extended to Metropolitan Isaiah for his unwavering support and to Archon Mike Manatos, Thomas Suehs and Bill Miller for their critical roles in helping secure the adoption of the resolution."

A second resolution, SR 1006, was given final adoption by the Texas Senate, on May 16.

Senator John Whitmire agreed to lead the effort after the original Senate sponsor abandoned the effort several months ago in response to objections raised by the Turkish-American community.

In response to this most recent adoption of SR 1006, National Commander Dr. Anthony J. Limberakis, stated, "What a tremendous blessing during this Paschal season when we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and Savior! This has been an extraordinary accomplishment and endorsement of religious freedom and human rights. We are all very grateful to Senator John Whitmire and congratulate Metropolitan Isaiah, Archons Chris Pappas, John Zavitsanos, Frank Mihalopoulos, Mr. Thomas Suehs, Mr. Bill Miller and all the cler-

gy and laity who worked so diligently to achieve this resounding statement in support of human rights and religious freedom."

To date, 44 such resolutions have been adopted by 37 states, representing 85 percent of Americans! – *Archons News*, May 25.

THE PREMIER RESEARCHER OF AMERICAN ORTHODOXY, ALEXEI KRINDATCH, HAS RELEASED A COMPREHENSIVE VOLUME WHICH INCLUDES DATA ON ALL ORTHODOX CHURCHES (INCLUDING ORIENTAL) IN THE UNITED STATES.

Supplemented with numerous maps, current and historical facts, the Atlas of American Orthodox Christian Churches is published by Holy Cross Orthodox Press and was co-sponsored by SCOBA and the Virginia Farah Foundation. In addition to full coverage of all American jurisdictions, the Atlas includes an additional chapter which profiles all American monastic communities.

The Atlas provides a "snapshot" of the Orthodox Christian Churches in the United States. Simultaneously, this book is an atlas, a reference book and a thematic monograph. It is an atlas because it contains numerous maps to show the historical development and present territorial patterns of Orthodox Church life in America. It is a reference book because it furnishes comprehensive information and statistical data on all American Orthodox Christian Churches. It is a thematic monograph because the essays in this book tell the story of the Orthodox Christian past and present in the United States. – OCA Press Release, May 27. [Ed. note: The Atlas is available from Holy Cross Bookstore and Amazon. More details about the book, including sample chapters and maps, are posted online at www.orthodoxreality.org]

UNDER THE AUSPICES OF HIS BEATITUDE THEODOROS II, POPE AND PATRIARCH OF ALEXANDRIA AND ALL AFRICA AND UNDER THE ORGANIZATION OF DR AMANDA-ALICE MARAVELIA, SCIENTIFIC COLLEAGUE OF THE CENTER FOR EGYPTOLOGY STUDIES of the Russian Academy of Scientists, an International Congress on the subject of "Ancient Egyptian Science and Metaphysics: the Quintessence of Religious Allegories and the Roots of Scientific Thought," will take place on May 6, 2011, in the Patriarchal Library of Alexandria, within the Patriarchal Mansion.

The aim of the congress is to trace and assess the ancient Egyptian ideology and

religion, and the pre-scientific attempts of the ancient Egyptians to understand both the world which surrounded them, as well as their own existence. Within this framework, particular attention will be given to the metaphysical background of ancient Egyptian religion, ancient Egyptian astronomy, mathematics and medicine. Furthermore, the interaction between Religion and Science, as it is formulated in the thought of the priests and the philosophers, will be analyzed. The congress aspires to consider this multi-dimensional theme through an inter-scientific prism, through the coupling of principles of Egyptology, Ancient Astronomy, Archaeology, History and Anthropology. To this end an international team of scientists will contribute with their talks.

This congress is yet another actual witness of the will of His Beatitude Theodoros II Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria to host within the historic Patriarchal Library scientific gatherings of a high standard which aim to deepen and expand the knowledge of culture which was developed historically in the land of the Nile, achieving universal dimensions thereafter. – Press Release, Patriarchate of Alexandria, May 6.

THE HOLY SYNOD OF THE PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM MET ON MONDAY 9 MAY 2011 REGARDING THE RESOLUTION OF THE ANTI-CANONICAL ACTIONS OF THE PATRIARCHATE OF ROMANIA, which has built a church and hostel in Jericho without their permission.

The Holy Synod of Jerusalem, after an in-depth investigation, regrettably decided to sever communion with the Patriarchate of Romania and crossed Patriarch Daniel out of the dyptychs.

In the 1990's during the days of Patriarch Diodoros of Jerusalem and Teoctist of Romania a church and hostel was being built by Romanians in Jericho without permission from the Jerusalem Patriarchate. The Patriarchate of Jerusalem protested these actions, but the Romanian Church continued the unlicensed building project, and today the church is even functioning liturgically.

It should be noted that despite the interruption of ecclesiastical communion, Romanian pilgrims are welcome to visit the Holy Land and the Monasteries of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. – Weblog of John Sanidopoulos, May 10.

JORDANIAN MEMBERS OF THE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH HAVE RENEWED CALLS FOR PATRIARCH THEOPHILUS III TO STEP DOWN AND FOR ARABIZING THE LEADERSHIP OF THE GREEK-LED CHURCH.

In a protest held outside the Amman archdiocese on Sunday evening, hundreds of Orthodox Christians accused the Greek Patriarch of failing to honor previous commitments and marginalizing Arabs inside the Church - an umbrella of believers in Jordan, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories.

They denounced recent accords between Israel and the Jerusalem-based Greek Orthodox Patriarchate to renew contracts leasing Church-owned land on which key Israeli government institutions are situated and called for revoking them.

In 2009, followers of the Church from both sides of the Jordan River took part in a series of protests against Theophilus III, charging he did not meet commitments he made to the Jordanian government and the Palestinian Authority when he came to office six years ago, replacing Irenios I, who was dismissed over sales of church land in Jerusalem to Israeli investors.

Any Patriarch has to have the blessings of Jordan, the Palestinians and Israel in order to gain legitimacy.

Theophilus III has pledged to stop land sales to the Israelis and present a comprehensive list of all church assets to the Jordanian government.

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which is in charge of following up on the Orthodox issue, revealed that earlier this year the Patriarchate renewed the lease for land in West Jerusalem until the year 2150.

The headquarters of the Israeli presidency, government and Knesset are situated on the rented land, located in the Talbiyeh neighborhood, PLO member Hanna Amireh told *The Jordan Times* over the phone from the West Bank.

“Our position is clear: We condemn this renewal and call on the Patriarchate to revoke it,” he said, adding that he believes Theophilus III signed the renewal accord to “guarantee Israel’s recognition.”

In April 2009, an Israeli company rented 71 dunums of land in the Mar Elias area between Jerusalem and Bethlehem from the Orthodox Patriarchate on a 99-year renewable contract, according to the Amman-based Orthodox Society.

“We are fed up with the Greek rule... this tyranny should end,” Raouf Abu Jaber, president of the Central Orthodox Council, told the protesters.

Arab Orthodox Christians also demand a greater say in the church’s decision-making bodies, and permission for Arabs to become monks.

They accuse the Patriarchate of violating the 1958 law of the Greek Orthodox

Patriarchate of Jerusalem, under which the Holy Synod must be composed of 18 members who hold Jordanian citizenship, with at least two originally Jordanian bishops or archbishops.

There has been only one Jordanian member in the synod, while the Patriarchate has claimed the appointment of a second was difficult due to the Israeli occupation.

Minister of State for Media Affairs and Communications and Government Spokesperson Taher Odwan urged the protesters to contact the authorities.

“The congregation should address the government in writing so that it can take suitable measures,” he told *The Jordan Times* yesterday.

The 2009 protests began after Jordanian Archimandrite Hanna (Christoforos) Atallah was dismissed from his post as the church court’s vice president, which the Patriarchate deemed “an internal affair with no personal agenda.”

In 2007, Atallah was one of three Arab clergymen whose salaries were suspended for taking part in a meeting in Amman that called for revoking Theophilus’ recognition because he did not fulfill his commitments.

The Patriarchate has not recognized a convent established by Atallah in 1998 in Dibbeen, near the northern city of Jerash, which also angered the Amman protesters, who came from several cities across the Kingdom.

“For decades we have been calling for legitimate rights that are backed by Jordanian laws,” said Ehab Houry, a 32-year-old protester, adding that they will not stop demonstrating “until we obtain our rights.”

Many congregation members also want the Greek leadership of the church replaced by an Arab one who “can better understand our needs and rights.”

But for others, what matters are their demands, and not the identity of top clerics in Jerusalem.

“Arabizing the church is on our list of demands, but is now difficult due to the [Israeli] occupation,” noted Nidal Kakish, member of the Central Council for the Arab Orthodox in Jordan and Palestine.

Amireh explained that since most of the church property is situated in Israel, this “makes it difficult to talk about the Arabisation now.”

“Our goal is to reform this church, not to topple it,” he said.

The Patriarchate issued a statement on Monday defending its stance, and describing the protest as part of a “defamation campaign” targeting the church.

“Answers to the questions raised by the protest organizers are clear, and if they

included these answers in their sit-in, it would have become a rally in support of the church and its ability to survive in the middle of all the storms," the statement quoted the Patriarchate's spokesperson, Father Issa Misleh, as saying.

Despite several attempts by *The Jordan Times* to contact Misleh yesterday, he could not be reached for comment. -- Thameen Kheetan for *The Jordan Times*, May 31.

THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF RUSSIANS (82 PER CENT) BELIEVE IN GOD, THIS ACCORDING TO A SURVEY BY THE PUBLIC OPINION FOUNDATION AND THE WEDNESDAY SOCIOLOGICAL SERVICE, which includes employees of the former sociological service of the synodal Department for Affairs of Youth. This makes Russia one of the most religious nations in Europe. The study was conducted with 1,500 respondents, 18 years of age or older, in 44 regions of the country.

This is astonishing. In a country where atheism was taught for generations and which exported it around the world, only 13 per cent said they did not believe in God. The remaining 5 per cent said they had difficulty answering.

Twice as many men as women are atheists. Nonbelievers were strong among workers and the poorest respondents ("I do not even have money for food").

Among believers, 27 per cent do not belong to any organized religion, a proportion that rises to 34 per cent for the 18 to 24 group and 38 per cent for students.

Four per cent of respondents said they were Muslim. Few are Buddhist, Catholic, Protestant or Jewish. Half of all believers said they were Russian Orthodox.

Women constitute 62 per cent of the Orthodox group against 38 per cent for men. Forty per cent lived in cities of 250,000 or more.

However, many respondents see Orthodoxy as part of their Russian identity. Only 3 per cent go to church each week.

Compared to another survey released by *Interfax-Religiia*, Wednesday's results indicate that Russia is one of the least atheistic nations in Europe. In Switzerland, atheists represent 37 per cent of the population; in Germany, they are 31 per cent; in Great Britain, they are 34 per cent, and in Belgium, 36 per cent. -- *Asia News*, May 5.

IN HIS MESSAGE TO HIS HOLINESS SHENOUDA III, POPE OF ALEXANDRIA AND PATRIARCH OF THE THRONE OF ST. MARK IN ALL AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST, HIS HOLINESS PATRIARCH

KIRILL OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA EXPRESSED CONDOLENCES OVER THE POGROMS COMMITTED IN GIZA, EGYPT, in which Coptic churches were damaged and 12 people were killed. Below is the text of the message.

Your Holiness,

The Paschal joy over the resurrection of Christ has been darkened by sad reports coming from the Egyptian province of Giza. The criminal actions committed on May 7 and 8 carried away the lives of our Christian brothers and damaged Coptic churches. We share the pain of the tragedy with you and your flock and express heartfelt condolences to the families and friends of the victims of this barbaric attack.

The Russian Orthodox Church has raised her voice already on several occasions in defense of Christians in the countries in which they are subjected to oppression and violations of their fundamental rights to life and religious freedom. And today we call upon the Egyptian authorities, the leaders of Islamic communities in the country and the world community to resolutely and unambiguously put an end to the violence against the Christian minority which has been historically present in the Egyptian land.

Sharing the pain of the Coptic Church, we pray for the repose of those who were killed and for the establishment of a lasting civic peace in Egypt.

With love in risen Christ,

+ Kirill

Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia

-- Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, May 9.

PATRIARCH KIRILL I OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH AND RABBI BERL LAZAR, THE CHIEF RABBI OF RUSSIA, SPEAKING AT SEPARATE CEREMONIES ON 8 AND 9 MAY, URGED RUSSIANS TO HEED THE LESSONS OF WORLD WAR II.

The end of the war, known in Russia as the Great Patriotic War, is marked on 9 May in most of the other former Soviet republics as Victory Day over Nazi Germany. Soviet civilian and military deaths in the war are estimated at upwards of 20 million and the losses are still seared into memories here, even of those born long after the war.

Kirill, who was paying a pastoral visit to Ukraine, which makes up one of the largest and most important parts of the Russian Orthodox Church and is at the fulcrum of disputes over Soviet history, laid a wreath of chrysanthemums at a war memorial in Kharkov. The city in northeastern Ukraine, near the Russian border, was the

scene of intense battles between the Soviet Red Army and the Nazis.

"At memorials devoted to those who died in the Great Patriotic War, one understands especially well how deep is the wound inflicted by the war on the body of our entire people: Ukrainians, Russians, Belarusians -- all those who fought together defending a united Fatherland, who fought with the most frightening and dangerous enemy, which wanted to change the world according to its image," he said, according to the Interfax news agency.

Post-Soviet historical debate has raised questions about Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin's role in the war and wartime losses, and brought out into the open long-taboo information about collaboration with the Nazis and even suggestions that Russia would be better today if Nazi Germany had won.

Kirill and other church leaders have strongly condemned Stalinism and the persecution of the church in the Soviet era, but the Russian Orthodox leader warned against attempts to reinterpret the memory of the war.

On 9 May, he addressed war veterans who gathered at Christ the Savior Cathedral in Moscow, where a celebration was being held to mark the role of the Russian Orthodox Church in the war. After nearly destroying the church in the 1930s, Stalin revived it under strict Kremlin control, to rally the nation in the war effort.

Also in Moscow, Lazar, war veterans and students of Jewish schools on 8 May placed a wreath on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the Kremlin wall in Moscow. Lazar said that Victory Day marks the day when Jews were miraculously saved from total annihilation. "That's why we will never forget the feat of those who saved Europe from Nazism," he said.

But he also warned that "right now in Russia a gradual return of Nazi ideology is taking place." For that reason, said the rabbi, Victory Day "is not only a holiday, but a moment when we can learn some lessons from the past so as not to allow it to be repeated in the future," he said, according to the Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia. -- Sophia Kishkovsky for *ENI*, May 9.

ARCHBISHOP IVAN JURKOVIC, NEW APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO RUSSIA, WAS RECEIVED BY METROPOLITAN HILARION OF VOLOKOLAMSK ON MAY 11, 2011, AT THE DEPARTMENT FOR EXTERNAL CHURCH RELATIONS. Present at the meeting were also Hegumen Philaret (Bulekov), DECR vice-chairman, Mgr Visvaldas Kulbokas, first secretary of the Apostol-

ic Nunciature to Russia, Rev. Dimitry Sizonenko, DECR acting secretary for inter-Christian relations, and Deacon Alexy Di-karev of the DECR secretariat for inter-Christian relations.

Metropolitan Hilarion congratulated Archbishop Ivan Jurkovic on taking the office of Apostolic Nuncio, wished him success in his work and expressed hope for further development of constructive cooperation between the Moscow Patriarchate Department for External Church Relations and the Apostolic Nunciature to the Russian Federation. His Eminence noted with satisfaction that Orthodox-Catholic relations have considerably improved in recent years. In this connection, he underscored the role of the Joint Working Group for considering problems in relations between the Roman Catholic Church and the Russian Orthodox Church as an effective instrument for discussing and searching for a settlement of various practical problems in relations between the two Churches.

They also discussed prospects for Orthodox-Catholic cooperation in bearing common witness to Christian values in the modern society and in protecting the rights of Christians who are subjected to persecution in various parts of the world.

In conclusion of the meeting, Archbishop Ivan Jurkovic thanked Metropolitan Hilarion for the warm welcome and assured him of his desire to promote further development of cooperation and mutual understanding between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, May 11.

ON 16 MAY 2011, HIS HOLINESS PATRIARCH MAXIM OF BULGARIA RECEIVED METROPOLITAN HILARION OF VOLOKOLAMSK, CHAIRMAN OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE'S DEPARTMENT FOR EXTERNAL CHURCH RELATIONS (DECR), who arrived in Bulgaria with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia to take part in the celebration of the commemoration day of the martyrs of Batak.

They were joined in the meeting, which took place at the Synodal residence, by Metropolitan of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church: Kalinik of Vratsa, Kyrill of Varna and Veliki Preslav, Dometian of Vidin, Neofit of Rousse, Natanail of Nevrokop, Grigorij of Veliko Tărnovo, and Bishop Naum of Stobi, general secretary of the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Patriarchate; Rev. Igor Yakimchuk, DECR secretary for Inter-Orthodox relations; hieromonk Zotik (Gayevsky), acting treasurer of

the Sofia metochion of the Moscow Patriarchate; and hierodeacon Ioann (Kopeikin), assistant to the DECR chairman.

The DECR chairman conveyed warm fraternal greetings from His Holiness Patriarch Kirill to His Holiness Patriarch Maxim and underscored the importance of the glorification of the martyrs of Batak, as "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." Metropolitan Hilarion told the Primate of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church about the plans to build in Moscow the church of Metropolitan Cyprian of Moscow, "a great son of the Bulgarian people."

The development of relations among the Local Orthodox Churches was also discussed during the talk.

The DECR chairman presented an icon of St. Sergius of Radonezh to His Holiness Patriarch Maxim as a keepsake of their meeting. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, May 16.

THE RUSSIAN ORGANIZING COMMITTEE FOR PREPARING THE CELEBRATION OF THE DAY OF SLAVONIC LITERATURE AND CULTURE HELD ITS MEETING AT THE HOUSE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION ON MAY 20TH, 2011.

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia chaired the meeting.

Prime Minister Putin addressed the participants and congratulated His Holiness Patriarch Kirill on his Name Day, thanking him for his "fruitful activity and sincere zeal for the revival of spirituality in Russian society."

In his address, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill said that this celebration explains "who we are and how to build our future in the best possible way."

His Holiness called to include cultural and education competitions, ethnographical, museum and publication programs in the Day of Slavonic Literature and Culture as well as events that would "help people make choices in in life, education and profession."

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church underscored the necessity of actions aimed at the recovery of the purity of the Russian language and the culture of communication, calling it a nation-wide task.

His Holiness believes that the organizers should pay particular attention to the youth. He is confident that the celebration should be interesting and significant to young people. The deed of Ss Cyril and Methodius and its meaning for the Slavonic culture should be actualized.

His Holiness shares Mr. Putin's view

on the importance of having the Days of Slavonic literature in the regions and called the mass media to cover the celebration more actively in order to help people understand its meaning.

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church underscored that the celebration of the Day of Slavonic Literature and Culture should include inter-state and inter-church aspects and reminded the participants that His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, who took part in the 2010 celebration, suggested inviting representatives of the Local Orthodox Churches and secular leaders of various states in order "to celebrate this day together with the representatives of other Slavic nations."

His Holiness noted that the Organizing Committee would have to elaborate a concept of the celebration for the coming years and assured the participants of the willingness of the Church to take part in this work. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, May 21.

THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH URGES AGAINST RUSHED DECISIONS OVER THE REMOVAL OF THE EMBALMED BODY OF COMMUNIST LEADER VLADIMIR LENIN FROM THE MAUSOLEUM ON RED SQUARE, a senior clergyman said.

"It is obvious that the condition of Lenin's body does not fit into Russia's cultural tradition...but we should take into account the opinions of various social groups and avoid making decisions that entail social upheavals," the chairman of the Synodal Department for Relations of the Russian Orthodox Church and Society, Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin, told RIA Novosti on Tuesday.

Eighty-seven years have passed since the body of Vladimir Ulyanov, known worldwide under his pseudonym Lenin, was placed in a glass sarcophagus and displayed in a specially built granite mausoleum near the Kremlin wall.

Throughout the years of Soviet rule, the Lenin mausoleum became a symbol of the Soviet Union, and crowds of Soviet citizens and numerous delegations from foreign countries visited the tomb.

However, voices of those willing to remove the Russian revolutionary leader's embalmed body from his granite mausoleum on Red Square and bury him are becoming stronger today, 20 years after the issue first emerged with the breakup of the Soviet empire.

In 2011, the issue of Lenin's removal from the mausoleum was raised again by prominent members of the ruling United Russia Party apparently as an attempt to

give the party a greater public appeal prior to parliamentary polls in December.

The move sparked anger from Russia's Communists, whose leader Gennady Zyuganov accused United Russia of being only able to "destroy monuments, rename streets and dig up graves."

According to a public opinion poll conducted in February, over 60 percent of Russians want Lenin to be removed from the mausoleum and buried, while 30 percent are in favor of leaving Lenin in the mausoleum as they believe it has long become a major tourist attraction.

The discussion seems set to continue for some time as the opinion of Russia's top leadership remains non-committal.

Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, the leader of the United Russia party, said in 2010 that the time when the Russian people decide on the fate of Lenin's mummy is still to come, adding that history shows a strong dislike for haste and disturbances. President Dmitry Medvedev has never made a public comment on the issue. -- *RIA Novosti*, May 25.

ON 25 MAY 2011, HIS HOLINESS PATRIARCH KIRILL OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA RECEIVED A DELEGATION OF THE PATRIARCHATE OF CONSTANTINOPLE that was in Moscow to participate in the celebration of the Days of Slavonic Literature and Culture and the commemoration of Ss Cyril and Methodius Equal-to-the-Apostle – the Name Day of His Holiness.

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church greeted the guests and asked Metropolitan Elpidiphorus of Prusa to convey gratitude to His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople for sending his representatives to the celebration and his congratulatory message. Discussed were the development of cooperation between the two Patriarchates and certain subjects of pan-Orthodox importance.

After the meeting with His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, the delegation of the Patriarchate of Constantinople departed for Istanbul. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, May 26.

AREGULAR SESSION OF THE HOLY SYNOD OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OPENED AT THE HISTORICAL BUILDING OF THE HOLY GOVERNING SYNOD IN ST. PETERSBURG ON 30 MAY 2011. The session was chaired by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill opened the session, saying, "There are many items

on the agenda. We should consider many important issues in the life of the Russian Orthodox Church and the reorganization of several dioceses. We should think of measures to bring about a more intensive church life in certain regions in compliance with the decisions of the Bishops' Council."

The Synodal institutions have prepared reports to be considered at the session. "We shall size up the work of all Synodal institutions and chart future tasks," the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church noted.

The members of the Holy Synod will also consider nominees to bishopric and discuss certain aspects of the external activities of the Moscow Patriarchate. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, May 30.

THIS DOCUMENT WAS ADOPTED BY THE HOLY SYNOD OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH AT ITS MEETING ON MAY 30, 2011 (Proceeding No. 51)

With profound concern the Russian Orthodox Church has taken reports coming from various countries in the world about recurring manifestations of Christianophobia. Christians have been subjected to persecution, becoming victims of intolerance and various forms of discrimination. The recent tragic events in Egypt's Giza on May 7 and 8, when during mass disorders Christian churches were set on fire and parishioners of the Coptic Church were killed, are only one chain in the link of such developments. Our brothers and sisters are killed, driven away from their homes, separated from their relatives and friends, deprived of the right to confess their religious beliefs and to bring up their children according to their faith. Regrettably, the manifestations of Christianophobia cannot be treated as occasional incidents: they have become a settled tendency in some parts of the world.

Discrimination against Christians varies in expression from country to country. In some cases Christians are attacked in hooligan actions, which as a rule are manifestations of extremism on religious grounds. In some countries where Christians are a minority their freedom of faith is considerably restricted with regard to the right to celebrate, to own property and to establish and run theological schools. There are cases where Christians are rendered extremely severe court judgments and given even death sentences according to laws on blasphemy (as disagreement with the beliefs of other religions is described in such cases). But even in those countries where Christianophobia is manifested only in seeing Christians as 'second-rate citizens', our

brothers in faith remain in distress. All this leads to the mass emigration of Christians from countries in which they have lived for centuries, as we see in today's Iraq and some other countries of the Middle East.

At the same time there are manifestations of Christianophobia also in countries where a majority of citizens confess Christianity. The domination of rigid and sometimes even aggressive secularism leads to forcing Christians out of public life, while public statements and actions motivated by Christian faith, especially its moral assessment of events taking place in a society, provoke a negative reaction.

By drawing the public attention to the growing manifestations of Christianophobia, discrimination and persecution against Christians of various confessions, we do not intend to interfere in the internal affairs of state and do not call upon the world community to do so. Christianity teaches its followers to obey the law and to respect lawful governments, according to St. Paul who said, Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities (Rom. 13:1). At the same time, governments, too, as responsible before their citizens, are obliged to respect people's dignity and rights and, accordingly, to ensure the free confession of religious faith and security of religious communities.

Nor do we see other religions as sources of Christianophobia. The Russian Orthodox Church has always opposed any discrimination against individuals and peoples on the grounds of their religious affiliation and resolutely condemned any manifestations of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. Russia, just as other countries under the canonical jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate, has accumulated a rich experience of peaceful coexistence between religions, as well as mutual respect and interreligious solidarity. We are ready to share this experience with all those who wish to build a just society.

Christianophobia is manifested in the first place in situations where religious differences are used in political struggle mostly by extremist forces who pursue their own purposes incompatible with the welfare of the whole society. Such manifestations ought to be unequivocally condemned by all the healthy social forces including public and religious leaders. Discrimination on religious grounds can be overcome only through a broad dialogue involving governments, international organizations, religious communities and the civil society.

We call upon the world community, religious leaders and all the responsible public forces to develop a comprehensive

and effective mechanism for protecting Christians and Christian communities who are subjected to persecution or restrictions in their religious life and work.

The Russian Orthodox Church stands for a more intensive dialogue between religious leaders and the international community for working out foundations for peaceful coexistence between believers belonging to different traditions.

We express solidarity with our brothers and sisters – Christians who are subjected to discrimination, persecution and violence, empathizing with their suffering and deprivations wherever they may be on their earthly journey.

We pray and call the faithful of the Church to augment their prayers for suffering and persecuted brothers and sisters. We pray that they may be strengthened in their faith and spiritual courage. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, May 30.

THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE ASSEMBLY OF BISHOPS OF THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH TOOK PLACE AT THE SERBIAN PATRIARCHATE IN BELGRADE MAY 16-27, UNDER THE PRESIDENCY OF HIS HOLINESS SERBIAN PATRIARCH IRINEJ. Participating in the Assembly were all the diocesan hierarchs of the Serbian Orthodox Church, as well as of the autonomous Archbishopric of Ochrid headed by His Beatitude Archbishop of Ochrid and Metropolitan of Skopje, Jovan.

The Assembly began its work with the joint serving of the hierarchical Divine Liturgy in the Holy Archangel Michael Cathedral in Belgrade, led by Serbian Patriarch Irinej, including the Invocation of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth and wisdom, in Whom the Church lives and always works, especially in the assemblies of its bishops. Then the president of the Assembly, His Holiness the Patriarch, in his opening statement to the Assembly indicated some of the current questions of the life and mission of the Church in these times, times of difficult trials for us and for the world, but also times of hope and spiritual action.

During this year's Assembly the joint celebration of the Liturgy took place twice—on the feast of the transfer of the relics of our Holy Father Nicholas on May 9/22 in Sremski Karlovci on the patronal feast of the completely renovated Cathedral church of St. Nicholas, and in Belgrade's church of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist Mark on the feast of the Holy Brothers Cyril and Methodius, Enlighteners and Teachers of the Slavs, on May 11/24. The most important decision of the Assembly concerns the liturgical life of the Church — the

establishment of the feast of the wonder-working Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos kept at the Patriarchate of Pec, to be celebrated every year on the day after the feast of the Ascension of our Lord. From this time this feast loses its local and takes on an all-church character. Beginning with its most important liturgical aspect, the Assembly concerned itself with the upcoming celebration of the 1700th anniversary of the Edict of Milan (313-2013) in Nis, the birthplace of St. Constantine the Great, on the local, pan-Orthodox, and all-Christian levels. The Assembly also sent a letter to His Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew about the earliest possible calling of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church — naturally, after all necessary preparations, with deep accountability and in the spirit of complete faithfulness to the holy ecumenical and local councils of the past.

Having heard the report of the Holy Synod on its activities in the period just ended and the reports of the diocesan hierarchs, the Assembly made appropriate decisions.

At the meeting of the central body for the completion of the Church of St. Sava on Vracar, the Assembly welcomed with warm thanks the brotherly willingness of the Russian Orthodox Church and the great Russian state to help with the interior appointments of the church, and after the meeting a memorial service was held for the founders, benefactors and donors of the church.

The reorganization and restructuring of certain dioceses in Serbia, in Europe and in America and Australia was carried out, and most episcopal vacancies were filled, although some dioceses continue to be guided by bishop administrators. As bishop of the vacant see of the Diocese of Nis was elected the heretofore vicar bishop to the Metropolitan of Montenegro and the Coastlands and elder of Monastery Ostrog, the Bishop of Dioclia Dr. Jovan, and as bishop of the newly created Diocese of Krusevac Hierodeacon Dr. David (Perovic), assistant professor at the Theological Faculty of Belgrade University. The administrator of the newly formed Diocese of Austria and Switzerland with its see in Vienna will be the Bishop of Backa Dr. Irinej, and Metropolitan Dr. Amphilohije of Montenegro and the Coastlands will serve as administrator of the newly created Diocese of Buenos Aires, which will be comprised of all the congregations and missionary parishes in South and Central America. Elected as vicar bishops to His Holiness the Patriarch were Protosyngel Jovan (Culibrk) with the title Bishop of Diplja, and Archmandrite Andrej

(Cilerdzic) with the title Bishop of Remezi-ja. Likewise, the Assembly asked Bishop Grigorije of Zahum-Hercegovina to assist Metropolitan Nikolaj of Dabro-Bosnia in carrying out his archpastoral duties as his deputy.

On the American continent, as the result of restructuring, the Diocese of New Gracanica-Midwest America was created, while the Metropolitanate of Libertyville-Chicago ceases to exist. The Assembly decided that St. Sava Monastery in Libertyville, near Chicago, will attain the status of a stavropigeal institution, that is, a monastery directly under the jurisdiction of the Serbian Patriarch. New York-Washington was designated as the new see of the Eastern American Diocese. The revised Statute of the Canadian Diocese was approved, as was the Constitution of the Metropolitanate of Australia and New Zealand.

The creation of new dioceses from the Archdiocese of Belgrade-Karlovci was for the present postponed. Likewise, while aware of the obvious pastoral reasons for the reestablishment of the ancient Diocese of Ras, absorbed by the Diocese of Prizren during the difficult time of the Turkish enslavement, and that the permanent presence of a bishop in the Ras region would strengthen the visible and active presence of the Serbian Orthodox Church in that part of Serbia, the Assembly temporarily postponed the resolution of this question until all necessary conditions are met.

With the aim of ensuring the most effective organization of church life, the Assembly enlarged the existing Assembly commission for the revision of the Constitution of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

As it does every year, the Assembly gave full attention to church education in general and church schooling in particular. The Orthodox Theological Faculty of Belgrade University has been entrusted with a very important mission—the translation of the works of the holy Fathers and Teachers of the Church from the original languages and their publication with accompanying scholarly introductions and commentaries. Further, the Assembly expects the advancement of cooperation between the Serbian Orthodox Church's institutions of higher learning. Protosyngel Professor Jovan Petkovic was elected the new dean of the Seminary in Karlovci, and it was decided to resume the work of the Prizren seminary in Prizren itself, while part of its activities will continue in Nis. The Assembly recommended steps for the advancement of the educational system in the seminaries of the Serbian Orthodox Church and steps for the introduction of theology into

the educational system of Serbia on Serbian territory, and recommended the establishment of Orthodox high schools and other schools which would work under the jurisdiction of the Church, wherever that is possible.

The Assembly welcomed the return of religious services to the Serbian Army, as well as the decision of the Constitutional Court of Serbia on the constitutionality of the law on the return of illegally seized properties of the Church and religious organizations. In this regard, the Assembly awaits and seeks the implementation of the provisions of this law, which has not yet been implemented even though it is valid and obligatory, which is unacceptable.

The Assembly welcomes the decision of the Serbian state authorities to return the Church's metrical books, which were confiscated after the Second World War, and hopes for the return also of bequests and donor funds which have not yet been returned. Expecting and seeking the complete return of expropriated church property, the Assembly also supports the return to all organizations and foundations of properties illegally confiscated from them. The Assembly regrets that the neighboring Republic of Hungary refuses to return the former church building in Budapest's Baca Street to the Diocese of Budim.

Similarly, the Assembly regrets that there has occurred a deep crisis in relations between the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the oldest Christian Church, and the Romanian Orthodox Church, because of the uncanonical activities of the latter in the Holy Land. Sadly, neither does the hierarchy of the Romanian Orthodox Church respect the canonical order and jurisdiction of the sister Churches in other places. In our case, the Assembly is grateful to the Romanian Orthodox Church for its good relationship towards the Serbian Orthodox Church's Diocese of Temisvar and for the support it offers to its administrator, clergy and monastics, which reciprocates the Serbian Orthodox Church's stance of brotherly love towards the Romanians in Serbian Banat, but at the same time it expresses its regret and energetic protest concerning the uncanonical intrusion of certain bishops and clergy from Romania in the territory of two dioceses in eastern Serbia, without the approval of the ruling bishops from the Serbian Orthodox Church. If the noncanonical and unbrotherly actions of these individuals do not end, the Assembly and Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church will take all canonical and legal steps to stop them, to protect the established canonical order, and to prevent the disturbance of the sacred

inter-Orthodox unity, whoever may be the instigator and organizer of the activities which endanger that unity.

The Assembly also deeply regrets that the government of the Republic of Macedonia, despite criticism by international organizations for its violation of religious freedom and human rights, continues to persecute the canonical Archbishop of Ochrid Jovan and refuses to legally register the Archdiocese of Ochrid, an autonomous Orthodox Church which is in full union with all Orthodox Churches throughout the world. The Assembly Fathers most strongly condemn the recent violent incident against a bishop, monastic clergy and faithful of the Ochrid Archdiocese during the celebration of a liturgical service in Kavadarci, instigated and directed by a local schismatic bishop according to his own public admission. Those who have such an unchurch-like mentality, not only because they desire no dialogue to heal the wounds of schism but because they aggravate those wounds, heap injustice upon injustice, bringing great spiritual harm to the misled faithful and provoking both God's longsuffering and human patience. The ill-begotten are already judged, as the wise popular saying goes.

The Assembly gave special attention and consideration to serious difficulties faced by the Metropolitanate of Montenegro and the Coastlands and other dioceses of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro. Examples are: threats that the church of the Holy Trinity on Mount Rumija will be destroyed; the demolishing of Saint Alexander Nevsky and the Most Holy Lady Theotokos churches on Saint Stefan; the unlawful intention to usurp churches in Cipur and Krusevac; a statement from the highest state official by which the right of the Serbian Orthodox Church to lawfully exist and function in Montenegro is denied along with its right to own property; the publicly expressed ambitions of certain Montenegrin politicians to administer church affairs and through pressure, and even through open physical threats, to manipulate the identity and organization of the Orthodox Church in Montenegro with the open wish to make the Church an instrument of their own political aims; the determination of the Montenegrin party in power, the Democratic (!) Socialist Party, to aggressively shape the church life of Orthodox Christians in Montenegro (fortunately, not disturbing other churches and religious communities). All this represents the endangerment of essential human rights and religious freedom, an active denial of the secular character of the Montenegrin

state and a rejection of the democratic principles of the separation between the Church and state, as well as an open reintroduction of a long ago overcome social categorization, the category of second class citizenship based on religious and ethnic identity. Therefore the Assembly demands that the state officials of Montenegro respect their constitution and the rights of every church and religious organization, and consequently the rights of Serbian Orthodox Church, guaranteed by the domestic and international laws. It would indeed be a huge embarrassment and shame to go to Brussels, Strasburg and Washington in order to secure these rights and justice.

The Assembly is also concerned because of the difficulties that the Republika Srpska, and consequently the Serbian Orthodox Church in Bosnia and Herzegovina, are facing. The Assembly is convinced that citizens of the Republika Srpska, like citizens in other modern democratic states in general have a right to plebiscitary expression on questions that they hold important as this right is a clear if not the only example of democracy. The Assembly also asks the domestic political structures and foreign relevant factors and policy making centers to respect the Dayton agreement and in doing so, to continue building a comprehensive peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

A particular concern weighing on the souls of the Assembly members is the non-existence (and that after so many years) of conditions for the return of expelled refugees from Kosovo and Metohija, a new endangerment of Serbian property and homes, and the lack of conditions for rebuilding more than one hundred destroyed churches. The Assembly reminds the domestic and international public that any dialogue about Kosovo and Metohija that would lead to the violation of the Constitution of Serbia and the violation of the United Nations' resolution 1244 would represent a direct undermining of the United Nations' Charter and international order established after World War II. The wrong resolutions would be no resolutions at all; rather they would become long-standing and possibly permanent: instability, adversities and chaos in Serbia, especially in her south region and in southeast Europe in general.

The concern and sadness of the Assembly members is made even greater by the fact that among the Serbian people there are more deaths than births. This indicates a deep moral, family and even religious crisis despite the fact that the majority of our people consider themselves Orthodox Christians. As a result, the Assembly

appeals to the conscience of parents, teachers, state officials and all those who may have an impact on the state of society and the dioceses of the Serbian Orthodox Church and their local parishes to recommend the establishment of funds for assistance to families with three or more children, to take preventative and pastoral-therapeutic measures in fighting against immorality, pornography, drugs and all other spiritual illnesses which directly and indirectly harm man and the future of our nation and many other nations.

The newly elected Synod members are: His Grace Vasilije, Bishop of Srem, His Grace Irinej, Bishop of Backa, His Grace Jovan, Bishop of Sumadija and His Grace Joanikije, Bishop of Budim-Niksic. – Communiqué, Serbian Patriarchate, May 31.

TODAY, 19 MAY 2011, THE WORKING SESSION OF THE HOLY SYNOD OF THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH BEGAN IN THE SYNODAL ROOM OF THE PATRIARCHAL RESIDENCE, under the chairmanship of His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel.

After opening the proceedings, the meeting of the Holy Synod proceeded to the election of the titular hierarch for the vacant post of Archbishop of Alba Iulia, under the chairmanship of His Eminence Metropolitan Andrei of the Metropolitan See of Cluj, Alba, Crişana and Maramureş.

The Holy Synod elected, by secret ballot, one of the two candidates that the Metropolitan Synod of the Metropolitan See of Cluj, Alba, Crişana and Maramureş assigned after consulting the Eparchial Assembly of the Archdiocese of Alba Iulia, in the person of His Grace Irineu Bistriţeanul for the vacant post of Archbishop of Alba Iulia with 29 votes out of 42 expressed. His Grace Andrei Făgărăşanul, Assistant Bishop to the Archdiocese of Sibiu, got 13 votes.

The enthronement ceremony of the new Archbishop of Alba Iulia will take place in "Reintregirea" Cathedral of Alba Iulia city on 5 June 2011. – Press Release, Romanian Patriarchate, May 19.

ON 20 MAY 2011, HIS BEATITUDE PATRIARCH DANIEL RECEIVED HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL STANISLAW DZIWISZ, ROMAN CATHOLIC ARCHBISHOP OF CRACOW, WHO WAS ON A VISIT TO ROMANIA. His Eminence Metropolitan Ioan Robu, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Bucharest and President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Romania, was also present.

As former secretary of Pope John Paul II, His Eminence Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz remembered the unforgettable visit of the former Pontiff Sovereign to Bucharest (7 – 9 May 1999) and underlined its importance for the consolidation of the theological dialogue and of the relations between the Roman Catholic Church and the Romanian Orthodox Church.

His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel said that the two encounters between Patriarch Teoctist and Pope John Paul II in Bucharest (1999) and at the Vatican (2001) had a favorable effect on relations between the Romanian Orthodox faithful and Catholics in Italy and in some other countries with a Catholic majority.

The Patriarch of Romania emphasized the traditional friendly relations between the Romanian and Polish peoples and underlined the importance of the dialogue and practical co-operation between Churches for promoting peace, good understanding and solidarity with various Christian communities in distress. – Press Release, Romanian Patriarchate, May 20.

THE HOLY SYNOD OF THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH ANALYZED DURING ITS WORKING SESSION HELD AT THE PATRIARCHAL RESIDENCE, FROM 19 – 20 MAY 2011, UNDER THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF HIS BEATITUDE PATRIARCH DANIEL, THE DECISIONS OF THE HOLY SYNOD OF THE PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM published on its official site on 9 May 2011 and thinks that these decisions are contradictory to the spirit of the brotherly communion between the sister Orthodox Churches.

Nevertheless, the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox does not break up the communion with the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

Therefore, the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church assigned a delegation made up of His Eminence Honorable Metropolitan Nifon, Archbishop of Târgovişte, His Eminence Honorable Archbishop Ioan, of the Diocese of Covasna and Harghita, His Grace Vincentiu, Bishop of Slobozia and Călăraşi, and His Grace Ciprian Câmpineanul, Assistant Bishop to the Patriarch with the official mandate to have an official dialogue with the Patriarchate of Jerusalem in order to solve this issue. – Press Release, Romanian Patriarchate, May 21.

GREEK PRIME MINISTER GEORGE PAPANDEOU HAD A SCHEDULED MEETING AT THE MAXIMOS MISSION GOVERNMENT HEADQUARTERS IN

ATHENS ON FRIDAY WITH ARCHBISHOP OF ATHENS AND ALL GREECE AND A CHURCH OF GREECE HOLY SYNOD DELEGATION.

Papandreou underlined the importance of state-Church cooperation in this difficult time for the country, stressing however, that each side has its own special role.

"Greece should enter a different course if we wish to produce solutions that will bring hope and optimism," he added.

On his part, Archbishop Ieronymos agreed with the comments made by the premier and stressed that "the people agonize over the future and want the crisis to be overcome. We should make decisions that will bring relief to the people." – ANA, May 7.

ARCHBISHOP OF ATHENS AND ALL GREECE IERONYMOS IS BEING TREATED AT A HOSPITAL IN THE CITY OF AGRINIO, WESTERN GREECE, FOLLOWING A DOUBLE FRACTURE IN THE LEG HE SUSTAINED AS HE WAS ENTERING THE CHURCH OF AGIOS CHRISTOFOROS.

As the Archbishop was coming out of his car to go to the church, he slipped, probably due to slipperiness caused by rain, resulting in his injury.

The Archbishop expressed the desire to be taken to Athens.

Archbishop Ieronymos was in Agrinio to attend events regarding the celebration of patron saint Christoforos, while earlier he had been proclaimed an honorary citizen of Agrinio. – ANA, May 10.

ARCHBISHOP IERONYMOS OF ATHENS AND ALL GREECE ON TUESDAY UNDERWENT SUCCESSFUL SURGERY IN ATHENS' KAT HOSPITAL to treat a double fracture in his left leg.

According to the medical bulletin issued, his postoperative condition is excellent and he will remain hospitalized for roughly a week. – ANA, May 11.

ARCHBISHOP OF ATHENS AND ALL GREECE IERONYMOS LEFT AN ATHENS HOSPITAL ON MONDAY AFTERNOON, where he had undergone surgery for a broken leg. The Archbishop will continue therapy at home.

Shortly before leaving hospital, he was visited by main opposition New Democracy (ND) party leader Antonis Samaras, while he had also been visited by Education Minister Anna Diamantopoulou. – ANA, May 17.

THE SPRING SESSION OF THE METROPOLITAN COUNCIL OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA OPENED

AT CHRIST THE SAVIOR CHURCH, CHICAGO, IL ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 4, 2011 with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. His Beatitude, Metropolitan Jonah, presided.

His Grace, Bishop Melchisedek of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania chaired the meeting, while Igumen Alexander [Pihach] served as vice-chair.

After approving the agenda and the minutes of the previous meeting, Metropolitan Council members heard the opening remarks of Metropolitan Jonah. An extensive discussion ensued, during which the Holy Synod announced the four resolutions it had adopted concerning OCA governance going forward. The resolutions—found in the public minutes of the Holy Synod of Bishops -- deal with Locum Tenency, the Officers of the Church, the Permanent Lesser Synod, and the Chancellor.

In his report, Bishop Melchisedek, Interim Chancellor, spoke of the work that was done during his two months, including specific issues dealing with the leave of absence of Metropolitan Jonah. He informed the Metropolitan Council that he will continue as Interim Chancellor for the foreseeable future. He also outlined major concerns going forward.

Archpriest Eric Tosi, OCA Secretary, reported on his activities. He spoke at length about the difficult work in the chancery and introduced the new communications team and spoke about their recent work and the process of communications in the Church. He also reviewed a variety of administrative issues, including human resources, insurance, estate management, pastoral and legal issues.

In an executive session, the members of the Sexual Misconduct Policy Advisory Committee [SMPAC] discussed their work, focusing primarily on the methodology used in compiling their confidential report, which was presented at the Holy Synod session preceding the joint meeting.

After a long and intense discussion, the Metropolitan Council resolved to recommend strongly the cessation of any activity of Priest Gregory Jensen in matters pertaining to sexual misconduct, and that any candidates to fill a position in the Office for Review of Sexual Misconduct Allegations must be vetted by the SMPAC. The MC also resolved to commend the SMPAC for its extraordinary work.

Also in executive session, the Metropolitan Council received the report of the Ethics Committee and reviewed various ethics complaints that had been raised. The ethics committee was blessed by the Holy Synod to conduct an investigation into

those ethics complaints and to present a full report.

Priest John Vitko presented the latest revised version of the OCA Strategic Plan. The Metropolitan Council resolved to recommend that the revised Strategic Plan be posted on the OCA website for continued feedback from the Church and that it be incorporated into the agenda of the upcoming 16th All-American Council. The formation of a Post-Conciliar subcommittee of the Metropolitan Council to oversee implementation of the Strategic Plan after the Council was recommended.

On its second day, Thursday, May 5, the Metropolitan Council heard the report of the Charity Committee; the Council Development Committee, which presented its report and an updated version of the Council Handbook; and the Crisis Management Committee, which presented its report in executive session. An extensive discussion on failures in the Church to adequately respond to critical issues was held.

Following the Human Resources Committee report, the Metropolitan Council resolved to recommend that Archpriest Alexander Garklavs remain as consultant to the Interim Chancellor for his institutional knowledge and continuity of the work of the Chancery; that his compensation and benefits continue until he receives another appropriate appointment; and that his severance package of four months' salary be deferred compensation.

The Internal Governance Committee presented a report in executive session on various critical issues in Church government. Out of executive session, the Internal Audit Committee, represented by Michael Strelka, presented its findings and outlined the reporting procedures leading up to the All-American Council. The Metropolitan Council thanked the Internal Audit Committee for its professional work. To date, all stavropegial institutions have been examined or have had their external audits examined, with the exception of one institution slated to be audited during the summer.

The Legal Committee presented its report, which covered a variety of current and potential legal issues, in executive session. A lengthy discussion ensued on instances of potential liability of the Church and involved an in depth discussion.

Melanie Ringa presented her extensive Treasurer's report, after which it was resolved to make some minor adjustments to the 2011 budget. Among the adjustments are funds for further OCA web site development for the Feasts and Saints section; translations into Spanish; funding for psychological evaluation of all ordination can-

didates; and funding to cover costs realized by the change in the Metropolitan Council meeting venue. She also presented a budget for the 16th All-American Council.

The Financial Development Committee reported on investment strategy and the need for a professional financial advisor.

The Pension Board presented two amendments to the OCA Pension Plan, both of which were adopted. The amendments include housing allowance calculation for non-clergy Church employees and a clarification on disability retirement benefits.

Fr. Leonid Kishkovsky, Director of External Affairs and Interchurch Relations, reported on the external relations of the Orthodox Church in America. The report included an account of the relations, contacts, and correspondence with Orthodox Churches after the Holy Synod retreat at the end of February 2011 and the announcement of the leave of absence of His Beatitude, Metropolitan Jonah.

Father Eric presented an extensive overview of the 16th All-American Council, highlighting work accomplished and items that still need attention. He outlined the timeline for the months leading to the Council and reviewed the registration process. The draft agenda was adopted.

Father Eric unveiled the new OCA website and reviewed the process and work that has gone into its redesign. He explained various features of the site, which is due to make its debut in June.

Father Alexander Garklavs addressed the Council, offering words of gratitude. A motion was made to acknowledge with profound gratitude Father Alexander's service as Chancellor, which was accompanied by a standing ovation.

The Human Resources Committee was mandated to organize the search for a new Chancellor by the next meeting of the Metropolitan Council in September 2011. Council members authorized funding to conduct the search.

The Holy Synod and Metropolitan Council offered their gratitude to the Diocese of the Midwest and Christ the Savior Church for hosting the gathering.

After the Metropolitan Council meeting closed on Friday morning, members of the Strategic Planning Committee met to discuss the changes and release of the Strategic Plan, plans for the All-American Council, and other issues. — OCA Press Release, May 6.

HIS BEATITUDE, METROPOLITAN JONAH, PRIMATE OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA [OCA],

AND HIS EMINENCE, METROPOLITAN HILARION, FIRST HIERARCH OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA [ROCOR], CONCELEBRATED THE DIVINE LITURGY at Saint Nicholas Cathedral here on Tuesday, May 24, 2011, the Feast of Saints Cyril and Methodius.

The Liturgy was an historic one, in that it marked “the first joint service of the American Bishops and the Russian Orthodox Church after nearly 70 years of the liturgical period of absence of communication,” according to the web site of the Patriarchal Parishes in the USA. It represents the fruit of the diligent labors undertaken by the joint OCA-ROCOR Commission.

At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, Metropolitan Jonah presented relics of Saints Herman of Alaska and Alexis Toth to Metropolitan Hilarion, who in kind presented relics of Saint John Maximovich to Metropolitan Jonah. The Metropolitan also sent a message to His Holiness, Patriarch Kirill of Moscow, on the occasion of his patronal feastday. The text of the message reads as follows.

“We thank the Lord, Who on this festal day has vouchsafed us to offer unto Him the Bloodless Sacrifice in the Patriarchal Cathedral of St. Nicholas of the Russian Orthodox Church in New York City!

“On this, the feast day of the holy Equals-of-the-Apostles, Sts. Cyril and Methodius, Enlighteners of the Slavs, having communed in the One Holy Spirit of the One Chalice of Christ, with sincere love we greet Your Holiness on the occasion of your Name Day.

“By God’s beneficent Providence you have been fated to serve as the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church, of which the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia is an inseparable part, and which is the Mother—and Sister—Church of the Orthodox Church in America.

“We are certain that the long-desired concelebration of the Hierarchs of the American Church and the Russian Church Abroad will be a glad tidings to Your Holiness, and to the innumerable Orthodox clergy and laity.” – OCA Press Release, May 25.

The Assyrian Church of the East

HIS GRACE MAR AWA ROYEL, BISHOP OF CALIFORNIA AND SECRETARY OF THE HOLY SYNOD OF THE ASSYRIAN CHURCH OF THE EAST HAS BEEN RECEIVED IN AUDIENCE BY HIS ALL HOLINESS BARTHOLOMEW I, ARCHBISHOP OF CONSTANTINOPLE AND ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH.

The meeting, on 2 May, took place while His Grace was in Istanbul, in transit, on the way to the Holy Land for a pilgrimage with some 72 faithful of the Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East.

His Grace was received at the Patriarchate (in the Phanar district of Istanbul) by the Patriarchal deacon at 11:00 am. The deacon then gave a tour of the Patriarchal cathedral of St. George the Martyr, which houses the relics of St. Gregory Nazianzus and St. John Chrysostom.

The Patriarch received the Assyrian prelate and clergy at 12 noon in his personal office. After a colloquium of about one hour, during which His Grace Mar Awa handed His All Holiness Bartholomew I a very important letter from His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV addressed to the Patriarch of Constantinople, the Assyrian bishop and clergy were invited to share lunch with the Patriarch and other Greek Orthodox prelates and clergy resident at the Patriarchate.

During the audience, His Holiness Bartholomew I welcomed the Assyrian clergy to the Ecumenical Patriarchate and extended his sincere greetings to His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV, and spoke briefly about the Ecumenical Patriarchate’s commitment to promoting understanding and dialogue among Christian Churches.

After bidding the Patriarch and the members of the Patriarchal court farewell with gratitude for his immense hospitality, the Assyrian delegation headed directly to the airport in order to reach the Holy Land. – *Assyrian Church News*, May 10.

ON MAY 11, 2011, METROPOLITAN HILARION OF VOLOKOLAMSK, HEAD OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE’S DEPARTMENT FOR EXTERNAL CHURCH RELATIONS, RECEIVED BISHOP MAR ISAAC JOSEPH OF NORTHERN IRAQ AND RUSSIA, ASSYRIAN CHURCH OF THE EAST, AT HIS REQUEST.

Bishop Mar Isaac Joseph thanked Metropolitan Hilarion for the audience and talk and told him about the hardships experienced by Christian Churches in Iraq today, about the blasting of churches and attacks on Christians. He asked the Supreme Authorities of the Russian Orthodox Church to raise their voices in defense of the suffering Christian population in Iraq and a number of other countries so that the world community could pay attention to these facts and put an end to the continued violence committed on religious grounds.

During their talk, Metropolitan Hilarion assured Bishop Mar Isaac Joseph of the support of the Russian Orthodox

Church and said that the Moscow Patriarchate considered it extremely important that the world community and international organizations should give special attention to protecting the life, dignity and religious freedom of Christians in a number of countries in Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

In conclusion, Bishop Mar Isaac Joseph asked Metropolitan Hilarion to convey to Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russian cordial greetings and best wishes from the Primate of the Assyrian Church of the East, Catholicos Mar Dinkha IV. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, May 11.

HIS GRACE MAR AWA ROYEL, BISHOP OF CALIFORNIA AND SECRETARY OF THE HOLY SYNOD OF THE ASSYRIAN CHURCH OF THE EAST, HAS DELIVERED THE KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT THE ANNUAL CHRISTIANITY IN IRAQ SEMINAR DAY HELD IN LONDON.

The seminar, on 28 May, was presented by the Center of Eastern and Orthodox Christianity, Department for the Study of Religions, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, in conjunction with the British Institute for the Study of Iraq and the Jerusalem and Middle Eastern Churches Association.

The Christianity in Iraq Seminar Day this year focused on the Christian library from Turfan and the “mother church” in Mesopotamia. Between 1902-1914 the German Turfan Expedition unearthed a library at the monastery site of Bulayiq in Turfan (north-west China) that yielded over 1000 Syriac, Christian Soghdian and Christian Uighur manuscript fragments written in the Syriac script. This material remains preserved in various locations throughout Germany.

The range of discovered literature, dated between the 9th and 14th centuries demonstrates that Turfan was an important outpost of the Church of the East’s legendary missionary enterprise. Amongst the discovered manuscripts were Christian Soghdian translations from the Peshitta, hymns, psalms and importantly, several Hudras (liturgical cycles) that are dated to the 9th or 10th centuries.

Four papers exploring the manuscript discoveries were delivered by Syriac scholars, Dr. Erica C.D. Hunter (SOAS), Prof. Peter Zieme (Berlin), Dr. Mark Dickens (SOAS) and Prof. Nicholas Sims-Williams (SOAS). His Grace Mar Awa’s keynote presentation addressed the importance and impact of the liturgical texts from Turfan on the liturgy today.

His Grace Mar Awa holds a BA from Loyola University in Chicago (1997), a

Bachelor of Sacred Theology from the University of St. Mary of the Lake in Mundelein (1999) and a Licentiate of Sacred Theology from the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome. In 2007 His Grace took a PhD in Sacred Theology from the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome. – *Assyrian Church News*, May 31.

The Oriental Orthodox Churches

CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM CLASHES IN EGYPT HAVE LEFT 12 PEOPLE DEAD, 238 INJURED AND TWO COPTIC CHURCHES IN CAIRO BURNED, THE STATE MEDIA REPORTED.

Faith and political leaders condemned the weekend violence, which was triggered by rumors that a woman who had converted to Islam was being detained at the sixth-century Coptic Church of St. Mena in the working-class neighborhood of Imbaba in northwest Cairo. It's the worst sectarian violence since protests in February overthrew Hosni Mubarak, Egypt's long serving president, and the clashes are presenting fresh challenges to the military-led government.

Members of the Coptic community there were reportedly forming groups for self-defense saying they expect more clashes in the coming months. The groups will protect churches as well as homes and businesses owned by Copts. "Now we are really afraid," said the Rev. Arshileadis Mar Mina, a priest at the Mar Mina church, adding, "people are systematically attacking us and there are no police or military to protect us." He was quoted by the Al Masry Al Youm independent newspaper.

The trouble reportedly started on 7 May, when nearly 500 Muslims who are followers of the Salafi fundamentalist Islamist ideology attacked the church demanding the release of Camelia Shehata, the wife of the priest there, alleging she was being held hostage after conversion.

The mobs then lobbed firebombs at homes, shops and the church, setting its facade on fire. Later, a separate group set on fire the nearby Virgin Mary church. "A Catholic church was also attacked, along with Coptic Orthodox ones," said the Rev. Luciano Verdoscia, a missionary who has been working in Cairo for several years.

Muslims on 29 April held a sit-in outside San Marco Cathedral to demand Shehata's release. This prompted several Coptic movements to call for a protest march on 6 May to protect the cathedral in the Cairo suburb of Abbasseya.

Islamic clerics have denounced the violence, and the government has arrested

190 people, warning that anyone who threatens the military-ruled country's security will face "an iron fist." The Christians have, however, alleged the military was not doing enough to protect them. "These events do not benefit either Muslims or Copts," said Ahmed al-Tayyeb, the Sheik of al-Azhar.

Muslim are in the majority in Egypt with Christians accounting for 10 per cent of the 80 million population. – Frederick Nzwili for *ENI*, May 9.

THE HEAD OF EGYPT'S COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH, POPE SHENOUDA III, MET ON MONDAY WITH A DELEGATION OF SEVEN ETHIOPIAN CLERICS LED BY ETHIOPIA'S ARCHBISHOP.

In a statement to MENA, Shenouda's secretary, Anba Armia, said the meeting was dominated by a new atmosphere of understanding between Egypt and Ethiopia, which has developed since the 25 January revolution and the recent visit by interim Prime Minister Essam Sharaf to Ethiopia.

He noted that the guests praised Egypt's new stance and predicted stronger bilateral collaboration in the coming period.

He explained that cooperation between the Egyptian and Ethiopian churches on religious and spiritual matters would continue.

In early April, Shenouda resumed communications with Ethiopian church leaders to convince the government not to escalate the Nile crisis between Egypt and Sudan, which erupted after Ethiopia declared the construction of its Millennium Dam on the River Nile. Egypt and Sudan fear the new dam will affect their share of Nile water. -- *Al-Masry Al-Youm*, May 16.

THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH HAS CALLED ON THE EGYPTIAN CABINET TO PRESENT IT WITH THE UNIFIED LAW FOR PLACES OF WORSHIP ONCE IT HAS BEEN DRAFTED. A Church source said that head of Egypt's Coptic Orthodox Church, Pope Shenouda III, was awaiting the law.

The source went on to say that the Church has rejected the financial supervision of churches as they do not receive any funding from the state. All sources of Church income are either from Coptic endowments or Coptic donations, the source said.

The source also called for the swift adoption of the unified personal status law for non-Muslims.

Meanwhile, Kameel Sadeeq, from the Coptic Council in Alexandria, said the Patriarchy does not receive one cent from the state's general budget for services or sala-

ries. He went on to say that the Church depends solely on Coptic donations and tithing.

Sadeeq told Al-Masry Al-Youm that the Patriarchy would not permit financial supervision by the Central Auditing Agency, or by any other state entity, as the money concerned "is simply private money." He said that supervision is appropriate only for public funds or institutions financially supported by the state.

Sadeeq went on to say that the financial and administrative committees within the Church are currently run by secularists, not the state. – US Copts Association, May 31.

ON THE COMBINED OCCASION OF HIS 80TH BIRTHDAY, 60TH YEAR OF MONASTIC LIFE AND THE 20TH YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF HIS ORDINATION AS A BISHOP, H. G. BISHOP MAKARIUS RECEIVED RECOGNITION at the Crown Plaza Hotel in Secaucus, New Jersey on May 1, 2011. The event was organized by the Coptic Orthodox Church in North America.

The invited guests to the special reception included four other Coptic bishops, many Coptic, Eritrean and Ethiopian clerics and over 400 people. Many of His Grace's accomplishments were spoken of by several representatives of Coptic churches he has helped found and nurtured. Even children and young people who have grown under his pastoral care and influence gave moving messages.

There was a large contingent of Eritrean men and women from the New York City and New Jersey area. Their ululation and applause as an expression of their appreciation on seeing such great honor being bestowed on their beloved bishop gave the event an added significance.

Representing the Eritrean Orthodox Church's Archdiocese of North America, Fr. Prof. Athanasius Ghebre-Ab delivered the first message of the evening. He expressed the gratitude and indebtedness of the Eritrean people in general, and the Eritrean Orthodox Church and that of the Archdiocese's in particular, for the support and encouragement His Holiness Pope Shenouda has shown since the crisis in the Church surfaced six years ago. Fr. Athanasius reminded the audience about the continued imprisonment of His Holiness Abune Antonius, the canonical Patriarch of the Eritrean Orthodox Church.

Speaking of the insightful and resolute leadership H.G. Bishop Makarius has given to the Archdiocese, Fr. Athanasius underscored his "tenderness towards his flocks." He added, "But when the situation calls for,

Bishop Makarius has also shown his fearless side as well." He cited as an example the most recent and much publicized homily he delivered to the people of Eritrea when nearly 400 Eritrean young men, women and children drowned off the coast of Libya. Fr. Athanasius concluded that the Eritrean people have shown their elation over having His Grace to talk to them and for them in such a time of national tragedy. In Him, they have found a true father.

H. G. Bishop David and many others also paid tribute to Bishop Makarius for his spiritual leadership and decades of committed service to God and his church. Moreover, Bishop David reiterated once more on this fitting occasion and to a sustained applause and a standing ovation that the Coptic Church "recognizes no other canonical Patriarch of the Eritrean Orthodox Church, but H. H. Abune Antonius.

May God continue to grant H.G. Bishop Makarius good health and many more years of service to God and the church. – Eritrean Orthodox Diocese of America, May 6

ON MAY 5, HIS HOLINESS KAREKIN II, SUPREME PATRIARCH AND CATHOLICOS OF ALL ARMENIANS, DEPARTED ARMENIA TO PAY A PONTIFICAL VISIT TO SOUTH AMERICA.

Accompanying His Holiness are His Eminence Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America; His Grace Bishop Artak Derderian, Dean of the Monasteries of the Mother See; Rev. Fr. Anania Tsaturian, Staff-bearer of His Holiness; Rev. Fr. Adam Markarian, Secretary of the Catholicosate; and Deacon James Kalustian, Supreme Spiritual Council Member and Benefactor of the Mother See.

The Armenian Pontiff will pay a Pontifical visit to the Armenian Diocese of Brazil from May 6 to 10. His Holiness will visit the Armenian Diocese of Uruguay from May 10 to 12 and the Armenian Diocese of Argentina from May 12 to 21. The Catholicos of All Armenians will also visit the Armenian Communities of Chile and Venezuela from May 21 to 25. – Press Release, Holy Etchmiadzin, May 5.

THE ARMENIAN PATRIARCHATE OF TURKEY WOULD DO BEST TO STEER CLEAR OF POLITICS, ACCORDING TO A POSSIBLE FUTURE PATRIARCH who has vowed to keep politics at an arm's length from the church if elected to the post.

"Even though I am personally concerned about politics, I would not advise the Patriarchate to get involved in such

matters," Archbishop Karekin Bekjian, a candidate for the Patriarchate and a primate of the German diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church, told the *Hürriyet Daily News* on Sunday.

Bekjian was in Istanbul to celebrate the 550th anniversary of the Patriarchate, which was only marked by a low-profile service and a small reception due to the continuing illness of titular Patriarch Mesrop II, who is incapable of discharging his duties due to dementia. Grandiose plans to celebrate the 550th anniversary of the Patriarchate were turned down by prominent figures within the Armenian community due to the Patriarch's illness.

In his stead, Archbishop Aram Ateşyan was appointed as acting Patriarch although Bekjian was one of the leading opponent's of Ateşyan's investiture.

"A deputy Patriarch was already appointed in 1998 while Mesrop II was still in good health. Why was [someone else] appointed [afterwards]? Was there a deal with the state? There should have been an election for the Patriarch as if the the current Patriarch were dead," Bekjian said.

Discussing his current role, Bekjian said his primary duty as a cleric was to maintain the church's well-being.

"Any bonds that will form between the diaspora [and the Armenian Patriarchate in Turkey] must come about of its own accord. If they prefer to recognize the Patriarchate, then they will; and if they prefer otherwise, then we will not feel any special obligation to reach out to them," said Bekjian, who is well-acquainted with the Armenian diaspora because of his residence in Germany.

Asked whether he would become a Turkish citizen if elected as Patriarch, Bekjian said he currently had both Turkish and German citizenship.

During the ceremony, Ateşyan also presented Mustafa Sarıgül, the mayor of Istanbul's Şişli district, with a Patriarchate Special Service Gold Medal, marking the first time that a person of Turkish descent has been awarded the honor.

Mesrop II had suggested opening a theology department within a university several years ago to raise new clerics for Istanbul's Armenian community, Bekjian said.

"The idea of sending young clerics to theology departments in Europe had also come up, [but] I am not warm to that idea. Clerics must be chosen from among the Armenians of Istanbul so that they can understand the mentality, the cast of that mind that exists here," Bekjian said.

Authorities used to permit the raising

of new clerics at the Tibrevank School in Istanbul's Üsküdar district in the early 1960s, but this right was revoked in 1968, the archbishop said. The school, which still operates as the Private Surp Haç High School, lost its status as a foundation in 1985, he said.

If the Halki Seminary on Heybeliada Island were to be opened again, then the Armenian Patriarchate of Turkey could also take advantage of the situation, and clerics graduating from the seminary could then enroll in theology seminars abroad before returning to Turkey, Bekjian said.

"Our people in Germany speak Turkish and preach in Turkish. [Even though] the Armenian community has a past in Europe that goes back 150 years, they do not have established traditions there," said Bekjian.

The Armenian community of Istanbul, however, thrived on a well-established system of traditions, according to Bekjian.

"Istanbul is my memories, my everything. For me, Istanbul is a never-dying aspiration. I could not live without this city," Bekjian said. -- Vercihan Ziflioğlu for *Hurriyet Daily News*, May 30.

ON MONDAY, 9 MAY 2011, AT THE CONVOCATION WHICH TOOK PLACE IN CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL, VANCOUVER, CANADA, HIS EMINENCE ARCHBISHOP NAREG ALEMEZIAN RECEIVED HIS DR. OF MINISTRY DEGREE from the University of British Columbia Vancouver School of Theology.

The subject of Archbishop Alemezian's thesis is "Priesthood in the 21st Century in the Armenian Church: The Model of the Celibate Brotherhood of the Catholicosate of Cilicia." On Friday, 29 April, Archbishop Nareg defended his thesis, which was unanimously approved by the examining committee.

His Holiness Aram I, welcoming the academic achievement of His Eminence, recalled that the Brotherhood of the Catholicosate of Cilicia gives priority importance to university education, considering it vital for the witness of the church. – Press Release, Great House of Cilicia, May 13.

ON MONDAY 30TH MAY 2011, HIS HOLINESS ARAM I LEFT FOR YEREVAN, ARMENIA ON THE INVITATION OF H.E. SERGE SARKISSIAN, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA. As one of the two spiritual leaders in the Armenian Church, he was invited to participate in the Pan-Armenian committee to prepare the 100th Anniversary Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide.

President Sarkissian announced the formation of this committee a month ago. The leaders of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (the Tashnag Party) and the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (the Ramgavar Party) visited Aram I to discuss the importance of Armenia-Diaspora consultation on this issue. – Press Release, Great House of Cilicia, May 31.

The Catholic Churches

ON MAY 7, 2011, DURING HIS STAY IN DROHOBYCH, THE HEAD OF THE UKRAINIAN GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH (UGCC), MAJOR ARCHBISHOP SVIATOSLAV, MET WITH JOURNALISTS, SEMINARY STUDENTS AND CLERGYMEN. ONE OF THE MANY QUESTIONS OF THE JOURNALISTS WAS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE UGCC.

In describing his vision of the future of the church in 10 years' time in its internal, external and territorial development, Major Archbishop Sviatoslav said:

“The Synod of our Bishops established Team #2, which was to elaborate the vision of what our church should be in 10 years, by 2020. We have chosen ten priorities of what we would like to do during these ten years. Now, Team #3, which is to develop certain mechanisms of implementation, begins its activity. The main questions were the questions of young people, evangelization, inculturation, development of structures of our church, language in the liturgy. The question of language may not be so urgent for Ukraine but when other countries are concerned, it is a very painful question. In 2020, I would like to see our church as a unified organism existing all over the world, speaking different languages, proclaiming the Gospel in different countries, but being a unified church of an eastern tradition. Therefore, taking advantage of the fact that seminary students are present here, I would like to call the brethren to think very seriously about the missionary ministry.”

The head of UGCC also stressed that it is important to provide spiritual care to all Greek Catholics scattered around the world: “Our task is to follow them where they are. Our people need pastors. In that case, by 2020, we will probably have eparchies, metropolitanates in Africa, in the Middle East and in countries where our people need our spiritual care, who need to have a father and want to know that this father from Ukraine really cares about them.”

The head of UGCC visited Drohobych on the occasion of the celebration of the

75th birthday and 25th anniversary of the ministry of the ruling Bishop Yulian (Voronovskyi) of Sambir and Drohobych Eparchy. – *RISU*, May 9.

THE SUBJECT OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UKRAINIAN GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH (UGCC) AND THE ORTHODOX CHURCHES IN UKRAINE WAS DISCUSSED IN A RECENT INTERVIEW OF MAJOR ARCHBISHOP SVIATOSLAV WITH THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PROGRAM OF VATICAN RADIO.

In this regard, the new head of the UGCC said: “The main challenge for the church situation in Ukraine is the division among the Orthodox, and so it is very difficult to form some relations because if we develop cooperation with one group, the others feel ignored or rejected. It is very important for us that the special organization, which we call the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations, exists in Ukraine. Each religious community that was registered by the state joined the council. It provides certain kinds of opportunities to cooperate, at least to talk and meet together with state authorities and develop our relations,” said the hierarch.

According to the hierarch, the UGCC has a special task: to be the bridge between the divided communities, not only between Catholics and non-Catholics but even, like in this case, between the Orthodox, to create space where they can not only meet with us but also with each other.

Major Archbishop Sviatoslav says that the UGCC is open to a dialogue with the Orthodox. “I was 20 when Communism collapsed. And I remember well the tension between the Orthodox and Greek Catholics in western Ukraine. But this tension is no more. And I know well the wounds still carried by our people from that time. There are many of them. Therefore, I speak not only on my own behalf but also on behalf of the communities that were wounded at that time. And I understand this fear, or, to put it more precisely, pain of the Orthodox community and the Russian Orthodox who constantly accuse Greek Catholics of destroying their three eparchies in western Ukraine. It is not an easy question. But I think that, first of all, to be able to touch upon that question, we should be open and ready to forgive each other,” said the hierarch in the interview.

In answer to the question if the new head of the UGCC has any practical ideas, ways of promoting the project of reconciliation, Major Archbishop Sviatoslav responded: “First of all, we are gathering specific information about churches that

may be claimed by the Orthodox and about the current number of their communities in western Ukraine, what kind of relations we have between our communities at the basic, local level, in order for us to have clear statistics about the churches with which we are going to deal, for us to be able to conduct our own investigation. Then we can study and discuss the real situation, not fantastic figures but real facts and names of villages where there may be some tension. Only after this will we be well prepared to meet with the Orthodox and study specific churches and affairs.” – *RISU*, May 11.

ON MAY 11, 2011, THEIR EXCELLENCIES THE MARONITE BISHOPS HELD AT BKERKEH THEIR MONTHLY MEETING, WHICH WAS PRESIDED OVER BY HIS BEATITUDE PATRIARCH BECHARA PETER RAI, with the participation of His Beatitude and Eminence Nasrallah Butros Cardinal Sfeir. They studied church and national matters. At the end of the meeting, they issued the following communiqué:

The Fathers dwelled upon two distinguished events that the Maronite Church experienced during the last month:

1. The first event was the visit of His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Peter Rai to the Apostolic See. He was accompanied by a number of Bishops, Superiors General, priests, faithful and officials of different communities, headed by the representative of His Excellency the President of the Republic, to celebrate the confirmation of the ecclesiastical communion with His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI and visit the Vatican Curia. The Lebanese delegation received a distinguished paternal welcome from His Holiness and the Vatican authorities.

2. The second event was the beatification of Pope John Paul II. His Beatitude the Patriarch participated, heading a church delegation from different countries, beside a Lebanese delegation in which His Excellency the President of the Republic was represented by the First Lady. They expressed the esteem of the Lebanese people for everything the new blessed did to defend their homeland and carry its case before the international circles, considering Lebanon not only as a homeland, but also as a message of freedom, dialogue and peace for all Peoples.

3. The Lebanese are still suffering from the worrying situation in their homeland and neighboring countries. They reflect upon them as deplorable security events, difficult being conditions, confusing economic stagnation and an almost total paralysis of the centers of decision-making and

authority. Thus, the Fathers call upon all the authorities to close ranks and expedite the formation of a government that would be responsible for treating the concerns of the citizens, ward danger off the homeland and secure a future for all its daughters and sons, specially the rising generations.

4. The meeting held by some Maronite leaders at Bkerkeh, in response to the invitation of His Beatitude and under his presidency, left a great relief upon the citizens, strong hope in the possibility of overcoming wounds, advancement in the national reconciliation procedure and mutual forgiveness, holding hands in order to strengthen Christian presence in Lebanon and the region and strengthen their role in building good societies on the bases of justice, love and respect of Man.

5. The Fathers look forward with joy and hope to the Moslem-Christian spiritual summit meeting tomorrow at the Patriarchate. They hope that this summit will facilitate true national unity and that the participants will endeavor to work together to strengthen common life among all the children of this homeland, with respect for the plurality of their religious cultural and social adherence, and be committed to dialogue which respects the different points of view and aims at realizing public good.

6. In the Easter-tide, the Fathers call upon all their sons and daughters to renew their hope in Christ who vanquished sin and death. In this month consecrated to the Mother of God, the Virgin Mary, they call upon them to persevere in prayer, asceticism and repentance, to visit Marian shrines and saints' tombs asking their intercession that God may grant our homeland and region security and peace and our Peoples tranquility, love and affection. Press Release, Maronite Church, May 11.

LEBANESE RELIGIOUS LEADERS HAVE WARNED AGAINST GROWING INTERNAL DIVISIONS IN THEIR COUNTRY AND URGED NATIONAL LEADERS TO WORK TOWARDS UNITY AND TOLERANCE, FOLLOWING A JOINT CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM MEETING convened on 12 May in Bkerkeh by newly appointed Maronite Patriarch Beshara Rai.

Lebanon has been without a functioning government since January when the Muslim militant group and political party Hezbollah toppled the government coalition of Saad Al Hariri in a dispute over an investigation of the assassination of Former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Al Hariri, Saad's father.

In turn, Al Hariri has refused to support the appointment of Hezbollah-chosen

Najib Miqati as the new prime minister. According to the Lebanese English daily, the Daily Star, the religious leaders said divisions could weaken Lebanon's ability to face regional challenges and they expressed support for the use of dialogue to resolve domestic problems.

In his opening speech, Rai said Lebanon needed to set a precedent of inter-religious dialogue and strengthen Lebanon's national pact of coexistence, according to media reports.

In their final statement the leaders urged political leaders to form a new government as soon as possible, based on "constitutional principles so that (the country) can play its role as the region is going through critical times," the Daily Star said.

The summit's statement also encouraged officials "to refer to constitutional institutions to solve any conflict and to depend on the Lebanese Army and legitimate security forces to preserve stability and security and fight organized terrorism," said media reports.

In reference to the current regional instability, the religious leaders expressed their commitment also not to interfere "directly or indirectly" in other countries' internal affairs, according to media reports.

They warned that current divisions are harming Lebanon's ability to confront challenges currently facing the Arab region. "The Lebanese government is the source of power for the Lebanese people. The citizens are supposed to respect [the state] institutions, and the officials should respond to [national] needs," they said. "Political leaders should rise above their political differences." – Judith Sudilovsky for *ENI*, May 16.

ON 18 MAY, PATRIARCH FILARET, THE HEAD OF THE UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH-KYIVAN PATRIARCHATE (UOC-KP), MET WITH THE HEAD OF THE UKRAINIAN GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH (UGCC), MAJOR ARCHBISHOP SVIATOSLAV, AT PATRIARCH FILARET'S RESIDENCE. The Major Archbishop was accompanied by the Secretary of the Synod of UGCC, Bishop Bohdan Dziurakh.

According to the press-service of UOC-KP, Major Archbishop Sviatoslav thanked Patriarch Filaret for attending his enthronement as head of UGCC at the Cathedral of the Resurrection. In remembrance of the event, he presented to the head of UOC-KP a copy of the Icon of the Mother of God from the iconostasis of the Cathedral of the Holy Sophia in Rome and a video of the enthronement service.

The hierarchs discussed a wide spec-

trum of questions regarding cooperation between the Kyivan Patriarchate and UGCC, including social morality, social ministry, state-Church relations, patriotic education, freedom of worship, etc. Major Archbishop Sviatoslav noted that he intends to develop the achievements of his predecessor, Cardinal Lubomyr (Husar) regarding these questions.

The participants in the meeting expressed concern over growing social confrontation and political extremism. They stressed the need to jointly defend the state sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and civil accord in Ukraine. The primates discussed specific lines of development of further cooperation regarding the bilateral and multilateral interaction.

Patriarch Filaret presented the head of UGCC with a translation of the Apostolic Fathers and other books published by the Kyivan Patriarchate. – *RISU*, May 21.

ON SATURDAY, 21 MAY, THE HOLY FATHER APPOINTED ARCHBISHOP THOMAS E. GULLICKSON, APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Sts. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Suriname, Saint Vincent and Grenadines, and apostolic delegate in the Antilles, as apostolic nuncio to Ukraine. – *VIS*, May 21.

POPE BENEDICT XVI HAS NAMED MSGR. MIKAEL MOURADIAN, WHO IS SUPERIOR OF THE CONVENT OF NOTRE DAME IN BZOMMAR, LEBANON, AS THE NEW BISHOP OF THE EPARCHY OF OUR LADY OF NAREG IN NEW YORK FOR ARMENIAN CATHOLICS.

The appointment was announced May 21 in Washington by Archbishop Pietro Sambi, apostolic nuncio to the United States. Bishop-designate Mouradian, who was born in Lebanon, succeeds Bishop Manuel Batakian, who is 81.

The New York-based eparchy serves about 25,000 Armenian Catholics in the United States and about 10,000 in Canada. The church has two parishes in Canada, Toronto and Montreal, and seven in the United States -- two in California and one each in Michigan, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York and Massachusetts.

The eparchy was formed as an exarchate in 1981. On Sept. 12, 2005, Pope Benedict raised it to an eparchy. The same day Bishop Batakian, who had headed the exarchate since 2001, became the first eparch.

Dioceses in Eastern Catholic churches are called eparchies. An exarchate is a church jurisdiction formed in areas where

there are enough Catholics of that rite to establish a hierarchy but the church is not sufficiently developed yet to form an eparchy, or full diocesan structure.

The eparchy is named for a village in Armenia. Nareg was the site of a famous monastery and home to one of Armenia's most noted theologians and saints, St. Gregory of Nareg.

Bishop-designate Mouradian, who will turn 50 in July, is a member of the Institute of the Clergy of Bzommar. Ordained a priest Oct. 24, 1987, he has held a number of positions, including serving as head of Caritas Armenia.

A native of Greece, Bishop Batakian served the church in Lebanon, Paris and Rome before coming to the United States.

Born in Athens Nov. 5, 1929, he moved with his family to Lebanon during World War II. After philosophy and theology studies in Rome, he was ordained a priest Dec. 8, 1954, as a member of the Armenian Patriarchal religious order, the Institute of the Clergy of Bzommar.

He was Patriarchal vicar of the institute, 1978-84; pastor of the Armenian cathedral in Paris, 1984-90; and rector of the Armenian Pontifical College in Rome, 1990-94.

Elected a bishop in December 1994, he was ordained the following March and served as vicar general of the Patriarchate. He was named head of the U.S.- Canadian exarchate in November 2000 and took up that post in January 2001. — *CNS*, May 23.

HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XVI GAVE THIS SPEECH WHEN HE RECEIVED A DELEGATION FROM BULGARIA HEADED BY HER EXCELLENCY TSETSKA TSACHEVA, PRESIDENT OF THE BULGARIAN PARLIAMENT, on May 23:

Madam President of Parliament,
Hon. Members of Government,
Distinguished Authorities,
Venerable Brothers of the Orthodox Church and of the Catholic Church,

I wish to address my respectful greeting to the Official Delegation of Bulgaria in Rome — led by the President of the Parliament — as is customary in the context of the liturgical Feast of Sts Cyril and Methodius. This welcome meeting, taking place again this year, offers me the opportunity to highlight the spiritual and cultural relevance of these two distinguished and worthy pioneers of the evangelization of Europe, figures honored in the East and in the West. Thanks to their courageous preaching along the roads of the Continent, they fostered a vast spiritual renewal and laid the foundations for an authentic promotion of the free-

dom and unity of Christian Europe. Cyril and Methodius were “living Gospels” and eloquent signs of the goodness of the Lord, and therefore their witness reached the people of their time more easily.

These two great Saints remind the European peoples, who have recently opened themselves to new perspectives of cooperation, that their unity will be strengthened if it is based on their common Christian roots. In fact, in the complex history of Europe, Christianity represents a central and qualifying element. The Christian faith has molded the culture of the Old Continent and is permanently woven into its history, to the point that this would not be understandable if it did not refer to the events which first characterized the long period of evangelization and then the great centuries in which Christianity assumed an ever more significant role.

Therefore, it is important that Europe grow also in a spiritual dimension in line with its salutary history. The unity of the Continent, which is progressively maturing in consciences and is also defining itself on the political front, represents a perspective of great hope. Europeans are called to commit themselves to creating a condition of deep cohesion and of effective cooperation between peoples. To build the new Europe upon a solid base it is not enough to depend on economic interests alone; rather it is necessary to rely on authentic values which are founded on the universal moral law, inscribed on the heart of every person. I warmly wish that the moral and cultural legacy of Sts Cyril and Methodius may always nourish in everyone esteem for the spiritual patrimony of your lands and, at the same time, openness and communion in mutual respect. May this meeting serve to motivate further relations of brotherhood and solidarity. May the Lord bless your dear Country and all of its citizens. — Vatican website, May 23.

HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XVI GAVE THIS SPEECH WHEN HE RECEIVED A DELEGATION FROM THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA HEADED BY HIS EXCELLENCY GJORGE IVANOV, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC, on May 23:

Mr. President,
Hon. Members of the Government,
Distinguished Authorities,
Venerable Brothers of the Orthodox Church and of the Catholic Church,

I am particularly pleased to welcome you and to extend to each of you my cordial greeting, especially to the President of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

The Feast of Sts Cyril and Methodius is a cause of joy for all of us. Sent to the Slavic people, these holy brothers announced the Gospel amidst great difficulty always sustained by an unwavering trust in the Lord. They were inspired by the passion to make known the Good News of Christ and for that reason they worked prodigiously to make Christian Doctrine known, recording it in books written in the Slavic language. No doubt this was a decisive factor in the growth and development of the Slavic culture and civilization in general. The witness and teaching of Sts Cyril and Methodius are still relevant for those who serve the Gospel today, and for those who are called to govern the futures of nations.

The life of these men was entirely dedicated to apostolic activity and the divine inspiration of making the message of Revelation accessible and comprehensible to peoples was the uniting cause of diverse traditions and cultures. In the acceptance of God's plan of salvation, people can rediscover the foundations on which to build a society imbued with the spirit of reconciliation and peaceful coexistence. There can be no real unity without respect for the dignity of every human person and his or her inalienable rights. The Gospel of Christ, as Sts Cyril and Methodius understood, is capable of illuminating every part and dimension of human experience, making it fully human. The Word of God calls us continually to a conversion of heart, so that every decision, every choice, may be purified from selfish interests; and it is precisely from this steadfast conversion to God that it is possible to give birth to a new humanity.

Your annual pilgrimage to Rome is both an occasion for renewing the bonds of friendship between your Nation and the Catholic Church and for reinforcing your country's commitment to promote its good. Let us invoke the intercession of Sts Cyril and Methodius that the Lord may grant his peace and bless the people of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia! -- Vatican website, May 23.

ON MAY 26, THE HOLY FATHER GRANTED THE CONFIRMATION REQUESTED OF HIM IN ACCORDANCE WITH CANON 153 OF THE CODE OF CANONS OF THE EASTERN CHURCHES BY BISHOP GEORGE ALENCHERRY, OF THUCKALAY OF THE SYRO-MALABARS, canonically elected as major archbishop of the Archdiocese of Ernakulam-Angamaly of the Syro-Malabars, India by the Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church meeting in Mount Saint Thomas, Kakkannad-Kochi, in Kerala, India on 24 May. Bishop

Alencherry was born in Thuruthy, India in 1945, was ordained a priest in 1972, and consecrated a bishop in 1997. – *VIS*, May 26.

ARCHBISHOP GEORGE ALENCHERRY, THE NEW MAJOR ARCHBISHOP OF THE SYRO-MALABAR CATHOLIC CHURCH, SAID HIS PRIORITIES WOULD BE "EVANGELIZATION, GREATER UNITY AND COMMUNION WITH OTHER CHURCHES."

"My aim is to serve with love through dialogue," he told *Catholic News Service* in a May 27 telephone interview from Mount St. Thomas, headquarters of the Syro-Malabar Church, in Cochin.

Asked about how he was planning to take care of the Syro-Malabar Catholics who have migrated in large numbers to different parts of India and abroad, Archbishop Alencherry replied that "the pastoral rights of our church members, as spelled out by canon law, will be pursued through the structures of the church, including the Vatican."

Though the Syro-Malabar Church has more than 3.6 million members, more than half a million of them are scattered outside Kerala state, where the church remains the largest Christian denomination.

The 66-year-old bishop of Thuckalay was elected major archbishop of Ernakulam-Angamaly by the Syro-Malabar bishops' synod May 24. Pope Benedict confirmed the election the following day.

Archbishop Alencherry succeeds Cardinal Varkey Vithayathil, who died at age 84 while celebrating Mass April 1. He had led the Syro-Malabar Church, the larger of the Eastern-rite Catholic churches in India, since 1997.

The new head of the church was born in 1945, the sixth of 10 children in a farm family in Thuruthy. He has a sister who is a nun and two brothers who are priests. All three priests were ordained Dec. 18, although in different years.

Archbishop Alencherry earned a bachelor's degree in economics from Kerala University. He was ordained to the priest-

hood in 1972 and ran the religious education program of the Changanacherry Archdiocese. He did further theological studies, specializing in catechesis, eventually earning a doctorate from the Institut Catholique in Paris.

Returning to India, he was director of the Changanacherry catechetical center and later director of the Pastoral Orientation Center, which is sponsored by the Latin-rite, Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara Catholic bishops of Kerala state.

He also served as a professor of pastoral counseling and of systematic theology before being ordained a bishop in 1997.

Fewer than 2 percent of India's 1 billion residents are Catholic. The church has 161 dioceses in India; 128 of them are Latin rite, 27 belong to the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church and six dioceses belong to the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. – Anto Akkara for *CNS*, May 27.



Major Archbishop Mar George Alencherry, Primate of the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church

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