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ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW MET WITH UKRAINIAN PRESIDENT VICTOR YANUKOVYCH IN KARYES, THE ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER OF MOUNT ATHOS, GREECE, ON 7 OCTOBER AFTER A BUSINESS FORUM IN THESSALONIKA. The Ukrainian presidential web site does not report about this meeting.

According to portal-credo.ru, at the meeting with the Patriarch, President Yanukovych spoke about good relations between Ukraine and the Ecumenical Patriarchate. According to him, Ukraine puts great hopes in the preparation of the Pan-Orthodox Council and expects that its decisions will have positive consequences for the Ukrainian Church.

In his turn, the Patriarch of Constantinople stated that he views the relations of his cathedra with the Ukrainian Church as relations between the “Mother-Church” and “amiable daughter.”

Patriarch Bartholomew also expressed concern over the Church schisms in Ukraine. “The Mother Church is sad and concerned about the sufferings of its children in that country,” said Patriarch Bartholomew about the Church situation in Ukraine and noted that he intends to visit the country.

If I am considered worthy to visit Ukraine again in answer to the kind proposal of the President, it will be done to strengthen the relations between it and the mother Church and to let the Mother Church help to eliminate the schisms which unfortunately still exist within the Ukrainian Orthodoxy,” added Patriarch Bartholomew. – *RISU*, Oct. 11.

ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW SENT THIS LETTER TO COPTIC PATRIARCH POPE SHENOUDA III REGARDING THE TRAGIC ATTACK ON COPTIC FAITHFUL ON OCTOBER 9:

It is with heavy heart and wholehearted sympathy that we communicate with

Your Beatitude – indeed, not for the first time this year! – regarding similar tragedies confronting our beloved and pious Coptic Christian brothers and sisters under your spiritual and pastoral protection in Egypt.

Upon hearing this painful news during our recent visit to the Holy Mountain, we hastened to invoke the intercession of the numerous saints who have led ascetic lives in that monastic republic and to urge the ongoing prayers of the monks who currently reside there.

The remarkable and turbulent changes experienced by your entire historical continent and especially your biblical nation in recent times have proved both encouraging and costly. Nevertheless, the difficult and complicated transition in the life of all citizens of Egypt can never and should never provide any pretext or excuse for acts of violence toward any targeted individuals or groups, including and especially religious communities or political factions.

It is, therefore, in the strongest possible expression of solidarity and condolence that we deplore the unacceptable persecution and unjustifiable execution of all humble and law-abiding citizens, particularly belonging to Christian or other faith minorities, whether in Egypt or in the entire Middle East.

The struggle for peace and democracy can never come at the expense of religious liberty and human rights.

Finally, Your Beatitude, we would like to assure you and your faithful that we always stand prayerfully beside you as we continue to journey on the difficult paths of our respective Churches. May God give rest to the souls of the departed and strength to the families that survive them.

At the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the 17th day of October 2011. Your Beatitude’s beloved brother in Christ,

+ BARTHOLOMEW, Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch – Website of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Oct. 17.

ON 22 OCTOBER 2011, THE GREAT ARCHIMANDRITE OF THE ECUMENICAL THRONE, ATHENAGOROS CELEBRATED THE DIVINE LITURGY AT THE PATRIARCHAL CHURCH OF ST. GEORGE THE VICTORIOUS IN THE PHANAR TO MARK THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ELECTION AND ENTHRONEMENT OF PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW OF CONSTANTINOPLE.

Praying at the festive divine service were His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople; His Holiness and Beatitude Catholic-Patriarch Iliya II of All Georgia; His Holiness Patriarch Irinej of Serbia; His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana and All Albania; hierarchs, clerics and laymen from the Local Orthodox Churches.

The Russian Orthodox Church was represented by Archbishop Justinian of Naro-Fominsk, administrator of the Patriarchal parishes in the USA.

Metropolitan Constantine of Nicea was the first to greet His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew on behalf of hierarchs, clergymen and laymen.

Archbishop Justinian of Naro-Fominsk read out the congratulatory address of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and handed Patriarch Bartholomew the inscribed panagia as a gift.

The Primate of the Church of Constantinople thanked all those who addressed him for their warm wishes and noted that August 13 marked the 50th anniversary of his ordination as deacon, recalled his studies at the Halki Theological School and its significance for his entire life.

Lunch was given at the Beity Restaurant in honor of all the guests.

That same day in the evening a festive reception was given in the Hilton Hotel in honor of His Holiness Patriarch Irinej of Serbia who is paying an official visit to the Orthodox Church of Constantinople. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, Oct. 23.

HIS EMINENCE ARCHBISHOP DEMETRIOS OF AMERICA MET YESTERDAY WITH THE CONSISTORY OF THE AMERICAN CARPATHO-RUSSIAN ORTHODOX DIOCESE of the Ecumenical Patriarchate at the Archdiocese Headquarters in New York City. The Consistory requested the meeting from the Archbishop who is the *Locum Tenens* for the Diocese since the passing of the late Metropolitan Nicholas of Amissos earlier this year. Following the meeting, the Consistory attended a luncheon hosted by the Archbishop.

This meeting is the second of its kind since the repose of the late Metropolitan. Among the items for discussion were the following: the search for a new presiding bishop for the Diocese, administrative issues affecting various parishes, and representation of the Diocese at the celebrations at the Ecumenical Patriarchate in honor of His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew's 20th Anniversary of election and enthronement as Ecumenical Patriarch. Archbishop Demetrios offered thanks to the Consistory for their offering of stable, decisive stewardship during this season of "widowhood" of the Diocese. The Archbishop also offered a substantial contribution to the two Carpatho-Russian parishes affected by the recent floods in New Jersey. For their part, the clergy of the Consistory expressed their gratitude to the Archbishop for his leadership, generosity and pastoral care for the Diocese. – Press Release, Greek Archdiocese, Oct. 5.

THE HOLY EPARCHIAL SYNOD OF THE HOLY GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA CONVENED ITS REGULAR MEETING ON OCTOBER 12-13, 2011, AT THE SYNODAL CHAMBER OF THE HOLY ARCHDIOCESE IN NEW YORK. His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America presided and all Members of the Synod participated.

Prior to the commencement of the Synod's meeting, Members had the opportunity to hold a special meeting with Rev. Father Stratton Dorozenski, Chairman of the Archdiocese Benefits Committee, during which relevant issues were discussed. They also met with Rev. Father James Kordaris, Director of Stewardship, Outreach and Evangelism, and were informed about the work being accomplished by said Committee.

During the meeting of the Synod, the following issues were discussed:

With regard to the resignation of Metropolitan Maximos of Pittsburgh, due to health reasons, the Synod expressed its deep gratitude and wholeheartedly recognized his most precious and lengthy offering to the Church, especially his decisive contribution to the meetings and decisions of the Holy Eparchial Synod.

The Synod then proceeded with the formulation of the *triprosopo* – a three-person list, for the filling of the vacant seat of the Holy Metropolis of Pittsburgh, to be submitted to the Holy and Sacred Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which will then elect the new Metropolitan who will succeed the most worthy former Metropolitan of Pittsburgh Maximos.

Further, the Synod worked on the English translation of the original Greek text of the Divine Liturgy and approved the English translation of the hymn *Christ is Risen* to be used by the parishes of the Holy Archdiocese. Issues of a pastoral nature and the administration of the Sacraments were also discussed.

The Synod reviewed and approved a recent list of clergymen eligible for episcopacy, and discussed general issues relating to clergy, and the ordination especially of new clerics, as well as issues with respect to the administration of parishes and the Holy Archdiocese in general.

Finally, a discussion took place on the fruitful cooperation between the Synod and the Hellenic College/Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, the Assembly of all Canonical Orthodox Bishops, the special educational program for Deacons, the forthcoming Clergy-Laity Congress, and issues of pastoral care of clergy and laity. -- From Office of the Holy Eparchial Synod, Oct. 13.

THE GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA ANNOUNCES TODAY AN AGREEMENT WITH THE PORT AUTHORITY OF NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY REGARDING THE REBUILDING OF ST. NICHOLAS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH, WHICH WAS DESTROYED IN THE TERRORIST ATTACKS OF SEPTEMBER 11, 2001.

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo invited Archbishop Demetrios and the Hierarchs of the Holy Eparchial Synod of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, together with the leadership of St. Nicholas Parish and the Archdiocesan Council to his New York City office for the official signing of the agreement by

Archdiocesan Council Vice-Chairman Michael Jaharis, St. Nicholas Parish President John Couloukoundis and Port Authority Executive Director Chris Ward. Archbishop Demetrios, Governor Cuomo and NYS Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos signed as the formal witnesses to the agreement.

Archbishop Demetrios expressed particular praise for Governor Cuomo and said, "We are grateful to our esteemed Governor and precious friend Andrew Cuomo for bringing to reality the dream we have nourished for ten long years. St. Nicholas Church, rising again with the help of God at Ground Zero - where it stood spiritually important for 85 years, is an affirmation of the significance of religious freedom and experience for all New Yorkers and all Americans. The covenant stands firm. We will again light many candles in the new St. Nicholas Church and remember those who were lost to us, and those heroes who so nobly sacrificed their lives. Our pledge is to be a witness for all New Yorkers, that freedom of conscience and the fundamental human right of free religious expression will always shine forth in the resurrected St. Nicholas Church." The Archbishop also expressed deep appreciation to Michael Jaharis and Dennis Mehiel and the other members of the joint committee who had labored so diligently to accomplish this historic agreement.

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo said, "We lost St. Nicholas Church in the destruction of September 11 and for too long its future has been uncertain. Rebuilding St. Nicholas Church, with a nondenominational bereavement center, is not just good news for the Greek Orthodox community, but for all New Yorkers. With this agreement, we are continuing New York's collective healing, restoration, and resurgence. Now we are finally returning this treasured place of reflection to where it belongs."

According to the Port Authority Press Release, "The agreement ... permits the rebuilding of the Church with a nondenominational bereavement center at the east end of Liberty Park, at 130 Liberty Street. The agreement follows a four-month independent engineering study commissioned by the Port Authority and the Archdiocese, which found that the Church could be built on the site with minor modifications to the original plan and with no impact on the World Trade Center construction schedule." – Press

Release, Greek Archdiocese, Oct. 14.

THE ASSEMBLY OF CANONICAL ORTHODOX BISHOPS OF NORTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA HAS CREATED A LEGAL ENTITY WITH THE FILING OF ITS ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION IN WASHINGTON, D.C. This action follows the second annual meeting of the Assembly of Bishops held May 25-27 in Chicago, Illinois.

The Assembly has been hailed as a major development for the canonical administrative unity of all Orthodox Christian jurisdictions, which together represent over three million church members.

The Assembly of Bishops is a council of all active, canonical Orthodox bishops whose purpose is to preserve and contribute to the unity of the Orthodox Church by helping to further Her spiritual, theological, ecclesiological, canonical, educational, missionary and philanthropic aims. To accomplish this, the Assembly has as its goals: the promotion and accomplishment of Church unity; the strengthening of the common pastoral ministry to all the Orthodox Christian faithful; and a common witness by the Church to all those outside Her. In addition, the Assembly has as an express goal the plan for the organization of the Church in North and Central America in accordance with the ecclesiological and the canonical tradition of the Orthodox Church.

The Assembly hopes to deepen the ties of brotherhood among the bishops, give them a common and united voice, and create a greater unity of action among all the Orthodox faithful, thereby strengthening the Church's witness to Her faith in Jesus Christ.

The Assembly of Bishops is one of twelve bishops' assemblies which have been established in different geographical regions throughout the world. It was established in accordance with the decision of the Fourth Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference, convened in Chambésy, Switzerland in June of 2009, attended by representatives from all the universally-recognized autocephalous Orthodox Churches.

The Assembly is a transitional body. If it achieves its goal, it will make itself obsolete by developing a proposal for the canonical organization of the Church in North and Central America. This proposal will in turn be presented to the forthcoming Great and Holy Council, which will consist of all canonical Orthodox bishops

throughout the world. Should this proposal be accepted, it is expected that the Assembly of Bishops would then come to an end and be succeeded by a canonically regularized Church in North and Central America.

The Assembly, which meets annually, functions by a consensus of all its members. It has established a number of committees to help further its work. These committees are charged by the Assembly with specific tasks; they are made up of member bishops, and are assisted by over 100 lay and clergy advisors. The Assembly has assumed oversight of all the agencies, dialogues, and other ministries of the former Standing Conference of the Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA).

In the ensuing months, the thirteen committees of the Assembly of Bishops will be working in earnest. The chairmen of the committees will be calling upon the many priests, deacons, monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen who have been recommended to them as expert consultants so that they may join together with the bishops who are members of the committees in accomplishing the many important responsibilities and tasks assigned to them. — Press Release, Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops, Oct. 18.

THE NORTH AMERICAN ORTHODOX-CATHOLIC THEOLOGICAL CONSULTATION HELD ITS 81ST MEETING AT ST PAUL'S COLLEGE IN WASHINGTON OCTOBER 27-28. The meeting was chaired by Catholic Archbishop Gregory Aymond of New Orleans. The Orthodox co-chairman since 1987, Metropolitan Maximos of Pittsburgh, has retired, and a successor has not yet been named.

During this meeting the members heard reports about major events in the lives of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches and issued a brief statement, "On the Plight of Churches in the Middle East."

The members of the Consultation also continued their study of the role of the laity in the two churches and the intermediate or regional levels of ecclesial authority. A paper on the Catholic theology of the parish by Sister of Charity of Leavenworth Susan K. Wood of Marquette University was presented in her absence. Father Patrick Viscuso of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America delivered a paper, "Canonical Reflections on the Orthodox Parish." Father Nicholas Apostola

of the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in the Americas presented a study, "The Role of the Laity in the Church," and Chorbishop John D. Faris, pastor of St. Louis Gonzaga Maronite Church in Utica, New York, presented a paper, "Synodal Governance in the Eastern Catholic Churches."

The Consultation also welcomed a new Orthodox member, Despina D. Prassas, Ph.D., associate professor of theology at Providence College in Providence, Rhode Island.

The next meeting is slated to take place at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Brookline, Massachusetts, June 5-7.

This is the full text of the joint statement on the plight of churches in the Middle East:

The "Arab Spring" is unleashing forces that are having a devastating effect on the Christian communities of the Middle East. Our Churches in Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine report disturbing developments such as destruction of churches and massacres of innocent civilians that cause us grave concern. Many of our church leaders are calling on Christians and all people of good will to stand in solidarity with the members of these ancient indigenous communities. In unity with them and each other, we the members of the North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation, gathered October 27-29, 2011, add our voice to their call.

We are concerned for our fellow Christians who, in the face of daunting challenges, struggle to maintain a necessary witness to Christ in their homelands. United with them in prayer and solidarity, we ask our fellow Christians living in the West to take time to develop a more realistic appreciation of their predicament. We ask our political leaders to exert more pressure where it can protect these Churches, many of which have survived centuries of hardship but now stand on the verge of disappearing completely.

When one part of the body suffers, all suffer (cf. 1 Cor. 12:26). As Christians in the West, we therefore have the vital responsibility to respond to the needs of our brothers and sisters who live in fear for their lives and communities at this moment. As Orthodox and Catholic Christians we share this responsibility and this concern together. — USCCB and Episcopal Assembly Press Release.

THE MEMBERS OF THE SECOND EPISCOPAL ASSEMBLY OF ALL CANONICAL ORTHODOX BISHOPS OF OCEANIA WELCOMED ONCE AGAIN THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET IN SYDNEY FROM OCTOBER 16-17, 2011, UNDER THE CHAIRMANSHIP EX OFFICIO OF HIS EMINENCE ARCHBISHOP STYLIANOS OF AUSTRALIA.

The Assembly commenced with prayer at the central offices of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia, Redfern.

The bishops continued the work of the first Assembly, held in Sydney in October last year, and heard the reports of the respective Committees.

It was unanimously agreed:

1. To arrange an annual Synaxis meeting of Clergy of all canonical jurisdictions for the purpose of forming brotherly relations and to have collaboration in carrying out the decisions of the Assembly on a local level;

2. To launch an official website of the Assembly that will inform our faithful of its work and provide a source of information, that would include a catalogue of canonical Clergy and thereby knowledge of schismatic groups;

3. To seek legal opinion with regard to the suggested promulgation of a statute for the Episcopal Assembly of Oceania;

4. To organize a common celebration to mark the 1,700th anniversary of the Edict of Milan in 2013;

5. To respond formally to the Healthcare Chaplaincy Council of Victoria affirming the position of the canonical Churches in relation to Hospital Chaplaincy, without ignoring the pastoral dimension of ministering to all infirm Orthodox, irrespective of national backgrounds; and

6. To bring together prominent Orthodox theologians, medical doctors, psychologists, ethicists, legal and public policy experts to enable the Hierarchs of Oceania to issue responsible joint statements with regard to the ethical dimensions of proposed Government legislation.

The Assembly received a report on the draft Act of Parliament for the recognition of all canonical Orthodox Churches in New Zealand, and specifically with regard to the registration of Marriage Celebrants.

Another report was received from the Committee on Campus Ministry, which met under the co-Chairmanship of His Grace Bishop Irinej and His Grace Bishop Ezekiel, the primary focus of which was to develop Orthodox Chaplaincies in tertiary educational institutions. The Assembly

confirmed the proposal of the Committee to appoint His Grace Bishop Iakovos of Miletopolis as Chair of the Committee.

The Assembly reaffirms its unity in our Lord Jesus Christ, and in brotherly love, committing ourselves to work together for the good of the holy Orthodox Church and its children in Australia and throughout Oceania. – Website of the Serbian Orthodox Patriarchate, Oct. 18.

THE INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT OF THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY ON ORTHODOXY (IAO), BY MEANS OF ITS COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL POLICY AND IN COOPERATION WITH THE PARLIAMENT OF FINLAND, THE ORTHODOX BISHOPRIC OF HELSINKI and the SOFIA cultural center, has organized a conference on the subject “The development of Church – State relations according to the Apostle Paul and the Eastern Orthodox tradition,” on Tuesday, 18, October 2011. Members of Parliament, political figures, personalities from the world of science and academia as well as representatives of Christian thought and the Church attended the conference.

After the lectures and interventions the conference reached its main conclusions as follows:

It is well known that Orthodoxy is at the origin of the formation of national self-consciousness and statehood in many countries of Europe and the World. Religious freedom is a basic constitutional principle and a fundamental right for each and every individual and as such must be protected by the State which must prevent and discourage violations of religious freedom. The conference recorded and confirmed the need to flag up the distinct roles of the Church and the State in the modern world, while the positive role the I.A.O could play in mediating the relations between these two poles was highlighted.

The State is one of the dominant institutions in civil societies; as such, it has the responsibility to guarantee not merely the military-political security and the social prosperity of a country, but also to foster the prevailing views on morality in matters of family well-being and the high spirituality of the people. In this respect the Church is considered as working in complementarity with the State, as part and parcel of society, of which it is the spiritual and moral foundation.

A perception of the state as an exclusively administrative institution, rid of all

traditions and ethical rules, or of any social and moral responsibility, never stopping any form of arbitrary behavior or expression on behalf of the citizens, can hardly be said to contribute to the solution of modern societies’ moral problems.

Any effort to build a “civil society” without the contribution of the Church leads increasingly to a new “secular totalitarianism” which aims at ridding society of all forms of influence by the Church, marginalizing it from the public life, preventing it from publicly expressing its moral assessments or judging the decisions and practices of the established power.

The conference called upon the Church to enter into dialogue with the positive values of modernity – without relinquishing its principles - to enhance its contribution in the consolidation of democratic institutions in modern societies and to defend the idea of cultural pluralism and multiculturalism as a necessary ingredient of all modern societies and of its own confession.

It called upon the States to fully comprehend the importance of the Church’s salvation presence for two millennia in the world, and to use the means they dispose of to defend the Orthodox Churches present in regions of political unrest and crisis. In countries where the Orthodox are a minority, in the Middle East especially, there is a risk of the State sliding towards a protectionist policy of the prevailing religious confession and non-respect of religious and cultural difference, this leading to violations of the fundamental civil and political rights.

It called finally, on the Church and the State, in the present deep spiritual and financial crisis, to strengthen their cooperation on all fronts, for the benefit of the financially weaker social groups. – Press Release, Oct. 18.

THIS IS AN UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION OF THE COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF THE FALL MEETING OF THE HOLY SYNOD OF THE GREEK ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE OF ANTIOCH:

At the invitation and under the guidance of His Beatitude Patriarch Ignatius IV, the Antiochian Orthodox Synod held its regular session in the Patriarchal residence at the Monastery of Our Lady of Balamand from the 25th to the 27th of October.

The current session of the Holy Synod was held in delicate circumstances,

which the countries of the Patriarchate of Antioch and the Arab Middle East are experiencing, especially Syria and Lebanon, where the Orthodox are the majority of Christians.

The meeting began with a word of welcome from His Beatitude, in which he emphasized the importance of the unity of the Antiochian Orthodox Church in Lebanon, Syria, the Middle East, and the diaspora and the priority of working to provide satisfactory responses to her children who, along with their partners in citizenship, face many problems and challenges, as His Beatitude laid out in the intensive meetings which he held in Lebanon regarding the organization of the Orthodox community so that it can take its due place in centers of political and administrative decision-making.

Starting from the basis of a single, faith-based approach to the effective Christian presence and the genuine witness of Christians, the Synod is concerned to emphasize the role of the Church in her capacity as a conscience for all the faithful and so it continuously calls to mind what God wills for the good of humanity. The Church cannot stand with her hands tied regarding the oppression and discrimination that peoples and groups are facing.

Starting from the basis of the Orthodox Church having been present in these countries since the spread of the Christian gospel and on the basis of the proactive role that the Orthodox have taken across the ages in the revival of their country as a nation and a civilization, the fathers call on their children to participate actively in forging effective solutions for exiting the crisis and embarking on the path of flourishing and their nations' advancement.

The fathers of the Holy Synod examined the phenomenon of political changes which are sweeping the region, asking God to inspire those responsible for the fate of the countries of the region to take the right decisions to lessen the citizens' pains, to ease the circumstances of their lives, and to ensure a flourishing future for their children. In this regard, the Synod emphasized:

1. Work in faith and hope for the sake of bringing peace, social justice, and the building of a civil state on the basis of equality of rights and responsibilities for all under a single law to which all children of the nation submit without exception.

2. That the children of the Orthodox community hold on to their homes through Church- and social-solidarity between the

flocks both within the nation and the emigration. The Synod likewise studied internal issues, including:

1. The internal statutes of the See of Antioch: They emphasized that these statutes must take inspiration from the unity of the people, which is enclosed in secrets around its pastors, so that they can offer service pleasing to God. They called attention to the importance of applying these statutes, the basic purpose of which is to ensure opportunities for the faithful's partnership together, each according to the gifts he has been given. Through this it is possible for all to participate in planning the work of the Church, being involved in it, and bearing responsibilities.

2. The pastoral situation and the necessity of reforming it: The technical developments which the world is witnessing make it necessary for the Church to adopt new positions with regard to pastoral questions that transcend habitual forms and adopt advanced means for helping the faithful to ensure an honorable life and to employ their abilities in general life. In this context, the establishment of productive enterprises is one of the ways to root the community's children. It is likewise possible for educational and social institutions, those existing and those yet to be founded, to ensure, by securing opportunities for work spaces in which the Church can bear witness to the particularity of her service to the world and her love for it.

3. The state of church media: Media must play a central and important role in solidifying interaction and cooperation between the Church and the world. In order for media to be interactive, they must leave space open for communication in order to determine the reality of the situation and the ideas and proposals that today's society is producing concerning everyone's future. Likewise, church media have an interest in building bridges of communication within the single nation and between the societies of the different nations that make up the Antiochian sphere. Likewise, the fathers of the Synod emphasized the universal role of church media and the importance of the Church's taking initiative in responding to the needs of the flock and of society.

In closing, the Synod expressed its hope that the leaders and peoples of the Arab Middle East will work together to ensure stability, freedom, and a promising future for this region as well as its hope that the Orthodox community will play an effective role in this.

Published by the secretariat of the Holy Synod of Antioch, Monastery of Our Lady of Balamand, October 27, 2011. – “Notes on Arab Orthodoxy,” Oct. 31.

METROPOLITAN HILARION OF VOLOKOLAMSK, HEAD OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE'S DEPARTMENT FOR EXTERNAL CHURCH RELATIONS, HAS BEEN APPOINTED CHAIRMAN OF THE SYNODAL BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION. This decision was made by the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church during the first day of the winter session on October 5, 2011.

The Holy Synod granted the request of Metropolitan Filaret of Minsk and Slutsk, Patriarchal Exarch for All Belarus, to relieve him of his duty as chairman of the Synodal Biblical and Theological Commission. The Synod thanked Metropolitan Filaret for his longtime work as chairman of the Commission, stressing that during his tenure the internal and international theological discussion was raised to a high level, a serious dialogue was organized between church scholars and secular scientists, and theological questions posed before the Commission by the Supreme Authority were answered.

Metropolitan Hilarion has worked as member of the Commission since 1996.

The Synodal Theological Commission was established by the Holy Synod decision of December 28, 1993. In 2009, it was renamed as the Synodal Biblical and Theological Commission.

The Commission is a permanent working advisory and analytical body of the Holy Synod. It has the following tasks:

- * to carry out instructions of the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church, the Holy Synod and other church institutions to consider particular theological and doctrinal issues;

- * to make theological analysis of topical problems in the life of the Russian Orthodox Church;

- * to coordinate academic theological work carried out by Synodal departments, dioceses and other church structures.

The membership of the Commission is approved by a decision of the Holy Synod. It members are theologians from among the episcopate, clergy and laity who are professors of theological schools and staff members of theological, educational and Synodal establishments of the Russian Orthodox Church. The Commission involves experts and consultants in its work.

Metropolitan Filaret was the first chairman of the Commission. He is an author of a great number of theological works and publications and holder of academic degrees in theology from several universities. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, Oct. 6.

IN AN INTERVIEW ON OCCASION OF THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH WHICH SUPPORTED THE NECESSITY OF AUTOCEPHALY AND THE 90TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ALL-UKRAINIAN COUNCIL OF 1921 which proclaimed the establishment of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC), the head of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kyivan Patriarchate, Patriarch Filaret, explained what, in his opinion, the meaning of those events and what his vision of the mechanism of unification of all the supporters of the autocephaly of the Ukrainian Church is. According to him, the mechanism is simple and clear.

One of the questions was about the fact that Patriarch Filaret once was against UAOC and that allegedly it has been the obstacle for the unification.

Patriarch Filaret explained that he could not support the autocephaly of the Ukrainian Church when Ukraine was not an independent state but a part of USSR.

“If I supported the Autocephalous Church in the 60s until the 80s or even during the so-called perestroika, I would simply have been dismissed from the ministry and replaced by a person loyal to Moscow. Actually, eventually, they did so, but it was a different time, Ukraine was already independent and, therefore, they were not able to destroy the cause of autocephaly... I could not support autocephaly as long as I did not feel the support of the Church led by me and as long as Ukraine was not independent... Then, in 1989-1991, I really criticized UAOC, but I had a considerable reason for that. For, at that time, on the wave of patriotism, among many persons who were really loyal to autocephaly, a considerable number of unworthy careerists came to UAOC and began to progress quickly towards the leadership positions. But time showed who is who and sooner or later, the deceivers, such as Masendych, fell away from the Ukrainian Church.

At the same time, one can see now that it is thanks to the fact that many priests in Halychyna supported the autocephaly of the Ukrainian Church, that it

became possible to retain the presence and influence of Orthodoxy in that part of Ukraine at the time of renewal of the structures of the Greek Catholic Church. For at that time, many Ukrainian priests were tempted by arguments that a true Ukrainian patriot can be only Greek Catholic and that the Orthodox ones are servants of Moscow, whereas the priests of UAOC and Kyivan Patriarchate in Halychyna were able to remain loyal to Orthodoxy and defend the Orthodox faith. Not only did they preserve it, but also multiplied, as a large number of new Orthodox churches were built in Halychyna, including many churches of UAOC. Honor and thanks to them for that,” explained the head of UOC-KP.

According to the Patriarch, in the previous years, much dissent and mistrust was sowed to prevent unification of UAOC and the Kyivan Patriarchate. For the opponents of the autocephaly in Ukraine understand well what impetus for development such unification can give.

“UOC-Kyivan Patriarchate appeared in 1992 thanks to the unification of the supporters of autocephaly within UAOC and supporters of autocephaly within UOC. I accepted that unification sincerely. I think that representatives of the Kyivan Patriarchate will agree with me to say that both the revival of UAOC in 1989 and the election of the first Patriarch of Kyiv and All Ukraine, Mstyslav at the council of 1990 were parts of our mutual church history, important stages of the mutual struggle for Church independence,” said Patriarch Filaret.

The head of UOC-KP also called the mechanism of unification of all the supporters of the autocephaly of the Ukrainian Church “simple and clear.”

“I repeatedly said in the past and can repeat now: from our point of view, the mechanism of unification is simple and clear. It means that upon the unification, one retains what one has had. If a priest is a parish one, he remains the parish priest. Deans, as they are called in Galicia, remain in their positions. Bishops continue to govern the parishes they governed in the past. Whoever has held an outstanding position in the Church government, will retain that place after the unification. That is no one loses anything. On the contrary, those who unite, will gain something. For, let us speak openly, now, the Kyivan Patriarchate’s influence in the society is stronger than that of UAOC. Therefore, determined steps should be

made towards each other without hesitation. We are ready to take such steps and we are open to cooperation with everyone sharing and supporting the autocephaly of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.” – *RISU*, Oct. 10.

IN HIS STATEMENT PUBLISHED BELOW, THE PRIMATE OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH EXPRESSES SUPPORT FOR THE SUFFERING EGYPTIAN CHRISTIANS.

“The Russian Orthodox Church has followed the developments in Egypt with concern and bitterness. Blood has been spilt and Christian churches have been destroyed again. There is another manifestation of growing intolerance towards Christians and their legal and physical vulnerability in the Egyptian society.

Our Church knows from her recent history what the suffering of innocent people and destruction of churches are. We raise our voice in defense of our Egyptian brothers in faith and call upon the world community not to be indifferent to this lawlessness. The United Nations and other international organizations and leading world powers capable of influencing the policy of the new authorities in Egypt should unequivocally come out against the persecution of Christians and do everything to help establish interreligious peace and security in the region.

The tragic ordeals the Egyptian Christians are undergoing so courageously are links in the same chain which has already brought out a new and ever growing wave of emigration. Egypt is a country in which the Christian and Muslim communities have lived together for centuries. The aggression against Christians lies on the conscience of destructive radical forces whose motives are not at all religious. We appeal to the leaders of the Islamic world to express a clear condemnation of the violence against Christians, to respect their right to openly confess their faith and to preserve their religious and cultural traditions. At an hour when the very future of Christian-Muslim dialogue is threatened, religious leaders should demonstrate in deed their commitment to peace and mutual understanding.

We call upon the Egyptian authorities to put an end immediately to the violence against the ancient Coptic community, to the murder of Christians, to the defilement of churches and shrines. It is insufficient to declare commitment to the principles of justice and human rights; rather it is nec-

essary to ensure the real observance of freedom of conscience in the country. The historical Christian community in Egypt should have the right to confess its faith freely and safely and to preserve its old churches and to build new ones.

The Russian Church once again expresses her support for the suffering Egyptian brothers in Christ, calling on them to preserve the spirit of peace, to defy provocations, to be faithful to our Savior in their suffering.

+ Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, Oct. 12.

THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE HAS GIVEN THE GREEN LIGHT FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF 13 NEW DIOCESES THROUGHOUT ITS TERRITORY, AS PART OF WHAT THE MEDIA IN RUSSIA HAVE ALREADY CALLED THE BIGGEST REFORM OF the Orthodox Church since the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Continuing the project that began last March and which has already seen the creation of eight new dioceses including three in the North Caucasus, last week the Holy Synod - which is the highest administrative level, chaired by Patriarch Kirill - approved the foundation of new dioceses in Kazakhstan, in the regions of Irkutsk, Orenburg, Ryazan, Saratov and in the Republic of Tyva, as reported by the website of the Russian Orthodox Church.

According to some analysts, as well as to improve the administration of the Church at the local level, the restructuring of the canonical territory strengthens the authority of the Patriarch, who already last year had launched a more centralized management of the church, also for missions. Vladimir Vigilyansky, spokesman for the Patriarchate, told the newspaper *Kommersant* that the reform is to improve the organization of life of the Church still based on a structure of Soviet times, "so a diocese can include cities 1000 km distant from each other and parishioners who don't even know who their bishop is."

Many priests approve the reform and the bishops believe that it will help to establish more direct contacts with churches for a more concrete guidance. "The fact that the priests have sometimes never even met the bishop who in turn was not aware of the daily life of the parishes has often been a problem," Andrei from the parish of the Assumption in Angarsk, in the Irkutsk region, told *The Moscow Times*.

For some, the opening of new dioceses

and the construction of new churches is a sign of religious revival in Russia after decades of state atheism. But for others, it is also a strategy to boost the power of Patriarch Kirill, considered not only a religious but also political figure.

According to the director of the Institute of Religion and Law, Roman Lunkin, "the reform of the Church will strengthen the personal authority of the Patriarch in the provinces, because the new bishops are people loyal to him." Last year, Kirill took personal control of the Patriarchate Mission Department, ordering its expansion. At the time some had suggested the same "vertical power plan" applied to State management by Vladimir Putin in his first term as president was also being brought to bear on the religious sphere. – *Asia News*, Oct. 17.

ON 21 OCTOBER 2011, METROPOLITAN PANTELEIMON OF KRASNOYARSK AND ACHINSK, MET WITH ARCHBISHOP IVAN JURKOVIC, APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, the website of the Krasnoyarsk diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church reports.

Bishop Kirill Klimovich, an ordinary of the Catholic diocese of St. Joseph in Irkutsk, and Rev. Antony Badura, dean of the Krasnoyarsk deanery of the Irkutsk diocese, attended the meeting that took place at the Krasnoyarsk diocesan administration.

The Apostolic Nuncio congratulated Metropolitan Panteleimon on his appointment as head of the Krasnoyarsk Metropolia and invited him to attend the celebration of the centenary of the Krasnoyarsk Organ Hall, the place of the Roman Catholic parish of the Transfiguration of the Lord. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, Oct. 24.

ON OCTOBER 24, 2011, METROPOLITAN HILARION OF VOLOKOLAMSK, HEAD OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE'S DEPARTMENT FOR EXTERNAL CHURCH RELATIONS AND RECTOR OF THE STS CYRIL AND METHODIUS POST-GRADUATE SCHOOL, VISITED THE MOSCOW STATE INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS (MGIMO University).

In his address to the faculty and students, Metropolitan Hilarion spoke about the history of the DECR, stressing that 'the subject matter of the department and that of the work you are to carry out overlap. Therefore, there are a lot of common

problems we will have to settle together'.

He reminded the audience that the Department for External Church Relations was established in 1946, the first year after the Great Patriotic War. 'It was a time when the Church was given a respite for the first time after the severe persecution of the 20s and 30s. The Soviet power had set itself the task to eliminate the Church and this task was carried out by the most brutal and inhuman means, first of all through the physical elimination of the clergy and destruction of churches. Before the war, the Russian Orthodox Church had only four acting bishops left while before the 1917 Revolution there were over 300. Almost all the churches and all the monasteries and church schools were closed. But the situation changed during the war as the state leaders realized the importance of the Church in lifting up the spirit of the people. It was the time when the state policy towards the Church radically changed. Stalin invited three leading metropolitans of the Russian Orthodox Church to see him. It was an historical meeting which radically changed the status of the Church. The changes made it possible for her to establish structures ensuring her life and work in the post-war period not only inside but also outside the Soviet Union. The task of the Department for External Church Relations was first of all to establish contacts between the Russian Orthodox Church and the external world', the metropolitan said.

He specified that at present the DECR's responsibilities include maintaining inter-Christian and inter-Orthodox relations and cooperation with international organizations such as the UN, UNESCO and others and with expatriates in various countries. In recent times, increasing attention has been given to inter-religious dialogue due to the increasing persecution of Christians in various countries, especially in the Middle East. Speaking about the work of the DECR, Metropolitan Hilarion also highlighted the preparations for a Pan-Orthodox Council. He spoke in detail about relations with the Roman Catholic Church as well as Protestant Churches and communities and the need for them to oppose terrorism and extremism together and to give a common response to such challenges of today as secularism and the liberalization of Christian teaching in some Protestant countries.

The time when the DECR was chaired by Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad, now Patriarch of

Moscow and All Russia, was a special period in its history, as he directed the department in the difficult years of perestroika. At that time the primary task of the DECR was to build relations with the state power. Metropolitan Kirill directed the work on the Basic Social Concept which was presented to the Jubilee Bishops' Council in 2000. The document sets forth the basic teaching on church-state relations and other problems of social importance today.

In conclusion of the meeting, Metropolitan Hilarion gave to the MGIMO library a copy of the book published on the occasion of the 65th anniversary of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, Oct. 25.

THE FIRST JOINT SESSION OF THE COMMITTEES SET UP BY THE SYNOD OF THE UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH-KYIVAN PATRIARCHATE (UOC-KP) AND THE HIERARCHICAL COUNCIL OF THE UKRAINIAN AUTOCEPHALOUS ORTHODOX CHURCH (UAOC) TO CONDUCT A DIALOGUE ON UNIFICATION WAS HELD ON OCTOBER 27, in a session hall within the Golden Dome Monastery of St. Michael.

According to a report of the press service of the Kyivan Patriarchate, at the first session, the participants exchanged ideas on a wide range of questions on the history and present state of Ukrainian Orthodoxy and discussed various proposals as to possible ways of unifying the UOC-KP with the UAOC. A list of proposals was prepared to be included in the final document of the session.

In the afternoon, the second session was held where the hierarchs of the two churches considered and passed the text of the final document. The 10 paragraphs of the document present both the agreed general vision of the unification process and concrete proposals as to overcoming the existing church divide.

Upon approval of the document by the primates of the churches, it is to be submitted to be considered by the two churches, particularly, through discussion at the eparchial sessions. The next joint session of the committees is to be held according to the results of the consideration and discussion.

The final document was signed by all the participants of the session. – *RISU*, Oct. 31.

ON 12 OCTOBER 2011, HIS BEATITUDE PATRIARCH DANIEL OF ROMANIA RECEIVED IN AN AUDIENCE AT THE PATRIARCHAL RESIDENCE, CARDINAL GIANFRANCO RAVASI, PRESIDENT OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR CULTURE, WHO WAS PAYING A VISIT TO ROMANIA. His Excellency Francisco-Javier Lozano, Apostolic Nuncio in Romania and Republic of Moldova and Mr. Bogdan Tataru-Cazaban, Romanian Ambassador to the Vatican, were also present.

Cardinal Ravasi thanked the Patriarch for the reception and proposed that the Romanian Patriarchate collaborate in some cultural projects of the Pontifical Council for Culture in the coming years, out of which we mention:

- Organizing together with some public state institutions from Romania and Italy in 2012 –declared in Italy as the Year of Romanian Culture – some exhibitions of Byzantine art and concerts of Romanian Orthodox religious music, as well as some other events of Romanian contemporary art and culture;

- Organizing anniversary manifestations in Rome and Milan in 2013, when it is 1700 years since the Edict of Milan of Emperor Saint Constantine the Great (313 – 2013);

- Organizing during the coming years an international inter-disciplinary Congress on the theme Theology, Science and Philosophy

- Organizing an international symposium on the theme Arts and Faith

The Patriarch of Romania appreciated the proposals of collaboration and mentioned that the Standing meeting of the Church National Council has recently decided to propose the Holy Synod to proclaim the year 2013 as Homage year of the Holy Emperors Constantine and Helen. His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel also proposed some pilgrimages in the footsteps of the Holy Emperors Constantine and Helen to Rome, Jerusalem and Constantinople.

During the meeting, a possible pastoral visit of the Patriarch of Romania to Italy was also discussed (2013). – Press Release, Romanian Patriarchate, Oct. 12.

A DELEGATION OF THE KIEV THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS ARRIVED IN ROMANIA ON OCTOBER 24, 2011, AT THE INVITATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST'S FACULTY OF ORTHODOX THEOLOGY. Led by Archbishop Anthony of Borispol, rector of the Kiev Theologi-

cal Academy and Seminary, and blessed by His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel of Romania and His Beatitude Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev and All Ukraine, the delegation included Ass. Prof. V. Burega, pro-rector for theological studies, Archbishop Vladimir Kotsaba, secretary of the academic council, and the academy's lecturers.

In the evening of October 24, His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel of Romania received the delegation at his residence in Bucharest. Welcoming the guests, he asked that his gratitude be conveyed to Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev and All Ukraine for his help in arranging the visit and pointed out the long history of relations between Romania and the Kiev Theological Academy. Theological education was initiated in Kiev by St. Peter Moghila, who came from the family of rulers of Wallachia, an historical region in southern Romania, and Moldova. Among the graduates of the Kiev school was St. Paisius Velichkovsky, who greatly influenced the regeneration of old monastic traditions in Greece, Wallachia, Moldova, Ukraine and Russia. The Kiev Academy also issued some prominent hierarchs of the Romanian Orthodox Church. Patriarch Daniel expressed satisfaction with the plan to develop cooperation between the Kiev Theological Academy and the University of Bucharest Faculty of Orthodox Theology and wished the guests success in training pastors for the Church of Christ.

In his response, Archbishop Anthony thanked His Beatitude for the invitation to visit Romania. Speaking about the life of the Kiev theological schools today, he emphasized that theological schools of all the Local Orthodox Churches should seek today to maintain cooperation so that the unity of Universal Orthodoxy may be consolidated and common answers to today's challenges may be sought. – Press Release, Romanian Patriarchate, Oct. 26.

THESE ARE EXCERPTS FROM AN ARTICLE BY PATRIARCH DANIEL OF ROMANIA THAT WAS PUBLISHED IN *PNEUMATIKI DIAKONIA* OF THE METROPOLITANATE OF KONSTANTIA AND AMMOCHOSTOS, CHURCH OF CYPRUS, on the occasion of the 20th Anniversary of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew's Election (22 October 1991) and of his Enthronement (2 November 1991):

During his numerous visits to Romania, the main co-ordinates that His Holiness Bartholomew, Ecumenical Patriarch,

focused on, have defined the view of the Ecumenical Patriarchate concerning the mission of Orthodoxy in the contemporary context, the importance of the relations with the Romanian Orthodox Church, as well as the need for a practical approach to the inter-Orthodox relations. While evaluating the first visit that His Holiness paid to Romania, we underlined the fact that it had a profound ecclesiological and theological content, which pointed out, on the one hand, the place and role of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Orthodoxy and, on the other hand, the Orthodox unity between freedom and responsibility, which does not ignore the national identity and freedom (Mother and Sister Church), as well as the Orthodox solidarity and inter-aid that must be manifested to a greater extent.

As regards the relations between the Romanian Patriarchate and the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the period of pastoral service of our predecessor, Patriarch Teoctist of happy memory, was one of the richest. The frequency of the meetings between the Primate and representatives of the two Churches was unprecedented, bringing a new inspiration in the centuries old relations between the two Sister Orthodox Churches. There are, certainly, objective explanations for that, besides the personal factor. One of the main objective elements is the fall of Communism and the release of the Romanian Orthodox Church from the pressure and control of the atheist totalitarian state, which created a effervescence in the manifestation of faith, stemming from the feeling of the freedom re-gained and of the responsibility assumed.

Patriarch Bartholomew has greatly contributed to this dynamics of the relations between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Romanian Patriarchate. Once elected on the 22nd of October 1991 and enthroned on the 2nd of November 1991, His Holiness imprinted a new style of presence and activity at the Ecumenical Throne in the field of inter-Orthodox relations, animated by enthusiasm, by his solid theological education, with a wide vision and rich experience in inter-Christian and interreligious relations. He has always considered himself a good friend of the Romanian Orthodox Church and, thus, of the entire Romanian people. As His Holiness confessed, during the centuries of terrible poverty the Ecumenical Patriarchate passed through, the "Christ's Church of the poor" has almost exclusive-

ly relied on the aid given by the princes of Wallachia and Moldova who have always helped their "Suffering Mother." In this sense, His Holiness pointed out the following: "History shows us that, in the 17th century, the Romanian rulers, the only Christian princes in the Ottoman Empire, had their throne in the Patriarchal Cathedral in Constantinople just in front of the Patriarchal throne, namely where the throne of the Byzantine emperors once stood." (Bucharest, 18 August 1993). [...]

The brotherly relations between the Romanian Patriarchate and the Ecumenical Patriarchate developed also in the period after our enthronement as Patriarch of Romania (30 September 2007), through the continuation of the work of our predecessors, as we expressed, on various occasions, our esteem both for the love and friendship that His Holiness constantly shows towards our Church and to the Romanian people, and for the wisdom and dynamism that he shows in witnessing Orthodoxy in Constantinople and in other great cities of the world: "During the official visits to Romania, you had the opportunity to notice personally the appreciation the Romanian Orthodox clergy and faithful feel for you as the first among the Orthodox Patriarchs, as well as for the traditional relations cultivated between the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Ecumenical Patriarchate."

In his turn, His Holiness confessed several times how much he appreciates the Romanian Orthodox Church and the faithfulness of the hierarchs, clergy and believers for the preservation of the Orthodox faith throughout the centuries. In this sense, the Ecumenical Patriarch affirmed, on the occasion of his participation in the festivities occasioned by the anniversary of 125 years of autocephaly and 85 years of Patriarchate of the Romanian Orthodox Church, on 27 October 2010, at the patronal feast of the Patriarchal Cathedral in Bucharest: "The fact that we lost count of our visits to Romania in our capacity as Ecumenical Patriarch gives testimony to this love [...] (We thank God) that He gave us, several times, the opportunity to come here, in order to live together the joy of the communion in the same Holy Spirit, to liturgically affirm, in the Eucharist, the fact that there is an indestructible relationship in the Lord, between the two Churches, between their Primate and hierarchy."

It is in the light of this fraternal communion and pastoral co-responsibility for the good of all of Orthodoxy that we pray

God to bestow His rich gifts upon His Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, now, at the anniversary of 50 years of his Church service and 20 years of pastoral service of the Archdiocese of Constantinople and of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, having been, at the same time, a diligent missionary promoting the contemporary Orthodoxy in a world increasingly secularized and in turmoil.

May Christ, our Lord, "the High Priest" give him many good years of life!
 † DANIEL, Patriarch of Romania
 Website of the Romanian Patriarchate, Oct. 26.

THE SOLEMN WORKING SESSION OF THE HOLY SYNOD OF THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH WAS HELD IN PATRIARCH TEOCTIST AULA MAGNA, CHAIRED BY HIS BEATITUDE DANIEL, PATRIARCH OF THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH. The guests to this solemn event were: His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, His Eminence Georgios, Metropolitan of Accra, and His Eminence Chrisostom, Metropolitan of Patras. In addition to the hierarchs, also present were members of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church, members of the Standing meetings of the Church National Council and the Archdiocese of Bucharest, members of the teaching staff, archpriests, priests of Bucharest and neighborhood, monks, theological students and pupils of the Seminaries.

The Primate of the Romanian Orthodox Church opened the meeting and delivered a speech in which he spoke, among other things, about the significance of the Sacraments of the Holy Baptism and of the Holy Matrimony in the life of the Christian family.

Further on, His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa delivered a speech on the occasion of this solemn meeting of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church in which he spoke, among other things, about the relations of co-operation and reciprocity between the two sister Orthodox Churches, emphasizing the responsibility to strengthen this relationship.

During this meeting, the Patriarch of Alexandria awarded the Patriarch of Romania the highest distinction within the Patriarchate of Alexandria, the Order of the Cross of Saint Mark the Apostle in Great Cross Degree.

His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel

thanked him for the honor, which honors also the Romanian Orthodox Church. It constitutes "a sign of the progress that must be made in the near future in our brotherly relations and of an intensification of the mission in today's world," His Beatitude said.

Then, His Grace Ciprian Campineanul, Assistant Bishop to the Patriarch, read the synthesis dedicated to the Homage Year of the Holy Baptism and of the Holy Matrimony, a synthesis that comprises estimations of the most important manifestations with religious, cultural and media character organized this year in the eparchies of the Romanian Patriarchate in the country and abroad.

"Today's solemn working session of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church crowns the entire activity of the hierarchs, clergy, teaching staff, monks, and of so many employees of the Church or of the institutions of theological education and research designed to deepen the importance and topicality of the teaching of the faith concerning the Sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Matrimony, as well as the importance of these two Sacraments for the life of the faithful," reads the report presented by His Grace Ciprian Campineanul, Assistant Bishop to the Patriarch.

Then the documentary, "Family in the Focus of the Church" by Trinitas Television station was presented, as well as a few new titles published by the Romanian Patriarchate and the publishing house of the Archdiocese of Bucharest.

The book *Orthodox Theology in the 20th Century*, coordinated by Rev. Prof. Viorel Ionita, was presented by Rev. Prof. Lect. Daniel Benga, deputy dean of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology of Bucharest, and the book *Saint Andre the Apostle, Protector of Romania, Beginner of Baptism with the Romanian People* was presented by Rev. Nicolae Cristian Cada, Cultural counselor to the Archdiocese of Bucharest. – Press Release, Romanian Patriarchate, Oct. 28.

BULGARIAN ORTHODOX METROPOLITAN ARCHBISHOP OF PLOVDIV NIKOLAY IS HOLDING A SERVICE SUNDAY IN THE VILLAGE OF KATUNITSA NEAR PLOVDIV, THE SITE THAT HAS SPARKED A WEEK OF ETHNIC UNREST IN BULGARIA.

In the solemn Mass commemorating the victims of the violence, Bishop Nikolay also read out an address of the Bulgarian

Orthodox Church to the nation.

Simmering tensions escalated last Saturday after a 19-year-old ethnic Bulgarian resident of Katunitza was run down and killed by a van driven by Roma.

This led to a string of protests across the country, some of them violent and carrying racist overtones.

"The Bulgarian people is wise and should not let tensions escalate to hatred, something that the Bulgarian Orthodox Church will make all efforts to assist," reads the position of the clerics.

"At the same time, the scale of the events is a manifestation of an immense accumulation of regrettable anger and hatred. This happens every time that God's desire for justice on earth is neglected," stated Bishop Nikolay.

The Orthodox Church strongly calls for the reinstatement of what it sees as the two foundational principles of society - justice and solidarity - and states that their deficiency in Bulgaria can lead to a total erosion of life in the country. – *Sofia News Agency*, Oct. 2.

A COUPLE OF HUNDRED BULGARIANS FLOCKED TO A SOLEMN EUCHARIST IN THE ST. MARINA CATHEDRAL IN PLOVDIV TO MARK THE 97TH BIRTHDAY OF PATRIARCH MAXIM SATURDAY. The head of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church celebrated his birthday in Plovdiv at the invitation of Plovdiv metropolitan bishop Nikolay.

Before coming to the city, the Patriarch held a solemn service in the Bachkovo Monastery, located in the Rhodope Mountains south of Plovdiv.

Maxim was born October 29, 1914 in the village of Oreshak, near Troyan in central northern Bulgaria as Marin Naydenov Minkov.

He was chosen Patriarch by the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church on July 4, 1971.

This year marked the 40th anniversary of his enthronement as Patriarch. – *Sofia News Agency*, Oct. 29.

A RCHBISHOP IERONYMOS OF ATHENS INSISTED ON OCTOBER 4 THAT THERE WOULD BE NO CHANGE IN THE SOURCE OF PAYMENT OF THE COUNTRY'S PRIESTS, THEREBY REBUFFING REPORTS that the Church will be obliged to cover a section of clerics' wages.

"The salary of clerics has traditionally been the obligation of the state," Ter-

onymos told a session of the Holy Synod.

Condemning "a string of attacks and insults" against the Church for ostensibly failing to lighten the state's load at such a critical time, Ieronymos presented figures for 2010 that suggest the Church is not making as much money as some claim.

The Church's income for 2010 was 10 million euros, 9.1 million euros from leasing property, he said. Its expenses meanwhile, chiefly subsidies for church organizations, churches and monasteries, came to 16.5 million euros, he said. – *KED*, Oct. 4.

THE HOLY SYNOD OF THE CHURCH OF GREECE SENT THE FOLLOWING LETTER TO MR JOSE MANUEL DURAO BARROSO, THE PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION, ON OCTOBER 13:

"Love one another with mutual affection; anticipate one another in showing honor." (Romans 12:10)

Your Excellency Mr President,

We communicate with you today, within the framework of the "open, transparent and regular dialogue" that is stipulated in Article 17 of the Lisbon Treaty, which, within the context of democratic development, enables the Churches to articulate their discourse on subjects concerning European citizens. Besides, democracy is not appreciated only in the freedom and movement of political ideas but also in the dialogue between cultures, social strata and groups.

Throughout the history of the entire human race, Europe, and in particular the European Union of the 27 member states, soon to be 28 with the integration of Croatia, was a source of inspiration by its spiritual forces, putting forward an invaluable social model of worldwide caliber for the coexistence of peoples. Today, however, the modern European civilization is going through a new crisis, which we may call a crisis of reliability of politics and of political persons, a crisis of confidence on the part of citizens vis-à-vis institutions, and indeed European institutions. The causes reported are numerous, ranging from the erosion of the family and of individual rights, and consumerism, to economic liberalism and income inequality.

As a matter of fact, it should not escape our attention that the Greek people but also many other European citizens turn with great anxiety to governments and to Church leaders, acknowledging that, to the extent to which it falls upon us, we too bear responsibility for the current

crisis. Lack of transparency, easy profit, disregard for institutions, hubris and disrespect for the state and for the law, inconsiderate revindications, have now sadly become part of today's society.

The Orthodox Church of Greece has been keeping a watchful eye on these global developments. We turn our attention and our thought to today's crisis, in the awareness that no worship gathering or religious community can exist if it does not minister to man above all, this image of God, irrespective of gender, age, religion, nationality or any other particularity within the multicultural environment of Europe par excellence, where "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28). Christianity, like any other religious community, cannot turn a blind eye to the huge problems of the whole of mankind, which are not solely financial or political, but first and foremost of ethical nature, because of the multiple ethical dilemmas constantly raised by the complexity of today's economic state of affairs worldwide. And by using the term "ethical" we have specifically in mind the right of every European citizen to work and to honest human activity, respect for the human person, the importance of interpersonal relationships, responsibility towards others, and the course of the entire European society.

The Greek people is a proud people which has greatly contributed to European progress. Today it is put to sacrifices; its history is put in doubt; its partners reserve themselves against Greece and the Greek people itself. It is difficult to grasp the intensity of the feeling of drowning that has taken over the majority of our fellow citizens. Indeed, who could have imagined that the great Greek people, who contributed its civilization to the evolution of Europe, would today be defamed the world over?

Faced with the economic crisis our Church cannot tolerate any kind of default, but primarily does not forgive the default of human values; it cannot accept any kind of bankruptcy, but primarily cannot remain blind to the bankruptcy of human dignity. The very statutory documents of the Union stress the fact that "the Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity..." (Article 2 of the Lisbon Treaty). Therefore, we cannot hope for a society where social justice does not prevail. Man, and the European

citizen in particular, cannot be seen by the managers of the economic crisis as an accounting figure. It would be a scandal if European leaders did not take the cries of simple citizens into account and if these very citizens of Europe were threatened like expendable products. The result of all this is the increase of agony, of despair, of the shrinking of national sovereignty, of the splitting of the family, of the complete isolation of the most vulnerable social groups (the disabled, immigrants, senior citizens, etc.), the spread of fear and eventually the creation of a society with no moral rules. As a Church, we cannot accept this social model. We cannot accept the alteration of our European *acquis* by the adoption of the rules of impersonal financial markets and credit rating agencies. This situation is leading us to the utter shattering of social cohesion by excluding any form of convergence towards the European vision of our founding fathers.

Your Excellency Mr President,

In your recent annual State of the Union Address before the European Parliament (Strasbourg, 28.09.2011) you emphasized the fact that Europe can have a future if we rebuild confidence, stability, growth and political willingness. We agree with you. However, something more is needed. An insight deep into our spiritual heritage is indispensable ("Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or by our epistle," 2 Thessalonians 2:15), so that a new prioritization of values may arise, with the aim of stressing the need for solidarity, non-abandonment of the European vision and the imperative to turn the economic Union to an unalloyedly political one. Today's questions should be focused on the inner and outer solidarity of the European Union. Only in this manner is it possible to overcome the existing cultural differences and to create a common space of confidence and solidarity, so that "bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2).

We are aware of the sensitivity of the European Commission to education issues, reflected in the substantial increases of the respective Budget funds for 2014-2020. We believe that all European institutions would do well to turn to the education of European citizens and indeed of the young, by supporting specific projects aiming at the modification of today's way of life and at the creation of a society of

persons and of solidarity, as these are set out in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, and more specifically in its Chapter "On Solidarity" (Articles 27-38 of the Lisbon Treaty). We would like an education that will help us achieve the shift from the imprudent "nouveau-riche" mentality to a decent austerity and to contentment with little; to the adoption of a new economic anthropology which will not be founded upon consumption but upon the Christian principle of "nothing needful," in a society that will be based not upon competition and rivalry but upon the coexistence of citizens of Europe. We would like our common home of Europe to be more like a family which understands the difficulties of its members and does not sentence them to isolation ("a new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another," John 13:34). In this endeavor you will find us by your side. Both in the recent past and today the Church of Greece has contributed through many efforts to the success of the European vision. Our presence in Brussels through our Representation confirms our will to persevere with these efforts.

Mr President,

All the above is not merely a cry of denunciation serving only temporary detonation but at the same time intensifying polarization and division. It is the expression of our personal anxieties and, we believe, of the anxieties of all citizens of Europe. The unity of Europe is the desideratum. We do not wish simply to cure or even merely to prevent any conceivable violent developments in European societies, but mainly to help check human disrespect and the absurdity of a new social model which has nothing in common with the history of Europe. The crisis threatening entire mankind necessitates a lucid diagnosis. The cure of this unprecedented crisis which we are living today requires not only a systematic approach with social sensitivity and a sense of justice and the rule of law, but also a reinforcement of ethical antibodies so that the results of the cure may not be merely temporary. We believe that this crisis may constitute the dawn of a better and more humane Europe, which will not deal exclusively with budget figures and bonds, but will respect human values, for which both your predecessors and you personally have striven ("but he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by

every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God," Matthew 4:4). – Website of the Church of Greece.

THE REPERCUSSIONS OF GREECE'S ECONOMIC CRISIS HAVE HIT THE FINANCES OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH TOO, ACCORDING TO THE HOLY SYNOD, which said that its budget deficit for the first eight months of 2011 was 767,240 euros.

According to a statement published on the archbishopric's official website, a sharp reduction in the purchase of candles by churchgoers and an increase in the cost of maintaining the Church's charity work had contributed to widening the deficit. – *KED*, Oct. 21.

AT THEIR OPENING SESSION AT SAINT SERGIUS OF RADONEZH CHAPEL IN SYOSSET, NY, ON TUESDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 4, 2011, THE MEMBERS OF THE HOLY SYNOD OF BISHOPS OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA ELECTED ARCHIMANDRITE ALEXANDER [GOLITZIN] TO THE VACANT SEE OF TOLEDO AND THE BULGARIAN DIOCESE.

Archimandrite Alexander was nominated for the vacant see at the diocese's Fifth Congress-Sobor held in Toledo, OH on Saturday, June 9, 2011.

A native of Saint Innocent Church, Tarzana, CA, Archimandrite Alexander received a BA in English from the University of California at Berkeley and an M. Div. from Saint Vladimir's Seminary. He spent seven years pursuing doctoral studies at Oxford University in England under His Eminence, Metropolitan Kallistos [Ware]. During this time, he also spent two years in Greece, including one year at Simonos Petras Monastery on Mount Athos.

After receiving his D.Phil. in 1980, he returned to the US, where he was ordained to the diaconate in January 1982 and to the priesthood two years later. In 1986, he was tonsured to monastic orders. He served OCA missions in northern California and headed the Diocese of the West's mission committee. In 1989, he took a teaching position at Milwaukee's Marquette University in the Theology Department, a position that he holds today.

The Bulgarian Diocese includes 19 parishes and missions and one monastery. – OCA Press Release, Oct. 4.

ON FRIDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2011, ARCHPRIEST ERIC G. TOSI, SECRETARY OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA, ANNOUNCED THAT ARCHPRIEST JOHN A. JILLIONS HAS ACCEPTED THE POSITION OF CHANCELLOR.

Selected from a slate of several applicants, Father John was confirmed by the Holy Synod of Bishops upon the recommendation of the Metropolitan Council at their fall sessions.

A life-long member of the Orthodox Church in America, Father John was born in Montreal, Quebec, Canada in 1955. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics from McGill University.

Since 2003, Father John served as an Associate Professor with the Sheptytsky Institute of Eastern Christian Studies at Saint Paul University, Ottawa, where he taught in the areas of 20th century Orthodox Christian thought, New Testament, ecumenism, and practical theology. Concurrently, he served as Dean of Ottawa's Annunciation Cathedral until 2009, at which time he was attached to the cathedral while serving "on loan" to the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Toronto, servicing a small community in Brockville, Ontario. He also has been a contributor to the "Ask the Religion Experts" column of The Ottawa Citizen and most recently has served as one of the vice-presidents of the Canadian Council of Churches.

He and his wife, Denise Melligon, have three grown sons — Andrew (married to Alice), Alex (married to Meaghan), and Anthony. – OCA Press Release, Oct. 23.

The Oriental Orthodox Churches

AS EGYPT APPROACHES THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE PROTEST MOVEMENT THAT OVERTHREW FORMER PRESIDENT HOSNI MUBARAK, THE COUNTRY STILL FINDS ITSELF TORN BY SECTARIAN VIOLENCE.

On 9 October, a demonstration in Cairo protesting an attack against a Coptic church in the Aswan province last week erupted into the worst violence since Mubarak's ouster in February. Between 17 and 24 people were killed and between 180 and 200 people were wounded.

Coptic Christians, who comprise about 10 percent of Egypt's 80 million people, blamed the church attack on Muslim radicals.

According to media reports, Egyptian troops, which accused the Cairo protestors

of shooting at them, shot rubber bullets and tear gas into a crowd of thousands. Demonstrators denied the charges and said the protest was a peaceful one, though perhaps others not associated with them had fired at the soldiers.

Addressing the nation on state television today, Egyptian Prime Minister Es-sam Sharaf said the clashes between army forces and Coptic Christian protesters had brought the country back to the kind of violence seen at the onset of the revolution. "Instead of going forward, we found ourselves scrambling for security," said Sharaf.

Despite scenes of unity during the revolution, when Muslims joined Christians in protests against continuing sectarian violence and Christians were seen protecting Muslims during their prayers at Tahrir Square, attacks against Christian targets have continued. Prior to the recent attack, some 24 people had been killed, 200 injured, and three churches attacked during the first five months of the post-Mubarak regime.

Christians say they fear growing control by conservative Islamic groups. The second article of the Egyptian constitution declares Shari'a, or Islamic religious law, as the law of Egypt, leaving Christians fearful of their future place in the country if that provision is enforced. – Judith Sudilovsky for *ENI*, Oct. 10.

THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (WCC) SUPPORTS EGYPTIAN CHRISTIANS IN THEIR QUEST FOR JUSTICE, REJECTION OF VIOLENCE AND INITIATIVES FOR DIALOGUE IN THE WAKE OF 9 OCTOBER CLASHES BETWEEN PEACEFUL PROTESTORS AND THE ARMY IN CAIRO WHICH RESULTED IN 25 PEOPLE DEAD, MOSTLY COPTIC CHRISTIANS, while the country was preparing to return to democracy.

Egypt's Christians make up about 10 percent of the population and mainly consist of Coptic Orthodox as well as Presbyterian, Maronite, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Armenian Orthodox and Armenian Catholic churches.

Christians in Egypt have remained vulnerable to the threat of religious extremism for some time, and their concerns have emerged crucially during the recent changing political landscape of Egypt.

They are now asserting themselves in condemning violence as witnessed on 9 October, and in the burning of churches like the Church of Al-Marinab and Edfu-

Aswan this year.

A recent statement issued by the Protestant Church in Egypt says, "Churches reject acts of violence in Egypt during this time of socio-political transitions. We therefore appeal to all those within the nation to stand together side-by-side in order to confront these incidents. We call on all Egyptians to reject the use of violence and, in doing so, work together to create a unified legislation to allow for building places of worship for all."

"Thus," the statement continued, "as Egyptians – both Muslim and Christians alike – we must call for the immediate investigation of the events of 9 October, with emphasis on bringing accountability to the doors of those responsible for the violence which, tragically, left many dead."

Similarly the Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Service joined hands with civil society actors including writers, academics, religious leaders, youth and media professionals to condemn the violence. A joint statement at the end of a symposium on "Together against sectarianism" stated:

"We appeal to all Egyptians to call for an end to violence. We must act now, collectively, to save the future of our great nation from the alternative – a divided and violent future which reminds us little of the Egypt we know and love."

The WCC praises the efforts of the churches in raising their voices for peace and dialogue. Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, general secretary of the WCC, says, "We as churches condemn the violence perpetrated against the Coptic Christians during the unfortunate incidents of 9 October. We hold the victims in our prayers. It is through the resilience of Egyptians, both Christians and Muslims, that the sectarian strife can be defeated. We stand in solidarity with the Egyptian churches in these difficult times." – WCC Press Release, Oct. 18.

ON OCTOBER 19, IN THE MOTHER SEE OF HOLY ETCHMIADZIN, HIS HOLINESS KAREKIN II, SUPREME PATRIARCH AND CATHOLICOS OF ALL ARMENIANS, RECEIVED HIS EMINENCE ARCHBISHOP VEREYSKI EVGENI, RECTOR OF THE SPIRITUAL ACADEMY OF MOSCOW of the Russian Orthodox Church and Vicar General of the Diocese of Moscow.

During the meeting His Holiness gave his blessings and best wishes to His Eminence, stressing that the visits of the rep-

resentatives of Sister Churches serve as a good opportunity to learn more about the Holy Armenian Apostolic Church, our faithful and the national-spiritual values created by the nation through the centuries.

There was also a reflection on the close and fraternal relations between the two Churches, particularly on the level of cooperation that has developed between the two spiritual educational institutions. The Armenian Pontiff reflected with satisfaction on the memorandum of cooperation signed between the Gevorkian Theological Seminary of the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin and the Orthodox Academy of Saint Petersburg of the Russian Orthodox Church. His Holiness also discussed one of the current challenges facing the Armenian Church – the preparation of the clergy. The Armenian Pontiff also stated that during his reign over three hundred clergymen have been ordained and called to serve in various departments and dioceses of the Armenian Church. He also noted that there was still much more work to be completed, expressing his hope that the three educational institutions in Armenia – the Gevorkian Theological Seminary, Vaskenian Academy at Lake Sevan and the Academy of Harijavank, as well as the candidates with higher education who take the Accelerated Academic Courses for the Priesthood, would complete the ranks of the clergy. Archbishop Evgeni expressed his appreciation to His Holiness for receiving him, stating his intent to cooperate with Gevorkian Theological Seminary. – Press Release, Holy Etchmiadzin, Oct. 20.

ON OCTOBER 31, IN THE MOTHER SEE OF HOLY ETCHMIADZIN, HIS HOLINESS KAREKIN II, SUPREME PATRIARCH AND CATHOLICOS OF ALL ARMENIANS, RECEIVED MR. JOHN A. HEFERN, THE NEWLY APPOINTED AMBASSADOR, EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA.

Welcoming the Ambassador and conveying his best wishes for his mission, the Armenian Pontiff reflected on the warm and close relations between the two countries. His Holiness extended his gratitude to the USA authorities for their efforts directed at the resolution of current issues in the region and for their unceasing support and assistance to the Armenian people.

During the meeting there was a reflection on the important role of the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group and involvement of their respective governments, directed towards the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno Kharabagh conflict and establishment of stable relations in the region. His Holiness also reflected on the efforts of the regional Spiritual Leaders directed at the development of peace and cooperation.

The Ambassador was presented with the activities of the Holy Armenian Apostolic Church in various spheres of life and the challenges facing the Armenian Church.

The newly appointed Ambassador expressed his joy for his visit to the Mother See and congratulated the Armenian Pontiff on the occasion of his 60th birthday and 12th anniversary of enthronement.

Present for the meeting were His Eminence Archbishop Khajag Parsamian, Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, His Eminence Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of America and His Eminence Archbishop Vicken Aikazian, Ecumenical officer of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America. – Press Release, Holy Etchmiadzin, Oct. 31.

ON WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 12, A GROUP OF FRIENDS AND BENEFACTORS OF HOLY ETCHMIADZIN GATHERED AT A DINNER HOSTED BY MR. AND MRS. NAZAR AND ARTEMIS NAZARIAN IN HONOR OF HIS HOLINESS KAREKIN II'S 60TH BIRTHDAY.

The event was held at Manhattan's Metropolitan Club and was attended by 60 people in an atmosphere of warm friendship and cordiality.

Berge Setrakian, President of AGBU, acting as the master of ceremonies, welcomed the guests and congratulated His Holiness on his birthday.

"You are surrounded tonight by great friends of the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin and the Catholicos of All Armenians" he said, and further noted that the AGBU has been a longstanding supporter of His Holiness' initiatives to further strengthen the Armenian Church.

Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), after thanking the hosts and congratulating the Catholicos, spoke on the need to develop

strong spiritual leadership in the Armenian Church—a mission His Holiness has advanced throughout his pontificate. He then announced on that occasion the establishment of the Pontifical Endowment for Pastoral Development, which will be chaired by Mr. Setrakian.

"From my experience, I can testify that having a dedicated, well-prepared pastor is key to a flourishing parish life...Our parishes flourish, family spiritual life flourishes, and our church as a whole will flourish," said the Primate.

Following the announcement of the establishment of the fund, Mr. Berge Setrakian stated that AGBU had decided to earmark \$1 million of its scholarship programs for this purpose.

Mr. Setrakian announced that Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, the Primate of the Diocese of Armenian Church of America (Western), had informed him that a pledge drive getting underway in that region had raised \$1 million so far for the same purpose.

To conclude the evening, His Holiness Karekin II expressed his deep appreciation to Mr. and Mrs. Nazarian for hosting the evening, and addressed the guests in his usual cordial tone. "Coming here, I feel I am among family," he said.

"I feel blessed and strengthened to know that you have been and continue to be so supportive of my ministry as Catholicos of All Armenians, and recognize the importance of advancing the clergy in our church," His Holiness said. — Press Release, Eastern Diocese, Oct. 12.

MEMBERS OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMUNITY AND ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS IN THE NEW YORK METRO AREA GATHERED FOR THE ANNUAL ORTHODOX PRAYER SERVICE AND RECEPTION AT ST. VARTAN ARMENIAN CATHEDRAL ON TUESDAY, OCTOBER 18.

The evening began with a procession of clergy from the cathedral plaza to the beat of a kebero—a traditional drum used in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, which organized this year's service. In the narthex of the cathedral, families and children welcomed the procession with dance and song.

Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), welcomed guests and reflected on the history of the UN Prayer Service, which was initiated in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on

America.

"We inaugurated this pan-Orthodox service 10 years ago, during a time of darkness and uncertainty for this city," Archbishop Barsamian said. "But I can vividly recall how the mere act of coming together on that occasion—of sharing our hopes and sorrows with each other—had a powerful effect on everyone present. We emerged strengthened, encouraged, re-committed to helping our respective people through the difficulties of that time."

Turning to recent violence against Christians in the Middle East, he added: "Tonight, we pray for our brothers and sisters all over the world, in their hour of need. And above all, we pray to our Lord Jesus Christ, for his strength and guidance, and for his peace—which our world so desperately needs."

The service was led by Archbishop Abuna Zakarias, the head of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church in the eastern and central United States. Other participating church leaders included Archbishop Demetrios, Primate of the Greek Orthodox Church in America; Bishop Savas, head of the Greek Orthodox Office of Society and Culture; and Bishop Antoun Khouri of the Antiochian Orthodox Church.

The evening's guest speaker was Ambassador Tekeda Alemu, the permanent representative of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the United Nations. Dr. Alemu emphasized the importance of the "collective efforts of the United Nations community to fully realize" global peace and stability, and noted the role of churches and other community organizations in supporting such efforts.

Following the ambassador's remarks, Archbishop Zakarias offered a special prayer for the Coptic community. At the conclusion of the service, a reception was held in the Haik and Alice Kavookjian Auditorium.

Organized under the auspices of the Joint Commission of the Standing Conference of Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in North and Central Americas, the annual Prayer Service gives Orthodox Christians an opportunity to come together for worship and to learn more about each other's culture and heritage by engaging with representatives from the United Nations. — Press Release, Eastern Diocese, Oct. 19.

ON THE MORNING OF SATURDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2011, HIS HOLINESS CATHOLICOS ARAM I MET WITH HIS BEATITUDE BECHARA RAI, PATRIARCH OF THE LEBANESE MARONITE CHURCH.

His Holiness arrived at Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Church in Los Angeles accompanied by H.E. Archbishop Moushegh Mardirossian, Prelate, H.E. Archbishop Yeprem Tabakian, and clergy. They were welcomed by Patriarch Rai, Bishops of the Maronite Dioceses of Los Angeles and Brazil, and clergy members.

The discussion centered on the current goings-on in Lebanon, the situation of Christians in the Middle East, and the relationship between Churches headquartered in the Middle East with their faithful in the Diaspora. Both spiritual leaders emphasized the importance of unity between Christian Churches and strengthened ties.

His Holiness gave His Beatitude a brief synopsis of the lecture he had presented a day before at UCLA on the future of Christianity in the Middle East. Patriarch Rai spoke of the meetings he has had during his visit to the United States, which are generally related to Lebanon and the Middle East.

After the hour long meeting, a prayer service was held inside the Cathedral. A brief interview followed, during which both His Holiness and His Beatitude spoke highly of the close relations between the Armenian and Maronite communities and called for more collaboration. — Press Release, Great House of Cilicia, Oct. 17.

ON WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2011, HIS HOLINESS CATHOLICOS ARAM I LED AN ECUMENICAL PRAYER SERVICE, with the participation of spiritual leaders and clergy from the Armenian Apostolic, Catholic, and Evangelical Churches, Coptic, Syriac, and Antiochian Orthodox Churches, and the Roman Catholic Church.

The prayer service was hosted by the Coptic Orthodox Diocese and took place at St. Mary and St. Athanasius Church in Northridge.

With the singing of the "Hrashapar" hymn, His Holiness entered the Church accompanied by the clergy. Prayers were then offered by the leaders or clergy of each Church in their respective languages, followed by readings from the Bible.

Remarks were delivered by Bishop Serapion, Archbishop Kaplan, and Bishop

Zehlaoui, all of whom reflected on the current situation in the Middle East and specifically on the recent clashes in Egypt, and expressed their hope for peace to prevail in the region. Bishop Serapion conveyed the greetings and well wishes of H.H. Pope Shenouda III to His Holiness.

The Prelate spoke of the purpose and significance of the ecumenical gathering, and invited His Holiness to deliver his message.

After greeting the clergy, His Holiness commended Bishop Serapion, whom he has known for many years, speaking highly of his service in ecumenical affairs from the Middle East to the United States, and expressed his thanks to the Bishop for hosting the gathering.

His Holiness noted that Christian Churches were established on the basis of peace, that peace forms the heart of our Churches and the foundation of our mission. Christians are disciples of peace and must remain so, and with their faith, knowledge, and hope, must preserve their identity in the Middle East as they have deep roots in the region and form a part of the region's rich and ancient culture. Being a disciple of peace does not mean being stagnant, it means protecting one's rights, assuming responsibility of obligations, and contributing to the development of democracy. His Holiness concluded by calling for strengthening of ecumenical collaboration.

An exchange of mementos followed, after which His Holiness and clergy were hosted to lunch by the Coptic Church. – Press Release, Great House of Cilicia, Oct. 21.

The Catholic Churches

AT THE END OF TODAY'S GENERAL AUDIENCE, BENEDICT XVI RECEIVED THE GOLD MEDAL OF THE APOSTLE JASON OF THESSALONICA FROM A DELEGATION OF THE THEOLOGY DEPARTMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THESSALONICA.

The medal was given to him personally by the president of the Association of Post Graduates and Doctoral Candidates of the university, Stefanos Athanasiou, and by the secretary-general, Zizis Siskos.

In his greeting to English-speaking pilgrims gathered in St. Peter's Square this morning, the Holy Father addressed the delegation of the University of Thessalonica, saying that he felt profoundly honored by this kind gesture, which is an elo-

quent sign of the growing understanding and dialogue between Catholic and Orthodox Christians.

I pray that it will be a presage of even greater progress in our efforts to respond in fidelity, truth and charity to the Lord's calls to unity, stressed the Pontiff.

According to Tradition, the apostle Jason is one of the seventy disciples; he appears in Acts 17, during St. Paul's preaching in Thessalonica. He is greatly venerated by the Orthodox and Eastern Churches. – *Zenit*, Oct. 5.

THE BISHOPS OF THE UKRAINIAN GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH (UGCC) STATED THAT THE POLICY OF THE PRESENT LEADERSHIP OF THE STATE IS IMPRUDENT AND IRRESPONSIBLE. This statement was included in a letter to the leadership of Ukraine passed at the Synod of Bishops of the UGCC, which was held on September 5-11, in Brazil. The letter was published today in Kyiv.

The letter deals with "the state of affairs regarding the socioeconomic policy, partiality in justice, oppression of the Ukrainian language, particularly, narrowing of the range of areas of its use, large-scale closing of Ukrainian-language schools."

The bishops of the UGCC stress that in anticipation of the parliamentary election in Ukraine, the question of the Ukrainian language is used as a bargaining chip. The bishops are concerned over the closing of Ukrainian schools in some regions of Ukraine.

"We believe that it is an irresponsible policy, which does not serve the Ukrainian statehood," reads the letter.

According to the bishops, "The church, which includes several millions of Ukrainians in all the continents of the world, is concerned over the fact that the authorities of the country do not care at all about the migrants abroad, who were compelled to work there, and do not assist in bringing them back."

The address stresses that the state today should set up an effective executive body to conduct the state policy with respect to the Ukrainian migrants and defend their rights. According to the bishops, new work places should be created to allow the people to come back.

Another subject of the letter was the condition of justice in Ukraine. The representatives of the UGCC call it "distorted" and state that under such conditions, one can hardly expect the judicial system to be

unbiased and objective. According to the letter of the UGCC bishops to the president, radical and fundamental changes are needed in the field of justice.

The head of UGCC cited the words of Pope Benedict who once said that a government without law is turned into a gang of robbers. Therefore, as the hierarch stressed at the press conference, the law should be observed in all things and should work in the state.

The head of UGCC also stressed that it is very important for the church that Ukraine be a European state.

According to Major Archbishop Sviatoslav, during the synod, the bishops also wrote a letter to the Brazilian president and on October 24-25, Viktor Yanukovich is to visit Brazil. – *RISU*, Oct. 5.

ON OCTOBER 6, 2011, HIS BEATITUDE SVIATOSLAV (SHEVCHUK), HEAD OF THE UGCC, AND THE NEW APOSTOLIC NUNCIO IN UKRAINE, ARCHBISHOP THOMAS EDWARD GULLICKSON, MET IN KYIV AT THE APOSTOLIC NUNCIATURE.

Pope Benedict XVI appointed titular Archbishop Thomas Edward Gullickson the new Apostolic Nuncio to Ukraine on May 21, 2011. The archbishop had been Apostolic Nuncio in numerous countries in the Caribbean. Archbishop Gullickson is the fourth Apostolic Nuncio to Ukraine in the 19 years of diplomatic relations between the Holy See and Ukraine.

On September 23, the new Apostolic Nuncio arrived in Ukraine. Archbishop Thomas Edward Gullickson will perform his responsibilities after he presents his credentials to the President of Ukraine.

In the first meeting between the UGCC Major Archbishop and the new Apostolic Nuncio, the sides exchanged views on the interdenominational situation in Ukraine. In addition, the parties discussed the state of church-state relations.

Major Archbishop Sviatoslav gave the new Apostolic Nuncio an icon of Blessed John Paul II. He also invited Archbishop Gullickson to visit the brotherly meeting of Roman and Greek Catholic bishops to be held in Lviv-Briukhovychi on October 26. – *RISU*, Oct. 10.

"I AM VERY GLAD THAT MEETINGS ARE HELD BETWEEN THE APOSTOLIC SEE AND THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE," SAID THE HEAD OF THE UKRAINIAN GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH, MAJOR ARCHBISHOP SVIATOSLAV, DURING

A PRESS CONFERENCE at UNIAN as he commented on the meeting between Pope Benedict XVI and Metropolitan Hilarion (Alfeyev). The head of the UGCC stressed that such meetings are very useful: "We will do everything we can not to hinder such meetings, but to promote them by all means," stated Major Archbishop Sviatoslav.

Talking about the importance of dialogue, the head of the UGCC mentioned his official meeting with the head of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Metropolitan Volodymyr (Sabodan), held on August 23, 2011, in the Kyiv Cave Monastery. "The meeting was very beneficial for all of us," said the hierarch.

According to the Information Department of the UGCC, it is important that Metropolitan Ilarion also expressed readiness to meet with Archbishop of Kyiv and Halych. This was mentioned in his interview about a possible meeting between the Roman Pope and the Patriarch of Moscow published on October 5 in the newspaper *Izvestiia*. "I hope to meet with Major Archbishop Sviatoslav in the near future," said Metropolitan Hilarion. The hierarch also expressed hope that with the appointment of the new head of the UGCC, positive changes in the relations between the two churches will be made. – *RISU*, Oct. 10.

PRESSURE BEING PUT ON THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT COULD HAVE VERY BAD CONSEQUENCES, ESPECIALLY FOR CHRISTIANS, WARNED THE PATRIARCH OF THE SYRIAC CATHOLIC CHURCH.

Attempts to collapse the government "will very probably lead to chaos," Patriarch Ignatius Joseph III Younan told *Catholic News Service*. "This chaos, surely -- with no means to implement security -- will lead to civil war," said the Patriarch, who stressed that a civil war in Syria would not merely be a struggle among political parties to control the power. "It will be confessional (religious), and war in the name of God is far worse than a political struggle. And this is what we fear."

Patriarch Younan was one of several Christian leaders who spoke with Catholic News Service about the situation facing Syrian Christians, who make up about 10 percent of the nation's population.

He told CNS that what Syria needs is a lot of reforms, a multiparty system of government and freedom of speech. He said the church "is all for reforms" and does not support a particular regime.

"But those reforms have to be executed or accomplished through dialogue," he said, expressing a need for a neutral third party "that could unite those who are in conflict," the government and the opposition.

The Patriarch said the West should push for true democratic reforms rather than just trying to change political systems, which they believe are dictatorial, "into an unknown system where the very respect of civil rights is absent."

"By civil rights, we mean not only the freedom of speech ... but civil rights to implement the religious freedom for all," Patriarch Younan said. "That means to implement a civil society that respects the charter of human rights as already stipulated by the U.N. in 1948," he added, referring to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Patriarch said a society that respects all is "absolutely vital," and the civilized world should uphold this, not just take the position that the majority should rule the country. This is especially the case if the majority is of the conviction that there is no separation between religion and state, he added.

"This would surely result in discrimination against those who do not share their religion," he said. "The church has always defended, and it stands for, the civil rights of all human beings," Patriarch Younan said.

While it would take time to make the needed reforms in the case of Syria, those seeking change for the good of their country "have to be kind of patient and find a way to make those needed reforms."

"However, it doesn't look feasible that these reforms will come out of violence," he said. – Doreen Abi Raad for *CNS*, Oct. 10.

CONDEMNING AN ATTACK ON UNARMED CHRISTIANS IN EGYPT, POPE BENEDICT XVI SAID THAT DURING THE COUNTRY'S TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY, ALL OF ITS CITIZENS AND INSTITUTIONS MUST WORK TO GUARANTEE THE RIGHTS OF MINORITIES.

At the end of his weekly general audience Oct. 12, Pope Benedict said he was "profoundly saddened" by the deaths Oct. 9 of at least 26 people, mostly Christians, after peaceful protesters were attacked by gangs, and then a speeding military vehicle ran into them and officers fired on the crowd. Hundreds of people were injured.

The Pope said Egypt, which has been

transitioning to democracy since the February ousting of President Hosni Mubarak, has been "lacerated by attempts to undermine peaceful coexistence among its communities."

Safeguarding harmony and cooperation is essential for a future of true democracy, he said. The Pope asked Catholics to pray that Egypt would "enjoy true peace based on justice and respect for the freedom and dignity of every citizen."

"In addition, I support the efforts of Egyptian civil and religious authorities in favor of a society in which the human rights of all -- especially minorities -- are respected to the benefit of national unity," the Pope said. – Cindy Wooden for *CNS*, Oct. 12.

MEMBERS OF THE PERMANENT SYNOD OF THE SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH, LED BY HIS BEATITUDE GEORGE ALENCHERRY, MAJOR ARCHBISHOP OF ERNAKULAM-ANGAMALY OF THE SYRO-MALABARS, INDIA, WERE RECEIVED IN AUDIENCE BY THE POPE on Monday 17 October. This is the speech the Holy Father gave for the occasion:

Your Beatitude,

I am pleased to greet you and the members of the Permanent Synod of the Syro-Malabar Church who have travelled to Rome in an expression of communion with the Successor of Peter, and I thank you for your kind words on their behalf and in your own name. This visit is a significant one, as it comes not long after your election as Major Archbishop. By coming here, you provide an eloquent sign of the hierarchical communion that you formally expressed in your recent letter to me requesting confirmation of your election.

Your predecessor, the late Cardinal Varkey Vithayathil, has left a legacy upon which you and your brother Bishops will surely wish to build. In this context, I would like to recall the example of the two holy patrons of the Syro-Malabar Church, Saint Alphonsa Muttathupadathu and Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara, who were beatified by Blessed John Paul II, during his visit to Kerala twenty-five years ago. Later, the grace fell to me to canonize Saint Alphonsa in 2008.

At home, the Syro-Malabar Church in Kerala continues to enjoy the respect of the local community for its work in education and for its social and charitable institutions at the service of the whole community. I know that life for Christians has

been complicated by sectarian mistrust and even violence, but I would urge you to continue to work with people of good will of all religions in the area, in order to maintain the peace and harmony of the region, for the good of the Church and that of all citizens.

Within the Church itself, there are encouraging signs of vocations to the priesthood and the religious life which will help you to maintain your pastoral outreach. To be kept in mind are the ongoing challenges in the formation of the clergy and religious, in Christian family life and in the pastoral care of your faithful. I commend you for your efforts to maintain the strength of your family structures, the quality of Catholic education and catechesis at every level, and your pastoral work with youth. I also encourage you to continue your good work in fostering vocations among young men and women.

In fidelity to the Gospel and to the grace bestowed upon us by Christ our Lord, you and your faithful have flourished at home and abroad in union with the universal Church. By fostering your own authentic liturgical tradition, your faithful have been nourished by word and sacrament in accordance with what was handed down to you by your fathers in the faith. I am also aware of pastoral initiatives in favor of Syro-Malabar Catholics scattered throughout the world. As I did during your *Ad Limina* Visit in April, allow me again to encourage you in this important task and, especially with regard to your pastoral outreach to Syro-Malabar Catholics living beyond your homeland. I ask you to do so always mindful of the essential need for cooperation with Catholic Bishops and pastors of other rites.

Your Beatitude, dear Brother Bishops, with these few thoughts I commend you to the intercession of Saint Thomas, the great Apostle of India, Saint Alphonsa and Blessed Kuriakose. I assure you of my affection and prayers and I willingly impart to you, your clergy and religious and all those entrusted to your care, my Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of grace and peace in the Lord Jesus Christ. – Vatican website, Oct. 17.

LAST MARCH A BISHOP WHO HAD NOT YET REACHED HIS 41ST BIRTHDAY WAS APPOINTED HEAD OF THE LARGEST EASTERN CHURCH IN COMMUNION WITH ROME. ONLY RECENTLY APPOINTED A BISHOP TO SERVE THE SOUTH

AMERICAN UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC FAITHFUL, SVIATOSLAV SHEVCHUK, was elected Major Archbishop of Kiev-Halychna, thus taking the helm of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church from Cardinal Lubomyr Husar, who had already served three years past normal retirement age.

Register correspondent Matthew A. Rarey spoke with Archbishop Shevchuk during his visit to Chicago last month to preside at the 50th anniversary celebration of the Eparchy of St. Nicholas, a diocese of the Ukrainian Church which has jurisdiction over the entire western United States, all of the Midwest (except Ohio), Alaska and Hawaii. These are excerpts from the interview:

Q: Especially given your age, one is reminded of two of your 20th-century predecessors: Andrei Sheptytsky and Josef Slipyj. Both became head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church when they were young, and both led the Church through difficult years: World War II, Soviet occupation and Stalin's brutal clampdown on the Church, which was forced to function underground as the so-called "Church of the Catacombs." What challenges do you face, and do they in any way compare with theirs?

A: I think the biggest challenge our Church faces now is her existence as a global Church. Our center is in Ukraine, throughout its different parts, but we have eparchies and parishes throughout the world. The challenge is how to be one Church in different countries and cultures: how to maintain our internal unity and be pastorally efficient in very different contexts. The second challenge — or perhaps I should say: main task of each parish — is how to be efficient in proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ. This is especially true in Ukraine, a post-communist country. Church life can be very intensive in one part of our country and in another part completely absent. How to fulfill this important task of preaching the Gospel, sharing our faith with all those people who need to be evangelized? — that is a primary challenge right now.

Q: What is the general state of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church today?

A: The Church has been experiencing a big explosion ever since the fall of the communists and our Church coming out from her underground existence in 1989. We are restoring our structures: from parishes to creating new eparchies. And now we are creating the Patriarchal structures which can provide the head of the Church

the possibility to have a special care for the Ukrainian Catholics in and outside Ukraine. The Church is developing herself. We also are focusing on creating new Church structures in central and eastern Ukraine, first of all because a lot of our faithful live there, whereas they might not have lived there in the past. Today, we have three exarchates in those territories.

Q: There was an influx of seminarians in those first exciting years after the Church emerged from underground. Some, however, may have been inspired by religious and patriotic ardor rather than a true calling. And, evidently, some men have chosen the priesthood for reasons that don't exist in America: The priesthood in Ukraine carries social status and offers a good income upon which to support a family in a country whose economy is far from stable. (The Ukrainian Church can ordain married men.) What is the seminarian situation in Ukraine today?

A: It's a very difficult question. Because when a young man asks to be received into the seminary, it is hard to say what kind of motivation he has. But I would say, as a former seminary rector, that we have very authentic vocations. Maybe some 2% or 3% leave after the first year. Thanks be to God, we have really good, authentic vocations among the overwhelming majority of seminarians.

Q: Approximately how many Ukrainian Catholic priests and seminarians are there in Ukraine? Are there enough to serve the faithful?

A: We are experiencing a shortage of priests. Right now, in Ukraine, we have 2,500 faithful per priest. It's too much in order for a priest to give proper personal care. And we have 2,300 priests serving the faithful. Before the Second World War and the destruction of our Church, however, we had 3,200 priests. So, 20 years after the liberation of the Church, we have not achieved pre-persecution levels.

Right now in Ukraine, we have five seminaries. Just recently, we opened one in Kiev, just beside my residence. In all, we have about 600 seminarians. We are happy about this, but it is still not enough. In Ukraine we have nine seminarians per 100,000 faithful. Compare this with Spain, for example, which has 4.2 per 100,000. So we still have a good number of vocations. And a certain percentage of potential seminarians are still being turned away — not accepted for various reasons. Even though we need more vocations, it is not

possible to receive everybody.

Q: Rome recognizes the head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church as a "major archbishop," despite granting him all the prerogatives of an Eastern Patriarch as head of a self-governing Church in full communion with Rome. Is this lack of formal titular recognition motivated by Rome's concern not to rile relations with the Orthodox, especially the Moscow Patriarchate?

A: The whole issue of the Patriarchate is not a political issue, though, very often, journalists like to speak of it as such. It's an issue of Church life. I would like to move this issue from the field of politics to the field of pastoral care. I would say that I, as the head of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, have the same rights as each Eastern Patriarch, but I do not have the honorific title. I think the most important thing is the growth of the Ukrainian Church, which definitely is growing toward Patriarchal dignity. Right now we do live in a [de facto] Patriarchal Church, however.

Q: Please explain that.

A: Let me explain by giving an example of a Patriarchal Church in action. A few weeks ago we had a Patriarchal savor in Brazil: that is, a general assembly of the whole Ukrainian Catholic Church, with representatives of all the eparchies throughout the world, including monks, nuns and laymen. Not a synod, which would only include all the bishops, but a Patriarchal gathering of the whole Ukrainian Catholic Church. This is the sign of an existing Patriarchal Church. Why? Because this savor gathered people not only from Ukraine, but from Ukrainian Catholic communities throughout the world, in order to discuss matters important to the whole Church, not just the Church within Ukraine. This is the way of existing for a Patriarchal Church.

Q: Your predecessor, Cardinal Lubomyr Husar, stressed the need for a unified Church in Ukraine, erasing the Orthodox divide. Is that your focus as well? And have relations with Russia improved under Kirill, the new Patriarch of Moscow?

A: To answer your first question, there are two different levels of unity: unity of action and unity of structure. I think the latter is not an imminent goal. Cardinal Husar understands very well that we do not presume to create a unified structure for all the different Churches in Ukraine. First of all, they want to go to

communion [i.e., unity in action]. It is very important to distinguish.

Q: Maybe it is not imminent, but would you envision a "unified Church in Ukraine" as one being in communion with Rome? Is that the ultimate goal?

A: Unifying the Church doesn't mean uniformity of Church: building a unique structure under the Pope. It's not like that. Christ's Church is the communion of the different local Churches. That communion doesn't mean the dissolution of one Church inside of another. From our point of view, we need to restore the life of the Church of the first millennium of Christianity: one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. Not a uniform, unifying Church, but one in communion with Rome — and also restoring regional ways of being Christians.

Before the division of the Great Schism in the 11th century, the Church of Kiev had double communion — with the See of Constantinople and the Pope of Rome — so it was united with East and West. The Church of Kiev, you see, existed before that division. So, in order to restore the communion with the Churches in Ukraine, we don't have to invent something strange or different, but restore the original unity of the Church of Christ. And this process, this ecumenical dialogue between Catholics and Orthodox: Is it easier now when the Patriarch of Moscow is Kirill? That is hard to say. I would say it is different, because he is a different person. But we are trying, first of all, to restore this unity of action, not the unity in structure.

Q: Unity of action meaning ...?

A: The common Christian witness of traditional values in today's society. There is so much that Orthodox and Catholics can do together to restore a society so in need of Christ. That is why I am speaking mostly about strategic alliance now: stressing unity of action, not unity of structure. This very terminology [an Orthodox/Catholic strategic alliance on social issues] was announced by the Russian Orthodox Church. I think it can be easily adopted in Ukraine as well. We have to be Christian in today's secularized world. Orthodox and Catholics, first of all, have to be Christian and commonly witness for Christ and preach the Gospel.

Q: Does the Russian Orthodox Church continue to view the Ukrainian Catholic Church with suspicion: as an arm of Rome, reaching in to proselytize Orthodox territory?

A: There is a lot of prejudice among Orthodox, but also among Catholics: You mention only one of them. I think that developing these simple relationships between the Churches can help overcome these prejudices.

Q: Prejudices born of history, born of ...?

A: Prejudices born of history, born of communist ideology and the ideology of Russia in the time of the czars. It's something that came from the past. It has nothing to do with the present. I think we need to liberate ourselves from those prejudices of the past.

Q: Is there still the problem of the Orthodox refusing to return to Ukrainian Catholics the churches that were put under Moscow's control when Stalin banned the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in 1946? Does that continue to be a sticking point in Catholic/Orthodox relations?

A: It's not a problem, because today in western Ukraine we use those churches which we built, that belong to us. I think the biggest problem for the Russian Orthodox Church is the fact that many Ukrainians who belonged to it have decided to return to the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. — Matthew A. Rarey for *National Catholic Register*, Oct. 18.

UNLESS MIDDLE EASTERN COUNTRIES SUPPORT RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND RESPECT HUMAN RIGHTS, THE "ARAB SPRING" MOVEMENT WILL DEVOLVE INTO AN "ARAB WINTER," SAID MARONITE PATRIARCH BECHARA RAI.

Patriarch Rai said the "Arab spring" movement holds much promise, but its leaders must "adopt a separation between religion and state." He said such a system exists in his native Lebanon and "respects all religions and all values of each religion."

"We wish to see freedom practiced in those countries. We wish to see the values of human rights and democracy implemented," he told a news conference Oct. 20 at the New York headquarters of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association, a pontifical agency that supports the Catholic Church in the Middle East, North Africa, India and Eastern Europe.

"It's not easy to talk about democracy in the Western sense in countries that have a theocratic system. Christianity divides politics and religion, and we wish Islam and other religions to do the same," Patriarch Rai said.

Failure to do so will result in civil

wars, such as the one in Iraq, he warned, and will lead to the rise of regimes "that are even more fundamentalist. This is something that will be to the detriment of everybody."

Patriarch Rai said conflicts between Israel and the Arab countries and between Israel and the Palestinians have had a negative impact on Christians.

"The Arab-Israeli conflict is at the level of religion and culture. The conflict between the Palestinians and the Israelis is a conflict (about) a people whose sovereignty, whose land, was taken away, who were displaced and for 64 years have been promised by United Nations resolutions a right of return, but this has not happened," he said.

"In Lebanon, we have suffered from the presence of a half million Palestinian refugees, and the war in Lebanon in 1975 started with the Palestinians," he added.

He said the conflict led to injustice, oppression and the rise of fundamentalist movements in the region.

"The atmosphere that was created by those conflicts has impacted the Christian presence in the Middle East, causing some to leave for economic and security reasons," he said.

Speaking about Israel, Patriarch Rai said, "In this day and age of globalization, it is strange to see a nation that wants to be for one religion or one race because, automatically, you are excluding the others."

"There will be no peace in that part of the world until Judaism, Islam and Christianity separate church and state," he said.

Patriarch Rai said tolerance of Christians in the Middle East falls into three categories. In some countries, they have no rights to establish a church or maintain a presence. In other countries, such as Egypt, the church exists and Christians can worship, but religious life is difficult and there are restrictions on construction and repair of churches. The third category covers places where Christians live freely and are accepted, but freedom of conscience is not respected and people do not have the right to change religions.

Patriarch Rai stressed that Christians are not outsiders in the Middle East and were established there "and impacted society with their values" 600 years before Islam. They have contributed positively to their countries and should not be made scapegoats in any area.

He said the international community has a responsibility to limit the spread of

fundamentalism in the world and encourage moderate people to take the lead in countries of the Middle East.

"The very large part of Islam is moderate," he added.

He said the church does "not side with any government or regime," but asks whoever is in power to respect the rights of the people and guarantee freedom of speech, religion and conscience.

Patriarch Rai said that in Lebanon, 18 distinct religious groups live together, "not in ghettos." He said Lebanon is a sign of hope for peoples of the region, and "the church in Lebanon is considered a guarantee for the Christian presence for that part of the world." — Beth Griffin for *CNS*, Oct. 21.

HIS BEATITUDE SVIATOSLAV SHEVCHUK, MAJOR ARCHBISHOP OF KYIV-HALYC, UKRAINE, WITH THE CONSENT OF THE PERMANENT SYNOD MEETING IN CURITIBA, BRAZIL, on 10 September, and having informed the Apostolic See, has accepted the resignation from the pastoral care of the eparchy of Sambir-Drohobych of the Ukrainians, Ukraine, presented by Bishop Julian Voronovsky M.S.U. in accordance with canon 210 para. 1 of the *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*. He is succeeded by Coadjutor Bishop Jaroslav Pryriz C.S.S.R. — *VIS*, Oct. 27.

TAKING 300 RELIGIOUS LEADERS WITH HIM ON PILGRIMAGE TO ASSISI, POPE BENEDICT XVI SAID PEOPLE WHO ARE SUSPICIOUS OF RELIGION CANNOT BE BLAMED FOR QUESTIONING GOD'S EXISTENCE WHEN THEY SEE BELIEVERS USE RELIGION TO JUSTIFY VIOLENCE.

"All their struggling and questioning is, in part, an appeal to believers to purify their faith so that God, the true God, becomes accessible," the Pope said Oct. 27 during an interfaith gathering in the Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels.

Marking the 25th anniversary of the first Assisi interfaith gathering for peace, hosted by Blessed John Paul II in 1986, Pope Benedict brought together the religious leaders and -- for the first time -- four philosophers who describe themselves as humanists or seekers who do not identify with any single religion.

After a train ride of almost two hours from the Vatican, Pope Benedict and his guests arrived in Assisi and were driven to the Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels for the morning gathering focused on "testi-

monies for peace."

Entering the basilica before the Pope, the delegates created an unusually colorful congregation: They wore white, black or crimson robes or business suits; on their heads were skullcaps, turbans, scarves or veils.

The Pope condemned the use of religion to excuse violence and the use of violence to impose a religion, as well as the growing violence resulting from "the loss of humanity" that comes from denying the existence of God and of objective moral standards.

"As a Christian, I want to say at this point: Yes, it is true, in the course of history, force has also been used in the name of the Christian faith. We acknowledge it with great shame," Pope Benedict said.

Christian leaders, like all religious leaders, he said, must work constantly to help their followers purify their faith and be "an instrument of God's peace in the world, despite the fallibility of humans."

But a lack of religion is not the answer to world peace, he said.

The Nazi death camps clearly proved that "the denial of God corrupts man, robs him of his criteria (for judging right and wrong) and leads him to violence," the Pope said.

On the other hand, he said, many nonbelievers are also "pilgrims of truth, pilgrims of peace."

"These people are seeking the truth, they are seeking the true God, whose image is frequently concealed in the religions because of the ways in which they are often practiced. Their inability to find God is partly the responsibility of believers with a limited or even falsified image of God," he said.

"They challenge the followers of religions not to consider God as their own property, as if he belonged to them, in such a way that they feel vindicated in using force against others," the Pope said.

Sitting to the Pope's right were Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople and Anglican Archbishop Rowan Williams of Canterbury, and to his left were Rabbi David Rosen, representing the chief rabbinate of Israel, and Wande Abimbola, president of a Nigerian institute that promotes the study of the culture and traditional religion of the Yoruba people. He chanted a poem, shaking a rattle made of an animal tusk or horn.

Eleven of the Pope's guests spoke before Pope Benedict did and, after the

morning session, the Pope invited the delegates to a "frugal lunch" of rice and vegetables, salad, fruit and juice. Patriarch Bartholomew sat on one side of the Pope, while Archbishop Williams sat on the other. Thirteen other delegates -- including Christians, a Muslim, a follower of Tenrikyo, a Buddhist and a nonbeliever -- also were seated at the head table.

During the morning session in the basilica, Patriarch Bartholomew said the 25 years since the initial Assisi gathering have included the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States and the Arab Spring democracy movement, "which has not put an end to tensions between communities."

"The place of religions in the changes under way remains ambiguous," the Patriarch said, echoing the concerns of many Christians that more radical followers of Islam may not protect the rights of Christian minorities in the countries that have thrown off dictatorships.

"We must oppose the deformation of the message and symbols of religion by perpetrators of violence," said the Ortho-

dox spiritual leader. – Cindy Wooden for CNS, Oct. 27.

ON OCTOBER 27, 2011, A DAY OF REFLECTION, DIALOGUE AND PRAYER FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE IN THE WORLD WAS HELD IN ASSISI, ITALY, UNDER THE MOTTO 'PILGRIMS OF TRUTH, PILGRIMS OF PEACE'.

Over 300 representatives of Christian churches and communities and representatives of other religions took part in the meeting to express their solidarity in seeking peaceful co-existence among the civilizations and peoples.

There were no common prayers. Brief remarks by participants alternated with moments of quiet, music or silent reflection, in which adherents of atheistic humanism also took part.

The dialogue focused on challenges of today's world, the need for people of good will to unite their efforts in opposing the destructive impact of various forms of

violence, discrimination, militant secularism, economic instability and fundamentalism.

The Russian Orthodox Church was represented by Metropolitan Filaret of Minsk and Slutsk, Patriarchal Exarch for All Belarus, Metropolitan Alexander of Astana and All Kazakhstan, Bishop Vladimir of Dneprodzerzhinsk and Tsaritsyno, Archpriest Dimitry Sizonenko DECR secretary for inter-Christian relations, Archpriest Nikolay Danilevich, secretary of the DECR's pilgrimage center, Father Anthony (Sevryuk), secretary of the Moscow Patriarchate's parishes in Italy, Archpriest Igor Vyzhanov of the church of St. Catherine in Rome, Archpriest Nikolay Korzhich, secretary of the Minsk diocesan administration, Victor Shevtsov, secretary to the Patriarchal Exarch for All Belarus, and Deacon Alexy Dikarev of the DECR secretariat for inter-Christian relations. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, Oct. 28.



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