

Light of the East

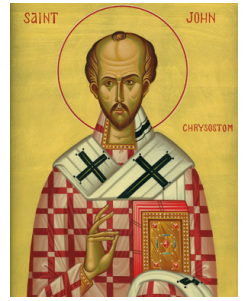
Newsletter of the Society of Saint John Chrysostom

Western Region Edition

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Summer, 2012



From left, Archimandrite Alexei Smith, Ecumenical Director, Archdiocese of Los Angeles; Archpriest Hrant Yeretzian, 40 Martyrs Armenian Apostolic Church; Fr. Athanasius Ragheb, Archangel Michael Coptic Orthodox Church; Archimandrite James Babcock, Holy Cross Melkite-Greek Catholic Church; Fr. Joseph Boules, St. Verena & St. Mary Coptic Orthodox Church; Fr. John Monestero, Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange Commission of Ecumenical and Inter-faith Affairs; Fr. Steve Tschlis, St. Paul Greek Orthodox Church; Fr. Felimon, Archangel Michael Coptic Orthodox Church; Fr. Don Romito, St. John Neumann Roman Catholic Church; Msgr. George Vida, Annunciation Byzantine Catholic Church; Fr. Al Baca, Director of Ecumenical Affairs; Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange.

Pentecost Ecumenical Prayer offers hope for Christian Unity

At a well attended Pentecost Prayer Service for Christian unity, clergy and laity gathered together at Annunciation Byzantine Catholic Church in Anaheim recently. Participants represented Eastern & Oriental Orthodox Churches and Eastern &

Roman Catholic Churches in Orange County, California. The service opened with the singing of the Great Doxology by the choir of St Paul Greek Orthodox Church.

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Happenings!

SSJC-WR workshop

“Christianity and Islam: A Coptic Perspective”

Saturday, September 22, at St. Marina Coptic Orthodox Church, 5 Wrigley, Irvine, 92618. 10:00 AM, St. Marina Coptic Church will host luncheon at the conclusion of the presentations. Speakers will be from the Coptic Church. SSJC-WR President, Fr. George Morelli, stressed the importance of this topic for Christians to increase their knowledge and understanding of Islam and the topic of Martyrdom in the Coptic Church of the Middle East.

Additional Happenings page 7

The Society of Saint John Chrysostom

The Society of St. John Chrysostom is an ecumenical group of clergy and lay people which promotes Eastern Christianity and Ecumenical Dialogue between the Eastern and Western Churches. It has sponsored the *Eastern Churches Journal* and the annual *Oriente Lumen* Conference. It has been in existence since 1997 in the United States and for over 70 years in England.

THE GOALS OF THE SOCIETY ARE TO:

- Make known the history, worship, spirituality, discipline and theology of Eastern Christendom.
- Work and pray that all Christians, particularly the Orthodox and Catholic Churches, will attain the fullness of unity which Jesus Christ desires.
- Develop educational programs which present information about the Eastern Churches.
- Organize and conduct pilgrimages and conferences that encourage ecumenical dialogue.
- Contribute to fund-raising activities which support Eastern Christian communities and other programs in need of financial aid.
- Publish books, brochures, and other information which help explain Eastern Christianity.
- Encourage and support the study of the writings and liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom.
- Promote scholarships for the study of Eastern Churches in Catholic and Orthodox seminaries.

WESTERN REGION

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Light of the East

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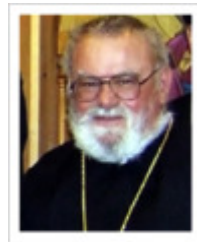
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A message from the President of SSJC-Western Region

The new martyrs in Syria

By the Very Reverend Father George Morelli, PhD.

Even a cursory reading or exposure to the current news media has made the world aware of the new martyrs among the Christians of the Apostolic Churches in Syria. Christians make up merely 10% of the 22 million inhabitants of Syria, with most belonging to the Greek Orthodox, Melkite-Greek Catholic and Syrian Orthodox Patriarchates of Antioch. A recent Eurasia Review article reported that, "The areas controlled by the opposition are witnessing the rise of radical forms of Sunni Islam with the extremists not willing to live in peace with the Christians. Many of these gangs and armed groups operate independently of the Free Syrian Army, which rejects such kinds of discrimination against minorities." What was once a peaceful country has become a battleground of destruction, devastation and death. It is feared that a continuation of armed hostilities will result in the mass exodus of Christians similar to what has happened in the ethnic cleansing of the Christians of Iraq and Palestine. Another Eurasia Review article comments: "The extinction of the Middle East's Christian communities is an injustice of historic magnitude."



What can we do as members of the Society of St. John Chrysostom-Western Region (SSJC-WR)? In the past, I have forwarded to our members and readers the call made for a moral alliance of the Apostolic Churches against pagan secularism and blatant societal de-Christianization. Now I forward the call for all of us to practice the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, both to those who are victims in this tragic conflict and to the perpetrators of these atrocious hostilities as well. Among the spiritual works of mercy, instructing those in ignorance, comforting those in sorrow, forgiving those inflicting injury and praying for all, stand out as needed in this situation. Among the corporal works of mercy, giving monetary or material aid to those afflicted seems the very least we can do. The Antiochian Archdiocese in North America and the Antiochian Patriarchate, for example, are working to help all those touched with this violence by contributing to the International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) and Christian Aid, a key member of the ACT Alliance, which is a coalition of 100 churches and church-related organizations working together in humanitarian assistance and development. Two prominent Catholic agencies, 'Caritas Internationalis' and 'Aid to the Church in Need,' under the direction of the Holy Father and the Vatican, have responded to the persecution of Syrian Christians by aiding those fleeing the horrific violence.

As an act of *moral alliance*, and certainly in the spirit of SSJC, the Patriarchs of the Apostolic Churches of Syria issued the following joint statement: "We: Ignatius IV Hazim, Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, Mar Ignatius Zakka I Iwas, Syriac Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, and Gregorios III Laham, Melkite Greek Catholic Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, of Alexandria and Jerusalem, condemn the cowardly criminal act that took place in the Qazaz district of Damascus on the morning of Thursday, 10 May 2012, and condemn all acts of terrorism that have targeted different regions of the beloved Syrian land, claiming the lives of many innocent victims and wounding both civilians and military personnel, the children of this great nation. . . we pray to God to heal the wounds of Syria and Syrians, and to restore the children of the one homeland to one

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An interview with

Irma Contreras

Irma Contreras is the founder of the annual Roman & Eastern Catholic and Orthodox Christian Ecumenical Service of Prayer for Christian Unity Pentecost Prayer.

Fr. James: Tell us how this event came to be.

Irma: I was working for Fr. Eamon O’Gorman at St. Catherine of Siena Roman Catholic Church in Laguna Beach. Fr. Eamon decided that it would be nice to visit some of the Eastern Churches in Orange County, so I helped organize a bus tour and we persuaded Dr. Charles Frazee, a professor of history at Cal State Fullerton, to be our tour guide. We visited Holy Archangel Michael Coptic Church, 40 Martyrs Armenian Church and St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church. This really opened my eyes and I thought, why is it that we cannot all pray together? Fr. Eamon was hesitant, but he gave me permission to host a dinner and suggested the “Holy Spirit” as a theme. I sent invitations, but drew only one response initially from Fr. Joseph Boules of St. Verena and Mary Coptic Orthodox Church. I was determined to make this event happen, so I sent a second invitation via Federal Express, and this time the response was much better. So we met. Fr. Athanasius from Holy Archangel Michael Coptic Church, Fr. Hrant from 40 Martyrs Armenian Church, Fr. Cornel from St. Mary Romanian Orthodox Church, and Fr. John Monestero from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange. I brought up the idea of holding a prayer for Christian Unity and a lengthy discussion followed.

Fr. James: What happened next?

Irma: We more or less decided on each tradition taking a portion of our evening prayer or readings, limited to 5 minutes each. Then we had to decide when we would hold this event. Christmas was deemed too busy; the Roman Church already had a prayer for unity scheduled in January, then Lent would begin and again it was deemed too busy. Finally, we came to Pentecost and that seemed like it might work. Fr. Athanasius offered to host the event at Holy Archangel Michael Coptic Orthodox Church. Meanwhile, Fr. Steve Tsichlis heard about it and asked if he and his community at St. Paul Greek Orthodox Church could participate. He said he was too busy to come to any of the meetings, but he sent a representative. Meanwhile, I was hired as business manager at St. Nicholas Roman Catholic Parish in Laguna Woods and I got them involved too. We chartered a bus from St. Catherine and St. Nicholas Churches. So the first Pentecost Prayer for Christian Unity took place with about 200 people attending.

Fr. James: How did it turn out?

Irma: It was a little crazy and exciting. For instance, I had Fr. Athanasius and Fr. Hrant help me hang a huge dove representing the Holy Spirit with the tongues of fire blowing all over in front of Holy Archangel Church. The other clergy started to help out as they arrived for the prayer service and the ice began to melt. The clergy were a bit nervous. There was a lot of repetition as we discovered that we all did many of the same prayers in our vesper services. Yet, at the same time, you could

feel the presence of the Holy Spirit working and all the people were amazed. They liked the idea of visiting one another’s churches. The clergy and the people had an opportunity to get to know each other, and each were able to share some of their own tradition with everyone present.

Fr. James: Did you receive any encouragement from the Roman Church and why do you think this turned into such a great success?

Irma: Initially, I didn’t receive any encouragement from my own church. I believe there was some suspicion and fear that the prayer service might not succeed. But I prayed that if God would bless my work that He would help me with raising my autistic son, James. Soon after the first prayer I noticed a marked improvement in him. He began to blossom and bloom and overcome his handicap. So I knew that God was blessing my work. I also believe that this event is successful because every church feels ownership in it. No one dictates what will take place, and we all work together in developing the service and when and where it will be held. Last year it was held at Mission San Juan Capistrano. This year it was held for the first time at Annunciation Byzantine Catholic Church. Soon, more and more communities began to get involved, including representatives of the Diocese Orange and the Melkite-Greek Catholic Church. This year a representative from the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles also took part and said that he would like to see the same thing happen in Los Angeles.

Fr. James: So, what do you envision for the future?

Irma: I want this event to continue to grow. It’s a grass roots effort to assist in allowing us to get to know one another. Nowhere else can people come together and experience prayer in so many different traditions, Armenian, Coptic, Greek, Slavic, and Latin/Roman. The reception following also affords an opportunity for the people to get to meet one another. I am currently looking for a grant to help grow this event. Until now the only funding source we have had is by having each of the participating churches pay for transportation, sound and other items. With additional funding we can have more outreach to our youth. I couldn’t do all this alone and I must also mention Fr. Steve Tsichlis who has been extremely helpful.

Fr. James: Thank you, Irma, for all the outstanding work you have done, often with little encouragement.

Irma: Thank you, Fr. James, for inviting me to share the story of how all this came to be. I want to thank all the participating churches for their support. And thanks also to the Society of St. John Chrysostom for publicizing this event each year.

SSJC-WR President’s Message

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another in love, openness and reconciliation, tolerance, mutual assistance and wisdom. . . .”

We, as members of the SSJC-WR, pray not only that this example of *moral alliance* be of some support and eventual relief for the beleaguered Syrian Christians, but that it also lead to full unity of all the Apostolic Churches in obedience to Christ’s prayer: “. . . that I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep in Thy name those whom Thou hast given Me, in order that they may be one, even as We.” (Jn. 17:11)

Pentecost Prayer for Christian Unity

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Following a welcome by Monsignor George Vida, pastor of Annunciation Byzantine Catholic Church, the congregation was invited to recite Psalm 127 together. The raising and offering of incense was led by the clergy of the Coptic Orthodox Church. The Great Litany was led by Archimandrite James Babcock, pastor of Holy Cross Melkite-Greek Catholic Church, the responses sung by the choir of St. Paul Greek Orthodox Church. A blessing was then given by Father Hrant Yeretzian, Pastor of 40 Martyrs Armenian Apostolic Church.

This was followed by a reading from the Prophecy of Isaiah read by Daniel Ibrahim of St. Mary & St. Verena Coptic Orthodox Church. Then the Song of Mary, the Mother of God from the Gospel of St. Luke was led by the Cantors and Choir of Saint Cecilia Roman Catholic Church, the refrain chanted by the entire congregation. Next was a reading from St. Paul's 1st letter to the Corinthians, by Dorothea Love of St. Paul Greek Orthodox Church. The responsorial psalm was led by the choir of St. John Neumann Roman Catholic Church, the refrain sung by the congregation. The Gospel Reading was from the Holy Evangelist John, proclaimed by Fr. Al Baca of St. Cecilia Roman Catholic Church.

Father Felimon Mikhail, Pastor of Archangel Michael Coptic Orthodox Church delivered the inspiring homily. Following the sermon the entire congregation offered the Lord's Prayer. Annunciation Byzantine Catholic Church Choir then sang a hymn of praise to the Holy Spirit. The Choir of St. Cecilia Roman Catholic Church then chanted The Litany of Saints. Next, the hymn *We Are Called* was sung by the Youth Choir of St. John Neumann Roman Catholic Church.

The service concluded with The Renewal of our Baptismal Vows led by the youth of our communities. The final blessing was then given by Fr. John Monestero of St. Justin Martyr Roman Catholic Church. The recessional hymn was sung by all the choirs and congregation.

Following the service a reception was held in the parish hall with delicious food provided by 40 Martyrs Armenian Apostolic Church.

The Annual Pentecost Ecumenical Prayer for Christian Unity is organized by Irma Contreras and serves as a catalyst, assisting the various Orthodox and Catholics to get to know one another.



During the visit by a delegation of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Constantinople to the Vatican the Pope thanked Bartholomew I for his openness to dialogue

By Luca Rolandi, Vatican Insider - La Stampa
Rome

The dialogue process is slow but constant. Today another piece was added to the puzzle of Orthodox-Catholic relations during Benedict XVI's cordial and fraternal meeting with a delegation sent by the ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople on occasion of the Feast of Ss. Peter and Paul, patron saints of Rome.



Pope Benedict XVI

If the Second Vatican Council marked "an important new phase in relations" between the Catholic and Orthodox faiths, **the Pope expressed the hope that God may "bring closer the blessed day when we can share the Eucharistic table."**

Benedict XVI recalled the importance of the conciliar meetings on ecumenism, he recalled the "passion for Church unity" which animated the ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras and popes John XXIII and Paul VI. They "became proponents of bold initiatives which paved the way for a renewed relationship between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Catholic Church."



Patriarch Bartholomew

Vatican Radio and the Holy See's daily broadsheet *L'Osservatore Romano* gave special focus to the meeting, a sign of solid fraternity. The Patriarchate's delegation sent a delegation from the Holy See to Istanbul for the Feast of St. Andrew on 30 November.

The Pope concluded by expressing his "great joy" for the way in which the current Ecumenical Patriarch, Bartholomew I, has continued this work, **"with renewed faithfulness and abundant creativity...noted around the world for his openness to dialogue between Christians, and his commitment to the proclamation of the Gospel"**

"The preaching of Ss. Peter and Paul, sealed by the witness of martyrdom, is the solid and eternal foundation upon which the Church is built. **The roots of the "communion between us" are found in the faith in the Catholic doctrine communicated by the Apostles,"** the Pope said.

That They May Be One

May 25, 2012

By Tim Kelleher, new media editor for *FIRST THINGS*.

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

Among the Cardinal's remarks was a tersely reiterated expectation of celibacy for priests serving the Eastern Catholic Churches *in diaspora*—in this case the U.S. The message may not have been carried directly from the hand of Benedict but the effect has been unpleasant to say the least. Enter Thomas Loya, a Ruthenian Catholic priest of the Parma Ohio Eparchy, writing his eparch in response.

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

hit the customs line at JFK? This is, at best, a very mixed signal. When added to other actions, however, it can begin to seem otherwise.

In terms of impeding the cause of reunion, perhaps the most inexplicable move in recent years was Rome's decision suddenly to drop the title "Patriarch of the West" from the list of papal honorifics in the 2006 *Annuario Pontificio*.

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

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

The Eastern Catholic Churches, and in particular the Ruthenian Church, are actually in a position to indeed supply what is lacking in the whole Church in America and to confront secular society with a type of vocabulary and spirituality that we alone can bring to the war on secularism and moral relativism. It seems that Rome understands none of this about us.

I'm not sure why he feels the Ruthenian Church is in the *particular* position he describes. I also wish he hadn't chosen to

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Orthodox Christians take steps toward unity

By Ann Rodgers / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Orthodoxy is the Eastern wing of a Christian church that split into the Catholic and Orthodox churches in 1054. Its spiritual leader, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople in modern-day Turkey, is first among equals. He has no authority to tell any other patriarch what to do.

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

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

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

"When we started this work 20 years ago it was anathema to talk about the possibility of administrative unity. Now we're

not only talking about it, but hopefully the hierarchs will be looking at what is necessary to accomplish it," said Charles Ajalat, a retired lawyer from Southern California, chairman of the pan-Orthodox social service agency FOCUS.

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

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

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

"These divisions are not authentic to our faith and should not be tolerated," said the Rev. Josiah Trenham, an Antiochian priest from Riverside, Calif., the media relations officer for the Assembly of Bishops.

"If this doesn't work, nothing will," he said of the assembly.

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

Skeptics believe the assembly will be undermined by rivalry between the overseas patriarchates, particularly Moscow and Constantinople. The latter, with 3,000 resident members, is so constricted by the Turkish government that it needs parishes elsewhere to survive. Moscow, the largest patriarchate with 164 million members, is asserting renewed strength since the fall of communism. George Matsoukas, executive director of Orthodox Christian Laity, which advocates American unity, said he was once promised that the Great Council would convene by 2000. "Now, you read that they are in disagreement about convening it because they can't agree about who should convene it," he said. The American assembly "is a step in the right direction, but they're not doing anything. It's mired in the affairs of the Old World." Metropolitan Savas, the Greek Orthodox bishop of Pittsburgh, said the patriarchs aren't trying to delay the Great Council.

"There are several reasons why it has taken so long. The first is that we don't have an emperor to summon it. That's how they were all called in the past" when there was still an emperor, he said. "There are questions such as does each bishop

get one vote, or do we vote in blocks? Does the Moscow Patriarchate have one vote or 750? They've got something like 500 dioceses."

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

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

There are tensions between converts -- who have entered the priesthood in large numbers -- and ethnic Orthodox. There has been conflict in and between jurisdictions here. In 2010, the Antiochian diocesan bishops were demoted to auxiliaries stripped of most of their power. Thirty years after declaring the Orthodox Church in America self-governing, the Russian Orthodox Church began planting parishes in the United States and reunited with the formerly schismatic Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia.

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

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

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

Such work isn't a stalling tactic, Metropolitan Savas said.

"Defining our task is important. What is it we want to achieve? How can we better demonstrate our unity of faith? Does it mean that we have to speak the same liturgical language?" he said.

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

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

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

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

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

"Right now people see all of these jurisdictional divisions

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

OCA Metropolitan Jonah resigns

SYOSSET, NY [OCA]

In a letter addressed to the members of the Holy Synod of Bishops dated Friday, July 6, 2012, His Beatitude, Metropolitan Jonah tendered his resignation as Primate of the Orthodox Church in America.

His Beatitude composed and signed the letter at his residence in Washington, DC, in the presence of Archpriest John Jillions, OCA Chancellor.

On Saturday, July 7, the letter was presented to the Holy Synod in the course of a conference call in which all of the hierarchs participated, except His Eminence, Archbishop Alejo of Mexico City.

The text of His Beatitude's letter reads as follows.

"To the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America,

"Brothers,

"As per your unanimous request, as conveyed to me by Chancellor Fr. John Jillions, I hereby tender my resignation as Primate of the Orthodox Church in America, and humbly request another Episcopal assignment.

"I had come to the realization long ago that that I have neither the personality nor the temperament for the position of Primate, a position I never sought nor desired.

"It is my hope that due consideration will be made for my financial situation, both in any interim and in consideration for any future position. I am the main financial support for both my parents and my sister, beyond my own needs.

"I will appreciate your consideration in this, and beg forgiveness for however I have offended you, and for whatever difficulties have arisen from my own inadequacies and mistakes in judgment.

"Asking your prayers, I remain faithfully yours,

"Metropolitan Jonah, Archbishop of Washington"

More Happenings...

The City A Desert - Urban spirituality today

Wednesday, October 24, 2012, Huffington Ecumenical Institute/Loyola Marymount University.

Reflections on the Catholic and Orthodox monastic traditions and their contributions to the Christian's search for God in the turbulence of work, family, school and urban life. Featuring Archimandrite Meletios Webber (Monastery of St. John of San Francisco, California) and Fr. Columba Stewart, OSB (St. John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota). For more information, please visit Bellarmine.LMU.edu/ecumenical or call 310 338 1917.

For membership in the Society of St. John Chrys-

That they may be one

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depict the resistance to secularism as *war*. But, those are fairly minor points. Fr. Loya is doing something important by addressing the tip that reveals the presence of an iceberg—something I earlier suggested could and should have a critical influence on the Christian response to our myriad problems.

Others have suggested, as have I, that a quantum leap in cooperation between the Roman and Orthodox Catholic Churches is indispensable to the cause of revitalizing a Western culture suffering as a result of its repudiation of or indifference to the treasure of its Judeo-Christian heritage. Given how things have unfolded in the reformed churches over the last fifty or so years, it is imperative that Rome and its sister churches of the East do all within the scope of their human power to rise to this challenge.

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

Light of the East, Newsletter of the Society of St. John Chrysostom, Youngstown-Warren Ohio Chapter

Book Review

This is a must-read book

Life after Death - according to the Orthodox Tradition

Author: Jean Claude Larchet

Published by Orthodox Research

20 Silver Lane

Rollinsford NH 03869

www.orthodoxresearchinstitute.org

Reviewed by Archimandrite James Babcock

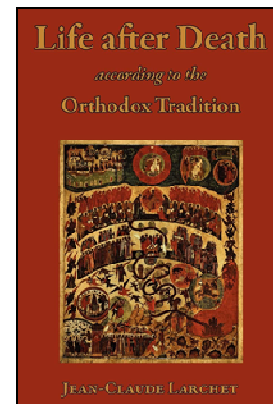
One of the blessings of Christianity is that it prepares us for the life to come with Christ in His Kingdom. The reader of this book will learn the most comprehensive explanation of what happens to us when we die. And this is something we should all be very much aware of and keep in the forefront of our minds, since there is no escaping death.

The author begins with the origin and spiritual meaning of death, utilizing all modern scientific information available. This is followed by what happens to us the moment we die.

Subsequent chapters include "From the first to the third day following death; the separation of the soul from the body;" "From the third to the ninth day: the traversing of the Aerial Toll-houses;" "From the ninth to the fortieth day; the introduction to the other world;" "The Fortieth Day; the particular judgment;" "The Fortieth Day to the last judgment: the intermediate state;" "Purgatory (according to Orthodox Tradition);" "The relations between the living and the dead;" "The Resurrection and the Last Judgment;" "Eternal Life: the kingdom of heaven and hell;" and "Preparing oneself for death and life in the hereafter."

The author utilizes both Eastern and Western Fathers throughout his explanation, which is written in a non-polemic style.

By the time you finish reading this book, you will be inspired to make a course correction in your life and focus on where you are going and what you should do about it. Don't miss reading this book. It may save your eternal life.



Pope sends 50th Anniversary greetings to Church of the East

His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI sent the following message to His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV, Catholicos Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of his consecration as a bishop.

The Golden Jubilee of the episcopal consecration of Your Holiness, which has culminated in your distinguished ministry as Catholicos Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East, offers me the opportunity to extend my congratulations and prayerful good wishes to you.

I thank the Lord for the many blessings he has bestowed on the Assyrian Church of the East through your ministry, and I am grateful for your commitment to promoting constructive dialogue, fruitful cooperation and growing friendship between our Churches. I recall your presence at the funeral of John Paul II and, previously, your 1994 visit to Rome to sign a Common Declaration on Christology. The subsequent Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East has borne many fruits. I renew the

hope which I expressed during your visit to Rome in June 2007, that "the fruitful labor which the Commission has accomplished over the years can continue, while never losing sight of the ultimate goal of our common journey towards the re-establishment of full communion."

I wish also to reiterate my solidarity with the Christian communities in Iraq and throughout the Middle East, praying that effective forms of common witness to the Gospel and pastoral collaboration in the service of peace, reconciliation and unity may be deepened between the Catholic and Assyrian faithful.

Your Holiness, on this significant anniversary, I pray that the love of God the Father may enfold you, the wisdom of the Son enlighten you and the fire of the Holy Spirit continue to inspire you. With sentiments of respect, I extend to Your Holiness a fraternal embrace in Jesus Christ our Savior. BENEDICTUS PP. XVI. – Vatican website.