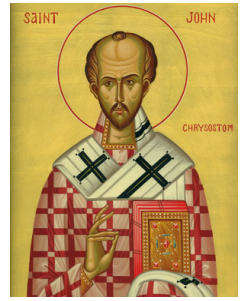


Light of the East

Newsletter of the Society of Saint John Chrysostom

Western Region Edition

Website: www.lightoftheeast.org



Volume 7, Number 1

Fall, 2012

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.

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, Colledgeville, Minnesota). For more information, please visit Belarmine.LMU.edu/

An update on the situation of Christians in Syria

Background:

Approximately ten percent of the population of Syria is Christian.

Three Patriarchates are located there. Greek (Antiochian) Orthodox, located in Damascus, headed by His Beatitude, Ignatius IV; Melkite-Greek Catholic, located in Damascus, headed by His Beatitude, Gregorios III and Syrian Orthodox, located in Saydnaya, headed by His Beatitude, Ignatius Zacca I.

Additional churches in Syria with sizable communities include the Syriac Catholic Church, Maronite Catholic Church and the Armenian Apostolic Church. Smaller communities of Roman Catholics and Protestants can also be found.

The majority of the Christians in Syria are all part of the Apostolic Church of Antioch, founded by Sts. Peter, Paul and Barnabas in apostolic times. “It was in Antioch that the followers of Jesus were first called Christians (Acts 11:26). After Antioch was destroyed by an earthquake the Greek Patriarchate relocated to Damascus.

Modern day Antioch is located today within the border of Turkey. There is still a small Greek Orthodox Community there dedicated to St. George, as well as a few Protestants and Roman



Collateral damage of the conflict in Syria damages a church.

Catholics. You may hear it mentioned in news reports as Antakya, the current Turkish pronunciation.

The current situation:

Christians are fleeing the country, principally to Lebanon, but also to Jordan.

Christians are a protected minority in Syria and as a result have prospered through the years. Thus, the Christian community has for the most part, quietly supports the Assad regime.

Unfortunately, the current conflict is taking on a sectarian nature. The Baathist Party of President Assad, known as Alawaites is comprised principally of those who follow a relaxed version of Shiite Islam, while the majority of Moslems in Syria belong to the Sunni group. Thus, a minority Islamic

governs a majority of a different Islamic party.

Iran (Shia) and Saudi Arabia (Sunni) are major players in the conflict, resulting in violent sectarianism.

Christians are caught in the middle. This same type of conflict evolved in Iraq following the United States intervention there and this has resulted in the near destruction of ancient Christianity in that country where it, too, has existed since Apostolic times. The Christian population there has been reduced from 1,800,00 to around 600,000.

Now the Christians of Syria fear the same thing might unfold in their country. As the struggle continues the Christians are faced with the horrible decision of staying or leaving.

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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A message from the President of SSJC-Western Region

Moral courage

By the Very Reverend Father George Morelli, PhD.

Members of the Society of St. John Chrysostom, in fact those baptized into any of the Apostolic Churches, have a very important responsibility this Fall season. American citizens will have the opportunity to vote for the President of the United States as well as for any number of other national, state and local offices. The mix of religion and politics in issues in this electoral season has made the usual politicking even more contentious and challenging than in past years.



In no manner shape or form is this message meant to support any particular candidate or political party. The only purpose of this message is to serve as a reminder for all to carefully discern the *Mind of Christ and His Church* on the critical moral issues raised in this election and to let Christ and the teachings of His Apostolic Churches be our guide in our witness by our political words, deeds and votes.

Unfortunately, some candidates want to usurp our right speak up for ourselves on issues. A particularly egregious statement I constantly hear from candidates for office from all political parties in the United States is, "What the American people want is. . . ." To have some modicum of honesty, politicians could at the very least somewhat qualify such arrogant rhetoric by saying: "Some American people want" I, for example, am one of these "American people." For a candidate to imply that I want something against the teachings of Christ and His Church is to take away the freedom of speech and religion granted to me – and all - by the constitution and, more importantly, granted by God to all to mankind by His making us in His image and giving us free will.

Despite the differences that still prevent full communion of all the Apostolic Churches, our witness should be informed by a Christ-like conscience. Furthermore, our conscience should be nurtured by deep prayer and by cultivating the virtue of discernment. It would be well for us to meditate on the counsel of St. Gregory of Sinai found in the *Philokalia*, Vol.4 (p.222): "A person is perfect in this life when . . . he receives the grace to assimilate himself to the various stages of Christ's life belief is knowledge or contemplation of the Holy Spirit scrupulous discernment in matters of dogma constitutes full knowledge of the true faith." **i** In union with His Church, may the Holy Spirit accompany all of us in this matter.

ENDNOTES

i Palmer, G.E.H., Sherrard, P. & Ware, K. (Eds.). (1995). *The Philokalia, Volume 4: The Complete Text; Compiled by St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain & St. Makarios of Corinth*. London: Faber and Faber.

SOCIETY OF ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM
-WESTERN REGION-

Invites you to a presentation on

Christianity and Islam:
A Coptic Perspective.

Saturday, September 22, 2012

10 a.m. – 1 p.m. (approx)

ST. MARINA COPTIC ORTHODOX
CHURCH

5 Wrigley, Irvine, CA

Tel: 949-951-5165 <http://www.stmarina.org/>

Lunch will be provided by St. Marina Church

A freewill offering will be taken.



Society of St. John Chrysostom business meeting: 2 p.m. Contact: Fr.
George Morelli; 760-920-6530



Directions: From 5Fwy, North or South, Exit at Bake parkway. East on Bake to Muirlands; left on Muirlands; left at Wrigley (first block). Church is on left.

N.B. Special Parking Instructions:

use buildings 1,4,5,6,7,8,9, and 10, or street parking on Church side ONLY.

Do Not Park in Buildings 2 and 3!!

Cars parked in wrong areas may be towed at owner's expense.

Identity Among Middle East Christians

By *Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi* on 1.5.12 <http://spectator.org/archives/2012/01/05/identity-among-middle-east-chr/print>

What accounts for clear examples of some Middle-Eastern Christians' strong loyalty to Islamic regimes?

In the course of the present unrest across the Middle East and North Africa, it has become clear that questions of identity are going to be extremely important in deciding the future paths of the various countries in turmoil, not only as regards the divide between Islamists and secularists, but also concerning ethnic and sectarian tensions in countries like Syria, Yemen, and Libya.

For Christians in the region, the issue of identity will similarly be important in determining ways to adapt to the changing political order. This naturally raises the problem of how exactly these Christians define themselves. For example, what does it mean to speak of an "Arab Christian"? Which Christians in the region feel the strongest affinity with such a description? Which ones reject it most vehemently?

It is often said that the concepts of Arab nationalism and pan-Arabism were formulated in significant part by Christians who did not wish for their communities to continue enduring discrimination. For instance, one could point to the fact that Michel Aflaq -- a founder of the Ba'ath Party -- and George Habash, an Arab nationalist thinker who founded the Marxist terrorist group known as the "Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine," were both Christians.

However, what is often overlooked is that these Christians who were the most vociferous and staunch proponents of Arab nationalism and the notion of "Arab Christians" have been either Antiochian Greek Orthodox or Melkite Greek Catholics, two Christian sects concentrated in Syria, Lebanon, and the Palestinian territories. Aflaq and Habash were Antiochian Greek Orthodox, but a case in point for the Melkite Greek Catholics is the current patriarch of the church: Gregorios III.

In an interview with the Italian monthly magazine, *30Giorni*, back in 2005, Patriarch Gregorios even went so far as to state that "the Melkite bishop Neophotos Edelby... would always repeat: we are Arabs, not Muslims.... I add: we are the Church of Islam."

As for the terrorist attack in October 2010 on the Syriac Catholic "Our Lady of Salvation" church in Baghdad and similar assaults on Christians in the region, His Beatitude characterized the persecution as a "conspiracy planned by Zionism and some Christians with Zionist orientations... that aims at depicting Arabs and Muslims in Arab countries as terrorist and fundamentalist murderers," according to a report in Lebanon's *Daily Star*.

Meanwhile, when it comes to the uprising in Syria, His Beatitude has condemned the Arab League's suspension of Syria from the organization on the grounds that the move has caused separation in the Arab world, with the Patriarchate Council affirming the following, as noted by the Syrian Arab News

Agency: "The criterion of the Arab League's success will be through its capability to solve the Palestinian cause, not through division or hostility."

In contrast, among the Maronites in Lebanon and the Copts in Egypt, the sentiment is more divided. One will almost certainly encounter members of both groups who identify as "Arab Christians," yet there has been a counter-trend on the question of identity that has never existed for the Antiochian Greek Orthodox or the Melkite Greek Catholics. For the Maronites, an alternative identity has been offered in the ideology of "Phoenicianism," which traces a link between the ancient Phoenicians and the Lebanese of today, besides taking pride in Lebanon's multicultural nature. A notable proponent of this view has been the well-known poet Said Akl, who reached his centenary last July.

Among Copts, there is the notion of "Pharaonism," which prefers to stress Egyptian identity as a combination of descent from the Ancient Egyptians, Egypt's historically close links with the Mediterranean world, and individual nation-state patriotism. This sentiment is shared by some Egyptian Muslims, and one of the most prominent advocates of Pharaonism in the 20th century was the liberal Muslim intellectual Taha Hussein.

Finally, one comes to the issue of identity among the Christians of Iraq. In this case, we find a virtually unanimous rejection of the term "Arab Christians." Instead, Christians in Iraq identify as ethnic Assyrians, although among some Chaldean Catholics there is a preference for a distinct Chaldean identity.

There is even a political party for Assyrians known as the "Assyrian Democratic Movement," which aims to secure an autonomous province for Assyrians in the northern Nineveh plains of Iraq.

One might note in objection to my point that Tariq Aziz -- the vice-president of Iraq during Saddam's rule -- was a Chaldean. On the contrary, he is overwhelmingly viewed as a traitor by Assyrians. Not only did Aziz drop his Christian birth name Mikhail Yuhanna, but he also abetted Saddam's Arabization policy in the north of Iraq, which led to the destruction of numerous Assyrian villages and the inhabitants' forced resettlement in Baghdad and points south in order to make way for Arab settlers.

What is apparent from these observations is that the degree of absorption of the Arabic language into the various churches correlates with the prevalence of the concept of "Arab Christians." In the cases of the Antiochian Greek Orthodox and Melkite Greek Catholic churches, Arabic has come to dominate as the main liturgical language over Byzantine Greek. The Maronites and Copts used to maintain Syriac and Coptic respectively as their sole liturgical languages even after the Muslim conquests, but have gradually come to incorporate Arabic to a limited degree as their adherents have adopted Arabic as their language of everyday communication.

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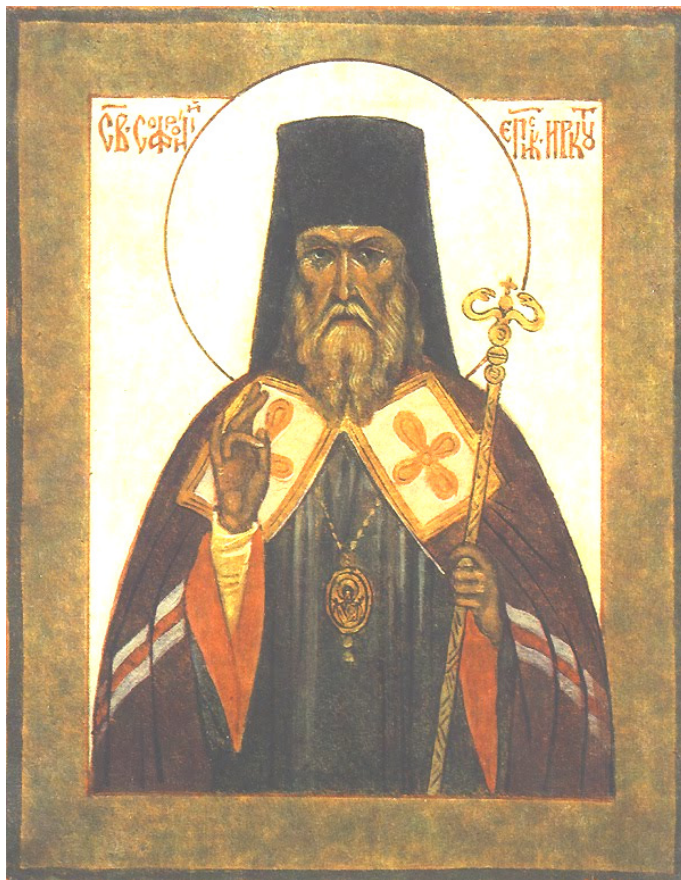
The Last Ancient Patriarch of Jerusalem: Saint Sophronius

by Robert Shaffern from: <http://www.crisismagazine.com/2012/the-last-ancient-patriarch-of-jerusalem-saint-sophronius>

Heavy-hearted, Sophronius, the patriarch of Jerusalem, set out to meet the Caliph, the successor to the Muslim prophet Muhammad, at the gates of the Holy City. The surrender had already been negotiated, after a siege that had lasted four months. Sophronius, patriarch of the city since 634, had decided that city must be surrendered. For several years, Palestine had been cut off from the rest of Christian-Byzantine territory. Sophronius could have known nothing of Emperor Heraclius's intentions to relieve or leave the city to its fate. He did know that invaders had ransacked villages of Palestine for the second time in a generation. That terror certainly encouraged him to accept surrender in exchange for the lives of the Jerusalemites and the safety of its churches. In the meantime, he sent many of the city's precious relics, including the True Cross, to Constantinople, where they could be kept safe. Shortly after the capitulation of the city, Sophronius seems to have fled into a voluntary exile. He died shortly thereafter, sometime in 638, many said of a broken heart.

Sophronius lived in a religiously and politically tumultuous era. Violence between Monophysite and Chalcedonian Christians often erupted in the great cities of Antioch and Alexandria. These two rival groups had been at odds since the fifth century, when oriental Christians began to insist on the one nature in the incarnate Christ, in opposition to the teaching of the Council of Chalcedon in 451, which taught two natures in Christ, one fully divine and the other fully human. In addition to this religious strife, Byzantine politics destabilized, and made the empire vulnerable to invasion from Persia, the Roman Empire's age-old enemy. In 602, a bloody coup in the palace in Constantinople ushered in a decade of terror and instability, which the Persians used to conquer Egypt, Syria, and Palestine, all of which remained in Sassanid hands for a generation.

Sophronius was born sometime around 560 in Damascus, but was formed by the Christianity of Palestine. Great monastic and liturgical creativity flourished in Christ's homeland during the sixth century. Still to be seen today are the remnants of numerous *lavra*, the cliff monasteries in the Judean countryside, some of which are still living communities. *Lavra* monasticism sought to combine the eremitic and cenobitic observations of monasticism. Between the hours of communal worship, when the monks gathered in church for the celebration of the Office, they remained in solitary prayer in cells bored out of the cliffsides of the Judean desert. Sophronius joined the *lavra* of St. Chariton, where he became the disciple and friend of the spiritual master John Moschus. In 604, the two monks



Icon of St. Sophronius

left St. Chariton to travel throughout Egypt, where they studied monasticism in its homeland. They became advisors to the patriarch of Alexandria, who in 607 encouraged them to gather the lore of the desert fathers. John Moschus collected these in his *The Spiritual Meadow*, a catalogue of the lives and deeds of mostly Middle Eastern holy men. Some of Sophronius's own works survive; they clearly influenced the thought of the most creative of the later Fathers, Maximus the Confessor (died 662). All three of these great figures emphasized deification—the divinization and glorification of humanity by the grace and glory of God.

Upheaval in the imperial capital must have contributed to their decision to leave Egypt for Rome. In 602, a general named Phokas deposed and executed the Emperor Maurice. Phokas was a cruel, bloodthirsty tyrant whose rule amounted to a reign of terror. In 610, a general from Africa named Heraclius gathered an army and deposed and executed Phokas. The political instability proved a catastrophe, for the Sassanid Persians took advantage and seized the regions of Syria, Palestine, and Egypt from Byzantine control. Persecution of Christianity accompanied the military campaign, for the Persians slaughtered lay and clerical Christians, and destroyed numerous churches. They took Jerusalem's most precious relic, the True Cross, off to Mesopotamia. Many Byzantine-Christians fled to the west.

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What Can Orthodox and Catholics Teach Each Other?

From *His Broken Body: Understanding and Healing the Schism between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches* by Laurent Cleenewerck. <http://orthocath.wordpress.com/2012/06/29/what-can-orthodox-and-catholics-teach-each-other/>

Both Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism are facing difficult new challenges. Christianity has become an open market where competition from upstart denominations is extremely fierce. The temptation to bury one's head in the sand (Eastern Orthodoxy) or to mimic successful Evangelical methods and worship styles (Roman Catholicism) is as great as it is destructive. In North America, converts from Protestantism have provided their respective 'teams' with solid theological responses, but the struggle remains very difficult. In the rest of the world, the tide of sectarian Christianity (notably Adventism, Mormonism and Pentecostalism) continues its damage to the ancient apostolic Churches.

While Rome has effectively embraced a liturgical modernism as a remedy that has proven even worse than the disease, Orthodoxy is often in denial that anything needs to be fixed liturgically or organizationally. In fact, both sides can learn and benefit from the other's strengths and experiences, as we shall see.

1. Catholics must become Orthodox

The rift between East and West was already extreme by the ninth century and reached its apex with Vatican I. But this apex was also marked by a growing sense that the theological and liturgical path of Roman Catholicism had reached some kind of a dead-end. Vatican II was an attempt to engineer a conciliar return to the sources that would reinterpret the Roman Catholic legacy of the past thousand years for the next millennium. Jean Danielou and Yves Congar – both Early Church scholars – were very influential at the council, but their vision was only partially achieved. As we have seen, the new mass of Pope Paul VI was an overreaction to the possible excesses of the Tridentine rite of Pius V. What was obscured or even lost in modern Roman Catholic worship is not just reverence and a few prayers; it is the eschatological experience of the Eucharist as an ascent to heaven, a manifestation on earth of the eternal liturgy of the angels and saints. Everything comes together to make the modern mass an expedited Eucharistic gathering of the community – or at least part of it since there are now various kinds of masses served at different times. Vestments and architectural styles are a manifestation of today's trends and attitudes: universal ecclesiology becomes incarnate in its liturgical consequence. As a result of this anchoring in the present and disconnection from the apostolic past and eschatological future, the Roman Catholic priesthood is often disoriented. Liberal theology is rampant in seminaries and universities beam in your own? How where many have rejected both patristic and scholastic theology in order to look for new ways to 'rescue Christianity from the New Testament.' I would like to

suggest that if Roman Catholicism rediscovers and embraces the liturgical spirit of Eastern Christianity, the crisis of post-Vatican II liturgics will end. But this cannot be achieved without a concurrent embracing of eschatological-Eucharistic ecclesiology and pre-Nicene theology. Time is running short for a Vatican III council that would prepare the Roman Catholic world for the third millennium with an era of convergence and reconciliation with Eastern Orthodoxy.

2. Orthodox must become Catholic

The message of the Eastern Orthodox world to Roman Catholicism (and all other Christians) is often reduced to 'leave us alone, we'd like to pretend you don't exist.' This fortress mentality is also a subconscious admission that 'the God-protected city' is in fact a weak and easy prey. The temptation to curl away from the world leads to nationalism and a failure to embrace the catholic-universal vocation of the Church. As a result, Orthodox Christians see themselves as Russian, Serbian or Greek Orthodox members of a national Church whose head is located in a political capital.

The contrast with Roman Catholicism is striking: the ability of the Church of Rome to coordinate worldwide missions, social work and a consistent doctrinal message should make the Orthodox think. The need for a universal center of unity and arbitration is obvious, and it does not have to mean absolute supremacy or infallibility. Two admonitions of our Lord come to mind:

"Why do you notice the splinter in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the wooden can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me remove that splinter in your eye,' when you do not even notice the wooden beam in your own eye? You hypocrite! Remove the wooden beam from your eye first; then you will see clearly to remove the splinter in your brother's eye" (Luke 6:40-41)

"Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20)

The real tragedy about the Schism is the lack of concern about its tragic consequences. The voice that should still cry out from heaven is that of Patriarch Peter of Antioch who had written in 1054:

"I tremble lest, while you [Photius] endeavor to sew up the wound, it may turn to something worse, to schism; lest while you try to raise up what has been smitten down, a worse fall may be in store. Consider the obvious result of all of this, I mean the yawning gulf that must ultimately separate from our holy Church [Orthodox Antioch and Constantinople] that magnanimous and apostolic see [Rome]... Life henceforth will be filled with wickedness, and the whole world will be overturned..."

Continued on next page

We should not have to think in terms of 'mutual interest' to discuss cooperation and reconciliation, but it may be that a common threat will do more for the cause of unity than our concern for the unity of the body of Christ.

3. Loving the Saints

If we confess Cyprian, Basil, Leo and Martin as saints and members of the same Body, what we also confess is that in spite of our earthly differences, heaven is filled with both 'Roman Catholic' and 'Eastern Orthodox' saints. In order to achieve visible and authentic unity, there must first be a desire to embrace what is best on the other side, and to find room for legitimate differences of expression. I am convinced that if Orthodox Christians can discover and love such lights as St. Therese of Lisieux or St. Solanus Casey, and if Catholics can embrace as their own St. Seraphim of Sarov or St. Elizabeth Fyodorovna, a new form of dialogue can take place: one motivated by love and respect. In general, Roman Catholicism has been more generous with its beatification and canonization process, with the result that a great variety of remarkable souls are presented as inspiring models for us today. By contrast, recent Eastern Orthodox saints tend to be martyrs and monastics: to my knowledge, not a single woman has been glorified for North American Orthodoxy, which means that if we can embrace Sts. Leo and Martin, we can certainly be inspired by Sts. Mary Cabrini or Katharine Drexel.

If we fail to realize that we are only "witnesses to the Truth" of Jesus Christ and imagine that our witness – in life and theology – will always be perfect, we are chasing the same mirage that leads countless American Christians from denomination to denomination, until one imagines that 'the perfect Church' has been discovered. If we accept the fact that our priests, bishops and ecclesial structures can make mistakes, we can focus on the incarnate Truth and deal reasonably with the theological formulas that are as fingers pointing to the moon: they are only signs, imperfectly crafted in human language, to a reality that is "ineffable, inconceivable, invisible, incomprehensible." In a court of law, a human witness can be accurate without being perfect, but inaccuracies can also lead to a 'falsification of the word of God' (2 Corinthians 4:2) This is the mandate given to us by Scripture, both as individuals and as communities. Let us deal with our shortcomings without trepidation and strive to be conformed to Him who is the "faithful witness" (Revelation 1:5; John 18:37).

Middle Eastern Christian identity

Continued from page 4

" However, the Assyrian churches, whose adherents primarily speak various Eastern Neo-Aramaic dialects as their mother tongue, still maintain Syriac as their sole liturgical language." In short, the degree of linguistic and cultural Arabization over time has played more of a part in the formulation of identity among Middle Eastern Christians than a simple desire to avoid persecution at the hands of the Muslims majorities.

You can learn all about the various churches that make up Eastern Christianity here: <http://www.cnewa.org/default.aspx?ID=1&pagetypeID=9&sitecode=US&pageno=1>

Orthodox/Catholic Consultation continues study of role of laity

The North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological consultation continued their study of the role of lay people in their churches during their 82nd meeting at Hellenic College/Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Brookline, Massachusetts, June 5-7.

Papers presented at the meeting included "Canonical Reflections on the Rights of Orthodox Laity" by Father Patrick Viscuso of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America; "Further Reflections on the Laity from Ancient Syriac Christianity: Laity in the Image of Christ" by Susan Ashbrook Harvey, Ph.D., of Brown University; "The Lay-Clergy Distinction in Recent Catholic Theology" by Sister of Charity of Leavenworth Susan K. Wood of Marquette University; and "The Role of Lay Members of the Christian Faithful in the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches" by Chorbishop John D. Faris, pastor of St. Louis Gonzaga Maronite Church in Utica, New York.

Ukrainian Catholic Patriarch seeks dialogue with Russian Orthodox

Ukrainian Catholic Patriarch Sviatoslav was asked by a journalist recently from the Polish News Agency KAI about the relationship between the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC) and the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) and how to establish a dialogue between these churches.

The UGCC head has repeatedly stated that a key issue for the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church is the dialogue with the Orthodox Church, especially with the Moscow Patriarchate, because the UGCC is not against its Orthodox brethren. As for the ROC, they always accuse the Greek Catholics that in the 90s in Western Ukraine they took churches from the Moscow Patriarchate.

In this regard, the head of the UGCC said: "Above all, we must put an end to inefficient conversations and review common strategies. If we want an agreement, then we must realize that some methods used in the past have been ineffective. For example, calls for the liquidation of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in Ukraine. It is impossible, because this church exists by the will of God, which the Blessed John Paul II repeated many times."

According to His Beatitude, the Moscow Patriarchate is not always based on proven historical facts: "For example, Metropolitan Hilarion several times repeated that in the 90s we took from them 500 churches in Western Ukraine. This must be the biggest obstacle for a meeting between the Pope and the Patriarch of Moscow."

The head of the UGCC said that in March of this year during an audience with the Pope, he gave the exact statistics of the Orthodox churches in Western Ukraine: "In those regions where, according to Metropolitan Hilarion such incidents took place, today there are more than two thousand Orthodox

Continued on page 8

Saint Sophronius

Continued from page 5

Like many other refugees of the religious and political tumult of the east, Sophronius and Moschus found sanctuary in Rome. Christian worship in the east was badly damaged, and the length of the Persian occupation (about 15 years) meant that many of the young grew up knowing little of Christian faith or liturgy.

Heraclius, however, rallied Byzantine forces and had decisively defeated the Persians by 628. Sophronius returned to Palestine and was named patriarch of the city in 634. The True Cross returned to Jerusalem amid triumphal rejoicing. Still, Byzantine political and religious authorities faced a colossal task. Both government and church desperately needed time to be reconstructed. Alas, that time was not forthcoming. Muhammad himself had planned on a campaign against Christian Syria and Palestine, but when he saw Heraclius's armies decided to bide his time. In the meantime he died, but his successor Umar waged a campaign of conquest in fulfillment of Muhammad's ambitions. The great battle of the Yarmuk river in 636 spelled the doom of Christian government in the Levantine regions. The Byzantine army was utterly destroyed. The Persian and Muslim wars, coming as they did in quick succession, had exhausted the Byzantine Empire's military resources. Heraclius, who lived until 641, could do nothing to recover what had just been recovered. He spent the rest of his days broken hearted, having seen his great reconquests lost.

The feast of Saint Sophronius is observed on March 11, but it is also fitting to remember his struggles on July 15, the date of the reconquest of Jerusalem by the First Crusade

Eastern Christian Publications

New magazine: *Theosis: Spiritual Reflections from the Christian East*

Based on the success of our "Fortnight for Freedom" bulletin insert, in conjunction with the upcoming Year of Faith, and Pope Benedict's call for a "new evangelization," Eastern Christian Publications has developed a new popular level monthly magazine called *Theosis: Spiritual Reflections from the Christian East*. It will be distributed as a print and eZine version starting with the first issue for September 2012.

Each issue of *Theosis* will be over 100 pages of several short essays for spiritual reflection on topics such as Prayer, Eucharist, Sacraments, Scripture, Holy Icons, Sacramental Living, Spirituality, and a Feast of the Month. Contributors will be authors and theologians from a wide variety of Orthodox and Catholic Churches including Metropolitan Kallistos (Ware) and Archimandrite Robert Taft, SJ. A photo essay of an Eastern church somewhere in the world will also be featured. It will also include the Calendar of Saints for the month with daily prayers, and a short biography of each saint according to the Byzantine calendar.

Printed in full color with plenty of icons and photographs, *Theosis* will be printed in a pocket size edition so you can carry it with you everywhere, and read just a few pages each day. The eZine edition will be distributed by email both as an interactive PDF and as an ePub format.

The annual print subscription is only \$60.00 per year, or \$5.00 per month including postage. The eZine subscription is only \$29.95 per year, or about \$2.50 per month. Single issues and bulk quantity discounts are also available. More information and sample pages can be viewed at www.ecpubs.com/theosis.html, and you can subscribe online and buy individual issues at the same webpage.

Just let me know whether you would like to receive the print or eZine version, or both.

Sincerely yours in Christ,
Jack Figel, Publisher

Ukrainian Catholic/Russian Orthodox

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churches. But only two hundred of them belong to the Orthodox Church that is in communion with the Moscow Patriarchate. Other Orthodox churches in western Ukraine belong to other Orthodox Churches that Moscow does not recognize as canonical. This means that the tragedy of the Orthodox Church in Western Ukraine is not caused by our existence and our presence but by the division among the Orthodox. If the Orthodox Church were united, it would have four times as many churches than Metropolitan Hilarion says there are. And where did these two thousand churches come from? A third are Roman Catholic churches that were given to the Orthodox; another third are our churches that Stalin after World War II gave to the Orthodox when our church was banned. The rest were built by the Orthodox. So I do not understand what the problem is. We are always open to a dialogue, as already stated my predecessor, Patriarch Lubomyr, and do not forbid anyone to build a church or belong to this or that religion. We demand only justice and recognition of our right to exist." – *RISU, June 14.*

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