

Light of the East

Newsletter of the Society of Saint John Chrysostom
Western Region Edition
Website: www.lightoftheeast.org



Volume 14, Number 1

Autumn 2018

SSJC-WR reorganizes, plans for the future

By Jim Trageser

After a hiatus of just about two years, *Light of the East* — the newsletter of the Society of Saint John Chrysostom, Western Region — is resuming publication with this issue.

Turnover in the chapter's leadership led to some discontinuity in program planning. While some

informal monthly luncheons were being held in San Diego's North County area, there were no other presentations and no issues of *Light of the East* were published in 2017.

Over this past summer, the leadership of the Society reconvened and took stock of our situation. We all agreed that

the work of the Society remains vitally important, that it matters: That restoring full communion between the ancient, liturgical and canonical Churches tracing back to the Apostles — Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, and Assyrian Church of the East — remains one of

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Ukraine question leads to rift in Orthodox Communion

By John Burger
Aletheia Staff Writer

A long-simmering dispute between two of the world's leading Orthodox Churches got ratcheted up in October when the Ecumenical Patriarch, considered "first among equals" among the leaders of Orthodoxy, renewed a decision to grant Ukrainian Orthodox faithful ecclesiastical independence from the Russian Orthodox Church.

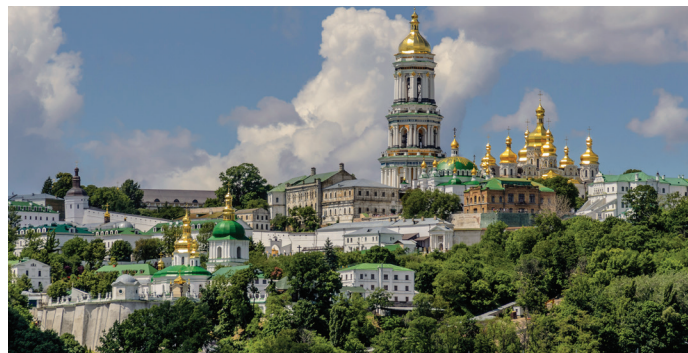


Photo courtesy Falin, via WikiCommons
The Kiev Monastery of the Caves, heart of the Orthodox Church in Ukraine.

Ukrainian Christians, who trace their spiritual heritage to Constantinople in the Eastern Roman Empire, have lobbied for a century for "autocephaly," the right to govern themselves while remaining in full communion with the other Orthodox Churches of the world. Autocephaly is an administrative issue that does not disrupt the

unity of belief and liturgical practices, the valid ad-

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Happenings!

Orientale Lumen XXIII Conference:

"One City, One Bishop: Church Boundaries Past, Present and Future"

The dates for the next *Orientale Lumen* Conference in Washington, D.C., will be June 17-20, 2019. More details to follow.

Ecumenical Pilgrimage to the Holy Land:

Patriarch Emeritus Gregorios of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church has invited members of the *Orientale Lumen* Foundation, and the Society, to visit Jerusalem next summer.

Tentative dates are July 10-24. More details will be shared as they become available.

The Society of Saint John Chrysostom

The Society of Saint John Chrysostom is an Ecumenical group of clergy and lay people that promotes Eastern Christianity and Ecumenical Dialogue between the Eastern and Western Churches. It has sponsored the Eastern Churches Journal and the annual Orientale 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 that present information about the Eastern Churches
- Organize and conduct pilgrimages and conferences that encourage ecumenical dialogue
- Contribute to fundraising activities that 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 and Orthodox Seminaries.

Western Region

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Light of the East

Official newsletter of the Society of Saint John Chrysostom. Western Region is published quarterly by the Western Region of the SSJC and is distributed free of charge to all SSJC members and through churches throughout the Western Region of the USA.

Editor: Jim Trageser, jimtrageser@gmail.com

Executive Editor: Archimandrite James Babcock, sophiamelkite@gmail.com

Distribution: PO Box 189, Temecula, CA 92593

Membership: Robert Greenwell, 2700 Katherine Street, El Cajon, CA 92020

rjgreenwell@sbcglobal.net

Message from the President of SSJC-Western Region



Commitment, hope, work: SSJC-WR update

By the Very Reverend Archpriest George Morelli PhD

I recently saw a new Ken Burns Documentary, "The Mayo Clinic: Faith — Hope — Science," on the PBS TV station here in San Diego. I had already been thinking of the KPBS model as a guide for the restructuring of the SSJC-WR, but here was a program to enliven the spirit of the organization as well.

Dr. W.W. Mayo came from England to the United States in the mid 19th Century. He studied chemistry and physics in England under famous Quaker scientist John Dalton, and considered himself agnostic. However, that did not stop him from partnering with the Sisters of St. Francis of Rochester, MN, and founding what has become one of the premier healing centers in the world today: The Mayo Clinic.

Remarkably, as I recall, the documentary mentioned that Mayo once commented that "such healing, at the hospital, cannot be done without faith." I cannot help but think of the integration of Orthodox spirituality and the best of physical medicine which characterized the monastery hospitals of the 3rd and 4th century Byzantium, such as those established by Sts. John Chrysostom and Basil.

The hospital sisters did all out of their unwavering commitment to Christ, and this, too, should be the enlivening motivation of all us who want to continue with and move forward the mission of the Society of St. John Chrysostom. We all know that the primary mission of the Society is healing – not physical illness like the Mayo Clinic, but the sickness of the divisions among the Apostolic Churches.

Accompanying our commitment to Christ is our hope that, as St. Paul tells us: "If then any be in Christ ... the old things are passed away, behold all things are made new." (2Cor 5: 17). The old things are the divisions that make up the sin of the separation of the Churches. The 'new things,' in Christ, that we hope, desire and long for, is the intercommunion of the Apostolic Churches and eventually all communities that label themselves Christian. This being, of course, the fulfill-

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Parish profiles: San Marcos, California

St. Petka Serbian Orthodox Church

Founded: 1986

Pastor: Protopresbyter Milovan Katanic

Jurisdiction: Western American Diocese of the Serbian Orthodox Church in North and South America

Divine Liturgy: 10 a.m.

Address: 1854 Knob Hill Road, San Marcos

Phone: 760-743-2178

Web: www.stpetkachurch.com



Photos by Jim Trageser



St. Mark's Roman Catholic Church

Founded: 1963

Pastor: Father Bruce Orsborn

Jurisdiction: Diocese of San Diego, Roman Catholic Church

Holy Mass: 8 a.m. daily; see Web site for Sunday schedule

Address: 1147 Discovery St., San Marcos

Deer Springs Mission Church: 2557 Sarver Lane, San Marcos

Phone: 760-744-1540

Web: www.stmarkscatholicchurch.org



Society's mission of Christian unity remains vital, urgent

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the most important tasks facing our patriarchs and popes. The society supports those ecumenical efforts at a very grassroots level by working to familiarize members of the Western and Eastern canonical Churches with one another, to strengthen the ties of brotherhood among all who worship the risen Christ within the historic canonical, sacramental liturgical Churches.

A series of meetings have been held to determine the best course to continue the important work of SSJC-WR, and to do so in a manner that is proportionate to our resources — in money, in talent (time), and in geography.

These meetings are ongoing, are guided by and grounded in prayer, and are open to any eligible members with the interest to join us.

Most of our current leadership is concentrated in the greater San Diego region. Further, said leadership is constituted solely from members of Catholic (Roman and Eastern) and Eastern Orthodox Churches. We deeply desire the

involvement and support of members of the Oriental Orthodox Churches (Coptic, Tewahedo, Armenian and Malankara), and the Assyrian Church of the East (the sister Church of the Chaldean Church, which is in communion with Rome).

We are also hoping that those with a passion for canonical ecumenicism will help us carry our message to congregations in the greater Los Angeles and Inland Empire areas. The "Western Region" in our name has been somewhat undefined, but in the past we have included as many Assyrian, Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox congregations as possible from the eight counties in Southern California: Santa Barbara, Ventura, Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Riverside, Orange, San Diego and Imperial. There are more than 400 congregations of the four canonical apostolic Churches in this area, and another 100 in adjacent Baja Cali-

fornia Norte. There are also several dozen universities and high schools in the Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches, and dozens more convents, monasteries and seminaries.

At the very highest levels, all four of the historic apostolic Churches are in discussions with one another about restoring the communion that existed in the first centuries of the Church. With our mutual apostolic heritage, common understanding of the sacraments and priesthood, and a shared liturgical life in faith, the leaders of our sister Churches are working to overcome the human barriers that have

led to our splintering of God's one Church.

This is a journey we all are traveling together.

Within the last few years, much progress has been made. In April 2017, Pope Tawadros II and Pope Francis issued a joint proclamation in which the Catholic and Coptic Churches recognize each other's baptisms as fully valid. (Thus, a baptized Catholic who wanted to join a Coptic

congregation would not have to be rebaptized.) There have also been recent meetings between Francis and Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians; and between Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and Tawadros II.

And, sadly, there are sometimes setbacks. The Moscow Patriarchate severing communion with Constantinople just last month. The refusal of five Churches to attend the 2016 Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church in Crete.

However, as Pope Francis pointed out a few years ago in response to another round of killing of Christians in the Middle East by ISIS, these were not Coptic martyrs. And others lost in the ongoing genocide were not Assyrian martyrs, nor Chaldean Catholic martyrs, nor were others Orthodox martyrs nor Protestant martyrs: All were *Christian* martyrs,

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Why St. John Chrysostom?

Born in Antioch in 349 AD, John became Archbishop of Constantinople in 397. His rich oratory in defense of Christian beliefs and values earned him the sobriquet "Golden Mouth," or Chrysostom. It also earned him the enmity of government officials, and he was sent into exile, where he died.

He is one of the few post-apostolic saints equally revered among Christians in both the East and West, and is a perfect patron for the cause of canonical ecumenicism.

Russia, Ukraine have shared Christian heritage, history

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ministration of the Sacraments, and the apostolic succession of bishops.

Both Ukraine and Russia trace their spiritual roots to the city of Kyiv, or Kiev. Before the Great Schism between Rome and the Eastern Orthodox, Prince Volodymyr, or Vladimir, of Kyivan Rus, accepted Christianity from the seat of the Archbishop of Constantinople and had his pagan nation baptized. That event, in 988, was the beginning of Christianity in the Slavic East.

In the Middle Ages, because Kyiv was under siege from the Mongols, Church leaders there moved to the city of Vladimir and eventually to Moscow. Around the time of the fall of Constantinople in 1453, a Russian Orthodox Church was emerging, and Kyiv came under the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and later the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The Kyivan Church continued under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople until 1686, when it was transferred to the jurisdiction of Moscow.

After a couple of failed attempts for autocephaly in Ukraine in the 1920s and 1940s, the issue was revived in the midst of Ukrainian independence in 1991, following the breakup of the Soviet Union, of which Ukraine was a part. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, which is recognized by the other Orthodox Churches of the world, found itself in competition for believers with a couple of breakaway groups: the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church. Neither was ever recognized by global Orthodoxy as “canonical” and were considered schismatic.

The issue languished until a renewed Russian aggression—in the form of the annexation of the



Photo courtesy Office of the President of the Russian Federation —www.kremlin.ru
Patriarch Kirill, right, leads Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew on a tour of the St. Nicholas Naval Cathedral in Kronstadt, Russia, during a 2010 visit to Russia by Bartholomew.

Ukrainian peninsula of Crimea in 2014 and a Russia-backed separatist movement in Eastern Ukraine—generated a backlash among nationalistic Ukrainians. Earlier this year, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, backed by the Ukrainian parliament, presented a formal request for autocephaly to Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I in Istanbul.

On April 20, Bartholomew, along with the Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, decided to grant autocephaly. Bartholomew dispatched two bishops to Ukraine to pave the way for eventual granting of a “*tomos*,” a formal declaration that the Ukrainian Orthodox Church was independent. The two bishop-legates returned recently to Istanbul, and after discussion, the Patriarch and the Synod on Thursday issued a declaration to “renew the decision already made that the Ecumenical Patriarchate proceed to the granting of Autocephaly to the Church of Ukraine.”

The decree issued on Thursday also acknowledged that the leaders of the breakaway Ukrainian Orthodox Churches were in schism “not for dogmatic reasons.” The Patriarch reinstated those lead-

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Ukraine issue leads to breach in Orthodox communion

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ers “to their hierarchical or priestly rank, and their faithful have been restored to communion with the Church.”

Bartholomew and his Synod also revoked the decision of 1686, that transferred Kyiv from the Patriarchate of Constantinople to the Patriarchate of Moscow, saying it was a decision done “for the circumstances of that time.”

Finally, the declaration appealed to “all sides involved that they avoid appropriation of churches, monasteries and other properties, as well as every other act of violence and retaliation, so that the peace and love of Christ may prevail.”

The Russian Orthodox Church, which all along has challenged Constantinople’s right to grant autocephaly unilaterally, slammed Thursday’s announcement as an “unprecedented anti-canonical act” that attempts to “destroy the very foundations of the canonical structure of the Orthodox Church.”

“It is hard to assess otherwise the announcement by Constantinople’s Synod to enter into canonical communion with schismatics and a man excommunicated from the Church,” said Russian Orthodox Church spokesman Vladimir Legoyda, referring to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church Church-Kyiv Patriarchate’s leader Filaret Denysenko.

“These actions will be given a proper competent assessment at the next meeting of the Russian Orthodox Church’s Holy Synod on October 15,” Legoyda said.

Earlier, Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill of Moscow was quoted as saying that his Church will “have to break eucharistical relations with Constantinople” if plans for autocephaly goes forward. This promise was kept on Oct. 15.

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Morelli

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ment of Christ’s priestly prayer at the institution of the Eucharist and following that, His arrest, passion, death and Resurrection: “That they all may be one, as thou, Father, in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” (Jn 17: 21)

We know that we are not the actual ‘physicians and surgeons’ of the healing of the divisions. That work belongs to the Church Councils and hierarchy. However, this does not diminish our role. Our unceasing work can be to promote the understanding of one another, as persons, that is to say children of God.

This will also involve the understanding and appreciation of the culture and traditions of the people making up the various churches as well as the idiosyncratic traditions of the various Church rites, such as music, language, temple structure etc.

Consider St. Mark’s (2: 3-4) account of the stretcher bearers who brought their palsied friend

to Christ for healing: “And they came to him, bringing one sick of the palsy, who was carried by four. And when they could not offer him unto him for the multitude, they uncovered the roof where he was; and opening it, they let down the bed wherein the man sick of the palsy lay.” We can do our ‘work’ by tenaciously calling out the sin of division and the need for healing for all, hierarchy, priests, laity and all children of God to hear.

This is a call for all to be supporters of the Society in any way they can. Importantly, but at the very least, by praying for the Society and being a ‘supporting member’ by making a generous yearly monetary contribution.

This is in partial imitation of the KPBS model. Some of us may respond to a call to be more active. This would entail a specific diaconia-apostolate in the Society. For example, setting up parish SSJC programs, newsletter work, working with the information technology committee members, etc. In our own way let us all be enlivened by the words of St. James (2: 26): “For even as the body without the spirit is dead; so also faith without works is dead.”

Other patriarchs weigh in on Ukrainian autocephaly

By Jim Trageser

In reaction to October's decision by the Moscow Patriarchate to break communion with the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, the leaders of other canonical apostolic churches have been weighing in.

There has been a variety of viewpoints put forth — with most attempting to reconcile the break between the two Orthodox Churches.

The Serbian Orthodox Church issued a statement Nov. 12 from its Holy Assembly of Bishops saying it did not recognize Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew's restoration of the two breakaway Ukrainian Churches.

However, the Serbian Church — which has historic ties to Moscow — also urged other Orthodox leader to “confirm and strengthen the unity of the Orthodox Church.”

Anastasios, Archbishop of Tirana, Durrës, and All Albania, wrote a letter to Patriarch Kiril of Moscow and All Russia on Nov. 7, saying that “My soul is sorrowful.”

He wrote that to break communion, to renounce

the sacraments of a fellow canonical church, was a “source of great concern.”

“It is unthinkable that the Divine Eucharist, the mystery *par excellence* of the infinite love and the utter humiliation of Christ, could be used as a weapon against another Church.”

Anastasios then asked Kiril if it was truly his intention to proclaim it a sin for member of the Russian Orthodox Church to partake of the Eucharist at a Divine Liturgy held under the authority of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

He then wrote that, “However serious they may be, the accumulated questions of jurisdiction on no account may constitute a cause for a Schism of Orthodoxy, anywhere in the world.”

Earlier, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church referred the request from the Moscow Pa-

triarchate for a meeting to discuss the Ecumenical Patriarchate's decision on Ukraine to committee, effectively delaying any decision. Bulgaria, along with Syria, enjoys one of the closest relationships with the Russian Church, and its reticence to react more strongly has most theological observers predicting the crisis will not spread further.



Photo courtesy Orthodox Church of Albania
Patriarch Anastasios, Archbishop of Tirana, Durrës, and All Albania.

Society recommits to unity

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and they belong to all of us, together.

We, the officers of the Society of St. John Chrysostom, Western Region, have recommitted ourselves to the mission of the Society — to serve as a bridge of fraternity between all branches of the ancient Church, and to support the ecumenical work of our blessed leaders.

The cause of Christian unity is a holy one, and we engage it with optimism, with humility, and with love.

And we urge all of you reading this to join with us in carrying this important work forward.

*The Society of St. John Chrysostom
Western Region*

WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

*Executive membership: \$50 (upon approval of the Executive Committee);
Supporting membership: Any amount;
Parish Membership: \$100.*

*For full information call
714-600-3660 and ask for Fr. James, or
e-mail secretary Diane Alves at:
secretary@lightoftheeast.org*

Briefly ...

Father Taft falls asleep in the Lord



Father Robert F. Taft, S.J.

Bridging Eastern and Roman Catholicism as a priest in the Ruthenian Greek Catholic Church, and in the Society of Jesus, Father Robert F. Taft kept his feet in both worlds his entire adult life, and did much to bring knowledge of and

an appreciation for Eastern Christianity to the West.

The noted scholar on Eastern Christianity passed away peacefully on Nov. 2, 2018, at the age of 86.

Taft was born in Providence, R.I., on Jan. 9, 1932. He was a distant cousin of William H. Taft, the 37th president of the United States and a Supreme Court Justice. He entered the novitiate of the Society of Jesus on August 14, 1949. After earning a graduate degree in Russian from Fordham University, he was ordained a priest of the Ruthenian Greek Catholic Church in 1963.

He was appointed a professor at the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome in 1975, a relationship he maintained until his 2011 retirement. He was editor of the Institute's journal, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, from 1972-76, and the *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* from 1987-2004.

In recognition of his contributions to understanding of Eastern Christianity, in 1998 he was made a mitred Archimandrite of the Ukrainian Catholic Church. He was also honored by the Chaldean Catholic Church, the Armenian Catholic Church, and the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church.

Taft's scholarship was considered key to the 2001 agreement between Rome and the Assyrian Church of the East recognizing the sacramental validity of one another's Eucharistic preparation — and allowing members of both churches to receive communion from the other's clergy in cases of emergency.

Following his retirement, Father Taft had lived at Campion Center in Weston, Mass., the same Jesuit community where he had studied as a youth.

It was here where Father Taft spent his last years in this life. He is survived by a brother, David Taft of Cranston, R.I., and his sister, Eleanor McSally, of Wakefield, R.I.

American Orthodox bishops gather



A group photo taken at the 9th Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America, held Oct. 2-3 in Cleveland, Ohio.

The Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America met in Cleveland, Ohio, on Oct. 2-3. The meeting began with the celebration of Divine Liturgy at St. Sava Serbian Cathedral.

The twenty-four assembled Hierarchs concluded the meeting by issuing a four-point statement that re-emphasized the importance of faith formation for the young at the parish level, expressed compassion for refugees, prayed for victims of natural disasters, and confirmed the unity of Orthodoxy.

American Orthodox issue parish map of USA

The Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America on Aug. 7 published a comprehensive new map showing all Orthodox bishops and parishes in the United States, down to the county level. A PDF file of the map can be accessed at www.assemblyofbishops.org/directories/map-of-bishops-in-the-usa.

Metropolitan Germanos remembered

Metropolitan Germanos of Theodoroupolis (Ecumenical Patriarchate) fell asleep in the Lord on Aug 10, at the age of 88. After growing up in Constantinople, he was ordained a priest in 1966. He was elevated to Metropolitan in 1987 (made active in 1990), and in 1995 was appointed confessor of the Archdiocese of Constantinople and its neighboring metropolises.