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On the Eastern Churches and Ecumenism

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The Eastern Orthodox Churches

ON 3 OCTOBER 2014, THE SPECIAL INTER-ORTHODOX COMMISSION FOR PREPARING THE PAN-ORTHODOX COUNCIL CONCLUDED ITS SESSION. THE COMMISSION CHAIRED BY METROPOLITAN JOHN OF PERGAMON (Patriarchate of Constantinople) was working in Chambesy, Switzerland, from September 30. With the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, a delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church took part in the meeting.

The Commission reviewed draft documents of the Pan-Orthodox Council on inter-Christian relations, adopted at the 3rd Pan-Orthodox Preconciliar Consultation in 1986. The participants in the meeting took into account considerable changes that had taken place in a whole number of Protestant denominations in recent decades.

At its subsequent meetings, the Commission will continue to edit and amend draft documents of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church.

The Pan-Orthodox Preconciliar Consultation, due to be convened next year in compliance with the decision of the Meeting of Primates of the Orthodox Local Churches which was held in March 2014, will consider the results of the Commission's work. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, Oct. 4.

THE HOLY EPARCHIAL SYNOD OF THE GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA CONVENED FOR ITS REGULAR MEETING IN THE SYNODAL CHAMBER AT THE ARCHDIOCESAN HEAD-QUARTERS ON OCTOBER 15 AND 16. His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America presided at the meeting, with the participation of the Members of the Synod.

The Synod deliberated extensively on many matters including the following:

1) Liturgical Matters: The Synod received the approval of the Ecumenical

Patriarchate for the English translation of the text of the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom and decided to proceed with its publication for the liturgical needs of parishes of the Archdiocese as well as a special publication with rubrics to be used by priests. The Synodal Committee on Liturgical Matters will continue its task of translating the texts of Vespers and Orthros into English.

2) Canonical Matters: The Synod deliberated on disciplinary matters regarding clergy, and the necessary decisions were made. In addition the Synod deliberated on the proper preparation of candidates to the priesthood and on the criteria for their ordination.

3) Administrative Matters: The Synod discussed a variety of administrative subjects regarding parishes and Holy Monasteries of the Holy Archdiocese.

4) Pastoral Care Matters: The Synod discussed at length matters regarding the youth and ways to reach out to them. The discussion included mention of the continuous efforts made in this direction by each of the Metropolises of the Holy Archdiocese, and relevant ideas were exchanged.

The institution of family and ways to strengthen it against the attacks of the negative influences of the modern society were also discussed.

5) Education: There was discussion on the efforts by parishes and Metropolises in regard to Day schools, Charter schools and Afternoon schools that are operating in each Holy Metropolis of the Holy Archdiocese of America as well as on ways to improve them.

With respect to the Theological School of Holy Cross, Brookline, MA, and Hellenic College, the efforts that have been made for the Greek Education of the students were discussed. These efforts include: a) the evaluation of the curriculum of the Greek language, b) the increase of laboratory hours and staff for the learning of the language, c) the financial support to students with financial need and d) assistance to students through tutoring

lessons.

In conclusion, during the meeting, the Synod nominated three persons for the election of an Auxiliary Bishop who will serve under His Eminence the Archbishop of America and will assist with the needs of the Holy Metropolis of San Francisco. The list of three names will be submitted to the Holy and Sacred Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate for the election of the Auxiliary Bishop. – Press Release, Greek Archdiocese, Oct. 16.

MORE THAN 2,000 PEOPLE GATHERED YESTERDAY OCT. 18, 2014 AT 130 LIBERTY STREET, THE NEW SITE FOR SAINT NICHOLAS NATIONAL SHRINE AT THE WORLD TRADE CENTER, FOR THE HISTORIC EVENT OF THE BLESSING OF THE GROUND AND THE SYMBOLIC "LAYING OF THE CORNER STONE."

The small and humble church of Saint Nicholas was the only house of worship destroyed in the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. The new Greek Orthodox Saint Nicholas National Shrine Church, designed by world-renowned Architect Santiago Calatrava, is expected to begin construction this year and to be completed within 24 months.

His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America presided at the agiasmos service, the sanctification of water and the blessing of the foundation for the new church.

Family members of victims of 9/11 carried vessels of water from the two memorial pools, which now occupy the footprints of the fallen twin towers. The Metropolitans of the Holy Eparchial Synod, concelebrating the service, received the water and poured it into the crystal font used for the sanctification of the water.

Following the Agiasmos and as a symbolic act of "laying of the corner stone" for the new church, two cairns (a memorial collection of stones) were built, with a total of 12 white marble stones each, laid down by donors and benefactors, community and institutional repre-

sentatives and public officials. Archbishop Demetrios blessed with sanctified water the two cairns, which will eventually be incorporated into the new church.

“What we establish today will be a house of prayer and a place of peace, a place of hope and a place of love,” said Archbishop Demetrios in his remarks following the service. His Eminence recounted in brief the long road traveled in the last 13 years, he recognized the contributions and efforts of many individuals and in particular the “decisive action of Governor Andrew Cuomo.”

Several officials delivered remarks. Former Governor of New York George Pataki spoke of his resolute commitment from the start to the rebuilding of Saint Nicholas. Architect Santiago Calatrava said that in his design for the new church edifice, his inspiration came from Hagia Sophia, in Constantinople. Senator Charles Schumer said that this day “is a testament to the courage of our spirit.” Patrick Foye, Executive Director of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, spoke of the resolve of two men, the Archbishop and the Governor that led to this day of celebration. Metropolitan Methodios of Boston read a letter from His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.

The service concluded with a moment of silence remembering the victims who perished in the tragic attacks on September 11.

Once rebuilt, the National Shrine will include a 2nd floor non-denominational bereavement center welcoming all those seeking comfort and prayer and a place of solace. -- Press Release, Greek Archdiocese, Oct. 19.

THE SYRIAN NEWSPAPER AL-THAWRA ONLINE MET WITH HIS BEATITUDE PATRIARCH JOHN X YAZIGI, GREEK ORTHODOX PATRIARCH OF ANTIOCH AND ALL THE EAST AND CONDUCTED AN OPEN DISCUSSION WITH HIM THAT TOUCHED UPON GENERAL ISSUES AND THE CRISIS THAT OUR COUNTRY IS EXPERIENCING. As is his custom, Patriarch Yazigi addressed these issues with all frankness, clarity and transparency. Here follows the text of the discussion:

Q: What role does the Antiochian Orthodox Church play as a part of the social fabric of Syria? What has it done and what will it do?

A: To start, we would like to direct our warmest greetings to the Syrian people as a whole and our Muslim brothers in

particular on the occasion of Eid el-Adha. Many happy returns.

The Patriarchate and our Orthodox Christian people are a fundamental part of our country. We are Syrians, the children of this nation. We were born here, as were our fathers and grandfathers. Christianity started out here and we feel that we are one family with all the country’s communities. Throughout history, the Patriarchate has been—and we hope it shall remain—a fundamental factor for common life in dignity, for reinforcing all the national and historical foundations that have brought us together ever since Christianity appeared in these lands. Ever since the coming of Islam, we have lived together and have built a common history. There is no doubt that our future is one.

Q: There have been more than fourteen centuries of brotherly coexistence between the various communities in the region and over the course of history nothing like the current crisis has swept through the region. Does this exceptional situation not call for exceptional measures?

A: All of us are mobilized to protect our land, our honor and our dignity in this country. We will all either stand together or fall together. Today they ask me, “Your Beatitude, what is your opinion about ‘the defense of Christians?’” In truth, this expression is new to our ears. We are always surprised when it is discussed. We have lived one history and have built a shared culture. We have one future. Perhaps over history we have differed, as a single family differs among itself. But the family remains one. When the late Fares al-Khoury was asked about “the protection of Christians,” he quickly took to the pulpit of the Umayyad Mosque and said, “As a Christian member of parliament, I reject French or English protection and I ask the protection of my brothers who are praying with me in this mosque.” This is our history and this is what we continue to affirm always. There are many people with other goals who are trying to spread other ideas, but adversity brings forth real men and we are not afraid.

We as the Patriarchate of Antioch are deeply rooted in this land. The Maryamiya Church, which is nearby to us here and hundreds of years old, bears witness to the authenticity and long history of co-existence between Christians and Muslims, of our living together with each other.

As regards the thinking in our sermons, our writings, our talks and in our meetings at home and abroad—in the

West, in America and Russia—with churches and other organizations, we first of all make this truth clear. It is very important to make others know the truth of what is happening and not to leave it to the deception of the misleading media. This is not just transmitting an accurate image—it is transmitting the situation on the ground. We are not satisfied with thinking and theorizing. We are trying as much as possible to be at our people’s side. We console them, strengthen them, assist them, even with matters of daily life, not only in terms of moral support. Consolation has many shapes and forms. It can be spiritual, psychological, material and so forth. It pleases me to say that we as a Patriarchate are helping everyone, Muslims and Christians, materially and humanitarily, without asking for their names, through the Department of Relations at the Patriarchate, which is concerned with endowments, financial, spiritual, pastoral and ecclesiastical issues and issues of aid and assistance. Each type of activity has its own department.

Q: You refrained from personally participating in the conference “In Defense of Christians,” contrary to the position of the other Patriarchs. What is your perspective? What message did you want to send to the public through your choosing not to be present?

A: This is an important and delicate question. There is a note worth mentioning, my refraining from personally attending a conference entitled “In Defense of Christians.” We do not go somewhere so that Christians will be defended in Syria. We have already spoken about this in principle. Likewise, the information that we and others concerned with the issue had in our possession indicated a great deal of ambiguity and lack of clarity in terms of the aims and title of the gathering, what would result from it, and what message would be demanded in it. All these questions led us to refrain from attending in person and to ask our brother Metropolitan Joseph Zahlawi, who is originally from Damascus. He is our church’s metropolitan in America and we asked him to represent us. This is a very important message, because when we want to talk about the Christians in the Middle East—in Syria, in Lebanon, in the region—then we are directly concerned and the matter is not in other people’s hands. We will not be like pupils who go into a classroom to listen to lessons told to them. We cannot be in that position.

Q: There are those who are intention-

ally attempting to cause the children of Syria in general to think of emigration and leaving the country through terroristic practices in specific regions, Maaloula for example. What is the role that the Church is playing to encourage the children of the nation to hold even more firmly to their land and their nation and to put a stop to such ideas, especially among the youth?

A: We always call to stay and stand firm in our land. Our homes and families are here. We encourage everyone, despite the hard life and difficult circumstances that we are going through, we always urge and encourage people to stay in this land. It pleases me to mention that two days ago we attended the high school graduation of those who received their diploma last year from the al-Assyeya School, which belongs to the Patriarchate. Meeting with them left a profound effect within me—around forty or fifty students attended their graduation ceremony along with their families—especially the smiles on their faces and the atmosphere that they created. I mentioned to them that today we are sending a message to the whole world that we are staying. Despite all the darkness around us, through your presence, your joy and your celebration you are piercing the walls of darkness. This event is a point of light that demonstrates how attached we are to our land.

At the same time, we as a church are trying to help the youth in a practical manner, materially and economically, to the best of our abilities which, in the end, remain limited. Likewise, we are trying to create opportunities for work, which helps the youth to be tied to their country and lessens their suffering. We are optimistic.

We are constantly holding meetings with the youth. Our churches are open and every church has a hall for gatherings of brotherhoods, women's groups, youth, girls, Sunday schools and Christian education. These activities are sometimes reduced as a result of the circumstances, but they are present and ongoing.

Last August, I made a visit to the Valley and we have many churches in that region—in the Valley, Safayta, Kafarin and elsewhere. We stayed for an entire month, going from one village to another, from one church to another. We met with great and small, young and old, men and women, Muslims and Christians in the presence of the sheikhs of the mosques and the children of the village. The goal of this activity was to be at the side of our people, to press them to have hope and not to sink under these difficult days we

are experiencing, but rather to make it through them.

Q: These channels that transmit sectarianism were put into place very carefully, through a premeditated media campaign. Do we not need today media programs and plans to counter it, that would work to spread awareness and bring up a new generation that is immune to it and believes in national brotherhood in word and deed? What is your role in producing this sort of content?

A: Media and communications play a fundamental role. Here in Syria, the media is active and has come to have a major role. Is not our meeting proof of this? We are in constant cooperation, dialogue and interaction with the major media. As a Church institution, we affirm the role of media. For us, Church media is a national media. As we mentioned to you before, we visited Wadi al-Nasara for almost a month. During that time, I said to my loved ones: I did not come here for prayer alone. I cannot shrink my purpose for this visit and limit it to prayer alone. I can perform my religious duty in the Maryamiyya Church, no more than thirty seconds walk from me. You do your prayers and open your heart to the Creator of the Universe, the Lord of Heaven and Earth, so that he can put you into partnership with your fellow man. You are at a national event, not only a spiritual event. And so the visit is a churchly visit in its form—a Patriarch visiting his church, his flock and his churches in the Valley. However, it is a national event in the fullest sense of the word. It was covered by all the media. We as the Church of Antioch have a website for the Patriarchate that aims to publish all the news of the Patriarchate and to be in contact with all those who want to get to know the Church, her history and her activities. We have a page on Facebook and there is a 24-hour radio station on the site of the Patriarchate. Of course, we use all these modern means of communication and harness them to transmit the truth.

A final word from His Beatitude the Patriarch:

We must very much pay attention to the issue of language and its use. This person says "I am a Muslim" and that person says "I am a Christian." Some time ago, we were passing near Arwad Island in Tartus. I said, "Look at Arwad Island. During the days of French colonialism they turned it into a prison and threw into it all the heroic citizens who worked for independence, from all communities with-

out exception. We read about Fares al-Khoury and Shoukri al-Quwatli. No one writes of them that they were Muslims or Christians. Rather, in history they are mentioned as being Syrians..."

This interview was conducted by Hani Naqshbandi and Maysoun Haddad. – Website of the Antiochian Archdiocese of North America, Oct. 4.

UNDER THE PRESIDENCY OF HIS BEATITUDE PATRIARCH JOHN X (YAZIGI), THE HOLY SYNOD OF ANTIOCH HELD ITS FOURTH REGULAR SESSION ON OCTOBER 7, 2014.

His Beatitude briefed the fathers about his pastoral visit to the regions of Wadi al-Nasara and Safita, which concluded in the Archdiocese of Akkar, where he had the opportunity to meet with his children and become familiar with their aspirations, concerns and anxieties.

His Beatitude expressed his great happiness and pride for his children, who are bearing witness to Christ risen from the dead in this part of the world and transmitting their faith from generation to generation in faithfulness to tradition and openness to the future, rooted in the land and holding fast to the values of the Gospel.

His Beatitude thanked His Eminence Metropolitan Basil (Akkar), the bishops and the priests for their pastoral care of their children in this region, along with all the faithful who worked hard for the success of this visit, which allowed our father the Patriarch to meet with his children in an atmosphere of love, intimacy and simplicity.

The fathers reviewed the results of the Orthodox-Catholic dialogue that was held in Amman, Jordan this past September. They stressed the necessity of serious work in order to remove all the obstacles to this dialogue and to the hoped-for unity in a spirit of love and openness, that the Christian world might be able to realize the Lord's prayer "that they may be one."

The fathers likewise reviewed the work of the preparatory committee for the great Orthodox council which met in Chambésy, Switzerland at the beginning of October, 2014 and took note of the working paper that it prepared regarding the relationship between the Orthodox churches and the Christian world.

In this regard, the fathers expressed their hope that the preparatory work for the great council will be effective for a united Orthodox witness in today's world which thirsts for a word of life.

The Holy Synod likewise took note of the recommendations brought to it by the committee that it delegated to reviewing the work of the general Antiochian conference held in June 2014. It decided to charge His Beatitude with forming a specialized committee to put into place a medium-term strategic plan that will take into account what recommendations can be implemented according to Antioch's priorities, available human and financial resources. This plan should also anticipate the dangers that implementation could face and ways to avoid them.

As soon as it is prepared, the plan will be presented to the dioceses for comment. It will then be presented in its final form at the next session of the Synod in order to take necessary action.

Concern for Jesus' little brothers was not absent from the fathers of the Synod, who reviewed the relief work being undertaken by the Patriarchate in order to lessen the impact of these evil days upon the needy.

The fathers praised the efforts being made in this regard and blessed those undertaking them. They praised those who are giving generously to help those in difficult circumstances and called on their children to work together to lessen the impact of these difficult days in response to the commandment "bear one another's burdens."

The fathers of the Holy Synod decided in this regard to conduct a survey and ecclesiastical census at the level of the See of Antioch in all dioceses in the homeland and the diaspora with the goal of better pastoral care and communication with them.

The fathers reviewed the situation in the dioceses, especially the vacant diocese of Baghdad and Kuwait. They elected Bishop Ghattas Hazim as metropolitan of the Archdiocese of Baghdad, Kuwait and their dependencies.

They also elected Archimandrite Gregory Khoury-Abdallah as an auxiliary to His Beatitude the Patriarch with the title of Bishop of the Emirates and Archimandrite Qais Sadek as an auxiliary bishop to the Patriarch with the title of Bishop of Erzurum.

The fathers lingered with great sorrow and regret on the mystery that still surrounds the case of Metropolitans Yuhanna (Ibrahim) and Paul (Yazigi), who were kidnapped a year and a half ago, amidst the world's blind eye and silence about this legitimate humanitarian issue.

In this regard, the fathers called upon world and Arab society to work seriously to uncover the fate of the bishops, priests, soldiers and civilians who have been abducted.

The fathers lingered on the ongoing tragedies that are afflicting the Middle East and attempting to tear apart its social fabric, wipe out its ancient cultures and enslave its people to violence, fear, misery and ignorance. They stressed that Christians are children of the Middle East and its builders, not visitors or newcomers there. They affirmed that they will remain there as witnesses to Christ because they believe that God embraces all and that He is able to lift them up from this historic impasse that they are experiencing.

The fathers likewise reminded their children that Christ who rose from the dead and conquers death by death is alone the true guarantor of their existence. They called on them not to approach the crisis sweeping their countries from a sectarian or minoritarian logic because this crisis is not a confrontation between religions, but rather between the interests of the powers of this world who exploit religions as a vehicle for their whims, while the religions are innocent of them.

The fathers affirmed that the active Christian presence in the Middle East remains a presence open to Muslims and constantly struggles alongside them for freedom, peace, true citizenship and human dignity and development. It is a presence that rejects extremism and terrorism and clings to this land that was formed by the blood of its sincere children and watered with the blood of the saints who lived there. They laud the positions recently issued by Muslim intellectuals and call on them to realize the necessity of developing a clear teaching that recognizes freedom of religion.

The fathers prayed for Syria and Lebanon and encouraged the international community to work seriously for peace in Syria, whose people are paying an exorbitant price to the language of interests, killing, terror and takfir. They encouraged members of the Lebanese Parliament to elect a president for the Republic who will ensure the constitutional regularity of work there. They prayed that the language of peace will replace the language of confrontation in Iraq, Egypt, Palestine and all parts of the Middle East.

The Antiochian presence throughout the western world was not lost on the fathers. They expressed their appreciation for their constant, living witness rooted in

their home countries and especially their solidarity with their brothers in the Middle East during these delicate and fateful circumstances.

The fathers praised the singleness of spirit that brings all together and the constructive work in which the mutual spiritual, human and cultural complementarity between them is made manifest. – Web site of the Antiochian Archdiocese of North America, Oct. 7.

IN HIS INTERVIEW WITH VIMA, PATRIARCH JOHN OF ANTIOCH HIGHLIGHTED THE NECESSITY OF INTERNATIONAL MOBILIZATION FOR PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND THE RELEASE OF THE TWO BISHOPS OF ALEPPO WHO WERE KIDNAPPED 18 MONTHS AGO ON THE TURKISH-SYRIAN BORDER. The primate of the Church of Antioch, based in Damascus, lives these tragic circumstances every day and characterizes the two kidnapped bishops as "apostles of peace." Even more tragic is that the drama of the kidnapping takes place within his family, as one of the two abducted hierarchs is not only his spiritual brother, but his brother according to the flesh. "They do not frighten us," he stressed and expressed his love for the Greeks shortly before his meeting with Prime Minister Antonis Samaras. Patriarch John, who has been on an official visit to the Church of Greece since last Thursday as part of the customary eirenic visits as a new primate, is having ongoing meetings with Archbishop Ieronymos and in the coming days will visit Mount Athos, where he lived during his studies in Greece.

Your Beatitude, you are coming from the most troubled region in the world right now. What is the situation of the Christians in the Middle East?

First, I want to express all the love, joy and honor I feel to be in Greece. We in the Patriarchate of Antioch, in Syria, Lebanon and Iraq, throughout the region, as you know we very much love Greece and the Greek people and we wish you the best. Greece is a beloved place for us. We are living in very difficult conditions. Particularly in Syria, churches, mosques, shrines and monasteries have been destroyed, but our faithful Orthodox Christians remain there. They still live there. We are about 1.5 million Christians in Syria, where we live in every city. And we are living normally, despite the difficulties. We bear them and hope that this cloud will pass as quickly as possible.

Two years ago, when leaders of the

Patriarchate of Antioch stated that the jihadists have nothing to do with the tradition of Islam in the Middle East, many people listened attentively to these statements.

It is a foreign spirit. There was never such a spirit in Syria or in Lebanon. Sadly, this phenomenon has come from outside and certain major powers bear some responsibility for this. This extremist phenomenon, which has reached the point of them killing each other in God's name, had never existed. It is not accepted by anyone. Neither do Muslims accept it.

Do the Muslims also have problems?

Everyone has. Syria has, Lebanon has. All inhabitants do. All the population, Christians and Muslims. And we as a Patriarchate, you know, we always say that we come from these places. We were born there. Our fathers were there and our grandfathers. We were there before Islam, together with Islam and after Islam. We always say that we all have a common history and a common future. Whatever happens to one happens to the other. For this reason we stress that we all belong to the same country. We have the same rights, every Christian and every Muslim. And you know that in Syria, the Christian feasts, Easter and Christmas, are official holidays...

Those people are fanatics. They are a foreign body. We as a Patriarchate tell the truth. There are special interests. If something happens to an Israeli soldier, then the whole world rises up, but if there are other victims, then there is silence... -- English translation by *Notes on Arab Orthodoxy*, Oct. 27.

ON THURSDAY, THE 17TH/30TH OF OCTOBER 2014, THE DIRECTOR OF THE TANTUR INSTITUTE, REV. FR. RUSSELL K. MCDUGAL, ACCOMPANIED BY HIS ASSISTANT, MR DANIEL KOSKI, VISITED THE GREEK ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM.

The Institute, which stands to the right of the central Jerusalem street to Bethlehem, at a short distance from the Monastery of the Prophet Elias, was founded in 1970 as a center for studies on the promotion of Christian unity and support of Christians in the Holy Land.

Fr. Russell K. McDougal was received by H.B. Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem.

A discussion took place during the meeting on the incessant history of the Orthodox Patriarchate in the Holy Land and on its willingness and readiness to

either participate in or undertake initiatives towards the education and financial support of Christians in the Holy Land, so that they may overcome the adversities of the political situation and remain in their ancestral homes.

His Beatitude went on to offer the Director of Tantur a copy of the "History of the Church of Jerusalem" by Chrysostomos Papadopoulos and wished him a fruitful diaconate in promoting the science of Theology and the benefit of the Holy Land's Church members. – Press Release, Jerusalem Patriarchate, Oct. 30.

ON OCTOBER 6, 2014, METROPOLITAN HILARION OF VOLOKOLAMSK, HEAD OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE'S DEPARTMENT FOR EXTERNAL CHURCH RELATIONS, RECEIVED THE RECENTLY APPOINTED AMBASSADOR OF THE PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF KOREA, MR. KIM HYONG JUN.

The PDRK ambassador noted that the Russian Orthodox Church cherishes the old history and rich culture of the Russian people and occupies a prominent place in Russian society today. He said that "under the guidance of the leaders of the two countries, the relations between Russia and North Korea in the religious sphere are persistently developing. Evidence to it is the Orthodox church of the Life-Giving Trinity built in Pyongyang and consecrated in 2006 by Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad (now His Holiness Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia) as a symbol of Russian-Korean friendship."

Metropolitan Hilarion reminded his guest that the Russian Orthodox Church brought the seeds of the Orthodox preaching of good news to the Korean peninsula over one hundred years ago. "It is gratifying that an Orthodox church has been built in the capital of North Korea and regular divine services are celebrated in it and delegations of the Metropolis of Vladivostok come to Pyongyang to celebrate together with the clergy of the Pyongyang church."

They also discussed problems of the division of the Korean people and the contribution made by religious communities to the strengthening of peace in the Korean peninsula. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, Oct. 6.

ON 10 OCTOBER 2014, HIS HOLINESS PATRIARCH KIRILL OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA RECEIVED REV. DR. OLAV FYKSE TVEIT, GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE WORLD

COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (WCC).

His Holiness greeted the high guest and said: "I would like to begin our meeting with the talk about the session of the WCC Central Committee that took place in Geneva last July. I looked through the materials and must say that the CC work made a positive impression on me. The theme of peace with justice on which you are focusing is topical. In our attitude to the world, especially to the world of politics, we always underscore on behalf of the Church the necessity to link all peace actions with demands of justice as peace without justice is very fragile. In my recent addresses to my Ukrainian flock I always emphasize the necessity to attain justice for securing genuine peace in Ukraine and to exclude the discrimination of people on the grounds of language, national origin or religious belief."

The participants in the meeting stated the importance of coordinating efforts of the Christian Churches and international Christian organizations for overcoming the crisis in Ukraine and conflict situations in other regions of the world.

Special attention was paid to the dire situation of Christians in the Middle East aggravated by the extremist Islamic State and measures taken by certain Western countries for suppression of this group.

The WCC general secretary believes that while solving the Middle East crisis it is extremely important to take into account the views of local religious leaders and representatives of all ethnic groups. For this, it is necessary to bring the inter-religious dialogue to a new level.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill noted that the World Council of Churches could play a key role in this dialogue and in coordination of Christian peace actions.

Certain projects in the field of humanitarian cooperation between the WCC and the Moscow Patriarchate were also discussed. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, Oct. 10.

ON OCTOBER 9, 2014, HIS HOLINESS PATRIARCH KIRILL OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA SENT A LETTER TO IRAQI PRESIDENT FUAD MASUM, EXPRESSING CONCERN FOR THE SITUATION OF CHRISTIANS IN NORTHERN IRAQ. "Hundreds of thousands of Iraqi Christians and people of other religions have been forced to leave their homes," the letter states.

Patriarch Kirill stated that "Christians in Iraq are in a state bordering on despair, with many of them abandoning themselves to the idea that they have to leave forever

not only Iraq but the Middle East altogether, since they cannot feel safe in Iraq. The disappearance of Christianity in this old region will have disastrous consequences for the entire world community.”

In his message to the President of Iraq, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church also raises the problem of the fate of Iraq’s former deputy prime minister Tariq Aziz who has been imprisoned already for 11 years and in September 2014 appealed to the world community, including the Russian Orthodox Church, to help release him. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, Oct. 13.

REPRESENTATIVES OF UKRAINIAN FAITHS STATED THAT BELIEVERS IN CRIMEA, ESPECIALLY THE CITIZENS OF UKRAINE, FACED THE THREAT OF THE BAN OF THEIR WORSHIP AND RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES.

This follows from the requirements of the occupying Russian authorities regarding the forced re-registration of the Ukrainian communities by January 1, 2015, in accordance with Russian legislation, reported the Institute for Religious Freedom.

The meeting of the Secretariat of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations, which took place on October 20 under the chairmanship of Kyiv Patriarchate spokesman Archbishop Yevstratiy (Zorya), was dedicated to the analysis of this situation and other issues.

Director of the Department of Religious and Ethnic Affairs under the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine Volodymyr Yushkevich, who was present at the meeting, assured that the Ukrainian government considers Crimea to be a temporarily occupied territory, and therefore all religious communities registered in compliance with the legislation of Ukraine continue to be recognized and protected by the Ukrainian government.

Representatives of churches and religious organizations discussed possible measures to protect freedom of religion in Crimea and interests of Ukrainian believers and religious communities of the peninsula.

The Secretariat of the Council also adopted texts of the messages of the Council of Churches on the occasion of the parliamentary elections and on issues of charity and philanthropy. In the near future the agreed documents will be made public in the media. – *RISU*, Oct. 22.

ON OCTOBER 23, 2014, THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH HOLY SYNOD BEGAN ITS REGULAR SESSION AT THE PATRIARCHAL AND SYNODAL RELIGIOUS, ADMINISTRATIVE AND CULTURAL CENTER IN THE SOUTH OF RUSSIA. It is chaired by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia.

Before the beginning of the session, Patriarch Kirill congratulated His Beatitude Metropolitan Onufry of Kiev and All Ukraine on his forthcoming 70th birthday and awarded him the Order of St. Sergius of Radonezh. His Holiness thanked Metropolitan Onufry for his service as Primate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and his zealous work at all posts, noting that His Beatitude always faced all life trials with “humbleness, trust in the will of God and honesty.”

“This way of your life has found a strong support of the Ukrainian episcopate during the primatial election and also our whole Church and all her members,” Patriarch Kirill said presenting His Beatitude with an old icon of the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God with a piece of the relics of St. Onuphrius.

Considering the first item of the agenda concerning the celebrations marking the 700th birthday of St. Sergius of Radonezh, Patriarch Kirill enumerated the main events of the closing celebrations and made a high assessment of the efforts made by the whole Church to hold them.

“Through these celebrations, St. Sergius has entered the life of our people, leading them to a new understanding of the great feat performed by this man of God. It is also important that very many state officials, representatives of our intelligentsia and business community took these celebrations to their hearts and responded with many good works,” the Patriarch said. Among them was the large-scale restoration work carried out in the St. Sergius Laura of the Trinity. “Never before did anything like this happen in the Laura,” His Holiness said assessing the volume of the restoration and archaeological work carried out in the monastery.

Among the most important events of the jubilee year, Patriarch Kirill made a special mention of the completed construction and opening of a new dormitory for the Moscow Theological Academy students. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, Oct. 23.

ON 25 OCTOBER 2014, METROPOLITAN HILARION OF VOLOKOLAMSK, HOST OF ‘THE CHURCH

AND THE WORLD’ TALK-SHOW ON VESTI-24 TV-CHANNEL, TALKED WITH MR. MATVEI POPOV, BROADCAST NEWS ANALYST AND RELIGIOUS SCHOLAR.

Metropolitan Hilarion: Good afternoon, dear brothers and sisters! You are watching ‘The Church and the World’ talk show. Today we will talk about our relationships with the Catholic Church with our guest, Matvei Popov, broadcast news analyst and religious scholar. Good afternoon, Matvei!

Matvei Popov: Good afternoon, Vladyka, you have recently returned from the Vatican. You were there during the Extraordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church dedicated to the problems of the family. What was the purpose of your visit?

Metropolitan Hilarion: The Synod of Bishops convenes once in several years. It is a consultative body under the Pope of Rome. Traditionally invited to the Synod are the so-called fraternal delegates, i.e., delegates of the non-Catholic Churches.

The problem of the family, discussed at the Assembly, is a topical one for the Catholic Church today. The processes which are going on in the legislation of the Western world, in the countries where the Catholic Church has her greatest influence, stand in a radical contrast with the Church’s views on the family. It concerns, of course, the legalization of various non-traditional forms of the family and, first and foremost, same-sex unions.

Besides, the Catholic Church experiences serious problems with those faithful who, for instance, have divorced and want to marry again. Millions of people who had to divorce by the force of different circumstances neither have the right to remarry nor are even allowed to partake of the Holy Communion.

This topic aroused heated disputes, since it appeared that the bishops who gathered for the Synod had very different views on it. I deemed it important to share with the Catholic brothers our Orthodox experience, because we have common teaching on marriage. It is neither Orthodox nor Catholic teaching – it is the teaching of Christ Himself and the apostles. We insist that there should be only one marriage and that spouses should be faithful to each other. However, when it comes to real situations in which people find themselves, we, as pastors, act in different ways.

The Catholic Christians, in my opinion, take a very rigoristic, legalistic approach: in order to receive the Church’s

recognition of the marriage annulment, people need to go through the church tribunal process. It is possible to receive such recognition only if the Church, after carrying out an investigation, will proclaim not just that the marriage broke down, but that it was illegal and erroneous from the very beginning. As far as I know, only a small percentage of Catholics agree to undergo such procedure.

We, Orthodox, have another view on marriage. The ideal, of course, remains, but in practice different situations arise. In case of divorce we always draw a distinction between the guilty party and the innocent one. If, for example, man beats his wife and children, then such marriage poses a threat to them and divorce becomes not only a justifiable, but even an inevitable option. The Church supports it and gives her blessing to the innocent party to marry again.

Matvei Popov: The Synod's work on formulating the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church to same-sex unions drew special attention of the mass media. Several working groups were set up which tried to express this attitude in different languages. No doubt, the wordings remained Christian and conservative. If we try to express them in one general formula we will say that a Christian must remain meek and loving; sin is sin, but mercy can be showed to those who repent. At the same time, the very fact that such problem as same-sex unions appeared on the agenda of the Synod made a number of the mass media say that the Catholic Church is preparing to soften her attitude to the problem.

Vladyka, you met with the participants in the Synod. Is any one of them ready to change his views?

Metropolitan Hilarion: I was not present at the sessions during all two weeks, but did not miss an important, to my mind, moment when the reports of different working groups, the English, the French, the Italian, and the Spanish ones, were being read out. Presented were eight reports, two from each language group, and they showed how far different opinions and approaches were. The difference is conditional to a large extent on a cultural context: on which country a certain bishop comes from and where he performs his ministry. Indeed, the approach that you call conservative prevailed, though the voices of liberal-minded bishops who advocated the relaxation of church discipline were distinctly audible.

As far as I know, almost no one spoke

in support of same-sex unions, and those who advocated the relaxation spoke about divorces and the possibility for people, who had divorced through no fault of their own, to remarry, as well as about the possibility for them to partake of the Holy Communion. That topic aroused a really serious controversy.

As for the attitude to same-sex unions, I think there were no serious controversies, because the teaching of the Church on that issue is unambiguous. The Church cannot change what is considered a sin from the perspective of Christian morality and declare it a normal behavior. Yet, again, the pastoral practice gives a Christian pastor rather ample opportunities. For example, in the Basis of the Social Concept, an official document adopted by the Russian Orthodox Church in 2000, we draw a distinction between homosexual inclinations and homosexual conduct. We say that the conduct is a sinful factor, as opposed to inclinations which are not sinful per se. A person who behaves in an unseemly manner is called to repentance. The Church accepts repentance; a human being can lament over any sin and receive forgiveness.

Matvei Popov: During your visit, you twice raised the issue of the Greek Catholics. While speaking to the participants in the Synod, you asked them to call the Ukrainian Greek Catholic community to distance itself from the conflict in Ukraine and not to split up the Christian community any further. Later, you raised the same issue during your meeting with Pope Francis. Can you say that the Vatican has heard your position?

Metropolitan Hilarion: I think that the Vatican has heard it. Yet, another matter is whether anything will change in our relations. Regrettably, we see the situation in which an official Vatican is carrying out the dialogue with us on different levels: on the theological one and on that of discussing certain problems, as it was at the Synod of Bishops.

However, there is still an acute tension in the countries where the Orthodox live side by side with the Greek Catholics. It happens largely because of the involvement of the Greek Catholics in political agenda. They take certain political positions and support one of the parties in a civil confrontation.

We cannot agree with that. The Church must be above politics and support people, regardless of their political views. That is the position of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patri-

archate. During all these horrible and tragic months, beginning with clashes in Maidan in January and during the developments in Eastern Ukraine, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church has not supported any party. Among the faithful of our Church there are people who have found themselves on both sides of the barricades. We would like all religious communities in Ukraine to adhere to this position because it alone can reconcile people. Any other position only adds fuel to the fire, divides people and, therefore, does not contribute to the settlement of the severe conflict.

We have another claim to the Greek Catholics, to which, actually, the head of the Greek Catholic Church gave a response immediately after my address. I am satisfied with this answer. The matter is that during last several months, the Greek Catholics have repeatedly supported schismatics and now, in fact, are fighting against a canonical Church. The head of the Greek Catholic Church has been seen several times in the company of the excommunicated head of the so-called Kiev Patriarchate, Filaret (Denisenko). They even went to America together and visited offices of the U.S. Department of State.

From our point of view, such close association of an official Catholic structure, the Greek Catholic Church, with a schismatic structure contradicts, at least, the protocol of inter-Church relations maintained during many decades. We do not come in contact with those whom the other side considers schismatics. Archbishop Svyatoslav (Shevchuk) gave his response to it the day after I had delivered my address. He said that the Greek Catholic Church recognized the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate as the only canonical Orthodox structure in Ukraine and that the Greek Catholics cooperated with the schismatics in a civil sphere and within the framework of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches which unites various Ukrainian church organizations.

Matvei Popov: Please, tell us the purpose of your meeting with Pope Benedict. Does he regret his decision to retire?

Metropolitan Hilarion: I did not ask him about it. He is 87 years old. He walks badly, but has an excellent memory. I was glad that in spite of his advanced age and some physical infirmity he keeps a clear head. He says that he spends most of his time in prayer.

I had an opportunity to see where and how he lives. It is a rather modest small house in the Vatican, on a hill, with a

wonderful view. By the way, one can clearly see from there our Orthodox Church of St Catherine.

I wanted to visit Pope Benedict, because I had met with him three times before his retirement and I hold him in great respect as a theologian. I have recently read his book 'Jesus of Nazareth,' which seems very significant for a contemporary Western reader. By visiting Pope Benedict, I also wanted to express my respect to him. I certainly did not ask him any delicate questions about his retirement.

The issues which we used to talk about with Pope Benedict, such as church affairs, the Orthodox-Catholic dialogue, and today's problems, I discussed with Pope Francis this time. I have to say that the Pope showed understanding to what I had to say.

Matvei Popov: What is your impression of the meeting with Pope Francis? In what ways was that meeting different from the previous ones?

Metropolitan Hilarion: Our every meeting is a renewal of the previous conversation. When I first met Pope Francis, the day after his enthronement, I was pleased to see that he was a competent man. For there were some concerns, as elected to the Pontifical Throne was a man from the so-called 'Third World,' South America, who would neither have a handle on a situation nor be well informed. In truth, he is very well informed on various issues, including such delicate ones as our relationships with the Greek Catholics. That impression only deepened during our last meeting.

Of course, we will not be able to resolve all issues at once. Yet, I believe that the dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church should be continued, because such meetings give us an opportunity to state our position and hear a response. I believe that Pope Francis is inclined to continue the dialogue with the Orthodox Church. He expressed his regret over the developments taking place in Ukraine today. Certainly, it is necessary to continue such meetings, both with him and with other leaders of the Roman Catholic Church.

Thank you, Matvei, for being a guest of our talk-show. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, Oct. 27.

ON 29 OCTOBER 2014, HIS HOLINESS PATRIARCH KIRILL MET WITH HIS HOLINESS TAWADROS II, POPE AND PATRIARCH OF THE COPTIC CHURCH.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill greeted Patriarch Tawadros and members of the

delegation and noted that he considers his visit as a new stage in the relations between the two Churches.

His Holiness continued to say: 'Our relations have always been good and cordial and active during the last forty years thanks to our participation in the work of several inter-Christian organizations. Theological dialogue carried on from 1985 to 1995 was very important as it allowed us to better understand the positions of our Churches on Christological issues.'

In 2005 the continuation was suggested, but, unfortunately, nothing happened due to the difficult situation in the Middle East. His Holiness suggested discussing the matter.

A considerable attention during the talk was given to the situation in the Middle East, where the open persecution of the Church began in 2011. "Church buildings were destroyed and some two hundred thousand Copts were forced to leave Egypt," His Holiness said. "You certainly know that the Russian Orthodox Church has made many statements in defense of Christians in Egypt and in the entire Middle East. We have kept direct contact with the authorities of the Russian Federation on this issue. Also, we have worked with different international organizations and used our bilateral contacts, including meetings of the Patriarch with the heads of states, in order to attract attention to this problem."

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill noted positive changes in Egypt and added: 'We hope that these changes will last and that President al-Sisi's good intentions concerning the Coptic Church will be carried out, including the restoration of the ruined churches and defense of the Christian population of the country.'

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church expressed his deep concern with the situation of Christians in North Africa and other countries of the Middle East, including Syria and Iraq. 'We have been against civil war in Syria and against the attempts of certain countries to intervene. We know that religious peace in the country was undermined by the war. The destiny of the two abducted Metropolitan is still uncertain. We know that the radicals had killed many priests and caused great damage to the people and the state. We see how the dangerous radical group called the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, which emerged out of the fire of the civil war, is realizing its aggressive intentions and bringing about the tragedy of Christians in Iraq.'

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill shared reminiscences of his visit to Iraq in 2002, saying that he was 'deeply moved by the asceticism of the monks. I saw that people had been protected and could openly profess their faith, but now thousands of Christians have to leave the country because of the terrible war.' He added that the Russian Church is raising her voice in defense of Christians in Iraq, Syria, Libya and other countries where the life of Christians is endangered. The Moscow Patriarchate has initiated several Pan-Orthodox statements on the situation of Christians in the Middle East.'

His Holiness Pope and Patriarch Tawadros said to the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church: 'I am very glad to meet You, Your Holiness. This meeting is very important to me... I hope that it will strengthen bilateral relations between our Churches. I have been dreaming to visit Russia; I have read many books about your country, about Orthodox theology and Orthodox monasteries. A year ago, in an interview to 'Russia Today' I mentioned my wish to visit Russia, and my dream has come true.'

Patriarch Tawadros spoke about history of the Coptic Church and its life at present. He said: 'We have lived in peace and accord with our brother Muslims for over fourteen centuries as we try to bring the Lord's love to all... Now, after a difficult period, during which people suffered and churches were destroyed, we thank the Lord for a new period in the history of Egypt.'

The head of the Coptic Church expressed deep gratitude to the Russian Orthodox Church and its Primate for the support of Christians in the Middle East. Speaking about their situations in the region, Patriarch Tawadros said: 'We pray to God to protect our brothers from sufferings they are undergoing.'

He added: 'The Coptic Church cherishes memory of Patriarch Shenouda's visit to your country twenty-six years ago for the celebration of the Millennium of the Baptism of Russia... We recall with gratitude Your visit to Egypt in 2010 and Your meetings with Patriarch Shenouda.' The head of the Coptic Church expressed his hope that His Holiness Patriarch Kirill will visit Egypt again.

Patriarch Tawadros mentioned cooperation in peacemaking, culture and education as possible guidelines for the dialogue. The sides underscored the importance of the continuation of theological dialogue. – Press Release, Moscow Patri-

archate, Oct. 29.

ON 31 OCTOBER 20124, HIS HOLINESS PATRIARCH KIRILL OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA MET WITH THE GRAND MUFTI OF SYRIA, SHEIKH AHMAD BADREDDIN HASSOUN.

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church warmly greeted the high guest and reminded him of their last meeting in Damascus in 2011.

‘You are a bright representative of the heroic Syrian people. You and your family have passed through the tragedy of terrorism and radicalism, and your calls for peace and a cessation of civil confrontation sound very convincing. ‘His Holiness underscored and continued to state that the position of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian Federation on the crisis in Syria has not changed.

‘Peaceful life in Syria has been interrupted through the intervention of the external forces which supported all who wanted to wage struggle against the government, including the most radical force, which has become very dangerous and is now known as the ISIL. It is ruining people’s lives in Syria and Iraq and poses a real threat to peace in the region. The position of Syria as a state and the position of the Syrian people who still fight for their independence are very important. We support your people.’

His Holiness said that the situation in Syria and Iraq had become a great tragedy for Christian in these countries. He noted that both Christians and Muslims suffer from the acts of extremists and added: ‘As Christians are in minority, the Christian presence in the Middle East can be ended, which will be a civilizational catastrophe.

‘I recall the life of Syria before the war. We respect the experience of this country in constructing relations between Christians and Muslims and between different branches of Islam.

‘You as a spiritual leader of the Syrian people have done a lot for Syria so that it could continue its policy of interreligious peace. We express solidarity with your mission and with the Syrian people and do hope for the end of the war in the near future and for the establishment of a lasting and just peace,’ the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church said.

The Grand Mufti of Syria said to the Patriarch that he was happy to meet him again and mentioned that their first meeting took place at the World Summit of Religious Leaders in Moscow in 2006.

He believes that the convocation of

this forum was very important as the ever new hotbeds of hatred and confrontation appear in different corners of the globe.

Sheikh Ahmad Badreddin Hassoun brought greetings to His Holiness from the President of Syria, Bashar Assad, and added that the people of Syria also conveyed their greetings. They are thankful for ‘the humanitarian aid sent by your Church and the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society. The Syrians appreciated the fact that the aid was sent to the Primate of the Orthodox Church of Antioch and the Grand Mufti of Syria to be distributed among the needy.’

Sheikh Hassoun said that Muslims and Christians were citizens who enjoy full rights in Syria and called the actions of those using religious and national problems for spreading division and tension in the country destructive. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, Oct. 31.

ON THE EVE OF THE GREAT FEAST DAY OF THE PROTECTION OF THE MOST HOLY MOTHER OF GOD, ON OCTOBER 13TH OF THIS YEAR, AT THE ST. SAVA MONASTERY IN LIBERTYVILLE, ILLINOIS, THE CLERGY BROTHERHOOD OF THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN NORTH AND SOUTH AMERICA HELD ITS MEETING. The brotherly assembly began with prayer, at noon, serving an Akathist Hymn to St. Nikolai of Zica and Ochrid. His Grace Kyr Longin, Bishop of New Gracanica – Midwestern American Diocese officiated. Following the service, Vladika addressed the clergy and all present with fatherly words, invoked God's blessing on all, and wished a successful assembly.

The meeting of the Clergy Brotherhood was very meaningful and lively. The clergy in brotherly love expressed their opinions on various topics and issues in the life of our Holy Church in our territory. Given that meetings of this kind were not held for a fairly long time, there were plenty of subjects for discussion and an exchange of opinions. Nevertheless, it was very pleasant to see the enthusiasm and desire of the clergy that the brotherhood continue its mission for the well-being of our Holy Orthodox Church and people. Father Dobrivoje Milunovic, president of the brotherhood, opened the meeting and expressed his gratitude to the clergy who participated. Twenty presbyters and one deacon were in attendance. The President particularly praised the newly elected board members, all of whom were in attendance, including those from the east

and west coasts, as well as other far away states.

At the onset of the assembly, the clergy unanimously agreed for St. Nikolai of Zica and Ochrid to be the patron of the Brotherhood. Although his holy relics were transferred to Serbia, his birthplace of Lelic, in 1991, part of the relics remained in the grave next to the monastery where he was originally buried. Thus the monastery of St. Sava, the spiritual center of the Serbian Orthodox Church in America, continues to keep the sacred tomb of Nikolai as he continues to protect the monastery and all of us gathered in and around it. The Brotherhood elected a committee to review and possibly amend its by-laws. Following the report of the Treasurer, ways of how to raise funds for the brotherhood were discussed so that the brotherhood could continue to help the education of seminarians and students of theology, widows of clergy, publishing and other charitable activities. The guidelines for scholarship grants were adopted, which the board of the clergy will follow, and which could be amended and/or modified in the future. Since the brotherhood annually publishes a calendar, discussion on this issue was particularly important.

An appeal was made to all clergy to promote the calendar in their parishes. Among other important issues, health insurance for clergy, especially younger ones who are serving in newly created and missionary parishes, the publishing activities of the brotherhood, continued education of clergy and other subjects were discussed. The assembly unanimously adopted the proposal of Bishop Maxim and the clergy of the Western American Diocese that the clergy seminar be held next year in Phoenix, Arizona, in the length of at least three days. – Web site of the Serbian Patriarchate, Oct. 23.

ON SATURDAY, THE 12TH/25TH OF OCTOBER 2014, HIS BEATITUDE PATRIARCH THEOPHILOS OF JERUSALEM ATTENDED A MEETING WITH POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST, ROMANIA. The students are conducting research into such fields as Byzantine Hagiography, Philosophy, Neoplatonism, Philology, Coptic and Ethiopian Studies etc.

Mrs Madea Axinciuc, who initiated the granting of the dignity of Doctor Honoris Causa, thanked His Beatitude by saying that: “for where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them” (Mat-

thew 18,20) and “Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity! (Psalm 132).

In his speech in reply, His Beatitude said that the Patriarchate of Jerusalem lies at the center of the world, because of the sacrament of salvation, which began from Mount Sinai and was fulfilled through the Lord’s crucifixion and resurrection in Jerusalem. Because of the fact that many people do not acknowledge this fact, the world suffers from political and religious disputes, especially so in the Middle East – where the Patriarchate of Jerusalem has a conciliatory role in the theocratic, religious and political milieu.

Following the speeches, Mrs Axinciuc was invited to confer the distinction of doctor *honoris causa*, in the presence of His Beatitude the Patriarch of the Church of Romania, and other dignitaries. Mrs Axinciuc first read out His Beatitude’s curriculum vitae, and then the *Laudatio*, namely the Commendation, relating His arrival to Jerusalem, his inclusion in the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, and His multifarious pastoral activities since His election in 2005. Professor Vlad Nistor went on to confer the honorary doctorate.

His Beatitude proceeded to give a lecture. After a performance by the Patriarchate’s choir, all those in attendance congratulated His Beatitude for this well-deserved distinction.

On the afternoon of the same day, His Beatitude visited His Excellency, the President of Romania, Mr Traian Băsescu.

During their meeting at the Presidential Palace, the President said it was with great joy that he welcomed the Patriarch of Jerusalem and his retinue and that he would always remember his visit to Jerusalem, and how helpful His Beatitude had been towards the resolution of the problem which had occurred at the time between the two Churches. He undertook, said the President, a peacemaker’s role.

Patriarch Theophilos replied in English and offered the President an icon of Jesus Christ.

His Excellency Mr Băsescu went on to add that the Romanian Church is a pillar of protection and strength for the Romanian Nation, and that he had personally brought before the EU the need to protect Christians in the Middle East. “11,000 Romanians” he said, “dwell today in Jordan, along with a total of 500,000 in Israel. Churches are called upon to offer their support where politicians fail. The Church has a great mission towards reconciliation and peace against religious extremists.”

“It is an issue,” he concluded, “that I have often raised in the European Union in the course of my ten-year presidential tenure.”

His Beatitude thanked the President for pointing out how distinct the roles of the State and the Church are.

“For this purpose,” His Beatitude went on, “we have been recently invited thrice by the King of Jordan, to work together for peace. Our political visit to Israel was of great ecclesiastical importance. I wish for you God’s blessing in order to sustain your contribution to peace, for the benefit of your people, Orthodox or otherwise.”

The Patriarch of Romania too thanked the President for contributing towards the resolution of the conflict between the two Churches, pointing out the importance of the sites of pilgrimage in the lives of the Churches. Patriarch Daniel also expressed His intention to receive in Romania students from the Greek Orthodox flock of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

President Băsescu then conferred on His Beatitude the supreme honorary distinction of Romania, in recognition of his work. Touched, Patriarch Theophilos said that the honor is reflected on the Patriarchate and the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood and that it shall be a visible link between the State of Romania and the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

The ceremony was followed by veneration at the Chapel of the Dormition of Theotokos, near the Presidential Palace, from where frescoes have been salvaged and restored. – Press Release, Jerusalem Patriarchate, Oct. 25.

TODAY, 26 OCTOBER 2014, HIS BEATITUDE DANIEL, PATRIARCH OF ROMANIA, RECEIVED THE VISIT OF MRS GIOVANNA IURATO, PREFECT WITHIN THE ITALIAN MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR, HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT FOR CIVIL FREEDOMS AND IMMIGRATION – CENTRAL BRANCH FOR RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS. Mrs Iurato was accompanied by Rev. Gheorghe Militaru, counsellor within the Episcopal Centre of Rome, and by Univ. Prof. Giuseppe Giordan.

They discussed religious freedom, the way in which the Romanians living in the Peninsula could be more easily integrated, and academic partnerships.

“The role of the Romanian Orthodox Diocese of Italy is a very important one in regard to their social cohesion and integration. This is basic for the Italian state, which receives them and tries to support their settlement in Italian society. There-

fore, having been representatives of the Italian state, we wish a better collaboration with the religious authorities both from Romania and from Italy in order to guarantee full rights to the Romanians who immigrate to Italy trying to find a better future for them and for their children. I have also proposed to His Beatitude more collaboration at the academic level, an exchange of scholarships for Romanian students who come to specialize in certain fields very important both for Romania and for Italy, for the Orthodox communities from here and from Italy,” Mrs Giovanna Iurato declared for the Trinitas Radio station. – Press Release, Romanian Patriarchate, Oct. 26.

MEETING IN WORKING SESSION UNDER THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF HIS BEATITUDE PATRIARCH DANIEL AT THE PATRIARCHAL RESIDENCE ON 28 AND 29 OCTOBER 2014, THE HOLY SYNOD OF THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH DECIDED:

1. To approve the Pastoral letter of the Holy Synod at the end of the Solemn Eucharistic Year (of the Holy Confession and Holy Communion) and the Commemorative year of the Brancovean holy Martyrs, which will be read in all churches and monasteries of the Romanian Patriarchate on the first Sunday of the Advent of the Nativity of the Lord (16 November 2014);

2. To declare the year 2016 as a Solemn year of the religious education of Christian Orthodox Youth and Commemorative year of the holy Hierarch Martyr Antim of Ivir at the commemoration of 300 years since his death as a martyr (1716 – 2015);

3. To extend to the national level the Romanian Patriarchate’s campaign entitled “Donate blood! Save a life!” which will take place with the support of Romanian Television and the Health Ministry.

Given the forthcoming presidential elections in Romania (2 November 2014), the Holy Synod reaffirms its encouragement for servants of the Holy Altars and faithful of the Romanian Orthodox Church to vote in a spirit of faith and love for Church and Nation, with Christian and civic responsibility for the implementation of the common welfare of Romanian society and the future of Romania. – Press Release, Romanian Patriarchate, Oct. 30.

ARCHBISHOP CHRYSOSTOMOS II OF CYPRUS IS EXPECTED TO LEAVE THE STUTTGART, GERMANY

MEDICAL CENTER ON FRIDAY WHERE HE UNDERWENT SUCCESSFUL BACK SURGERY EARLIER THIS WEEK.

Chrysostomos was diagnosed with transverse myelitis and degenerative bone lesions in the five vertebrae of his lumbar spine.

According to an Archbishopric announcement, the surgery, on Wednesday, was a success. The announcement also said Chrysostomos has recovered well, was in excellent health, and is expected to be able to leave the medical center Friday.

The diagnosis followed a series of medical examinations, the result of which led the Archbishop to seek specialized treatment overseas. He underwent the tests after experiencing weakness in his right leg, the announcement said. — *Cyprus Weekly*, Oct. 2.

HIS EMINENCE ARCHBISHOP DEMETRIOS OF AMERICA ARRIVED TODAY, OCT 21, 2014, IN CYPRUS FOR AN OFFICIAL VISIT at the invitation of President Nikos Anastasiades, and with the unanimous agreement of the Holy Synod of the Church of Cyprus.

At the International Larnaca Airport, Archbishop Demetrios was welcomed by the Minister of Agriculture, Natural Resources and the Environment Mr. Nikos Koufialis and His Excellency Metropolitan of Kition Chrysostomos.

Mr Koufialis said, “it is indeed an honor to welcome His Eminence to Cyprus, we receive him with great joy, knowing fully his tireless work in America for the promotion of our national issues and the advancement of all the things that concern Hellenism.

Metropolitan Chrysostomos, representing the Holy Synod of the Church of Cyprus and His Beatitude Archbishop Chrysostomos welcomed Archbishop Demetrios as an angel of peace and dear friend of Cyprus and added: “We express unequivocally our love and gratitude for all that he does for the people of Cyprus and for Hellenism in America.”

Archbishop Demetrios in his statement upon his arrival stated: “This visit for us it is not simply a visit but a pilgrimage. It is a pilgrimage in a sacred place that has given culture and has suffered injustice. In return for everything it has contributed it continues to suffer adversity, pressure and the occupation of a significant part of its territory. Cyprus continues to offer a lesson in resilience, a lesson of high principles and sticking to values, a lesson of pure patriotism and untainted

Orthodoxy; and it is for this reason that we declare publicly that Cyprus for us is a very dear, venerable and sacred part of our Genos, of Orthodoxy and of universal Hellenism. Our pilgrimage here starts with a very deep feeling of duty, so that the days we spend on this island will give us additional data for when we return to America. It will enable us to continue this struggle that we do all these years with the support of the Greek American community and especially with the Greek Cypriot American Community. It is a struggle we undertake regardless of results and it will continue because we believe that the God of justice and of love will at the end justify this blessed and pained people and will grant to all the people who live on this island a life of creativity and peace, as they continue to offer culture and peace to the whole world.”

Almost immediately upon his arrival to Nicosia, Archbishop Demetrios paid a visit to His Beatitude Archbishop Chrysostomos of Cyprus and had with him the first of the three visits scheduled during this trip. — Press Release, Greek Archdiocese, Oct. 22.

DOZENS OF GREEK POLICE TOOK PART IN AN OPERATION FRIDAY TO CLEAR AN APARTMENT USED AS A HOSTEL BY A REBEL MONASTERY WHOSE MONKS HAVE BEEN DECLARED SCHISMATIC BY THE ORTHODOX CHURCH.

Police said one monk and five supporters were in the apartment in central Thessaloniki during the raid, which followed a court decision for the eviction. Riot police blocked off surrounding blocks to prevent other supporters from hindering the operation.

Monks from the 1,000-year-old Esphigmenou Monastery on Mount Athos are in a bitter dispute with the Istanbul-based Ecumenical Patriarch, spiritual leader of the world's Orthodox Christians.

They accuse the Patriarch of treason for seeking better relations with the Catholic Church.

Esphigmenou's 125 monks refuse to cede the monastery, the Thessaloniki hostel and another building on Mount Athos — from which women are banned — to a new brotherhood created by the Patriarch that they say so far numbers five members.

Police efforts to dislodge them have failed. The rebel monks issued a statement deploring the raid. “When there is no justice, what can we expect?” Esphigmenou's abbot, Methodios, told the

Associated Press.— *KED*, Oct. 31.

THE FALL SESSION OF THE HOLY SYNOD OF BISHOPS OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA WAS HELD AT THE CHANCERY IN SYOSSET, NY, OCTOBER 21-23, 2014.

On its opening day, the Holy Synod elected His Grace, Bishop Irénée to the vacant Episcopal See of Ottawa and Canada and Igumen Paul [Gassios] to the vacant See of Chicago and the Midwest. Igumen Daniel [Brum] was elected Bishop of Santa Rosa and Auxiliary for the Diocese of the West.

Bishop Irénée will be enthroned in Ottawa on November 28-29, 2014, while Bishop-elect Paul's consecration and enthronement will take place in Chicago on December 26-27 and Bishop-elect Daniel's consecration and enthronement will be celebrated on January 23-24, 2015 in San Francisco and Santa Rosa.

In his opening address, His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon addressed the newly elected and reviewed the current status of the Church.

“We offer our expressions of ‘Axios’ to the newly elected members of the Holy Synod and welcome them to our fall session,” Metropolitan Tikhon said. “I think that I speak for all the brothers and for the entire Church in expressing our great joy. I offer our prayers and hopes for fruitful ministries in your dioceses and in pastoral and administrative work. In addition, we also know that, at least in the cases of Canada and the Midwest, each of your flocks has been waiting patiently for a shepherd to guide them, and I would exhort each of you to approach your new responsibilities with sobriety, humility and above all, love for your flock.

“I am also very pleased that, with today's elections, there remains only one vacant diocese in the Orthodox Church in America—the Diocese of the South—and it is our hope that the nomination of a new bishop for that diocese will take place next February,” Metropolitan Tikhon continued. “In any case, it has been a long time since we have had so few vacancies, and I believe that this gives expression to the continuing establishment of stability in the Orthodox Church in America and offers the foundation for all of us to fulfill the Apostolic work of Christ.”

After offering congratulations to His Eminence, Archbishop Nathaniel on the 35th Anniversary of his Episcopacy, Metropolitan Tikhon reviewed his work since the Holy Synod's spring 2014 session,

highlighting the contacts he has had with the retired bishops. He spoke of the recent work of the Holy Synod, Chancery staff, and ORSMA, and addressed a number of legal and pastoral issues and matters of external affairs. He also reviewed ongoing projects, including drafts of the Holy Synod handbook and the Instructions and Procedures for the Selection, Nomination and Election of Bishops.

According to Archpriest Eric G. Tosi, OCA Secretary, the Holy Synod

-- appointed to the Lesser Synod, chaired by Metropolitan Tikhon, His Eminence, Archbishop Melchisedek of Pittsburgh; His Grace, Bishop Mark of Philadelphia; and His Grace, Bishop Michael of New York.

-- heard updates from Ms. Cindy Davis of the Office of Review of Sexual Misconduct Allegations [ORSMA] and Dr. Albert Rossi of the Sexual Misconduct Policy Advisory Committee [SMPAC].

-- heard a review of the work of the Department of External Affairs and Interchurch Relations by Archpriest Leonid Kishkovsky, Director, and Priest Nazarii Polataiko.

-- reviewed the report of Archpriest John Jillions, Chancellor, in which a plan for the renewal of the Department of Pastoral Life was presented. It was agreed that each bishop will appoint a priest to attend a consultation, convened by the Department, in 2015. He also spoke of the ongoing work and meetings of the diocesan chancellors.

-- heard the report of Father Eric Tosi, Secretary, who updated the hierarchs on plans for the 18th All-American Council and sought guidance on a number of matters, including speakers, agenda items, and special events. He presented a plan to reestablish the OCA mailing list, which the hierarchs approved, and sought input on the reprinting of new metric books, in which parish sacramental celebrations are recorded. He also offered an update on the work of the Archive Committee.

-- received the proposed 2015 budget, which was presented by Ms. Melanie Ringa, Treasurer, who reviewed the current budget in detail and presented the positive results of the most recent internal and external audits.

-- heard reports from Prof. Dr. David Drillock of the Department of Liturgical Music and Translations and Archpriests Theodore Boback and Joseph Gallick of the Office of Military Chaplains.

-- directed the Legal committee to search for and retain a lawyer licensed in

the State of New York as General Counsel for the OCA in response to the report of Judge E. R. Lanier, Chair of the Legal Committee.

-- unanimously approved Church Plant Grants for five mission communities.

-- approved Father Tosi's recommendations on the OCA's departments and instructed the Chancery office to contact the Reorganization Task Force of the Metropolitan Council to continue its work.

-- heard the reports of Archpriest Dr. John Behr and Archpriest Dr. Chad Hatfield, Dean and Chancellor respectively of Saint Vladimir's Seminary, and Archpriest Dr. Steven Voytovich, Dean of Saint Tikhon's Seminary. His Grace, Bishop David of Sitka delivered a report on Saint Herman's Seminary. The hierarchs heard the report of the Board of Theological Education and approved several candidates who had completed Diaconal Vocation programs for ordination.

The members of the Holy Synod will address a letter to all seminaries and formation programs restating their insistence that all candidates must be members of the OCA for three years prior to their acceptance into programs leading to ordination. The hierarchs conveyed their gratitude to Archdeacon Kirill Sokolov, Director of the Diaconal Vocations Program, for his work in preparation for the Board of Theological Education's meetings.

Bishop Mark presided at the celebration of Thursday's Divine Liturgy for the Feast of the Apostle James, after which Bishop-elect Paul and Bishop-elect Daniel were elevated to the dignity of Archimandrite. Prayers were also offered for the late Mr. Gregory Sulich, a long-time Chancery employee, on the first anniversary of his repose. — OCA Press Release, Oct. 23.

The Assyrian Church of the East

HIS HOLINESS MAR DINKHA IV, CATHOLICOS-PATRIARCH OF THE ASSYRIAN CHURCH OF THE EAST, CAME TO ROME FROM 1-4 OCTOBER TO MEET HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS. His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV arrived with his delegation on Wednesday 1 October. On Wednesday evening a dinner was hosted by His Eminence Cardinal Koch in honor of the Patriarch. On Thursday morning 2 October, there was the private meeting of His Holiness Mar Dinkha with the Holy Father, followed by the meeting of the delegation with the Holy Father, compris-

ing speeches, an exchange of gifts and a group photo.

On Thursday afternoon and Friday morning two meetings were held at the office of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. The members of the delegation of the Assyrian Church of the East were His Beatitude Mar Meelis Zaia, Metropolitan of Australia, New Zealand and Lebanon, His Grace Mar Awa Royel, Bishop of California and Secretary of the Holy Synod, His Grace Mar Yohannan Yousif, Auxiliary Bishop of India, Very Rev. Archdeacon William Toma and Very Rev. Cor-bishop George Toma. The Catholic Church was represented by His Eminence Cardinal Koch (President, PCPCU); His Excellency Johan Bonny, Bishop of Antwerp, His Excellency Antoine Audo, Bishop of Aleppo of the Chaldeans, His Excellency Yousif Thomas Mirkis, O.P, Archbishop of Kirkuk of the Chaldeans, His Excellency Francis Kalabat, Bishop of Saint Thomas of the Chaldeans (Detroit, USA) and Rev. Gabriel Quicke (Official, PCPCU).

The meeting at the Pontifical Council commenced with a word of welcome by His Eminence Cardinal Koch and words of gratitude by the Patriarch. Bishop Johan Bonny gave a short presentation of the history of the dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East. The meeting reflected on the second phase of the dialogue dealing with the text on 'Sacramental life' with a view to ensuring its continuity and to preparing the signing of this document. There was also discussion on defining a methodology, and preparing an outline of the third phase of the dialogue on the nature and constitution of the Church. Both delegations want to continue along the path of dialogue and look forward to the next meeting. — Press Release, Assyrian Church of the East, Oct. 23.

THIS IS THE SPEECH GIVEN BY POPE FRANCIS WHEN HE RECEIVED THE ASSYRIAN PATRIARCH AND HIS DELEGATION IN AUDIENCE ON OCTOBER 2:

Your Holiness, Beloved Brothers in Christ, it is a moment of grace and true joy for me to be able to welcome you here, at the Tomb of the Apostle Peter. With affection I welcome Your Holiness and I thank you for the courteous words you addressed to me also on behalf of the distinguished members of your Delegation. Through you, I express my greeting in the Lord to the Bishops, the clergy and the faithful of the Assyrian Church of the

East. With the words of the Apostle Paul, I pray that “the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:7).

Our meeting is marked by the suffering that we share for the conflicts which are passing through various regions of the Middle East and especially for the violence which is striking Christians and those belonging to other religious minorities, especially in Iraq and Syria. How many of our brothers and sisters are suffering from daily persecution! When we think of their suffering, it is natural to move beyond any distinction of rite or confession: in them it is the Body of Christ, which, still today, is being wounded, struck, humiliated. There is no religious, political or economic reason that can justify what is happening to hundreds of thousands of innocent men, women and children. We feel deeply united in intercessory prayer and in the work of charity for these members of the Body of Christ who are suffering.

Your Holiness, your visit is another step on the path of growing closeness and spiritual communion between us, after the bitter misunderstandings of past centuries. Twenty years ago, the Common Christological Declaration signed by you and by my Predecessor, Pope St John Paul II, was a milestone on our path toward full communion. By it we acknowledged to confess the one faith of the Apostles, the faith in the divinity and humanity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, united in one person, without confusion or change, without division or separation. To use the words of that historic Document: united, we confess “the same faith in the Son of God who became man so that we might become children of God by his grace.” I wish to assure you of my personal commitment to continue the journey along this path, further deepening the relationships of friendship and of communion which exist between the Church of Rome and the Assyrian Church of the East.

I accompany with prayer the work of the Joint Committee for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East, thanks to which the blessed day is approaching, on which we will be able to celebrate at the same altar the sacrifice of praise, which will make us one in Christ. Until that day, let us feel we are walking together in the presence of the Lord, as Our Father Abraham did on his pilgrimage of faith toward the Promised Land, knowing that, although the destination seems distant and

we may taste it only in hope, it is however the gift promised by the Lord and, therefore, it will not fail to become manifest. What unites is much greater than what divides us; thus may we feel impelled by the Spirit to exchange, from now on, the spiritual treasures of our ecclesial Traditions, in order to live as true brothers, sharing the gifts that the Lord does not cease to bestow on our Churches, as a sign of his goodness and mercy.

Your Holiness, I thank you for your visit and I invoke upon you, your clergy and the faithful entrusted to your pastoral care, through the intercession of the All Holy Mother of God, an abundance of divine blessings. – Vatican web site, Oct 2.

The Oriental Orthodox Churches

THE ANGLICAN-ORIENTAL ORTHODOX INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION HAS HELD ITS THIRD MEETING, FROM 13–17 OCTOBER 2014, AT ST MARK’S CENTER, CAIRO, EGYPT.

The Commission greatly appreciates the hospitality offered by the Coptic Orthodox Church, and is grateful to His Holiness Pope Tawadros II for receiving the Commission in the Cathedral of St Mark and in his residence after its members had attended Vespers and His Holiness’ weekly pastoral Bible study and sermon. The Commission is indebted to The Most Revd Dr Mouneer Anis, President Bishop of the Anglican Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East, for his welcome to the Cathedral of All Saints and to his diocese and for his hospitality.

The Commission completed its work revising the text of the 2002 Holy Etchmiadzin Agreed Statement on Christology in the light of comments received from member Churches. The revised text was signed at the Cairo meeting by His Eminence Metropolitan Bishop of Damietta on behalf of the Oriental Orthodox Churches, and by The Rt Revd Dr Geoffrey Rowell on behalf of the Anglican Communion. This significant, revised statement will be sent to the responsible authorities of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Anglican Communion for their consideration and action.

During the course of its meeting the Commission shared in daily prayer from the various traditions represented, and considered and discussed the themes of authority and primacy in the two families of Churches.

The Commission shared the urgent

concerns of members from the Middle East, especially in the critical situations in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and other regions, and heard of the experience of the Church in Egypt from Pope Tawadros and Bishop Mouneer. Messages of solidarity were also sent to the Christians of those regions through the delegates present. Church leaders and members of the Commission reiterated their ongoing prayers and concern for the two kidnapped bishops of Aleppo, Metropolitan Mor Gregorios Youhanna Ibrahim of the Syrian Orthodox Church, and Metropolitan Boulos Yazigi of the Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch.

The fourth meeting of the Commission will take place in Wales from 5–10 October 2015, hosted by the Anglican Communion, addressing among other issues the theme of the Holy Spirit, on which important preliminary work was done.

At the conclusion of the dialogue the Commission thanked God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for the unity that they experienced and shared, and look forward to continuing its work.

The Commission also marks this as the last of its meetings co-chaired by Bishop Geoffrey, and thanks him for his faithful service to its work since its inception; and recognizes that this will be the last meeting as Co-Secretary for Archbishop Nareg Amezian (who is succeeded in the role by Fr Housig Mardirossian), and for Canon Alyson Barnett-Cowan on her retirement, thanking them both for their contribution to the Dialogue.

The new Anglican Co-Chair will be Bishop Gregory Cameron, Bishop of St Asaph in the Church in Wales. – Press Release, Anglican Communion News Service, Oct. 27.

THE MOST REVD JUSTIN WELBY, THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY, SENT THIS MESSAGE TO THE OCTOBER 2014 MEETING OF THE ANGLICAN-ORIENTAL ORTHODOX INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION:

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As you begin the third meeting of the Anglican-Oriental Orthodox International Commission in Cairo, I send you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ this short message of solidarity and encouragement.

The context in which you are meeting is one of heightened tension and conflict. Under the spreading violence and aggression, Christians and other religious groups in the Middle East are increasingly facing

violations of the fundamental right and freedom to practice faith in their homelands. We are, therefore, all called to greater commitment and prayer for those persecuted and displaced communities in the region. Christians in these parts have been a continuing presence from the earliest days, contributing to the stability in the region. Now this presence and their role as mediators and reconcilers are under grave threat.

On 3rd September this year a meeting and service of prayer was held at Lambeth Palace with the theme, "Solidarity with Christians in the Middle East: Rejoicing in their Faith and Witness and Sharing in their Collective Pain." We gave thanks to God for our brothers and sisters as they continue to live their Christian faith in the Middle East with perseverance despite the immense challenges. We lifted our prayers for them and all who continue to face persecution. Their plight and struggles continue to be at the forefront of our minds, and within our ministry to our Churches and the wider community.

As you reflect on our common faith in Christ, the common ground achieved and future steps, I pray that our theological dialogues for greater unity and closer fellowship will enable us to keep our focus on the importance of our common witness to the Gospel in our troubled world.

To our brothers and sisters in the Middle East, please be assured of our solidarity and our prayers that the living God will bring relief and liberation to the displaced and persecuted, and that those who promote the ways of conflict and oppression turn to the path of reconciliation.

It is in this spirit that I "share with you in Jesus the persecution and the kingdom and the patient endurance." Revelation 1:9. – Press Release, Lambeth Palace, Oct. 15.

ON THE EVENING OF OCTOBER 10, BY INVITATION OF HIS HOLINESS KAREKIN II, SUPREME PATRIARCH AND CATHOLICOS OF ALL ARMENIANS, HIS HOLINESS MOR IGNATIUS APHREM II, SYRIAC ORTHODOX PATRIARCH OF ANTIOCH AND ALL THE EAST, MADE A FRACTIONAL THREE-DAY VISIT TO ARMENIA.

In the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, the delegation from the sister church was led by procession with the singing of the Hrashapar Hymn and ringing of bells to the Mother Cathedral and the Holy Altar of Descent, where a united prayer of thanksgiving was offered.

After the prayer, Karekin II, Catholi-

cos of All Armenians, addressed his welcoming remarks to the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East and his delegation. Expressing great joy on the occasion of the arrival of the Supreme Head of the Sister Church to Armenia and spiritual center of All Armenians, His Holiness said in part: "Our joy is all the greater because we know you to be a courageous and self-sacrificing leader, a true friend and brother, whom we now host as a spiritual leader. Your visit commences with the Hrashapar Service of Welcome and with prayer in this cathedral. Our united prayer is a witness to the unity of the faith of our sister Churches and embodies the spirit of Christian testimony, founded upon the same faith and sacred tradition passed down to us by our holy fathers. We, as the true children of one heavenly Father, address the Lord our God together, in the words of the Apostle Paul, as "Brothers, sons of the promise." (Galatians 4:28).

The centuries-old relations of the Armenian Church and the Syriac Orthodox Church have been marked by a spirit of Christian love, brotherhood and cooperation. Your visit, as the newly elected Patriarch of our sister church, confirms this fact. The strengthening of our mutual relations is an imperative of our sister Churches, especially in these times when our two Churches, the Syriac Orthodox Church and the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church confront grave situations, which threaten our faithful and are of great concern to the whole world.

Dear Brother in Christ, despite the on-going war in Syria and difficult situations in the Middle East, you as a devoted and selfless servant and courageous shepherd, have returned from the United States to your native Syria to undertake a heavy responsibility, and to serve with further devotion during this historical period. Your presence in Syria and your efforts internationally in the name of peace are an encouragement for all people of faith, whose highest purpose and yearning is for the immediate restoration of peace and the triumph of justice over the evils of war and terror. Through our prayers to God on High we express solidarity with your Holiness and through you with the faithful of our sister church in Syria, for the immediate end to hostilities so that the people of Syria may return to their homes and rebuild their lives in peace and prosperity."

Welcoming the Syrian Church Patriarch in the name of the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church, the Supreme Spiritual

Council, the members of the brotherhood and staff of the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, and all of the faithful, the Armenian Pontiff prayed that Beneficent God protect and keep Syria and the Republic of Armenia, the Syriac Orthodox and Armenian Apostolic Churches under the protection of His Almighty Right Hand. "May He bless the fruitfulness of our mutual relations and cooperative efforts and may the pious children of the Armenian and Syrian brother peoples be granted the abundant graces and heavenly gifts of the Holy Spirit." His Holiness also wished that God grant His Holiness Mor Ignatius Aphrem II, a healthy life and a long pontificate.

His Holiness Mor Ignatius Aphrem II, reflected on his visit to Armenia and the Mother See. Expressing gratitude for the warm reception, the Supreme Head of the Syriac Orthodox Church emphasized with happiness that following his enthronement, he was making the first pastoral visit to the Sister Church of the Armenian Apostolic Church. "We renew our oath in this place, where 1700 years ago the Only-begotten Son descended and filled the soul of the Armenian nation with His Glory. We are happy to visit the Armenian Church and Your Holiness, because we share with you not only the faith, but also the blood. ... We have come to express our gratitude to you on these days; for your spiritual guidance for the Armenians, we have come to pray not only for Syria, but also for world peace," said the Syriac Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and All the East. His Holiness Mor Ignatius Aphrem II, also spoke about the challenges facing the Christians in Syria and the Middle East; adding that during these hard times the responsibility of religious leaders is to inspire hope in their communities. "The Faith in Christ and confidence towards our spiritual brothers strengthens us to continue our Christian witness," stressed His Holiness Aphrem II, expressing his gratitude on this occasion to the Catholicos of All Armenians; the pious people of Syria and particularly the Syriac Orthodox Church for unwaveringly providing support. – Press Release, Holy Etchmiadzin, Oct. 10.

ON OCTOBER 13, IN THE MOTHER SEE OF HOLY ETCHMIADZIN, HIS HOLINESS KAREKIN II, SUPREME PATRIARCH AND CATHOLICOS OF ALL ARMENIANS, AND HIS HOLINESS MOR IGNATIUS APHREM II, PATRIARCH OF ANTIOCH AND ALL THE EAST, SIGNED THIS

TEXT in the presence of the delegations of the two Churches:

JOINT DECLARATION

We, Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, and Mor Ignatius Aphrem II, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East and Supreme Head of the Universal Syriac Orthodox Church, offer thanksgiving to the Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for providing us the opportunity to meet in the spiritual center of all Armenians, the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin by the fraternal invitation of the Catholicos of All Armenians, to affirm the unity of faith, and the willful desire to continue cooperation between the two sister Churches.

The Armenian and Syriac Orthodox sister Churches, founded by the Apostles, share the same Christology and Apostolic Tradition, patristic heritage and common saints, confessors and witnesses. We are happy to acknowledge that today as well the historical relations between our two churches are developing closer.

In this fast changing world our Churches are facing new challenges in their pastoral life. We place great importance upon the development of our bilateral relations in the areas of spiritual and theological education, pastoral life and promotion of monasticism. We encourage the representatives of our Churches to continue their cooperative efforts on the diocesan levels.

We are greatly concerned with the situation in the Middle East. Today the countries of the Middle East, which are the birthplace of the monotheist religions and where representatives of different religions have lived and worked side by side for centuries, are going through major crisis. We strongly condemn the activities of all terrorist groups and religious extremists, and all violence committed against Christians, Muslims, Yazidi people and other minorities. We are hopeful that the war on terror in Iraq and Syria will succeed in establishing peace in the region, so that those who were forced into exile may return to their homes.

We also express our concern for the continuing war in Syria. Once again we call upon the international community to respect the will of the Syrian people to solve their own political problems and dissensions strictly by peaceful means. We urge and pray for the immediate release of two kidnapped archbishops Mor Gregorios Youhanna Ibrahim and Boulos Yazigi. We are hopeful that the international community will continue to provide

humanitarian aid to the region, whether it be of a financial, medical or other nature helpful to human life, and remove all obstacles in the way of humanitarian assistance.

One hundred years have passed since the beginning of the First World War which caused so much destruction and human misfortune. Different nations and governments of the world remember the evils of mankind and recall the events which brought about irreversible losses. The war brought about painful consequences for the Armenians, who lost one and half million of their people and a great part of their land and Syriacs who, have lost more than five hundred thousand of their population. We offer prayers for Armenian and Syriac martyrs as well as other victims of the World War I. We invite the entire Christian world to unite in prayer at the Armenian Genocide and the Syriac Sayfo centennial commemorative events in 2015. We call upon the civilized world to recognize and condemn the crimes committed against the Armenian and Syriac peoples as well as other Christian communities.

We give thanks to God Almighty for the existing cooperation between the Oriental Orthodox Churches, which share the same faith. We happily acknowledge that our Church family engages in the ecumenical movement and in dialogues with the other churches and Christian communities. In these new historical realities the theological dialogues must contribute to the common witness of the Church of Christ in the changing world. We are pleased that the bilateral and multilateral relations are progressing with representatives of other religions and inter-religious organizations, for the peace in the world as well as for the wellbeing and prosperity of humankind.

We pray to God for the splendor of the Churches, and for peace on earth and especially in the Middle East, asking that the Lord will soon grant peace and a undisturbed life to the people of Syria. – Press Release, Holy Etchmiadzin, Oct. 13.

ON OCTOBER 14, 2014, HIS HOLINESS PATRIARCH MOR IGNATIUS APHREM II RESPONDED TO AN INVITATION FROM HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS PRINCE GHAZI TO DISCUSS THE CURRENT SITUATION OF CHRISTIANS IN THE MIDDLE EAST. The meeting included the other Patriarchs of the East.

His Royal Highness King Abdallah II met His Holiness Patriarch Mor Ignatius

Aphrem II and the Patriarchs of the East individually first and then collectively to discuss the suggested solutions to help the Iraqi immigrants and the suitable ways to offer humanitarian aid.

His Royal Highness King Abdallah II emphasized the importance of strengthening the dialogue between religious leaders to promote the human interest and encourage moderation and tolerance and to reject extremism and terrorism. His Royal Highness invited the Christian religious leaders to support the relations of love and peace and to build bridges of dialogue between East and West. He stressed the necessity that Christians should remain in the region saying: “We cannot live as Muslims without Christians.”

In turn, His Holiness Patriarch Mor Ignatius Aphrem II expressed his gratitude for the important role that His Royal Highness King Abdallah II and the Kingdom of Jordan have played in spreading the culture of tolerance and openness towards others. He also appreciated the intensified efforts to increase cooperation and active dialogue among religions. His Holiness asked His Royal Highness to encourage the international community and major powers to opt for peaceful solutions for the crisis in Syria. He said that “the first and foremost victim of Islamic extremism witnessed in this region is Islam itself.”

At the end of the meeting, His Royal Highness, Their Holiness and Beatitudes the Patriarchs of the East met with delegates of international social and benevolent institutions to discuss ways of offering help to Iraqi immigrants. – Press Release, Syrian Orthodox Church, Oct. 15.

THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH IN THE UNITED KINGDOM CELEBRATED THE FEAST OF NAYROUZ, MARKING THE NEW COPTIC YEAR IN ST MARGARET’S CHURCH, WESTMINSTER ABBEY ON 21 OCTOBER 2014, with a sermon by His Grace Bishop Angaelos, General Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church in the United Kingdom, and messages from His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, The Right Honourable David Cameron Prime Minister, and the Most Reverend Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury.

Speaking of his recent visit to The Coptic Orthodox Church Centre in the United Kingdom, HRH The Prince of Wales praised “the dedication and commitment of the Coptic faithful in contributing to the life of the Church, and of this country, in many ways, some unseen and

unheard.” He went on to say, “I very much share your deep concern for all those still facing grave challenges across North Africa and the Middle East... The Coptic Orthodox community in Egypt and, indeed, Christians across the Middle East, have often proved themselves to be those who build bridges between different groups and religions. They have shown great forbearance and longsuffering despite the ongoing persecution they face, providing a humbling example of what it is to be a faithful Christian.”

In his message, Prime Minister David Cameron said, “As our Coptic communities mark Nayrouz today, we celebrate the fantastic contribution they make to our country and we think of the many Christian communities around the world for whom this New Year is a time of fear and suffering.” Speaking in support of the Coptic Orthodox Community, the Prime Minister went on to say, “We call for unity in support of tolerance, in standing up for the rights of people of all faiths and backgrounds and in promoting the building blocks of democracy as the long-term basis to defeat extremism in the region... we stand alongside the Coptic Church and other Christian churches in the Middle East in pursuing these values, treasuring the long history and deep roots of these churches and their commitment to the common good.”

The Archbishop of Canterbury, in his message said: “My prayer for all the faithful of the Coptic Church is that the coming year will bring peace and hope. In situations of crisis and conflict may the primacy of our inter church relations as Christians standing together and praying for one another provide us with the wisdom, courage and strength in Christ to dialogue, clarify, act and heal.”

In his sermon, Bishop Angaelos spoke of the responsibility and obligation of Christians to advocate for religious freedom for all, saying, “Freedom is a responsibility and an obligation that we have been given by God and must take seriously. We must, when we can, speak the truth; it is not an option. We must look at the freedom we have today in standing and praying together, and seek to use that freedom to benefit all those who are not able to do the same.” Speaking of the defiance and resolve of many who suffer gross violations of their religious freedom, he said: “We are reminded that in the midst of this immense darkness there is an incredible light, witness, example, power, and victory. What appears to be death and

defeat is actually defiance and victory for, in the cases of many of these people, it is a greater victory to have died for their Faith than to have given it up to continue otherwise. While this may be the case, and they may be defiant and victorious, we must also continue to actively advocate for them. The unity that we express today in standing side by side for those less fortunate or free than ourselves will be a testimony to encourage us and them that they are not forgotten. We stand here in the confidence that God hears our prayers and the cries of all who call upon Him, reminded in Exodus 3:7 “I have surely seen the oppression of My people... and have heard their cry... for I know their sorrows.” – Press Release, Coptic Orthodox Church UK, Oct. 22.

IN A RECENT TELEPHONE CONVERSATION WITH THE TALK SHOW *HUNAL-ASEMA* (THIS IS THE CAPITAL) ON SATELLITE TV, POPE TAWADROS II EXPOUNDED ON THE VARIOUS LAWS NEEDED BY THE COPTS AND AWAITING LEGISLATION BY THE UPCOMING PARLIAMENT. Major among them was a law for building churches a draft of which, the Pope said, had been fully agreed upon by the major Christian sects in Egypt and handed to the government. Such a law, when passed, he said, stands to reduce sectarian problems to at least half their current volume.

The second law is the Family law for Christians. Pope Tawadros said the draft law had also been approved by all the Christian sects in Egypt and handed to the Egyptian government more than 35 years ago, but never saw light. It is now being reviewed and revised to be passed by the new Parliament.

The Pope said that the current family law used by Egyptian courts in case of Christians, notoriously known as the 1938 Bylaws, had been set up by a laymen committee and included gross violations of explicit Bible teachings. The only authority qualified for legislating laws in the Church, he said, is the Holy Synod.

The Pope said that the Church was taking measures to speed and simplify the resolution of family problems, major among which is divorce and marriage annulment, by opening six new venues to see such cases. There has so far been only one venue, in Cairo, authorized to see family cases. This led to a pile-up of cases that rendered their resolution a very lengthy process. The new venues, he said, should ease matters up. – *Watani International*,

Oct. 25.

The Catholic Churches

DURING HIS STAY AT THE COUNCIL OF THE UGCC IN POLAND, WHICH TAKES PLACE IN THE CITY OF PRZEMYSL, BISHOP BOHDAN DZIURAKH, SECRETARY OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS OF THE UGCC, COMMENTED TO RISU ON THE RECENT STATEMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE on the latter’s willingness to return to the issue of “Uniatism” within the Catholic-Orthodox theological dialogue. This proposal, as reported by Russian media, was put forward by the Russian delegation during the last meeting of the Commission in Amman, Jordan.

According to Bishop Dzyurakh, there is always a lot of negativity in trying to raise the issue of so-called “Uniatism”: “it is always referred to as a ‘bloody wound on the body of Christianity’ and as something to be done with. I think that such rhetoric has no future, as it suggests that we should do something with a certain group of Christians, or rather do something so they cease to exist. This is not a positive proposal, it is not a proposal that may be developed and give rise to a good, creative and fruitful dialogue. In order for the dialogue to be fruitful and constructive, it must take place in love. And love requires respect for the rights of each party concerned.”

Commenting on the possibility of returning to this issue within the official dialogue between Catholics and Orthodox, Bishop Bohdan expressed his conviction that it should be returned to in a positive format rather than negative one: “We are inviting the dialogue to seek out new formats of unity. Perhaps, the methods that were used 400 years ago now look anachronistic, but the idea of unity does not come either from the Holy See or from a particular group of Christians – this is the commandment of Christ, a gospel postulate. So we have no choice here. For the choice here is to follow Christ, to go to unity or maintain this tragic dissent. I see that the authoritative representatives of the Orthodox Church in the person of the Patriarch of Constantinople understood it and along with the Pope withdrew the mutual anathemas that had emerged as a result of human sinfulness and ambitions.”

“I think that it does not make sense to continue the dialogue in a polemical manner. For ‘polemics’ comes from ‘polemos’ that means ‘war’ in Greek. In our case,

this is war on religious grounds. We should rather seek and offer new models of unity. Regarding the statements of the Moscow Patriarchate representatives to turn back to the issue of 'Uniatism' within the theological dialogue, as far as I know, this proposal was not supported by the Commission members. This suggests that those who are looking for true dialogue think in a positive way. And this gives us hope that the ecumenical dialogue is moving forward despite the various difficult moments of crisis," concluded the Secretary of the Synod of Bishops of the UGCC. – *RISU*, Oct. 2.

HIS BEATITUDE PATRIARCH GREGORIOS III EXTENDED THIS GREETING TO MUSLIMS FOR THE FEAST OF EID AL-ADHA ON OCTOBER 4:

To our Muslim brothers and sisters in the Arab world and beyond!

We salute you with the word peace, dear to all our hearts! Peace unto you and peace be with you! These words express our dearest aspirations for our world, especially for the Arab world, torn and bloody because of the wars raging in large parts of it over the past four years, especially in North Africa on the one hand and on the other hand in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Gaza.

The war has taken an even more unbearable and bloody image, because of the emergence and development of takfiri groups sweeping large areas in our East, the cradle of civilizations and religions, as well as threatening the West.

We are partners to our Muslim brothers, especially in the Arab world, and we consider that the biggest challenge facing Islam and Muslims, especially in the Arab world, is this variety of takfirism. The biggest challenge is also the position of the countries and institutions of the Islamic religious and civil world toward these various takfiri groups that threaten Islam and Christianity, Muslims and Christians in their values of faith, and in rights and standards of humanity that represent the general world heritage of the whole of mankind.

I don't like to consider myself an outsider in a world I love, and to which I belong, and of which and for which I am a part. I am not exaggerating if I express a wish dear to the majority, even of the vast majority. This wish has a two-fold aspect: first and foremost, that Muslim muftis or scholars of Islam, with the kings, princes and heads of governments and countries should work towards a comprehensive

Arab reconciliation, beginning with this holy feast.

The second is the formation of an Arab group, and I dare to say that it should be Muslim-Christian, working on a new Arab Charter to meet the aspirations of the younger generation in a modern state of solidarity, where religion and state operate harmoniously each in its natural sphere, and Shari'a law chimes in with citizenship and respect for fundamental freedoms, especially freedom of worship and belief for everyone of all denominations and sects.

On that basis, thinkers of the Arab community could work to set the agenda for an intellectual and cultural program stemming from our faith and values and our common heritage and history, and opening the way for a state to which a modern Arab could relate, and successfully identify with, that can be in harmony with today and the requirements of a future open civil society. So we Muslims and Christians will both keep our values of faith and meet the rising aspirations of the younger generations. We also call for bringing this vision to schools, colleges and universities, social institutions and the institutions of civil society at all levels.

Thus the Arab world takes an initiative towards the planning of what we call the New World Order, and we become makers of a road map of this new system and the new Arab world which copes with the aspirations of future generations and adapts to the diverse components of a vast world full of variables, in order to keep up with the world's rapid evolution.

How much we rejoice as we read, day after day, the statements issued by Arab and Muslim religious authorities from East and West publishing enlightened Islamic thought and calls to renounce the ideology of different takfiri groups and their incitements against the vision of the value of human beings, created in the image and likeness of God, which is the basis of our rights and the Declaration of Human Rights.

We pray for our Muslim brethren, peoples and rulers, clerics and political and academic thinkers, to stand together united against these takfiri groups. This common position would be a clear factor in countering these takfiri groups, and be a guarantee for the Islamic world and its faith values and be a guarantee to reassure the Christians in the Arab Middle East, the cradle of Christianity, religions and civilizations. We even consider that those who act together and adopt a posture of soli-

arity in faith are in a stronger position than Arab and global military powers. Faith is the power that outweighs weapons! We are convinced of this.

So we raise our prayers in our churches in order for God to remove from our country this nightmare, the nightmare of war, murder and bloodshed, destruction and attacks carried out by the various takfiri groups on human dignity and spiritual values. They deprive people of their home and possessions and reasons for living, uprooting them from their ancestral land and scattering them, killing the hope and promise in their hearts of a bright future, especially for our young people, who are looking forward to life. They want to be in a place where everyone is esteemed of equal worth, and accepted, enjoying a proper standard of living, which matches their aspirations to live together and work together in safety and security, fellowship, compassion and forgiveness, solidarity, love and peace!

Our feasts are celebrations of our faith and values and convictions. For this reason, we Muslims and Christians have common feast days. This is why we wish our Muslim brethren, the kings, princes, rulers and heads of state a blessed Eid ul Adha. We thank those who share our feasts and send us messages of greeting. We consider this letter a special greeting to each one of them!

We extend these sincere wishes stemming from the heart of one who loves the Arab world of the great East, which is the cradle of religions and civilizations, and about which it is rightly said, "From the East comes light."

Through these good wishes and by reflecting on them, we hope that the Arab world finds its own special place. Let it be neither a follower, nor an emulator. Let it not be remiss, breathlessly running behind others, but on the other hand, let it not be vulnerable to exploitation and fragmentation and extortion.

For all of you, my beloved brothers and sisters, we raise our hands in prayer, and offer you the most beautiful words of our faith for peace, with wishes for a happy future! May God favor our intention! Happy Feast!

+ Gregorios III, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, of Alexandria and of Jerusalem for the Melkite Greek Catholic Church. – Web site of the Melkite Patriarchate, Oct. 4.

BY TAPPING INTO ITS EASTERN THEOLOGICAL AND SPIRITUAL TRADITIONS, THE CATHOLIC CHURCH COULD FIND AN APPROPRIATE WAY TO MINISTER TO DIVORCED AND CIVILLY REMARRIED CATHOLICS AND OTHERS IN SITUATIONS THE CHURCH CONSIDERS IRREGULAR, THE HEAD OF THE UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH SAID.

“According to the tradition of the Byzantine church, a priest or a bishop is not a judge. His task is not to justify or to condemn somebody, especially in such a delicate area as marriage and family,” Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, the major archbishop of Kiev-Halych, told reporters Oct. 11. “Our task, our duty is to be spiritual fathers and provide some sort of spiritual healing.”

Much of the initial discussion at the Synod of Bishops on the family, he said, was “focused on canonical procedures and possibilities — how to help those who were married and then divorced to be more and fully accepted into the Christian communities. But our tradition is mostly focused not in canon law, in canonical procedures, but in the spiritual and aesthetical guidance of Christians.”

No one at the synod is questioning the Christian teaching that marriage is indissoluble, he said; “our question is how do we support and help the people of today’s culture, people who are getting more and more fragile,” to grow spiritually.

Pope Francis has described the church as a “field hospital” in the midst of a battle, the archbishop said. “We have to deal with so many wounded people. And we have to realize how many different possibilities, how many instruments Jesus Christ gave us.”

The church’s medicine chest includes: “spiritual assistance, the sacraments of the church, prayer, blessings, support, solidarity,” he said. On a battlefield, “in some cases, a physician would apply very strong and not very sweet medicines in order to save the life. But in some cases we are to provide some — I would say — more efficient medicine, not to cover a wound, but to heal.”

At a time when “the globalized culture is becoming more and more aggressive against the very institution of family,” he said, the church must take seriously its responsibility “to proclaim that according to the Christian faith, family is a covenant between man, woman and God.”

The bishops at the synod, he said, are realistic in recognizing there is no “simple and general rule,” no single medicine, that

will bring healing to all couples in irregular situations. However, “everybody would agree that we have to approach those people, we have to be with them, they have to feel that church is mother, but a teacher as well, that they are not alone in their difficult situation.”

“Our hope, our final goal,” he said, is to help every Catholic grow “toward a holy and happy life in the fullness of Jesus Christ. Our goal is not to put everybody into the right canonical position. Our goal is not to declare that somebody is right or wrong. Our goal is how to help everyone grow in the grace of God.” — Cindy Wooden for *CNS*, Oct. 13

ON OCTOBER 16, 2014, METROPOLITAN HILARION OF VOLOKOLAMSK, HEAD OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE’S DEPARTMENT FOR EXTERNAL CHURCH RELATIONS, ATTENDED THE PLENARY SESSION OF THE THIRD EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SYNOD OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS held these days in the Vatican on the theme ‘Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization’.

Before the session, the high representative of the Russian Orthodox Church was warmly welcomed by Pope Francis, Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith Cardinal Gerhard Ludwig Müller, President of the Pontifical Council for the Family Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, representative of the Patriarchate of Constantinople Metropolitan Athenagoras of Belgium and other participants in the meeting.

The plenary session chaired by Pope Francis was opened with an address by Metropolitan Hilarion who greeted the Head of the Roman Catholic Church and all the bishops present on behalf of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia. This is his address:

Your Holiness,
Your Beatitudes,
Your Eminences and Your Excellencies:

Allow me first of all to greet you on behalf of the primate of the Russian Orthodox Church, His Holiness Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

The topic of the family is one of the most acute and vital today. It is an indicator of the moral state of the society in which we live.

We have anxiously watched as abuse of the notions of freedom and tolerance has been used in recent years to dismantle

the basic values rooted in religious traditions. There is an increasingly aggressive propagation of the idea of moral relativism applied also to the institution of the family held sacred by all of humanity.

In quite a number of countries in Europe and America, despite numerous protests, same-sex unions are approved and recognized on the level of the state. In some places, the right of same-sex partners to adopt children has already been fixed legally and implemented, including through the use of “surrogate motherhood” technology.

At the same time, traditional families built on the notion of marriage as union of man and woman become weaker and weaker. Instead of concern for their consolidation, there is the propaganda of so-called “free relations.” The notions of fidelity, mutual respect and responsibility of spouses are replaced by the imposition of hedonism and calls to live for one’s own self.

Children are no longer seen as the desirable fruit of spouses’ mutual love. The right of abortion, restricted by almost nothing, has become widespread, and has led to the legalization of the destruction of millions of lives. Among the serious problems is the existence of orphans whose parents are still alive, and abandoned and lonely disabled children.

The ideas of moral relativism have also affected many Christians who in words confess the Church’s teaching on the family but indeed refuse to follow it.

Asserting the sanctity of marriage based on the words of the Savior Himself (see Mt. 19:6, Mk. 10:9), the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church traditionally place personal responsibility above egotistical interests. To cultivate in a Christian this responsibility before the family, society and the surrounding world is the most important task for the Churches today. The protection of human dignity and affirmation of the lofty value of love realized in the family is an integral component of the Gospel message that we are called to bring to people.

In November 2013, the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate and the Pontifical Council for the Family led by Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia held in Rome a conference on ‘Orthodox and Catholics Protecting the Family Together’. In the final statement, we underlined “our conviction that we bear a common responsibility for making marriage and family life the way to sanctity for Christian families.”

The time has come for Christians to join efforts and come out as a united front for the noble goal of protecting the family when confronted by the challenges of the secular world for the sake of preserving the future of civilization. It is the field in which our alliance may become really needed.

We should together defend our positions both in dialogue with the legislative and executive authorities in particular countries and on the platforms of international organizations, such as the UN and the Council of Europe. We already have a certain experience of such cooperation; it is enough to recall the well-known case of Lautsi versus Italy.

It is essential not to confine ourselves to noble appeals, but to press in every possible way for the legal protection of the family. It is necessary to restore in our society the awareness that freedom is unthinkable without responsibility for one's actions.

The Orthodox Church consistently proclaims the ideal of the one and only marital union concluded once and for all. At the same time, conceding the weakness of human nature, in exceptional cases the Orthodox Church allows for a new church marriage in the instance of the breakup of the first marriage. In this our Church follows the principle of *oikonomia*, guided as she is by the love of the sinner who is not to be deprived of the means of salvation. In today's world, in which the strict observance of the church ordinances becomes increasingly rare, the practice of *oikonomia*, which has existed in Orthodoxy throughout the centuries, may become a valuable experience in settling the pastoral problems of the family.

The Orthodox Church has accumulated a rich experience of pastoral care for the family. She has always preserved the institution of married clergy. As a rule, the families of priests are large and their children are brought up in the spirit of Christian devotion and faithfulness to church teaching. A priest with his own experience of family relations and parenting can better understand family problems and give his spiritual children the necessary pastoral aid. I believe it would be useful to notice this experience, which is also present in the Eastern Rite Catholic Churches.

Speaking about the Churches of the Eastern Rite, I would like to digress from the forum's topics and to touch upon an issue that has become today a stumbling block in the relations between the Orthodox and the Catholic Churches. It is the

problem of Uniatism which has become once again more acute as a result of the recent events in Ukraine. Regrettably, the conflict in that country, which has already taken the lives of thousands, from the very beginning has acquired a religious dimension.

A significant role in its conception and development has been played by the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. From the very first days of the conflict, the Greek Catholics identified with one of the sides of the confrontation. Contrary to the respect for canonical norms prevailing in relations between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, the Greek Catholics have entered into active cooperation with the Orthodox schismatic groups.

The Joint Commission for Orthodox-Catholic Dialogue, as far back as 1993 in Balamand, recognized that Uniatism is not the way to unity. We are grateful to our Catholic brothers for their open recognition of the mistakenness of Uniatism. And we have to state regrettably again that Uniatism does not bring the Orthodox and the Catholics any closer to each other; on the contrary, it divides us.

On behalf of the Russian Orthodox Church, I would like to address the representatives of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church present in this hall with an appeal to renounce any statements on political topics and any visible forms of support of the schism as well as calls to create "one Local Church of Ukraine." For standing behind this call is a simple truth, the wish to tear away the Orthodox faithful in Ukraine from their Mother Church, the Moscow Patriarchate, with which Ukraine has been bound by age-old blood ties.

The principal mission of the Church is to serve the cause of people's salvation. The mandate given to us by God does not presuppose interference in political and civil conflicts. In a world in which there are so many divisions, in which the very foundations of the survival of human civilization, including the institution of the family, are under threat, Christians are called to be "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world" (Mt. 5:13-14), bringing all to the love of each other and to unity in Christ.

We can do much together, also for the protection of the Christians who have become today victims of persecution. In Iraq and Syria and in a number of other countries in the Middle East and Africa, Christians are subjected to genocide. We should do all that depends on us to stop the killing of Christians, to stop their mass

exodus from the places where they have lived for centuries, to draw the attention of the whole world community to their calamitous state.

I wish you all, dear brothers, God's blessing and success in your efforts! – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, Oct. 16.

ON 17 OCTOBER 2014, METROPOLITAN HILARION OF VOLOKOLAMSK, CHAIRMAN OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE'S DEPARTMENT FOR EXTERNAL CHURCH RELATIONS, MET WITH THE POPE OF ROME FRANCIS.

Metropolitan Hilarion conveyed greetings from His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia to the Primate of the Roman Catholic Church, and Pope Francis conveyed his fraternal greetings and best wishes to Patriarch Kirill.

Much attention was paid to the dramatic situation in Ukraine where the conflict lasting for a year has claimed thousands of human lives. Metropolitan Hilarion told the Pope about the situation in the east of Ukraine where three priests were killed and fifty church buildings were partly or completely destroyed and shared his deep concern about the involvement of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in the political conflict on the side of the forces hostile to the Russian Orthodox Church. Metropolitan Hilarion expressed his hope that the Greek Catholics will revise their position, renounce unilateral politicized declarations and stop support for the schism.

Also discussed was the tragic situation of Christians in the Middle East. The necessity of consolidated actions of the Churches for the defense of Christians in the regions was noted. The DECR chairman told the Pope about the initiatives of the Russian Orthodox Church and thanked him for his peacemaking efforts.

Consideration was given to various aspects of the Orthodox-Catholic cooperation. Metropolitan Hilarion recounted the results of the 13th plenary session of the Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches held in Amman, Jordan, last September. The DECR chairman underscored that consideration of the correlation between synodality and primacy on the local, regional and universal levels of the church governing must be based on the sources rather than on theological speculations.

Metropolitan Hilarion shared with

Pope Francis his impressions of participation in the plenary session of the Synod of Catholic Bishops, noting the topicality of thorough discussion of the institution of the family and the necessity of defending traditional family values. The importance of cooperation in this area between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches was underscored.

After the audience, which lasted an hour in the atmosphere of mutual understanding, Metropolitan Hilarion introduced members of the Moscow Patriarchate delegation to Pope Francis. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, Oct. 17.

ANSWERING QUESTIONS DURING AN INTERVIEW WITH VATICAN RADIO, METROPOLITAN HILARION OF VOLOKOLAMSK, HEAD OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE'S DEPARTMENT FOR EXTERNAL CHURCH RELATIONS, attending the plenary session of the Third Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Catholic Bishops as representative of the Russian Orthodox Church, spoke on the Christian understanding of the institution of the family and the stand taken by the Russian Orthodox Church with regard to the civil conflict in Ukraine.

– Your Eminence, please tell us which practices of the Orthodox Church with regard to the family and marriage can be adopted by the Catholic Church?

– I think, in the first place, it is necessary to renounce the rigorist approach. We have common church rules and a common understanding of marriage: marriage is the union of man and women, and it should be one and the only. At the same time however, in practice there is a great deal of situations where this doctrine is not observed for various reasons. Then the problem moves from doctrinal to pastoral plane, in which the Orthodox Church has accumulated a certain experience, first of all, sometimes using the principle of *akriveia* – the strict adherence to the rules and sometimes the principle of *oikonomia* – condescension for human weakness.

In the discussions I have heard here today, the question was raised whether divorced spouses may be allowed to take Holy Communion and to make Confession. It seems to me that this question should be subjected to a thorough study, and we are ready to present our pastoral experience to our Catholic brothers.

I think, it is absolutely inadmissible to replace the Sacrament of Holy Communion with what some speakers have called “spiritual communion,” for it cannot be a

substitute at all. And here we have a great space for cooperation and exchange of opinions.

– Your Eminence, do not think my question provocative since it is voiced absolutely openly. Maybe this question has become especially relevant in the context of the Ukrainian conflict. Tell me, please, is it possible to establish in Ukraine a single autocephalous Orthodox Church?

– There is no need to establish an autocephalous Church as the one Local Church already exists there. It is the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate.

Calls to establish an autocephalous Church are actually calls to tear away the Ukrainian Orthodox faithful from the united Russian Orthodox Church. We cannot support them because such calls are not based on our self-understanding and church canons. Our faithful do not support them. Such calls are based solely on political expediency considerations: some politicians felt like declaring the principle “an independent Church in an independent state,” and the idea was taken up by the schismatics because the ideology of schism is based on this principle alone.

There is no other reason for the existence of a schism then to state that an independent state should have an independent Church. Then why not demand that the same Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church break away from the Pope, who is not just a certain symbolic head of that Church but really governs it through the supreme archbishop, approving decisions about the establishment of dioceses and episcopal ordinations?

There is no such relationship between the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and the Moscow Patriarchate because the Moscow Patriarchate does not have to approve decisions about the election of bishops or establishment of new dioceses. The Patriarch only approves the decision on the election of the Primate while the name of the Patriarch is mentioned during the liturgy. That is to say, it is not administrative or financial dependence. It is a spiritual relationship which has existed for many centuries going back to our common Dniester baptismal font of Prince Vladimir.

We are utterly opposed to breaking up relations under the influence of political expediency – the relations which have shaped for centuries to serve today as a powerful uniting force. While politicians

and schismatics divide people, the Church unites them.

– Perhaps in Byelorussia the cooperation between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church is a good model for co-existence?

– I think Byelorussia is a good model for co-existence between the Orthodox and the Catholics just as Russia is, in which there are no conflicts between us. We live in peace and harmony. I believe we can share this experience with our brothers in some other countries as well, in which such harmony and cooperation have not been reached as yet. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, Oct. 17.

THE SPEECH BY METROPOLITAN HILARION (ALFEYEV) AT THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS IN ROME DAMAGED THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH HERSELF. THIS IS A COMMENTARY THAT UGCC MAJOR ARCHBISHOP SVIATOSLAV (SHEVCHUK) made today at a press conference at St. George's Hill in Lviv regarding the speech by Metropolitan Hilarion, DECR Chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate, made in Rome.

“Not only the heads of the Episcopal Conferences, not only heads of the Eastern Catholic Church, but also the so-called fraternal delegates from the Orthodox and Protestant Churches were invited to the Synod's meeting, where they could speak to the Synod Fathers on the issues the Synod discussed, that is on the family issues. Metropolitan Hilarion did an ill service with his speech. Instead of talking about the Orthodox doctrine of the Church family, he used the opportunity to speak in the presence of the Holy Father and all the Fathers of the Synod and once again aggressively attacked the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church,” said His Beatitude Sviatoslav.

According to the leader of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, Metropolitan Hilarion's attacks concerned three issues. First of all, the very right of the UGCC to exist: “You see, it is so interesting, we celebrate 25 years of our freedom and over the past 25 years the rhetoric of our ‘northern brother’ has never changed. The very existence of our Church is a challenge. “Two other theses of Metropolitan Hilarion concerned allegations of Greek Catholics in fueling civil conflict in Ukraine and communication with representatives of the UOC-KP and UAOC.

Head of the UGCC said that the speech of Moscow guest excited negative response of those attending.

“These three provocations in one package presented at the highest forum of the Catholic Church ended in an absolute fiasco. What was the audience’s response? Extremely negative. Later on I was approached by representatives of all the Episcopal Conferences, who were expressing great solidarity with our Church and Ukraine.”

According to him, acting like that the Russian Metropolitan made a promotion of Ukraine and everyone began to wonder what is really going on here.

“Metropolitan Athenagoras, who represented the Ecumenical Patriarchate, responded in a very interesting manner. He was just surprised that someone allowed himself such an attitude to the member of the Catholic family in the presence of the entire family. The Holy Father was really perplexed. I had the opportunity to talk to him almost every day.”

“So I think that Metropolitan Hilarion did a lot of harm to the Orthodox Church by his speech. I was personally told of this harm by representatives of the Vatican curia,” concluded the UGCC Head. — *RISU*, Oct. 23.

“EVERY CHRISTIAN PILGRIMAGE IS NOT ONLY A GEOGRAPHICAL JOURNEY, BUT ALSO AND ABOVE ALL AN OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE A PATH OF INNER RENEWAL TAKING US EVER CLOSER TO CHRIST OUR LORD,” SAID POPE FRANCIS TO THE MEMBERS OF THE ORIENTALE LUMEN FOUNDATION in America, who are meeting in Rome in these days as part of an ecumenical pilgrimage.

“These dimensions are absolutely essential to proceed along the road that leads us to reconciliation and full communion among all believers in Christ. There is no true ecumenical dialogue without openness to inner renewal and the search for greater fidelity to Christ and to His will.”

The Holy Father expressed his satisfaction at learning that the pilgrims had decided to honor the memory of Popes St. John XXIII and St. John Paul II, remarking that “this decision underlines their great contribution to the development of ever closer relations between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches. The example of these two saints is without doubt enriching for all of us, since they always bore witness to an ardent passion for Christian unity.”

The Pope asked those present to pray for him during their pilgrimage to Rome,

“so that, with the intercession of these two Saints, my predecessors, I may carry out my ministry as bishop of Rome in the service of the communion and unity of the Church, always following the will of the Lord.” With regard to the pilgrims’ upcoming meeting with the Ecumenical Patriarch, His Holiness Bartholomew I, in Phanar, he remarked that he too will meet with the Patriarch during his apostolic trip to Turkey in November. “I beg you to convey to him my cordial and fraternal greetings, as testimony of my affection and esteem.” — *VIS*, Oct. 24.

THE PROBLEM IN CATHOLIC-ORTHODOX RELATIONS IS NOT THE EXISTENCE OF EASTERN-RITE CATHOLICS; THE PROBLEM IS THAT CHRISTIANS ARE DIVIDED, SAID BISHOP DIMITRIOS SALACHAS, THE APOSTOLIC EXARCH OF GREECE.

Some Orthodox leaders have called the Eastern Catholic churches an obstacle to Christian unity — even “wolves in sheep’s clothing” — because they preserve the Byzantine liturgy and spirituality they share with the Orthodox, but already are in full communion with the Pope.

“Even today there are Orthodox who say the Eastern Catholics are an anomaly — something not normal,” he said; they say, “‘You come from Orthodoxy so you should return to Orthodoxy’ or ‘If you want to be Catholic, become Latin.’ They still say this to us today.”

Bishop Salachas was one of the main speakers during a meeting Oct. 23-26 of the Eastern Catholic bishops ministering in Europe. The 45 bishops — mostly from the Byzantine tradition — meet annually to discuss common concerns. Gathered in Lviv for their 2014 assembly, they also celebrated the 25th anniversary of the legalization of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, which had been outlawed by the Soviet Union.

After the Great Schism between East and West in the 11th century, Bishop Salachas told reporters, there were people in the East who did not accept the schism and always worked for a restoration of unity. At a certain point, Bishop Salachas said, those Eastern Christians formed strong and stable communities and were recognized as Catholics by the bishop of Rome, the Pope.

For the Orthodox, he said, those Eastern Christians’ unity with Rome was a betrayal of the Orthodox communities from which they had emerged. Catholics, however, would say the unions were a

result of God’s providence, something “inspired by the Holy Spirit” and motivated by a true desire “for the unity that existed in the first millennium.”

Before the Second Vatican Council, the bishop said, Catholics were not exactly respectful of the Orthodox, taking the view that “anyone who wasn’t in union with Rome was not a real church.” But the council made it clear that the Orthodox churches are real churches and that they have valid sacraments.

For Eastern Catholics today, he said, the anomaly is not that Eastern Catholic churches exist, but that divisions continue to exist between Christians. “For 1,000 years the churches of the East and West were united — 1,000 years! — and don’t think there were no problems, conflicts and controversies. The church was united despite them.”

At the end of their meeting in Lviv, the Eastern Catholic bishops issued a statement affirming the rights of both the Orthodox and Eastern Catholic churches to provide pastoral care to their faithful, wherever they are, and to proclaim the Gospel to those who have not heard it.

“We affirm that the division of the one church of Christ is an ecclesiological anomaly which cannot be considered as a standard for the life and mission of the church,” they said, adding that the “unity of the church of Christ is one of the necessary, priority and irreversible dimensions of the identity of the Eastern Catholic Churches, in spite of the difficulties and hardships of the ecumenical journey.” — Cindy Wooden for *CNS*, Oct. 27.

EASTERN AND WESTERN CATHOLIC AND ORTHODOX CHURCHES WOULD DO WELL TO CHALLENGE ONE ANOTHER ABOUT HOW THEY HANDLE DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE, SAID A PRESENTER AT A CANON LAW CONFERENCE.

A pastoral approach that doesn’t renounce the indissolubility of the sacrament, yet doesn’t automatically exclude the faithful from full communion with the church is needed, according to Maronite Archbishop John Faris, an assistant professor of canon law at The Catholic University of America.

He spoke to about 350 people Oct. 16 at the 76th annual Canon Law Society of America convention in St. Louis.

In a flight to Rome from Rio de Janeiro in 2013, Pope Francis spoke to reporters about the need for a stronger pastoral approach to marriage and divorced people and made a parenthetical

reference to how Orthodox churches handle the breakup of marriages. "The Orthodox have a different practice," he said. They "follow the theology of oikonomia [economy or stewardship], as they call it, and give a second possibility; they permit a second marriage," the Pope had said.

That offhand comment has sparked the interest of canonists "seeking alternative approaches for the pastoral care for the millions of remarried Catholics who cannot receive the Eucharist," Faris said.

But he stressed that the Orthodox church and Catholic church have failed in two areas: teaching the faithful about the holiness and permanence of marriage; and providing an effective pastoral, healing response to those whose marriages have failed.

"The Catholic church and the Orthodox church both have the responsibility to teach the sanctity and unity of marriage -- which is ultimately designed to help couples get to heaven -- and to be cognizant and merciful when faced with human frailty," he said.

He said a solution could be found

through penance and dispensation.

Penance can be "a pastoral response to the problem of a marital breakdown and a successive marital union," he said, adding that penance, including acts of piety and charity, has a long-standing tradition in the Eastern Church. While penance doesn't return a situation to the status quo, it does serve a purpose in healing the offender and repairing damage to the ecclesial community, he said.

"Perhaps both the Orthodox and the Catholic churches could accept the challenge to formulate a pastoral approach that does not abdicate responsibility to consider the facts of the former marriage, the spiritual state of the faithful who are seeking to remarry and the possibility that persons who remarry are not automatically excluded from full communion with the church," Faris said.

A concern among canonists is that adopting oikonomia elicits a reaction that the "law has been abandoned and a 'feel-good' approach has been adopted," he said. But the Catholic church does have a developed, codified understanding of

economy: the dispensation.

A dispensation is an administrative act, not a legislative act, that relaxes "the obligation contained in a law but does not affect the juridical stability of the law itself, which retains its force and is not thereby abrogated," Faris said.

"The dispensation does not affect the juridical stability of the law itself, which prohibits the reception of the Eucharist by those who are generally considered unworthy because of their irregular unions, but does address the spiritual needs of individuals," he said.

While the law must be upheld, condemning in blanket fashion those who have divorced and sought to remarry doesn't help the situation, he said. "What we need to do is converse. For me, abortion, for example, has no gray areas. But when (we approach) someone who has had an abortion, we have to be merciful. It's a horrible thing that has happened. But after the cross, God brought life. The church needs to teach the truth in mercy." -- Jennifer Brinker for *CNS*, Oct. 28.



Pope Francis and Assyrian Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV during their meeting in the Vatican in October 2014.

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Edited by Ronald G. Roberson, CSP
Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs
3211 Fourth Street, NE
Washington, DC 20017-1194
Tel: (202) 541-3020 Fax: (202) 541-3183