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The Visit of Pope Francis to Turkey and the Ecumenical Patriarchate

ON THE MORNING OF NOVEMBER 28, POPE FRANCIS BEGAN THE SIXTH APOSTOLIC TRIP OF HIS PONTIFICATE. HIS VISIT TO TURKEY IS ESSENTIALLY OF AN ECUMENICAL NATURE, like those of his predecessors; the country has occupied a privileged position in the geography of papal trips ever since the visit of the Apostolic Delegate Angelo Roncalli, referred to by the Turkish authorities as “the first Turkish Pope in history” following his election as Pope John XXIII. Turkey was also the destination of Paul VI’s fifth apostolic trip in 1967, a corollary of his pilgrimage to the Holy Land and his historic embrace with the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras in Jerusalem. John Paul II continued the tradition with his fourth trip (1979) as did Benedict XVI with his fifth apostolic trip, in 2006.

The Holy Father departed from Rome’s Fiumicino airport at 9 a.m., and reached the Turkish capital Ankara at 1 pm (local time) where he was received by the civil and religious authorities. He transferred by car to the mausoleum of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, founder and first president of the Turkish Republic, the “Father of the Turks” who guided Turkey’s radical rupture with its Ottoman past, laying down the foundations of the modern secular state in its 1937 Constitution. Upon arrival the Pope was received by the Commander of the Guard, ascended the Steps of Honor, left a floral tribute and prayed for a moment. He was then accompanied to the nearby “Tower of National Pact,” where he signed the guest book.

He then paid a visit to the Presidential Palace or “Ak Saray” (White Palace), inaugurated just two months ago by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and substituting the historic Cankaya Palace. The Holy Father was received by the president, and the two spoke in private for a few minutes, after which Pope Francis gave his first

public address on Turkish soil, addressed to the authorities gathered in the Ak Saray.

The Pope reiterated the need for a dialogue to “deepen the understanding and appreciation of the many things which we hold in common. Such a dialogue will allow us to reflect sensibly and serenely on our differences, and to learn from them. There is a need to move forward patiently in the task of building a lasting peace, one founded on respect for the fundamental rights and duties rooted in the dignity of each person. In this way, we can overcome prejudices and unwarranted fears, leaving room for respect, encounter, and the release of more positive energies for the good of all.”

Therefore, “it is essential that all citizens – Muslim, Jewish and Christian – both in the provision and practice of the law, enjoy the same rights and respect the same duties. They will then find it easier to see each other as brothers and sisters who are travelling the same path, seeking always to reject misunderstandings while promoting cooperation and concord. Freedom of religion and freedom of expression, when truly guaranteed to each person, will help friendship to flourish and thus become an eloquent sign of peace.

The Pope concluded, “Turkey, by virtue of its history, geographical position and regional influence, has a great responsibility: the choices which Turkey makes and its example are especially significant and can be of considerable help in promoting an encounter of civilisations and in identifying viable paths of peace and authentic progress. May the Most High bless and protect Turkey, and help the nation to be a strong and fervent peacemaker.” – VIS, Nov. 28.

IN THE AFTERNOON OF NOVEMBER 28, FOLLOWING HIS ADDRESS BEFORE THE TURKISH AUTHORITIES IN THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE, THE HOLY FATHER MET WITH THE PRIME MINISTER AHMET DAVUTOGLU, AFTER WHICH HE PROCEEDED TO THE DIYANET, THE DEPARTMENT FOR

RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS AND HIGHEST SUNNI ISLAMIC AUTHORITY IN TURKEY. Although a secular state, 98% of the Turkish population is Muslim, of whom 68% are Sunni and 30% Shia. The president of the Diyanet, Mehmet Görmez, welcomed the Pope upon arrival and accompanied him to his office where they spoke privately for a minute. They then entered the Hall together, where Francis addressed the gathered Muslim and Christian political and religious leaders.

“It is a tradition that Popes, when they visit different countries as part of their mission, meet also with the leaders and members of various religions. Without this openness to encounter and dialogue, a papal visit would not fully correspond to its purposes. And so I wished to meet you, following in the footsteps of my venerable predecessors. In this context, I am pleased to recall in a special way Pope Benedict XVI’s visit to this very same place in November 2006. Good relations and dialogue between religious leaders have, in fact, acquired great importance. They represent a clear message addressed to their respective communities which demonstrates that mutual respect and friendship are possible, notwithstanding differences. Such friendship, as well as being valuable in itself, becomes all the more meaningful and important in a time of crisis such as our own: crises which in some parts of the world are disastrous for entire peoples.”

He continued, “Wars cause the death of innocent victims and bring untold destruction, inter-ethnic and interreligious tensions and conflicts, hunger and poverty afflicting hundreds of millions of people, and inflict damage on the natural environment – air, water and land. Especially tragic is the situation in the Middle East, above all in Iraq and Syria. Everyone suffers the consequences of these conflicts, and the humanitarian situation is unbearable. I think of so many children, the sufferings of so many mothers, of the elderly, of those displaced and of all refugees, subject to every form of violence. Particu-

lar concern arises from the fact that, owing mainly to an extremist and fundamentalist group, entire communities, especially – though not exclusively – Christians and Yazidis, have suffered and continue to suffer barbaric violence simply because of their ethnic and religious identity. They have been forcibly evicted from their homes, and have had to leave behind everything to save their lives and preserve their faith. This violence has also brought damage to sacred buildings, monuments, religious symbols and cultural patrimony, as if trying to erase every trace, every memory of the other.

“As religious leaders, we are obliged to denounce all violations against human dignity and human rights. Human life, a gift of God the Creator, possesses a sacred character. As such, any violence which seeks religious justification warrants the strongest condemnation because the Omnipotent is the God of life and peace. The world expects those who claim to adore God to be men and women of peace who are capable of living as brothers and sisters, regardless of ethnic, religious, cultural or ideological differences.”

However, as well as denouncing such situations, he added, “we must also work together to find adequate solutions. This requires the cooperation of all: governments, political and religious leaders, representatives of civil society, and all men and women of goodwill. In a unique way, religious leaders can offer a vital contribution by expressing the values of their respective traditions. We, Muslims and Christians, are the bearers of spiritual treasures of inestimable worth. Among these we recognize some shared elements, though lived according to the traditions of each, such as the adoration of the All-Merciful God, reference to the Patriarch Abraham, prayer, almsgiving, and fasting – elements which, when lived sincerely, can transform life and provide a sure foundation for dignity and fraternity. Recognising and developing our common spiritual heritage – through interreligious dialogue – helps us to promote and to uphold moral values, peace and freedom in society. The shared recognition of the sanctity of each human life is the basis of joint initiatives of solidarity, compassion, and effective help directed to those who suffer most. In this regard, I wish to express my appreciation for everything that the Turkish people, Muslims and Christians alike, are doing to help the hundreds of thousands of people who are fleeing their countries due to conflicts. There are

two million of them. This is a clear example of how we can work together to serve others, an example to be encouraged and maintained.”

In this regard, the Holy Father expressed his satisfaction at the good relations between the Diyanet and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. “It is my earnest desire that these relations will continue and be strengthened for the good of all, so that every initiative which promotes authentic dialogue will offer a sign of hope to a world so greatly in need of peace, security and prosperity. Following my meeting with the president, I am also hopeful that this interreligious dialogue will take on creative new forms.”

He concluded by thanking again the president of the Diyanet and his collaborators for this meeting, and expressed his gratitude to all present for their presence and their prayers for him and his ministry. “For my part, I assure you of my prayers. May the Lord grant us all his blessing.”

Following the encounter, the Pope transferred to the apostolic nunciature, where he spent the night. – *VIS*, Nov. 29.

IN THE MORNING OF NOVEMBER 29, POPE FRANCIS TRAVELLED BY AIR FROM ANKARA TO ISTANBUL. THE ONLY CITY IN THE WORLD DIVIDED ACROSS TWO CONTINENTS, ASIA AND EUROPE, IT IS SITUATED ON THE BANKS OF THE BOSPHORUS, the river that connects the Black Sea with the Mediterranean. Upon arrival he was welcomed by the Governor of Istanbul and by the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, and then transferred by car to the Blue Mosque, or the Mosque of the Sultan Ahmed.

Built between 1609 and 1917 by Ahmed I on what had been the site of the great palace of Constantinople, the mosque became the most important place of worship of the Ottoman Empire. The name “Blue Mosque” derives from the 21,043 turquoise ceramic tiles adorning the walls and the dome. The ceramics used to cover the walls, columns and arches originated from Iznik in ancient Nicaea, and range in colour from deep blue to green. Benedict XVI visited the mosque during his trip to Turkey in 2006. Pope Francis was received by the Grand Mufti and remained a moment in silent prayer.

The Holy Father then proceeded to the Museum of Hagia Sophia, the basilica dedicated to Divine Wisdom, first built in the year 360 by the emperor Constantine on a site previously occupied by pagan

temples. It was later destroyed by two fires, one in 404 and another in 532, and the emperor Justinian undertook its reconstruction in order to make it into “the most sumptuous work since the time of Creation,” ordering all the provinces of the empire to provide their best marble and most prized materials. Hagia Sophia was inaugurated for the third time in 537. During the conquest of Constantinople in 1204, it was despoiled of its richest adornments by Latin Christians and in 1453, when it fell into the hands of the Ottomans, Mehmet II ordered it to be transformed into the first imperial mosque of Istanbul. During the subsequent three centuries, this Muslim place of worship received splendid gifts from various sultans, until the eighteenth century, when the mosaics were covered with plaster. In 1847 the Sultan Abdulmegid engaged the Swiss architects Gaspare and Giuseppe Fossati to uncover the mosaics and restore the building. In 1935, at the behest of Ataturk, Hagia Sophia became a museum, which it remains to this day. Popes Paul VI, John Paul II and Benedict XVI all visited it during their trips to Turkey.

Pope Francis was received at the Imperial Door by the director of the Museum, who accompanied him on a guided tour lasting around half an hour. The Holy Father signed the guest book of Hagia Sophia, first in Greek with the phrase *Agia Sofia tou Theou* (Holy Wisdom of God) and then in Latin: “Quam dilecta tabernacula tua Domine (Psalm 38).

After leaving Hagia Sophia through the Beautiful Gate, Francis proceeded to the papal representation where he was awaited by members of the Catholic communities (Latin, Armenian, Syrian and Chaldean) of Istanbul, and where he was greeted by the president of the Episcopal Conference of Turkey, Archbishop Ruggero Franceschini, O.F.M. Cap. – *VIS*, Nov. 29.

EARLY IN THE AFTERNOON OF NOVEMBER 29, POPE FRANCIS VISITED THE LATIN CATHEDRAL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, OPENED FOR WORSHIP IN 1846. IN THE COURTYARD THERE IS A STATUE OF POPE BENEDICT XV, ERECTED BY THE TURKS IN 1919 DURING THE POPE'S LIFETIME, TO THANK HIM for his efforts in favour of the Turkish victims of the First World War. It bears the inscription: “To the great Pope of the world's tragic hour, Benedict XV, benefactor of the people, without discrimination of nationality or religion, a token of gratitude from the

Orient.” During his papacy, Armenian Christians were massacred in the Ottoman Empire, and Benedict XV used every means available to him – words, humanitarian aid and diplomatic activity – to bring an end to the slaughter.

Pope Francis celebrated an inter-ritual Mass with prayers in Armenian, Turkish, Aramaic (Chaldean rite), Syro-Turkish, Italian, French, English and Spanish, attended by the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, the Syro-Catholic Patriarch Ignacio III Youna, the Patriarchal Armenian apostolic vicar of Istanbul, Archbishop Aram Ateshian, the Syro-Orthodox Metropolitan of Istanbul Filuksinos Yusuf Cetin and other representatives of various evangelical confessions. – *VIS*, Nov. 30.

AFTER CELEBRATING HOLY MASS IN THE CATHEDRAL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, FRANCIS TRANSFERRED AT MIDDAY TO THE SEAT OF THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE IN PHANAR, THE WORLD CENTER OF ORTHODOXY.

The Pope was received by the Patriarch in the Church of St. George, where an ecumenical liturgy took place in which both prayed for the unity of God's holy Churches. After Bartholomew's discourse (see below), Pope Francis addressed those present.

“Each evening brings a mixed feeling of gratitude for the day which is ending and of yearning trust before the oncoming night. This evening my heart is full of gratitude to God who allows me to be here in prayer with Your Holiness and with this sister Church after an eventful day during my Apostolic Visit. At the same time my heart awaits the day which we have already begun liturgically: the Feast of the Apostle Saint Andrew, Patron of this Church. In the words of the prophet Zachariah, the Lord gives us anew in this evening prayer, the foundation that sustains our moving forward from one day to the next, the solid rock upon which we advance together in joy and hope. The foundation rock is the Lord's promise: 'Behold, I will save my people from the countries of the east and from the countries of the west... in faithfulness and in righteousness'.

“Yes, my venerable and dear Brother Bartholomew, as I express my heartfelt 'thank you' for your fraternal welcome, I sense that our joy is greater because its source is from beyond; it is not in us, not in our commitment, not in our efforts – that are certainly necessary – but in our shared trust in God's faithfulness which

lays the foundation for the reconstruction of his temple that is the Church. 'For there shall be a sowing of peace'; truly, a sowing of joy. It is the joy and the peace that the world cannot give, but which the Lord Jesus promised to his disciples and, as the Risen One, bestowed upon them in the power of the Holy Spirit.”

He continued, “Andrew and Peter heard this promise; they received this gift. They were blood brothers, yet their encounter with Christ transformed them into brothers in faith and charity. In this joyful evening, at this prayer vigil, I want to emphasise this; they became brothers in hope. What a grace, Your Holiness, to be brothers in the hope of the Risen Lord! What a grace, and what a responsibility, to walk together in this hope, sustained by the intercession of the holy Apostles and brothers, Andrew and Peter! And to know that this shared hope does not deceive us because it is founded, not upon us or our poor efforts, but rather upon God's faithfulness.”

“With this joyful hope, filled with gratitude and eager expectation, I extend to Your Holiness and to all present, and to the Church of Constantinople, my warm and fraternal best wishes on the Feast of your holy Patron.”

Francis and Bartholomew then recited the Lord's Prayer together in Latin and imparted their blessing, the Pope in Latin and the Patriarch in Greek, after which they retired to the second floor for a private meeting. – *VIS*, Nov. 30.

THIS IS THE ADDRESS GIVEN BY ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW DURING THE DOXOLOGY IN THE PATRIARCHAL CHURCH ON NOVEMBER 29:

Your Holiness,

In offering glory to the all-good God in Trinity, we welcome You and Your honorable entourage to this sacred place, the hierarchal See of the historical and martyric Church charged by divine providence with a profoundly responsible ministry as being the First-Throne among the local most holy Orthodox Churches. We welcome You with joy, honor and gratitude because You have deemed it proper to direct Your steps from the Old Rome to the New Rome, symbolically bridging West and East through this movement, while translating the love of the Chief Apostle to his brother, the First-Called Apostle.

Your advent here, being the first since the recent election of Your Holiness to the

throne that "presides in love," constitutes a continuation of similar visits by Your eminent predecessors Paul VI, John Paul II and Benedict XVI, but also bears witness to Your own will and that of the most holy Church of Rome to maintain the fraternal and stable advance with the Orthodox Church for the restoration of full communion between our Churches. Therefore, it is with great satisfaction and appreciation that we greet the arrival here of Your Holiness as an historical event filled with favorable signs for the future.

This sacred space, where in the midst of diverse historical challenges Ecumenical Patriarchs have for centuries celebrated and celebrate the holy Mystery of the Divine Eucharist, constitutes a successor to other illustrious places of worship in this City, which have been brightened by renowned ecclesiastical personalities already adorning the choir of great Fathers of the universal Church. Such luminaries include our predecessors Saints Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom, whose sacred relics now lie in this holy church, thanks to their gracious return to the Ecumenical Patriarchate by the Church of Rome; their relics are alongside those of Basil the Great and Euphemia the Great Martyr, who validated the Tome of the Fourth Ecumenical Council, as well as other saints of the Church. This year marks the tenth anniversary since the blessed return of the relics of St. Gregory and St. John; wherefore, we express to Your Holiness our fervent thanks for this fraternal gesture on behalf of Your Church to our Patriarchate. May these holy Fathers, on whose teaching our common faith of the first millennium was founded, intercede for us to the Lord so that we may rediscover the full union of our Churches, thereby fulfilling His divine will in crucial times for humanity and the world. For, according to St. John Chrysostom: "This is what ultimately holds the faithful together and upholds love; indeed, this is precisely why Christ said that we should be one." (Homily on Philipians 4.3 PG62.208)

We express once again the joy and gratitude of the most holy Church of Constantinople and of ourselves on this formal and fraternal visit of Your Holiness, and we wish You and Your honorable entourage an altogether blessed sojourn among us so that we may further increase our fraternal relations for the glory of His name.

"Thanks be to God for His inexpressible gift." (2 Cor. 9.15)

Welcome, beloved brother in the Lord! – Website of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Nov. 29.

POPE FRANCIS' FINAL DAY IN TURKEY (NOVEMBER 30) BEGAN WITH A MEETING, EARLY IN THE MORNING AT THE PONTIFICAL REPRESENTATION IN ISTANBUL, OF THE CHIEF RABBI OF TURKEY, Ishak Haleva.

The Holy Father then traveled to the Ecumenical Patriarchate to attend the celebration of the Divine Liturgy for the Feast of Saint Andrew, patron saint of the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

DURING THE CELEBRATION OF THE DIVINE LITURGY FOR THE FEAST OF SAINT ANDREW, ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW DELIVERED THIS HOMILY:

Your Holiness Pope Francis, beloved brother in Christ, bishop of Senior Rome,

We offer glory and praise to our God in Trinity for deeming us worthy of the ineffable joy and special honor of the personal presence here of Your Holiness on the occasion of this year's celebration of the sacred memory of the First-called Apostle Andrew, who founded our Church through his preaching. We are profoundly grateful to Your Holiness for the precious gift of Your blessed presence among us, together with Your honorable entourage. We embrace you wholeheartedly and honorably, addressing you fervently with a greeting of peace and love: "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 1.7). "For the love of Christ controls us" (2 Cor. 5.14).

We still vividly preserve in our heart the recollection of our encounter with Your Holiness in the Holy Land for a joint pious pilgrimage in the place where the pioneer of our faith was once born, lived, taught, suffered, was risen and ascended as well as for a thankful remembrance of the historical event of the meeting there by our predecessors, the late Pope Paul VI and Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras. As a result of their meeting in the Holy City fifty years ago, the flow of history has literally changed direction: the parallel and occasionally conflicting journeys of our Churches have coincided in the common vision of restoring our lost unity; the cold love between us has been rekindled, while our desire to do everything in our capacity so that our communion in the same faith and the same chalice may once again emerge has been galvanized. Thenceforth, the road to Emmaus has

opened up before us – a road that, while perhaps lengthy and sometimes even rugged, is nonetheless irreversible – with the Lord as our companion, until He is revealed to us "in the breaking of the bread" (Luke 24.35).

This way has since been followed – and is still being followed – by all of the successors of those inspired leaders, in turn establishing, dedicating and endorsing the dialogue of love and truth between our Churches in order to lift a millennium of burdens amassed in our relations. This dialogue is one that befits friends and not, as in former times, adversaries, inasmuch as we sincerely seek to respect one another as brothers.

In such an atmosphere fashioned by our aforementioned predecessors with respect to our common journey, we too fraternally welcome Your Holiness as bearing the love of St. Peter to his brother, St. Andrew, whose sacred feast we celebrate today. In accordance with a holy custom established and observed for decades now by the Churches of Senior and New Rome, official delegations exchange visits on the occasion of their respective patronal feasts in order to demonstrate by this manner as well the fraternal bond between the two chief Apostles, who together came to know Jesus Christ and to believe in Him as God and Savior. These Apostles transmitted this common faith to the Churches founded by their preaching and sanctified by their martyrdom. This faith was also jointly experienced and articulated into doctrine by our Church Fathers, who assembled from East and West in ecumenical councils, bequeathing it to our Churches as an unshakable foundation of our unity. It is this same faith, which we have together preserved in both East and West for an entire millennium, that we are once again called to deposit as the basis of our unity in order that, "being in full accord and of one mind" (Phil. 2.2), we may press on with Paul "forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead" (Phil. 3.13).

After all, Your Holiness and dear Brother, our obligation is surely not exhausted in the past but primarily extends to the future, especially in our times. For what is the value of our fidelity to the past unless this denotes something for the future? What is the benefit of boasting for what we have received unless this translates into life for humanity and our world both today and tomorrow? "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and to the ages" (Heb. 13.8). And His Church is

called to keep its sight fixed not so much on yesterday as on today and tomorrow. The Church exists not for itself, but for the world and for humanity.

Therefore, in directing our sight toward today, we cannot avoid being anxious also for tomorrow. "There is fighting without and fear within" (2 Cor. 7.5) – This recognition of the Apostle Paul about his age is indisputably valid also for us today. Indeed, even as we are preoccupied with our own contentions, the world experiences the fear of survival, the concern for tomorrow. How can humanity survive tomorrow when it is severed today by diverse divisions, conflicts and animosities, frequently even in the name of God? How will the earth's wealth be distributed more equitably in order for humanity tomorrow to avoid the most heinous slavery ever known in history? What sort of planet will future generations inherit when modern man is destroying it so mercilessly and irrevocably through greed?

Nowadays many people place their hope on science; others on politics; still others in technology. Yet none of these can guarantee the future, unless humanity espouses the message of reconciliation, love and justice; the mission of embracing the other, the stranger, and even the enemy. The Church of Christ, who first proclaimed and practiced this teaching, is compelled to be the first to apply this teaching "so that the world may believe" (John 17.21). This is precisely why the path toward unity is more urgent than ever for those who invoke the name of the great Peacemaker. This is precisely why our responsibility as Christians is so great before God, humankind and history.

Your Holiness,

Your hitherto brief tenure at the helm of Your Church has already manifested You in people's conscience today as a herald of love, peace and reconciliation. You preach with words, but above and beyond all with the simplicity, humility and love toward everyone that you exercise your high ministry. You inspire trust in those who doubt, hope in those who despair, anticipation in those who expect a Church that nurtures all people. Moreover, You offer to Your Orthodox brothers and sisters the aspiration that during Your tenure the rapprochement of our two great ancient Churches will continue to be established on the solid foundations of our common tradition, which always preserved and acknowledged in the constitution of the Church a primacy of love, honor and service within the framework of

collegiality, in order that "with one mouth and one heart" we may confess the Trinitarian God and that His love may be poured out upon the world.

Your Holiness,

The Church of Constantinople, which today for the first time receives You with fervent love and honor as well as with heartfelt gratitude, bears upon its shoulders a heavy legacy, but also a responsibility for the present and the future. In this Church, through the order instituted by the holy Ecumenical Councils, divine providence has assigned the responsibility of coordinating and expressing the unanimity of the most holy local Orthodox Churches. In the context of this responsibility, we are already working very assiduously for the preparation of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church, which – as decided – will convene here, God willing, in 2016. At this time, the appropriate committees are laboring feverishly to prepare this great event in the history of the Orthodox Church, for whose success we also implore Your prayers. Unfortunately, the Eucharistic communion of our Churches that was interrupted one thousand years ago does not yet permit the convocation of a joint Great Ecumenical Council. Let us pray that, once full communion is restored, this significant and special day will also not be prolonged. However, until that blessed day, the participation in one another's synodal life will be expressed through the involvement of observers, as we observe now, with Your gracious invitation to attend Synods of Your Church, just as we hope will also occur when, with God's grace, our Holy and Great Council becomes reality.

Your Holiness,

The challenges presented to our Churches by today's historical circumstances oblige us to transcend our introversion in order to meet them with the greatest degree of collaboration. We no longer have the luxury of isolated action. The modern persecutors of Christians do not ask which Church their victims belong to. The unity that concerns us is regrettably already occurring in certain regions of the world through the blood of martyrdom. Together let us extend our hand to people of our time; together let us extend the hand of Him, who alone can save humankind through His Cross and Resurrection.

With these thoughts and sentiments, once again we express our joy and thanks at the presence here of Your Holiness, even as we pray that the Lord – through

the intercessions of the one we celebrate today, the First-called Apostle and brother of the Chief of the Apostles Peter – may protect His Church and direct it to the fulfillment of His sacred will.

Welcome among us, dearly beloved brother! – Website of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Nov. 30.

FOLLOWING THE CELEBRATION AND AFTER LISTENING TO THE PATRIARCH'S WORDS, THE POPE ADDRESSED THOSE PRESENT, RECALLING HOW AS ARCHBISHOP OF BUENOS AIRES HE HAD FREQUENTLY PARTICIPATED IN THE DIVINE LITURGY OF THE CITY'S ORTHODOX COMMUNITIES, but "today, the Lord has given me the singular grace to be present in this Patriarchal Church of Saint George for the celebration of the Feast of the holy Apostle Andrew, the first-called, the brother of Saint Peter, and the Patron Saint of the Ecumenical Patriarchate."

He continued, "Meeting each other, seeing each other face to face, exchanging the embrace of peace, and praying for each other, are all essential aspects of our journey towards the restoration of full communion. All of this precedes and always accompanies that other essential aspect of this journey, namely, theological dialogue. An authentic dialogue is, in every case, an encounter between persons with a name, a face, a past, and not merely a meeting of ideas.

"This is especially true for us Christians, because for us the truth is the person of Jesus Christ," observed the Pontiff. "The example of Saint Andrew, who with another disciple accepted the invitation of the Divine Master, 'Come and see', and 'stayed with him that day', shows us plainly that the Christian life is a personal experience, a transforming encounter with the One who loves us and who wants to save us. In addition, the Christian message is spread thanks to men and women who are in love with Christ, and cannot help but pass on the joy of being loved and saved. Here again, the example of the apostle Andrew is instructive. After following Jesus to his home and spending time with Him, Andrew 'first found his brother Simon, and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (meaning Christ). He brought him to Jesus'. It is clear, therefore, that not even dialogue among Christians can prescind from this logic of personal encounter."

Therefore, "it is not by chance that the path of reconciliation and peace between Catholics and Orthodox was, in

some way, ushered in by an encounter, by an embrace between our venerable predecessors, Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras and Pope Paul VI, which took place fifty years ago in Jerusalem. Your Holiness and I wished to commemorate that moment when we met recently in the same city where our Lord Jesus Christ died and rose.

"By happy coincidence, my visit falls a few days after the fiftieth anniversary of the promulgation of *Unitatis Redintegratio*, the Second Vatican Council's Decree on Christian Unity. This is a fundamental document which opened new avenues for encounter between Catholics and their brothers and sisters of other Churches and ecclesial communities. In particular, in that Decree the Catholic Church acknowledges that the Orthodox Churches 'possess true sacraments, above all – by apostolic succession – the priesthood and the Eucharist, whereby they are still joined to us in closest intimacy'. The Decree goes on to state that in order to guard faithfully the fullness of the Christian tradition and to bring to fulfilment the reconciliation of Eastern and Western Christians, it is of the greatest importance to preserve and support the rich patrimony of the Eastern Churches. This regards not only their liturgical and spiritual traditions, but also their canonical disciplines, sanctioned as they are by the Fathers and by Councils, which regulate the lives of these Churches."

The Pope emphasized the importance of reaffirming respect for this principle "as an essential condition, accepted by both, for the restoration of full communion, which does not signify the submission of one to the other, or assimilation. Rather, it means welcoming all the gifts that God has given to each, thus demonstrating to the entire world the great mystery of salvation accomplished by Christ the Lord through the Holy Spirit. I want to assure each one of you here that, to reach the desired goal of full unity, the Catholic Church does not intend to impose any conditions except that of the shared profession of faith. Further, I would add that we are ready to seek together, in light of Scriptural teaching and the experience of the first millennium, the ways in which we can guarantee the needed unity of the Church in the present circumstances. The one thing that the Catholic Church desires, and that I seek as Bishop of Rome, 'the Church which presides in charity', is communion with the Orthodox Churches. Such communion will always be the fruit

of that love which 'has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us', a fraternal love which expresses the spiritual and transcendent bond which unites us as disciples of the Lord."

In today's world, "voices are being raised which we cannot ignore and which implore our Churches to live deeply our identity as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. The first of these voices is that of the poor. In the world, there are too many women and men who suffer from severe malnutrition, growing unemployment, the rising numbers of unemployed youth, and from increasing social exclusion. These can give rise to criminal activity and even the recruitment of terrorists. We cannot remain indifferent before the cries of our brothers and sisters. These ask of us not only material assistance – needed in so many circumstances – but above all, our help to defend their dignity as human persons, so that they can find the spiritual energy to become once again protagonists in their own lives. They ask us to fight, in the light of the Gospel, the structural causes of poverty: inequality, the shortage of dignified work and housing, and the denial of their rights as members of society and as workers. As Christians we are called together to eliminate that globalization of indifference which today seems to reign supreme, while building a new civilisation of love and solidarity."

A second plea, he said, "comes from the victims of the conflicts in so many parts of our world. We hear this resoundingly here, because some neighboring countries are scarred by an inhumane and brutal war. I think in a particular way of the numerous victims of the grotesque and senseless attack which recently killed and injured so many Muslims who were praying in a Mosque in Kano, Nigeria. Taking away the peace of a people, committing every act of violence – or consenting to such acts – especially when directed against the weakest and defenceless, is a profoundly grave sin against God, since it means showing contempt for the image of God which is in man. The cry of the victims of conflict urges us to move with haste along the path of reconciliation and communion between Catholics and Orthodox. Indeed, how can we credibly proclaim the Gospel of peace which comes from Christ, if there continues to be rivalry and disagreement between us?"

A third cry is that of young people. "Today, tragically, there are many young men and women who live without hope,

overcome by mistrust and resignation. Many of the young, influenced by the prevailing culture, seek happiness solely in possessing material things and in satisfying their fleeting emotions. New generations will never be able to acquire true wisdom and keep hope alive unless we are able to esteem and transmit the true humanism which comes from the Gospel and from the Church's age-old experience. It is precisely the young who today implore us to make progress towards full communion. I think for example of the many Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant youth who come together at meetings organized by the Taizé community. They do this not because they ignore the differences which still separate us, but because they are able to see beyond them; they are able to embrace what is essential and what already unites us.

Pope Francis concluded by addressing Bartholomew I: "We are already on the way, on the path towards full communion and already we can experience eloquent signs of an authentic, albeit incomplete union. This offers us reassurance and encourages us to continue on this journey. We are certain that along this journey we are helped by the intercession of the Apostle Andrew and his brother Peter, held by tradition to be the founders of the Churches of Constantinople and of Rome. We ask God for the great gift of full unity, and the ability to accept it in our lives. Let us never forget to pray for one another."

FOLLOWING THE DIVINE LITURGY, POPE FRANCIS AND PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW I APPEARED ON THE BALCONY OF THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE AND BLESSED THE FAITHFUL GATHERED OUTSIDE. Francis imparted the blessing in Latin, and Bartholomew I in Greek. They subsequently ascended to the Throne Room where they signed the following:

Common Declaration

"We, Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I express our profound gratitude to God for the gift of this new encounter enabling us, in the presence of the members of the Holy Synod, the clergy and the faithful of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, to celebrate together the feast of Saint Andrew, the first-called and brother of the Apostle Peter. Our remembrance of the Apostles, who proclaimed the good news of the Gospel to the world through their preaching and their witness of martyrdom, strengthens in us the aspi-

ration to continue to walk together in order to overcome, in love and in truth, the obstacles that divide us.

"On the occasion of our meeting in Jerusalem last May, in which we remembered the historical embrace of our venerable predecessors Pope Paul VI and the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras, we signed a joint declaration. Today on the happy occasion of this further fraternal encounter, we wish to re-affirm together our shared intentions and concerns.

"We express our sincere and firm resolution, in obedience to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, to intensify our efforts to promote the full unity of all Christians, and above all between Catholics and Orthodox. As well, we intend to support the theological dialogue promoted by the Joint International Commission, instituted exactly thirty-five years ago by the Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios and Pope John Paul II here at the Phanar, and which is currently dealing with the most difficult questions that have marked the history of our division and that require careful and detailed study. To this end, we offer the assurance of our fervent prayer as Pastors of the Church, asking our faithful to join us in praying 'that all may be one, that the world may believe'.

"We express our common concern for the current situation in Iraq, Syria and the whole Middle East. We are united in the desire for peace and stability and in the will to promote the resolution of conflicts through dialogue and reconciliation. While recognizing the efforts already being made to offer assistance to the region, at the same time, we call on all those who bear responsibility for the destiny of peoples to deepen their commitment to suffering communities, and to enable them, including the Christian ones, to remain in their native land. We cannot resign ourselves to a Middle East without Christians, who have professed the name of Jesus there for two thousand years. Many of our brothers and sisters are being persecuted and have been forced violently from their homes. It even seems that the value of human life has been lost, that the human person no longer matters and may be sacrificed to other interests. And, tragically, all this is met by the indifference of many. As Saint Paul reminds us, 'If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together'. This is the law of the Christian life, and in this sense we can say that there is also an ecumenism of suffering. Just as the blood of the martyrs was a seed of strength and

fertility for the Church, so too the sharing of daily sufferings can become an effective instrument of unity. The terrible situation of Christians and all those who are suffering in the Middle East calls not only for our constant prayer, but also for an appropriate response on the part of the international community.

“The grave challenges facing the world in the present situation require the solidarity of all people of good will, and so we also recognize the importance of promoting a constructive dialogue with Islam based on mutual respect and friendship. Inspired by common values and strengthened by genuine fraternal sentiments, Muslims and Christians are called to work together for the sake of justice, peace and respect for the dignity and rights of every person, especially in those regions where they once lived for centuries in peaceful coexistence and now tragically suffer together the horrors of war. Moreover, as Christian leaders, we call on all religious leaders to pursue and to strengthen interreligious dialogue and to make every effort to build a culture of peace and solidarity between persons and between peoples. We also remember all the people who experience the sufferings of war. In particular, we pray for peace in Ukraine, a country of ancient Christian tradition, while we call upon all parties involved to pursue the path of dialogue and of respect for international law in order to bring an end to the conflict and allow all Ukrainians to live in harmony.

“Our thoughts turn to all the faithful of our Churches throughout the world, whom we greet, entrusting them to Christ our Saviour, that they may be untiring witnesses to the love of God. We raise our fervent prayer that the Lord may grant the gift of peace in love and unity to the entire human family.

“May the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.”

After the signing of the Declaration, the Pope, the Ecumenical Patriarch and various members of the respective delegations lunched together on the third floor of the Phanar. – *VIS*, Nov. 30.

The Saint Irenaeus Joint Orthodox-Catholic Working Group

THE SAINT IRENAEUS JOINT ORTHODOX-CATHOLIC WORKING GROUP MET FOR THE ELEVENTH TIME FROM 5 TO 9 NOVEMBER 2014 AT THE ARCHDIOCESAN SEMINARY IN RABAT, MALTA.

The 2014 meeting was chaired by the Orthodox Co-President of the Working Group, Archbishop Job (Getcha) of Telmessos, and by the Catholic Co-President, Bishop Gerhard Feige of Magdeburg, Germany.

After the first session on Wednesday evening November 5, the group was joined at dinner by Archbishop Aldo Cavalli, Apostolic Nuncio to Malta and Libya, and by Rev. Dr. Hector Scerri, the President of the Ecumenical Commission of the Archdiocese of Malta. During the course of the meeting both Catholic and Orthodox celebrations of the Eucharist took place, with the members of the other Church in attendance. The members of the Working Group were very grateful for the support of a number of sponsors including *Renovabis*.

At this meeting a number of papers were presented dealing with recent developments in the international Catholic-Orthodox dialogue, contemporary approaches to primacy in the Orthodox Church (including the 2013 Moscow Synodal Statement on Primacy and reactions to it), synodality in theory and practice during the first millennium, Maximos the Confessor on primacy, and contemporary Orthodox and Catholic understandings of synodality. The future directions of the Working Group were discussed, and it was decided to move forward with a project to publish a succinct overview of what the group has achieved so far.

The deliberations of this session were summarized by the members in the following theses:

(1) History shows that the life of the Church has never been without assemblies and those who preside over them, two realities linked together in seeking to be faithful to the gospel. One must therefore have a theological understanding of synodality and primacy, which are both essential aspects of the life of the Church.

(2) A theological approach to primacy must be based on an analysis of authority in the Church. Institutional authority relates to both synodality and primacy. Preaching the gospel with authority presupposes cooperation with others in the community, because all the gifts of the Holy Spirit can be found in the Church and the churches as a whole – in the Pauline sense. A council is never an authority above the Church but an expression of the voice of the Church. As such it should never be interpreted merely in juridical or governmental terms.

(3) The authority of both primatial

and synodical acts is recognized in the Church's reception, manifested in its teaching, worship, canons, and institutions. The history of the councils shows that their authority too rests, among other things, upon their reception into the tradition of the Church. The mode of this reception does not follow precise rules but has varied in the course of history. Councils are also susceptible to significant re-readings in the tradition, e.g., the Council of Chalcedon. Ultimately the authority of a council can be determined only by its fidelity to apostolic tradition.

(4) At the councils of the first millennium the balance between primacy and synodality was not always explicitly defined. Primacy was exercised, but not explicitly codified. In order to understand the ways in which primacy was expressed at the ecumenical councils, the context, including imperial authority, dogmatic disputes, and cultural differences, must be taken into consideration in each case.

(5) In all these contexts, primacy remains a universal fact that expresses the relationship between an assembly and the one who presides over it, with different foundations and ways of functioning at the different levels on which communion in the Church is practiced.

(6) The relationship between primacy and conciliarity varies according to the different levels in the Church, and the same is true with regard to the way in which primacy is exercised. For example, the primacy of a regional church is not of the same kind as that of a bishop in his diocese. In diocesan synodality, the diocesan bishop has a charisma *sine paribus* and a special weight related to the fact that he is the guarantor of the communion between his Church and the other local churches.

(7) A better understanding of the Catholic concept of primacy at the universal level would be reached by making a clearer distinction between the role of the Pope as head of the Latin Church and his role as primate in the world-wide communion of the churches. A universal primacy, drawing on the practice of the first millennium, could be recognized, for example, in the moderation of disputes, and taking initiatives in the ecumenical councils.

(8) Both primacy and synodality in the early church evolved, reflecting the challenges of their times. No single model seems to have been universally accepted.

(9) The development of ecclesial structures of primacy and synodality con-

stitutes an important part of the self-perception of the churches, and came to be reflected in their ecclesiologies.

(10) In accordance with the biblical witness, it is safer to assume that Christology and pneumatology, rather than speculative Trinitarian theology, should serve as a paradigm of conciliarity. Biblical images, such as the body of Christ, the temple of the Holy Spirit, or the people of God, seem most adequate to express conciliarity in the Church.

(11) As a result of Orthodox-Catholic dialogues, there is now more reflection within the Orthodox Church on the meaning of primacy. The internal Orthodox debate on the understanding of primacy on the universal level should be understood as an invitation to increased reflection on the theological foundations of primacy.

(12) Even if in the Patristic era ecclesiology as such was not a subject of theological reflection, the fathers of the Church provide us with valuable insights on questions of primacy and synodality. For instance, Maximus the Confessor suggests a way of harmonizing these concepts. As a father of both the Western and Eastern churches, he demonstrates by his writings and personal example that no one institution has a monopoly of authority in the Church, and that there is a way to synthesize differing traditions.

(13) Synodality is part of the self-understanding of both our churches. According to the promise of Christ and faith in the Holy Spirit, truth is revealed in the consensus of the assembled faithful. Never in the course of history, despite noticeable variations, did the Church exist without synods (whether local or regional) nor without councils on the level of the universal Church. We note, however, that practice does not always conform to theology and good theology does not always guarantee good practice.

(14) In the current context, the papacy in its institutional form is in the process of being reconsidered. The structures of autocephaly are similarly being reconsidered by the Orthodox. Instead of attempting separately to resolve a challenge we both face (the relationship between the local churches and the universal Church), it might be more effective to address the issue together, taking into account weaknesses in our respective practices and the need to deepen our theology.

The Saint Irenaeus Joint Orthodox-Catholic Working Group is composed of 26 theologians, 13 Orthodox and 13 Catholics, from a number of European coun-

tries and the USA. It was established in 2004 in Paderborn (Germany), and has met since then in Athens (Greece), Chevetogne (Belgium), Belgrade (Serbia), Vienna (Austria), Kiev (Ukraine), Magdeburg (Germany), Saint Petersburg (Russia), Bose (Italy), and Thessaloniki (Greece). It was agreed to hold the next meeting of the Working Group in November 2015 on the island of Halki, near Istanbul (Turkey).

The Eastern Orthodox Churches

HIS EMINENCE ARCHBISHOP DEMETRIOS OF AMERICA, ON BEHALF OF THE HOLY EPARCHIAL SYNOD ANNOUNCES THE UNANIMOUS ELECTION OF ARCHIMANDRITE APOSTOLOS KOUFALLAKIS, CHANCELLOR OF THE METROPOLIS OF SAN FRANCISCO, AS ASSISTANT BISHOP of the Holy Archdiocese of America and for the needs of the Holy Metropolis of San Francisco, with the high title of the Diocese of Medeia.

Following the election announcement, Archbishop Demetrios, who is at the Phanar said:

"I congratulate the newly elected Bishop Apostolos of Medeia and I wish him wholeheartedly a fruitful and creative ministry in his new and very sacred mission. May he have God's permanent support in his work for the edification of the Church and the glory of His name." – Press Release, Greek Archdiocese, Nov. 28.

THE WORKING GROUP OF THE JOINT COMMISSION FOR THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH AND THE ORIENTAL ORTHODOX CHURCHES TOOK PLACE ON NOVEMBER 24 AND 25 IN ATHENS. It released the following communique on November 26:

Invited by the two Co-Chairmen, HE Metropolitan Emmanuel of France and HE Metropolitan Bishop of Damiette, of the Joint Theological Commission of the two families of the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches, and with the blessings and gracious hospitality of the Ecumenical Patriarch, His All Holiness Bartholomew, a working group of official delegates met in Athens, 24-25 November 2014, in order to lay down a road map for the future work of the Joint Commission.

The working group reviewed the achievements of the Joint Commission so far, in bringing together the two families of the Orthodox Churches on the basis of

our common understanding of the Apostolic faith.

Co-Chairman HE Metropolitan Emmanuel of France in his opening speech pointed out the very high priority accorded by the Orthodox Church to the official Theological Dialogue with the Oriental Orthodox Churches. He underlined the common acceptance of the Christological teaching of our common Father St. Cyril of Alexandria and of our common patristic and ecclesiological tradition of the first five centuries as the decisive criterion.

He called for a systematic evaluation of all the theological critiques on the proposals of the Joint Commission and for a theological defense against all prejudices and polemical arguments. He emphasized that unity of the Church is an important dogma of faith and therefore the work of the Commission towards unity is of fundamental doctrinal significance. In order to communicate to the clergy and the people of our Churches the work of the Joint Commission, he suggested regular meetings of the primates of our Churches, exchange of professors, well-prepared meetings of monks from both families and all possible cooperation of Churches at regional level and the Diaspora. The use of print and electronic media to disseminate the efforts for unity was also strongly advocated by Metropolitan Emmanuel.

Co-Chairman HE Metropolitan Bishop of Damiette in his speech, gave an interpretation of the First Agreed Statement on Christology of the historic official dialogue between the two families held at St. Bishoy Monastery, Egypt, in 1989. Highlighting the Christological position of our common Father St. Cyril of Alexandria he pointed out the fact that the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Orthodox Church are expressing the same reality when they speak about one composite hypostasis of the incarnate Logos. He cited from the Chambesy Statement of the Joint Commission in 1990 saying "that both families have always loyally maintained the same authentic Orthodox Christological faith, and the unbroken continuity of the Apostolic Tradition." HE Metropolitan Bishop also narrated the great efforts he made jointly with the former Co-Chairman HE Damaskinos of blessed memory to visit various local Orthodox Churches on both sides, in order to communicate personally to the local Churches' leadership the good results of the Joint Commission's work.

In the light of the presentations of the two Co-Chairmen, an intense and fruitful

discussion followed. There were also separate meetings of the families to discuss the remaining issues from the perspective of each family as well as to find the common way forward.

Following are some of the proposals, recommendations and concerns expressed by the working group.

1. Gratefully acknowledging the guidance of the Holy Spirit so far in the work of the Joint Commission, the working group called for the continuation of the dialogue in all earnestness and for a formal meeting of the full Commission at the earliest appropriate time.

2. While acknowledging the good work of the Sub-Committees on theological, canonical, liturgical and pastoral issues, the working group recognized that some Churches raised some serious issues that require further clarification such as lifting of anathemas, common enumeration of the Seven Ecumenical Councils, mutual recognition of Saints and some questions on Christology. Some solutions to these issues have also been proposed in the Sub-Committees, but they need to be communicated effectively to the clergy, monks, schools of theology and people on both sides to arrive at a consensus.

The working group expressed deep concern over the situation of our Churches especially in the Middle East. It appealed to the international community and to all concerned for the release of the two abducted Bishops, Metropolitan Mor Gregorios Youhanna Ibrahim and Metropolitan Boulos Yasigi. The group felt that the situation of Christianity today urgently necessitates Orthodox unity and the promoting of a healthy interfaith dialogue.

It was noted that three local Churches from the Orthodox family (Alexandria, Antioch and Romania) and three Churches from the Oriental Orthodox family (Alexandria, Antioch and Malankara-India), had already declared their acceptance of the agreed statements and proposals from the Joint Commission. The working group that met in the 50th year of the first unofficial dialogue meeting between the Orthodox and the Oriental Orthodox took place in Aarhus, Denmark, 1964. Hence, in the spirit of jubilee the group called for liberation from the misapprehensions and separations of the past, while praying for the joyful common celebration of our life together in Jesus Christ our Saviour in mutual forgiveness, reconciliation and communion in love and truth for the glory of the Triune God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. – Website of the Ecumen-

ical Patriarchate, Nov. 26.

TODAY 26 NOVEMBER 2014, THE HOLY SYNOD OF THE PATRIARCHATE OF ALEXANDRIA AND ALL AFRICA CONVENED AT AN APPOINTED SESSION UNDER THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF HIS BEATITUDE THEODOROS II, in the Board Room of the Holy Synod.

The vacant Holy Metropolis of Piousness was filled. The new Metropolitan of Piousness, elected unanimously, is His Grace Niphon, Bishop of Babylonia, Abbot of the Holy Patriarchal Monastery of St George, Old Cairo. Having accepted the resignation of His Eminence Proterios of Ptolemaid, who was named Retired Metropolitan of Diospolis, His Eminence Emmanuel of Kavazos was appointed new Metropolitan of Ptolemaid, to whom His Beatitude gave an award for his decade of hierarchal ministry. Next to be filled was the vacant Diocese of Botswana through the election of the Very Reverend Archimandrite Vasileios Varvelis, who has served for many years at the Representative Office of His Beatitude in Athens.

In conclusion, three Auxiliary Bishops were elected. Auxiliary Bishop of Nafkratis is the Very Reverend Archimandrite Meletios Koumanis, Abbot of the Holy Patriarchal Monastery of St Savvas the Sanctified in Alexandria. Elected as Auxiliary Bishop of Vereniki is the Very Reverend Archimandrite Chrysostomos Karagounis, Chancellor of the Holy Metropolis of Tripolis. Elected Auxiliary Bishop of Nitria is the Kenyan Very Reverend Archimandrite Neophytos Kongai. – Press Release, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria, Nov. 26.

METROPOLITAN HILARION OF VOLOKOLAMSK, HEAD OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE'S DEPARTMENT FOR EXTERNAL CHURCH RELATIONS, WITH A BLESSING OF PATRIARCH KIRILL OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA, ATTENDED THE RUSSIAN-AMERICAN FORUM OF CHRISTIAN LEADERS WHICH TOOK PLACE AT CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA. The forum was organized by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and attended by representatives of Christian Churches in Russia and the USA.

Welcoming the participants in the forum, Mr. Franklin Graham noted the Billy Graham Association's long relations with the Russian Orthodox Church, recalling numerous visits made by his father to the Soviet Union, the first one as far back as 1959.

In his remarks, Metropolitan Hilarion spoke about the history of relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and Christian Churches in the USA, which very actively developed in the second half of the 20th century. But by the beginning of the 2000s, the Moscow Patriarchate had to break contacts with some Protestant churches in the USA because of the liberalization of their doctrine and practice and the proselytic activity in the territory of Russia. At the same time, the Russian Orthodox Church remained open to cooperation with those churches in America which stayed faithful to the traditions of the bilateral dialogue and committed to the biblical morality.

Speaking about prospects for this cooperation, Metropolitan Hilarion said that it could be based primarily on joint work for asserting traditional moral norms in today's society. He singled out as a priority the protection of Christians who are persecuted in some regions of the world today. He gave special attention to the situation in Ukraine and the humanitarian crisis in it.

Bishop John of Naro-Fominsk, in his remarks, focused on the problem of secularism. Other speakers dealt with issues of common Christian witness in the modern society.

On the same day, Metropolitan Hilarion called on Dr. Billy Graham to congratulate him on his 96th birthday. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, Nov. 8.

METROPOLITAN HILARION OF VOLOKOLAMSK, HEAD OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE'S DEPARTMENT FOR EXTERNAL CHURCH RELATIONS AND RECTOR OF THE SS CYRIL AND METHODIUS INSTITUTE OF POST-GRADUATE STUDIES, WHO IS ON A VISIT TO THE USA with a blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, attended the academic convocation at St. Vladimir's Seminary in New York.

The event began with Great Vespers at the seminary's chapel. Among the worshippers – professors and students of the seminary and invited guests – were the head of the Orthodox Church in America, His Beatitude Archbishop Tikhon of Washington, Metropolitan of All America and Canada; Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk; and Bishop John of Naro-Fominsk, administrator of the Patriarchal Parishes in the USA.

The service was followed by an academic convocation at the assembly hall of the library. It was opened by the head of

the Orthodox Church in America, Metropolitan Tikhon. The rector of the seminary Archpriest John Behr, in his address, pointed to the importance of cooperation between Orthodox Churches on the academic platform. He stressed a special importance of establishing cooperation between St. Vladimir's Seminary and the St. Cyril and Methodius Institute founded at the initiative of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill and directed by Metropolitan Hilarion. In conclusion of his speech, he voiced the decision of St. Vladimir's Seminary Academic Council to award Metropolitan Hilarion the degree of Doctor of Divinity *Honoris Causa*. The diploma of the degree was presented to Metropolitan Hilarion by Metropolitan Tikhon.

The convocation lecture was presented by Metropolitan Hilarion on the theme "Primacy and Synodality from an Orthodox Perspective." Beginning his address, he stressed the importance of cooperation between the leading academic institutions of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Orthodox Church in America, which he believes becomes especially important in the situation of growing political tension in the world.

On the same day Metropolitan Hilarion celebrated the memorial service at the grave of the great Russian composer Sergei Rachmaninov at the Kensico Cemetery in New York. Praying at the service were Bishop John, the rector and the chancellor of St. Vladimir's Seminary together with its professors and students. The singing was served by the St. Vladimir's Seminary's choir.

Rachmaninov was buried in Kensico near New York in 1943. Buried next to him are his wife Natalia and daughter Irina, by marriage Princess Irina Wolkonsky. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, Nov. 9.

ON 8 NOVEMBER 2014, METROPOLITAN HILARION OF VOLOKOLAMSK MET AT ST VLADIMIR'S ORTHODOX SEMINARY WITH DR. FOLEY BEACH, PRIMATE AND ARCHBISHOP OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA.

The participants in the meeting discussed prospects of cooperation between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Anglican Church in America.

The Anglican Church in North America was established in 2009 and currently unites the dioceses and parishes who were dissatisfied with liberal teaching of their former churches. In 2006 several hier-

archs of the U.S. Episcopal Church sent a letter to Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations (now Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia) and were assured in response that the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church was open for contacts and cooperation with those members of the U.S. Episcopal Church who are faithful to the moral teaching of the Gospel.

On 25-26 October 2012, Metropolitan Hilarion visited Nashotah House Seminary (Wisconsin, USA). The Seminary, considered to be one of the most conservative theological schools in the Anglican tradition, was founded by active figures of the Oxford Movement, striving to restore the catholic tradition, in 1842. The Seminary has become the center of the 'High Church' in the USA. The Holy Patriarch Tikhon of Moscow, while a bishop in the United States, used to visit Nashotah House Seminary. At the initiative of Bishop Grafton, he was awarded there a degree of Doctor *honoris causa*. The Seminary cherishes the memory of Patriarch Tikhon's visits. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, Nov. 11.

ON 13 NOVEMBER 2014, HIS HOLINESS PATRIARCH KIRILL OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA MET WITH STUDENTS OF THE HIGHER DIPLOMATIC COURSES OF THE DIPLOMATIC ACADEMY OF RUSSIA'S MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill told the participants in the meeting about the external activities of the Russian Orthodox Church, emphasizing, in particular, that the Moscow Patriarchate is committed to taking pastoral care of its faithful living abroad.

Speaking about the tragic developments in Ukraine, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill emphasized that the Russian Orthodox Church holds a peacemaking position, speaks against bloodshed, and tirelessly calls both sides for dialogue and peace. "There is no other peacemaking force in Ukraine now, except for the Russian Orthodox Church," His Holiness Patriarch Kirill said, "Taking into consideration our historical experience, we do not associate ourselves with either party in the civil conflict. Coercive pressure has been exerted on our Church: three priests have been killed, over ten priests have been subjected to arrests, detentions, and tortures; many have been banished from the

country. Some fifty churches have been either destroyed completely or damaged severely under the aimed fire of the Ukrainian artillery."

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church also raised the issue of persecutions of Christians in the Middle East. "I had an opportunity to visit Iraq during the last days of Hussein's administration. I visited the north of the country, Mosul, some Christian monasteries. Hundreds of thousands of Christians lived there; now there are much less people left there. Many of them have been killed, others have fled Iraq. The same situation is in Syria, to some extent in Lebanon," His Holiness Patriarch Kirill said.

To conclude his address, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church wished the participants in the meeting God's help and every success in their future work. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, Nov. 14.

ON 14-16 NOVEMBER 2014, HIS HOLINESS PATRIARCH KIRILL OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA PAID AN IRENICAL VISIT TO THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH.

In the morning of November 14, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill arrived in Belgrade. At the airport he gave a brief interview to representatives of the mass media.

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church was to attend a round table devoted to the theme "Emperor Nicholas II and Serbia" to commemorate the centenary of the First World War which took place at the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Belgrade on November 14.

Upon his arrival, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill visited the Cathedral of the Holy Archangel Michael. There the Primates of the Russian and the Serbian Orthodox Churches celebrated a prayer service.

Later His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and His Holiness Patriarch Irinej of Serbia visited the University of Belgrade where the ceremony of awarding His Holiness Patriarch Kirill the degree of Doctor *honoris causa* took place.

That same day, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill and His Holiness Patriarch Irinej met with H.E. Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia.

Later the Primates of the Russian and the Serbian Orthodox Churches met with the Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia, Mr. Aleksandar Vučić.

On November 15, His Holiness Patri-

arch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and His Holiness Patriarch Irinej of Serbia visited the Monastery of Rakovica, the place of the repose of Serbian Patriarchs Dimitrije (1846-1930) and Pavle (1914-2009), and celebrated the Litia at their tombs. The talks between the Primate of the Russian and the Serbian Orthodox Churches followed the service.

On the same day, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill conducted the blessing of the Russian Necropolis in Belgrade, the largest burial place where Russian soldiers of the First World War repose, and visited the exhibition "Russia and Serbia: History of Spiritual Ties."

On November 16, Patriarch Kirill and Patriarch Irinej conducted the blessing of a monument to the Russian Emperor Nicholas II in the center of the Serbian capital. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, Nov. 17.

A MEMORANDUM FOR THE CREATION OF A SINGLE "LOCAL ORTHODOX CHURCH" IN THE UKRAINE, SIGNED BY THE HEADS OF VARIOUS CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS, INCLUDING THE GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH, IN RIVNE PROVINCE IN THE WESTERN PART OF THE COUNTRY HAS SPARKED A MAJOR CONTROVERSY AND REVIVED INTER-RELIGIOUS TENSIONS IN THE FORMER SOVIET REPUBLIC, STILL SHAKEN BY THE WAR IN THE EAST.

On 13 November, as reported by various Russian news agencies, representatives of the Kyiv Patriarchate, the Autocephalous Orthodox Church and the Greek Catholic Ukrainian Church signed a memorandum put forward by the Rivne provincial administration, calling for unity among Christians (currently there are three Orthodox Churches), which represents a *de facto* schism for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP), the only one canonically recognized by the Moscow Patriarchate.

Two UOC-MP bishops did in fact sign the memorandum, namely Metropolitan of Sarny and Poleskoe Anatoly, and Metropolitan of Rivne and Ostrog Varfolomy. The two took this initiative without consulting the Metropolitan of Kyiv Onufry, but later announced that they were withdrawing their signatures.

This was explained by "the pressure put on the clergy and the faithful," but also by new attempts by members of the Ukrainian Church-Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC-KP) led by excommunicated Metropolitan Filaret to seize churches belonging to the Moscow Patriarchate.

According to the Kyiv Patriarchate, the two bishops pulled out under pressure from Moscow. By contrast, for the Russian Orthodox Church, the Rivne Memorandum is evidence of the "extremely difficult position" of the Western dioceses of the Ukrainian Orthodox Canonical Church.

In fact, Vladimir Legoida, spokesman for the Moscow Patriarchate, noted that "This document only confirms the extremely difficult position in which the dioceses and faithful children of the canonical Orthodox Church in western Ukraine find themselves. It is completely obvious that such documents are signed under the strongest political pressure," he told RIA Novosti.

Kliment, bishop of Irpen and UOC-MP spokesman, agrees. In his view, "the so-called Kyiv Patriarchate is splitting Ukrainian society by open aggression, trying to get dividends from the difficult political situation and national grief."

Following Kliment, Metropolitan Onufry has appealed to all believers to preserve the unity and protect "the local Orthodox church that has been given to us through centuries from manifestations of aggression and schism."

For his part, Vladimir Legoida expressed amazement with regards to the signature on the Rovno memorandum of a representative of the Greek Catholic Church of Ukraine, calling it "canonical nonsense."

"If Greek Catholics declare the necessity of the creation of a united local church with their participation, then apparently first of all they should declare the end of all liturgical and canonical communion with the Holy See," he said.

In fact, "they should cease commemorating the Roman Pope in their worship services. Otherwise, their participation in this process is completely not understandable." – *AsiaNews*, Nov. 20.

HIS HOLINESS PATRIARCH KIRILL OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA MET WITH THE NEW AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE USA TO RUSSIA, MR. JOHN F. TEFFT.

His Holiness Kirill welcomed the head of the US diplomatic representation in the Russian Federation, who presented his credentials to the President of the Russian Federation on November 19, saying, "From this moment you begin your official stay in Russia. You represent a country with which Russia is tied by many

bonds including historical ones'.

The Primate of the Russian Church made a special mention of the importance of the Orthodox factor in the history of relations between the two countries, recalling in particular that the first Orthodox Christians appeared in the west of the United States, in Alaska, as far back as the time when it was part of the Russian Empire. It was a mission of monks from the Valamo Monastery. "From Ladoga Lake to the remote Kurils and the shores of Alaska did the Russian Orthodox mission spread at that time. It made a beginning of the development of Orthodox life in the United States to spread first through California and then to the eastern coast," he said.

Patriarch Kirill noted that the history of Orthodox in America is associated with the names of such great people as St. Innocent (Veniaminov), who was a missionary among the Aleutians and the small peoples of the North and the Far East, and St. Tikhon, Patriarch of All Russia, who used to be a bishop in New York. "The Russian Church was directly involved in the pastoral work in the American continent. It brought her in contact with Protestant churches in the United States so close that when Alaska became part of the United States, the Synod in Petersburg received an official letter from the Episcopal Church in the USA requesting to organize joint pastoral work with people in Alaska. The official response to that letter stated the need to develop dialogue, including theological, in order to bring the theological attitudes closer together so that such work could be possible," he said.

In the course of the talk, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church spoke about the dialogue and joint actions with Christians and cooperation with other religious leaders in the USA even in the years of the Cold War. "We managed to do much. At the most difficult times when there were great risks of confrontation between our two countries, Christians proved to be capable of working together and making joint statements."

He expressed the conviction that now, too, when relations between Russia and the USA are going through not the best period, "it is necessary to work, also for religious leaders, so that the two powers may develop their relations, treat each other with mutual respect and confidence and participate in the great task required of us by multiple crises which have gripped the modern civilization."

Mr. John F. Tefft, on his part, under-

lined that for him it was a great honor to have an opportunity for meeting with His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia. He congratulated the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church on his recent birthday.

He told His Holiness about his visit to the Orthodox church in the city of Juneau in Alaska.

The ambassador stressed that he was looking forward to an opportunity to meet with the Primate of the Orthodox Church in America, His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon of All America and Canada, who will come on an official visit to the Russian Orthodox Church in the beginning of December.

The both sides expressed concern and anxiety over the situation of Christians and other religious minorities in the Middle East and pointed to the need for consolidated efforts of Russia and the USA and their peoples in the struggle against extremism and terrorism.

In conclusion of the meeting, the participants exchanged tokens. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, Nov. 21.

TWO STATES IN CYPRUS CANNOT BE ACCEPTED, ARCHBISHOP CHRYSOSTOMOS OF CYPRUS SAID AFTER A 45-MINUTE MEETING WITH GREEK PRIME MINISTER ANTONIS SAMARAS ON FRIDAY.

Chrysostomos told reporters that he had the “joy of hosting the Greek Premier, and, as ever, the Church offered its views because we want this land to survive, and our people to have better days.”

“In the short meeting we had, I noted that Greece and especially [Cyprus] – all of our ambassadors in the countries that are permanent members of the Security Council and across Europe – must convey the message that the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) belongs to the state, the Republic of Cyprus, and its fruits will be enjoyed by the citizens of this state, whether Greek or Turkish or whatever,” he said.

This message needs to be made clear, he added, to all European governments and the permanent members of the Security Council, and they “should in turn pass the message to Turkey that the Republic of Cyprus is here.”

“Of course, they don’t recognize it,” Chrysostomos said. “They talk of two states, that’s what Turkey wants – two states in Cyprus – but that, of course, cannot be accepted.” – *Cyprus Mail*, Nov. 8.

THE SPIRITUAL HEAD OF THE CHURCH OF CYPRUS, ARCHBISHOP CHRYSOSTOMOS II, WELCOMED MEMBERS OF THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (WCC) EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AT HIS OFFICE IN NICOSIA, CYPRUS, ON 25 NOVEMBER. The meeting acknowledged contributions from the Church of Cyprus to the ecumenical movement, as well as the aspiration of churches to see a united island, partitioned as result of the Turkish invasion in 1974.

Archbishop Chrysostomos II shared that relations between religious leaders from Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities were positive, reiterating that the reasons behind the partition of the island were not religious. “The perception of the problem being religious and a clash between Christians and Muslims is not correct. I would like to make it clear that religion has never been, never was and never will be a problem in Cyprus.”

Archbishop Chrysostomos II added that the wishes of the people who want reunification of the island have been communicated to the high governmental authorities. He said, “We hope there will be a day when we will live together in peace, sharing joy, enjoying festivals and religious events of both Christian and Muslim communities in a united island as before.”

At the meeting, WCC Central Committee moderator Dr Agnes Abuom, appreciated the contributions from the Church of Cyprus to the ecumenical movement. She commended their efforts to work for the unification of Cyprus. “Since our vision at the WCC is to promote a pilgrimage of justice and peace, your country becomes a beacon of hope in this pilgrimage, as you are seeking peace, reconciliation and love between the communities,” Abuom said.

“We have seen Christians and other religious leaders’ commitment to the dialogue of life. This is one way of reminding people to build their dreams of a united, peaceful, prosperous Cyprus, even if this dream is accompanied by the memories of pain,” she said.

“It is our hope and prayer that the vision of the churches and religious communities in Cyprus for peace and unity is realized,” Abuom added. – WCC Press Release, Nov. 26.

THE HOLY SYNOD OF THE CHURCH OF GREECE HAS INSTRUCTED ITS PRIESTS NOT TO CONDUCT FUNERAL OR MEMORIAL SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WHO

HAVE CHOSEN TO BE CREMATED AFTER THEIR DEATH.

“The incineration of the body is not in keeping with the practice and tradition of the Church for theological, canonical and anthropological reasons,” the Synod said in a statement.

Greece has no cremation facilities though the practice has been legal since 2006. Earlier this year, the Church objected to the creation of crematoria at parish cemeteries in a potential setback to efforts by local authorities in Athens and Thessaloniki to facilitate the practice. – *KED*, Nov. 1.

THIS JOINT STATEMENT WAS ISSUED ON THE OCCASION OF THE IRENIC VISIT OF HIS BEATITUDE JOHN X, PATRIARCH OF ANTIOCH AND ALL THE EAST, TO THE CHURCH OF GREECE, OCTOBER 23-27, 2014:

His Beatitude John X, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East conducted his irenic first visit to the Church of Greece from October 23 to 27 at the invitation of His Beatitude Ieronymos II, Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, accompanied by a delegation of Antiochian bishops, priests, deacons and laity.

During the visit, His Beatitude was informed by Archbishop Ieronymos II and the members of the Synod of the Church of Greece about the current state of the Greek Church, which is experiencing remarkable growth and a radiant spiritual life. They also examined the suffering of the Greek people, who are suffering from severe economic distress, which is threatening people’s livelihood. His Beatitude and the Antiochian delegation likewise assessed the efforts being undertaken by the Greek Orthodox Church through Apostoliki Diakonia to serve the needy, anoint the wounds of the suffering, and console the sorrowing. They prayed for its leaders and benefactors, that God may grant them further grace and blessings and strengthen them in the service of Jesus’ little brothers. Their Beatitudes then prayed that God may strengthen the Greek people to get through this crisis and to continue to have the generosity and honor that have distinguished them throughout history.

While he attended an extraordinary session of the Synod of the Church of Greece, His Beatitude and the accompanying delegation examined with their brothers how to make shared cooperation between the two sister churches effective at the pastoral, theological and social levels.

They assessed the ongoing cooperation that exists between their two churches on the one hand, and between the Church of Antioch and the Greek state on the other hand, by exchanging common experiences at the level of theological studies. They expressed their aspiration for ongoing cooperation in the scholarly and cultural fields and in the field of Greek language instruction, a common Orthodox witness in today's world.

The two sides agreed on the necessity of proper preparation for the Great and Holy Council that is to be held in the city of Istanbul (Constantinople) in 2016. They stressed the necessity of eliminating all impediments that might impede its being held. His Beatitude the Patriarch of Antioch asked both the Church of Greece and the Greek Foreign Ministry to continue their mediation in order to find a solution to the crisis concocted by the Patriarchate of Jerusalem between herself and the Patriarchate of Antioch, so that this problem will not constitute an impediment to holding the Great and Holy Council.

Concern for the Christians of the Middle East, especially the children of the See of Antioch in Syria, Lebanon and Iraq was not absent from His Beatitude's meeting with the Holy Synod of Greece. His Beatitude also bore this concern to His Excellency the President of Greece, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister, informing them about the suffering of Christians who are weighed down by the horror of terrorism, takfirism, lack of freedom, and the obstruction of prospects for a peaceful solution in their region. His Beatitude stated that this region is being buffeted by interests of nations in changing its borders, obliterating its civilization and dividing up its wealth, exploiting the peoples of the region, with their various religions, sects and affiliations as human shields and fuel to stoke the flames of these conflicts. In this regard, the Church of Greece expressed her bitterness over the position of developed countries toward everything that is happening today in the Middle East.

His Beatitude went over with all the officials whom he met the repercussions of the crisis that is sweeping the region for the Church and in particular for her children, whose homes, churches and monasteries have been destroyed and who themselves have been displaced. During their meetings, the heads of the two churches contemplated the bleeding wound of the Antiochian Church and expressed their profound pain on account of the kidnap-

ping of Bishops Paul and Yuhanna of Aleppo over a year and a half ago. The peaceful history of this region has never known a tragedy like this. Even worse, the international community responds to the fate of the kidnapped bishops with a shameful silence that has had a painful impact on the faithful.

The fathers of the Greek Holy Synod and the officials met by His Beatitude assessed the positions and fixed principles of the Antiochian Church, which does not approach the crisis in the Middle East according to a narrow sectarian logic, but rather regards it as a war between the great powers of the world who are exploiting religion in their struggle. In this regard, the Archbishop of Greece said, "The Church of Greece has always been and will always be at the side of her sister, the Church of Antioch in her effort to stop the wars and spread peace with the goal of reconciliation between the country's inhabitants of various religions. You know very well that anyone who worships God the Creator does not desire this war that is unfortunately supported with extremist and intolerant ideas backed by foreign religious centers."

Syria and her wounds, Lebanon and her cares, Iraq and Palestine were present in the prayers of Their Beatitudes and those accompanying them in all the places that they visited, especially in the Church of Saint John the Russian on the island of Evia. During their celebration of the Divine Liturgy for the Feast of Saint Demetrius the Myrrh-Streamer, they prayed that peace will prevail in these countries and that God will console their children and strengthen them during their time of trial.

In closing, His Beatitude thanked his brother, the Archbishop of Athens and All Greece and the Greek government and people for the warm reception, hospitality and good organization as well as for the medal of honor granted to him by the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece, giving this award to all of his children in the See of Antioch who are suffering. – Notes on *Arab Orthodoxy*, Nov. 1.

MICHAEL DANDÁR WAS ELECTED NEW PRAGUE ARCHBISHOP OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN THE CZECH LANDS, AND HIS ELECTION ENDED THE PERSONNEL DISPUTES IN THE CHURCH, the Prague eparchy (diocese) office told the Czech News Agency (ČTK) today.

The personnel disputes started after Bishop Kryštof was forced to step down as Prague archbishop and head of the

church in the Czech Republic and Slovakia in April 2013.

The Church leadership then installed Archbishop Jachým in the top post, but a large part of the Church members did not recognize him as their legitimate head. They said he was not elected in accordance with the Church rules.

This opinion was shared by Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, the head of the world Orthodox Church. Jachým's critics say the departure of Kryštof was masterminded by a group of Czech priests supported by the Moscow-seated Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The election held Nov. 22 was allegedly an attempt to confirm Jachým in the post of Prague archbishop.

According to ČTK's sources, Jachým did not advance to the second round of the secret election, in which Marek Krupica and Dandár competed for the post.

Neither Krupica nor Dandár won the required two-thirds majority in the secret vote. Finally, a new vote followed, this time not secret, and Dandár won 78 percent of the vote.

A source within the church said fear of attachment to the Russian Orthodox Church has increased with Dandár's election. Dandár is said to come from the German eparchy of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Amid the personnel dispute, Czech Orthodox believers applied for the registration of a new Czech Orthodox Church.

A few days ago, the Czech Culture Ministry suspended the distribution of the financial compensation to the Orthodox Church as part of church restitution due to current internal disputes.

As a result, the 40 million Kč the Orthodox Church should receive in January might end up in judicial or notarial deposit.

"I have done what was needed to prevent a possible abuse of the money," Culture Minister Daniel Herman (Christian Democrats, KDU-ČSL) said. – *Prague Post*, Nov. 23.

The Assyrian Church of the East

THE BISHOPS OF THE DIOCESES OF THE ASSYRIAN CHURCH OF THE EAST IN THE UNITED STATES HELD THEIR FIRST EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE FROM OCTOBER 30TH TO THE 31ST, IN SAN DIEGO, California. The conference, blessed by His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV, Catholicos-Patriarch, was attended by: His Grace Mar Aprim Khamis, Bishop of the

Western United States, the chair of the episcopal conference, His Grace Mar Awa Royel, Bishop of California and Secretary of the Holy Synod & President of CIRED, and His Grace Mar Paulus Benjamin, Bishop of the Diocese of the Eastern USA and President of ACERO USA. The bishops were also in San Diego to take part in the rite of the consecration of the altar of the Rabban Hermizd Parish, which took place after morning prayers on the First Sunday of the Hallowing of the Church, November 2, 2014. His Grace Mar Yosip Sargis, bishop emeritus, was also present for the consecration rite.

The meeting of the bishops' conference was held at the offices of St. Rabban Hermizd Parish in San Diego, and was hosted by His Grace Mar Aprim Khamis. The items on the agenda for discussion and implementation in the United States dioceses included, among others: formulating a single Sunday School curriculum for the dioceses in America, preparing a program for the canonical preparation of marriage and baptism in the Church, finalizing the Constitution of the Youth Association of the Church in the US and other Youth matters, pastoral issues in dealing with the married, separated and divorced, unifying the ecclesiastical calendar in the US, the preparation of catechetical materials, strengthening the Church's charitable ACERO foundation, and various liturgical matters. The episcopal conference also called for a meeting and retreat of all the priests of the three dioceses in the US to take place in early November of 2015. These matters and the decisions of the bishops' conference will be communicated to the priests and clergy of each appropriate diocese at the next presbyteral council meeting of the diocese, respectively.

At the closing session, the bishops offered up prayers to our suffering brothers and sisters in the Faith, in Iraq and Syria, and prayed the Lord's blessings and help upon our suffering People in those countries, and in the Middle East at large. The next episcopal conference will take place in the early Fall of 2015, to be held in the east coast of the United States. – Press Release, Assyrian Church of the East, Nov. 7.

The Oriental Orthodox Churches

ON NOVEMBER 17, 2014, HIS HOLINESS PATRIARCH MOR IGNATIUS APHREM II OF THE SYRIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH RECEIVED THE GRAND

MUFTI OF THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC SHEIKH DR. AHMAD BADREDDIN HAS-SOUN IN MOR IGNATIUS PATRIARCHAL CENTER IN MAARAT SAYDNAYA.

His Holiness and his guest discussed the recent developments in the crisis in Syria. His Holiness emphasized that all religions call for the rejection of violence, injustice and hatred. Religions encourage their faithful to carry a message of tolerance, peace and common living among the citizens of the country. His Holiness also pointed out that national unity is the weapon with which the citizens of Syria can defend their country and defeat all foreign plans that aim to destroy Syria. The Grand Mufti, likewise, highlighted that the works of terrorism that are committed in Syria aim at the destruction of the moral values of the Syrian people and to transform the country into a battlefield where the western countries fight defending their economical interests. His Holiness invited the Grand Mufti and the accompanying delegation for a lunch banquet in their honor.

After the meeting, His Holiness and his guests visited the Monastery of the Lady of Saydnaya where they prayed for peace and security in Syria – Press Release, Syrian Patriarchate, Nov. 18.

ON NOVEMBER 25, 2014, HIS HOLINESS PATRIARCH MOR IGNATIUS APHREM II OF THE SYRIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH MET THE GERMAN MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS MR. FRANK-WALTER STEINMEIER IN THE GERMAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS IN BERLIN.

During the meeting, His Holiness thanked the German Minister for Foreign Affairs and the German government for all the efforts that they are doing in order to help Christians in the Middle East. His Holiness also discussed the current situation, especially the living conditions of the displaced people in Northern Iraq who were forced to leave their homes in Mosul and the villages of the Nineveh Plain. He also presented some suggestions to help Christians remain in their homeland. His Holiness demanded that a safe and immediate return for the displaced be provided, and assistance in getting back their properties that were taken away from them. He, likewise, offered long term suggestions that reflect the Church's vision and secure conditions for the Christian presence in the Middle East.

Moreover, His Holiness presented the case of the abducted archbishops of Alep-

po Mor Gregorius Youhanna Ibrahim and Boulos Yaziji. He asked for the intervention of the German minister of Foreign Affairs and the German government to work on their immediate release and return to their parishes and churches.

In turn, the German Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier expressed the concern of the German government with the intensification of the crisis in the Middle East and its effects on Christians in particular. He also expressed his sympathy with the suffering people in general and Christians in particular. He pointed out that the German government will provide the necessary help and assistance to allow Christians to remain in their homeland.

His Holiness then met the director of the Human Rights department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They discussed the practical steps to allocate humanitarian help and aid to the displaced and needy. – Press Release, Syrian Patriarchate, Nov. 26.

THE HEAD OF THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH, POPE TAWADROS II, CALLED ON SUNDAY FOR UNITY AND DIALOGUE BETWEEN ORTHODOX AND CATHOLIC CHURCHES.

During a golden jubilee celebration in Austria organized by Pro-Oriente, an establishment launched to promote dialogue between Catholic and eastern churches, Egypt's Pope said unity among churches come with theological dialogue as well as partnership in several fields including education, monasticism and social development.

"We hope all churches around the world could agree on a unified day to celebrate the Feast of Resurrection," the Pope said during the event attended by Austria's Catholic archbishop, Christoph Schönborn, and the head Vatican's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Cardinal Koch. – US Copts Association, Nov. 9.

TWO WEEKS AGO, THE THREE MAIN EGYPTIAN CHURCHES – ORTHODOX, CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT – DRAFTED THE PROPOSITION OF A LAW CONCERNING THE CONSTRUCTION OF CHURCHES.

Can this law – long-awaited law by the Christian community – finally push the current situation to change? Representatives of churches and Christian communities seem to be optimistic for the first time.

Gamal Habib, a legal consultant to the Coptic Catholic Church, explains that churches based the draft law on the country's new constitution, ratified in early 2014, which stipulates that a new law for building churches in Egypt will be discussed when parliament's first legislative session.

"According to the constitution, this law needs to be approved," Habib says.

Indeed, article 235 of the 2014 constitution says that "parliament, in its first session, has to issue a law related to the regulation of the construction and restoration of churches, in order to guarantee that Christians get the freedom to practice their religious rites."

Hence, the new Egyptian parliament – expected to be voted in by the end of the year – will have to examine the new draft law, which aims to loosen the limits on building churches in Egypt.

According to Habib, the prepared text mainly gives a precise definition of the church and its form, which varies according to each church's doctrine. The document also describes buildings attached to churches and the services that take place inside them, like the establishment of a medical center or nursery.

The draft also suggests that the criteria used for the construction of churches be aligned with those of the construction of private edifices. Furthermore, the text hopes that litigations be cancelled regarding the ownership of land on which churches have to be built.

The law, if approved, will force authorities to give approval or refusal of a request to build a church within 60 days. The absence of a response from the government will be considered a green light for the beginning of construction.

Several drafts have been presented to successive governments, the most recent in 2013, but all have been in vain. Until now, no law has governed the construction of churches. The legislative dispositions, in effect since 1934, make it extremely difficult to build churches in Egypt. A new church has to be authorized by a presidential decree, which is not issued until approval is given by the interior ministry. The ministry further adds 10 rules that are called, not without irony, The Ten Commandments by Christian churches.

These rules ban the construction of churches near schools, canals, governmental buildings, railway tracks and residential areas for security reasons. In many cases, the rigid application of these rules has prevented the construction of churches

in cities and villages where Copts live, especially rural areas in Upper Egypt. In addition, there are bureaucratic annoyances. As a result, given that the permits are difficult to obtain, several villages and neighborhood don't have churches, and many others are built without a permit.

According to Monsef Soliman, a member of the communitarian committee representing the Orthodox Church, "We have been waiting for the approval of such a law for long years. Restrictions have always been put on the Christian community regarding the construction of churches. We could wait between 15 and 16 years in order to get one approval, and it would end up being a refusal. It is time to face all these problems through the law." -- Chaimaa Abdel-Hamid for *Al Ahram*, Nov. 10.

FROM NOVEMBER 11 THROUGH 13, HIS HOLINESS KAREKIN II, SUPREME PATRIARCH AND CATHOLICOS OF ALL ARMENIANS; AND HIS HOLINESS ARAM I, CATHOLICOS OF GREAT HOUSE OF CILICIA; PRESIDED OVER THE OPENING OF THE BISHOPS' SYNOD OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH. The Synod was held at the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin. Present at the meeting were 61 archbishops and bishops from the Mother See.

On November 11, prior to the opening, the Bishops' Synod participated in the Morning Service in the Mother Cathedral, asking for the guidance of the Holy Spirit for the Assembly's effective works. The Synod was opened with the Lord's Prayer, after which His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians; and His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of Great House of Cilicia; were each invited to give a message by the co-chairman of the Bishops' Synod His Eminence Archbishop Khajag Barsamian.

Following the official remarks, the chancellery of the Synod was established: His Eminence Archbishop Yeznik Petrosyan and His Eminence Archbishop Sepuh Sarkisyan were appointed to serve as co-chairman; His Eminence Archbishop Vazken Mirzakhanyan and His Eminence Archbishop Babken Charyan were appointed to serve as secretaries.

Following the assignment of administrative duties, the Synod offered a prayer for the souls of the clergymen who rested in peace during the past year.

The Bishops' Synod also congratulated His Holiness Karekin II, for the 15th anniversary of his consecration and enthronement, wishing long years of his pas-

torate.

The November 11 and 12 sessions were devoted to issues related to the canonization in the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church and canonization of the victims of the Armenian Genocide. Co-Chairmen of the Sainthood Committee, His Eminence Archbishop Moushegh Martirosyan, and His Eminence Archbishop Babken Charyan, presented reports on the results of the work and studies concerning the issues.

Discussing the work of the Committee, the Bishop's Synod confirmed the canonization service of the Armenian Church.

The canonization service of the victims of the Armenian Genocide was decided to be held on April 23, 2015 in the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin. April 24 was defined on the liturgical calendar as an annual ecclesiastical remembrance day.

The Synod adopted the annual service of celebration guidelines for the victims of the Armenian Genocide, which includes a hymn canon and a sermon. It was decided to adopt the documents after final revisions. The Canonization Committee was instructed to undertake the necessary studies for individual canonization, as in the case of Komitas Vardapet and other individuals.

The session on November 12 began with Lord's Prayer for the souls of the nation's sons and daughters killed in a tragic bus accident on the Gyumri road; expressing condolences to their families.

On November 12 and 13, the Synod members discussed the works of the Liturgical Committee on the sacraments of Baptism and Chrismation of the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church. The reports were presented by Co-Chairman His Eminence Archbishop Arshak Kachatryan; and committee members His Grace Bishop Mikael Ajapahyan and His Grace Bishop Vahan Hovhannisyan. At the conclusion of intensive discussions, the Synod accepted the uniform text for the Services of Baptism and Chrismation. With minor revisions, the Baptism and Chrismation canonical guidelines were approved which was renamed the Baptism and Chrismation Pastoral Guidelines. The pre-Baptism information guide was also adopted. Under the directives of Catholicos of All Armenians, and the Catholicos of Great House of Cilicia, the adopted documents will be delivered to the individual dioceses.

On the first session on November 13, the members of the Bishops' Synod raised

a prayer for those three servicemen, who were killed in the downing of the Armenian helicopter, by the Azerbaijani Armed Forces, on the Artsakh frontline; and issued a statement condemning the provocative actions of Azerbaijan.

During the third session on November 13, Mr. Vigen Sargsyan; Chief of Staff of the President of the Republic of Armenia and State Coordinator of Events dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide; presented in detail the commemorative events planned by the government for 2015. He also made reference to the implementation of joint activities by the Armenian Church in Armenia and the Diaspora. He presented a report on the progress of the preparatory work.

At the conclusion of the Synod, a discussion was held on various challenges in the life of the nation and the church.

At the end of the three-day Synod, the Bishops' Synod expressed gratitude to the Most Holy Trinity; for the possibility of fraternal consolidation, as well as for the success of the Synod. The Synod members also expressed their gratitude to the organization, Canonization and Sacramental committee members for the Synod's preparation, and for the detailed study of issues on the agenda.

The next Bishops Synod is scheduled to be convened in 2016.

The Catholicos of All Armenians and the Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia closed the Synod with their blessings, offering appreciation and prayers. – Press Release, Holy Etchmiadzin, Nov. 13.

The Catholic Churches

YESTERDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2014, ON THE OCCASION OF THE CELEBRATION OF THE CATHEDRAL AND EPARCHIAL FEAST DAY, IN THE CATHEDRAL OF SAINT JOSAPHAT IN PARMA, OHIO (USA) the newly ordained Ordinary of the Eparchy of St. Josaphat in Parma, Bishop Bohdan (Danylo) presided over his first Sunday Divine Liturgy since his enthronement on the eparchial see. Bishop Bohdan was joined in the Eucharistic celebration by Bishop John Bura, until recently the eparchy's Apostolic Administrator. A large number of clergy, consecrated persons and the laity likewise partook in the Liturgy.

After the liturgy, a festive dinner with an artistic program took place in the eparchial Chancery's banquet hall during which some representatives of the clergy and the laity welcomed, in a family at-

mosphere, Bishop Bohdan as their newly enthroned Eparch and thanked Bishop John for the many years of his fatherly sacrificial work for the good of the eparchy after which Bishop Bohdan and Bishop John addressed people with a word of thanks.

As we reported earlier, on November 4, 2014, in the Cathedral of Saint Josaphat in Parma, Ohio, the Head of the UGCC His Beatitude Sviatoslav Shevchuk presided over the consecration and enthronement of the newly elected Ordinary of the Eparchy of St. Josaphat in Parma, Bishop Bohdan Danylo, whose co-consecrators during the ordination were Bishop Paul Chomnycky, Eparch of Stamford and Bishop John Bura, until recently the eparchy's Apostolic Administrator. – Press Release, Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, Nov. 10.

POPE FRANCIS HAS APPROVED A DECREE, SIGNED BY CARDINAL LEONARDO SANDRI, PREFECT OF THE CONGREGATION FOR THE EASTERN CHURCHES, LIFTING THE BAN ON THE ORDINATION OF MARRIED MEN TO THE PRIESTHOOD IN EASTERN CATHOLIC CHURCHES OUTSIDE THEIR TRADITIONAL TERRITORIES, (mostly in the United States, Canada and Australia). The decree was signed on 14 June and published later online in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, the official periodical which documents Vatican rulings.

The Eastern Catholic Churches have traditionally been allowed to ordain married men. However after ordination, a priest is not allowed to marry - or indeed re-marry if his wife should die. In 1890, the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples introduced a marriage ban on Ruthenian priests living in the USA, in response to protests from Latin Rite Bishops at the time, Cardinal Sandri explained. In 1929, the Congregation extended the ban, '*Cum data fuerit*' to South America and Australia.

Cardinal Sandri's decree notes that soon after the law was promulgated, "an estimated 200,000 Ruthenian faithful became Orthodox."

The document also notes that when Pope Benedict XVI issued *Anglicanorum Coetibus*, allowing for the reception of Anglican communities into the Catholic Church, he explicitly provided for the presence of married Catholic priests.

In 2012, Pope Benedict remarked that "the ministry of married priests is a component of the ancient Eastern traditions,"

which he encouraged the Eastern Catholic churches to maintain.

Cardinal Sandri's statement follows:

The Plenary Session of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, held from the 19th to the 22nd of November 2013 in the Palazzo Apostolico, treated the question fully and subsequently presented to the Holy Father the request to concede to the respective Church Authorities the faculty to allow pastoral service of Eastern married clergy also outside the traditional Eastern territory.

The Holy Father, in an audience granted to the Prefect of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, December 23, 2013, approved the request *contrariis quibuslibet minime obstantibus*, ("to the contrary notwithstanding") with the following modality:

- in Eastern administrative areas (Metropolia, Eparchies, Exarchates) set up outside the traditional territories such a faculty is to be conferred to the Eastern Hierarchy, who will exercise it according to the traditions of the respective Churches. Also, they have the faculty to ordain Eastern married candidates coming from the respective territory with the obligation to inform beforehand in writing the Latin bishop of the candidate's residence, in order to have his opinion and any relevant information.

- in Ordinariates for the Eastern faithful without a proper Hierarchy, such a faculty will be conferred to the Ordinaries, who will exercise it informing in concrete cases the respective Episcopal Conference and this Dicastery;

- in territories where the Eastern faithful lack a specific administrative structure and are entrusted to the care of the Latin Bishops of the place, such a faculty will continue to be reserved to the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, who will exercise it in concrete and exceptional cases after hearing the opinion of the respective Episcopal Conferences. – *Independent Catholic News*, Nov. 18.

ORIENTALIUM ECCLESIAARUM, THE DECREE OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL ON THE EASTERN CATHOLIC CHURCHES WAS PROMULGATED BY POPE PAUL VI ON 21 NOVEMBER 1964. HIS BEATITUDE CARDINAL GEORGE ALLENCHERRY, Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church celebrated the 50th anniversary of this event in Jerusalem on 20th November with a lecture: "The Importance of the Unity of the Christian Churches and the Role of the Individual

(*sui iuris*) Churches within the Catholic Church." This celebration took place in the context of the *Dies Academicus* of the Salesian Pontifical University's English Campus in Jerusalem.

In his introductory remarks, the Cardinal congratulated the Salesian Pontifical University for the appropriate timing of the day's lecture, "... today's lecture is quite well timed particularly because this year marks the 50th anniversary of the promulgation of the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* of Vatican II and the Decrees *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* and *Unitatis Redintegratio*. These three documents were promulgated on November 21, 1964 and this conference takes place here today on the 20th of November 2014, just one day before the semi centennial jubilee of that historic event." He began by quoting Pope Francis while speaking on the unity and holiness of the Church and stressed the need to live as a community centered on Christ; he proposed a theoretical as well as practical ecumenism based on the above three documents.

Later in his lecture, the Cardinal stated that the unity of Christians would only be possible if there is a change of heart (an interior conversion) enlightened by faith, guided by prayer and an openness to live in fraternal harmony. Unity though, he said, is not uniformity, giving the example of his own Church. "The Syro-Malabar Church or the Church of St. Thomas Christians of India is as old as Christianity itself in the Indian soil."

The Cardinal acknowledged that there are slight differences in liturgical practices between the Syro-Malabar Church and the Latin Church yet, he said, the two have never broken communion. Then, referring to the unity between the 23 Catholic Churches of the East and West that have kept intact the faith received from the Apostles, His Beatitude quoted Pope St. John Paul II to stress the need for unity, "The Church must learn to breathe again with its two lungs: its Eastern one and its Western one."

He then highlighted the most important aspects of the following themes, which are indisputably crucial for dialogue between Christian churches: the Church is a Communion of Churches; Individual (*sui iuris*) Churches and Rites; Canonical Definition of Church *sui iuris* and Rite; the Prayer of Jesus-the Heart of Our Unity; Gift of God - Not the fruit of a Treaty; the Eucharist and Unity; the Role of Eastern Catholic Churches (*sui iuris*) in the Path towards Church Unity, and Col-

laboration in the Field of Evangelization and Pastoral Care.

In his concluding remarks, His Beatitude made a call to unity, one that encompasses all the Christian Churches: "We all irrespective of easterners or westerners, Catholics or non-Catholics should be seriously concerned about the current cultural and social trends that are leading to a progressive de-Christianization and secularization everywhere, particularly in Europe. If we do not stand together and act accordingly, the evangelization process will deteriorate and the primary mission, which Christ entrusted us will not bear fruit. We always and everywhere have to affirm our commitment to work for Christian unity, as desired by Christ." Then he called the keen attention of the audience "to the plight of Christians living here in the Middle East, especially in Iraq and Syria and other religious and ethnic minorities who are suffering because of the violence raging across the region, which must certainly be an important subject of our reflection and prayer." In the context of this humanitarian catastrophe, the Cardinal added, "I feel that the world conscience is not fully awake to the gravity of the situation. Therefore it is high time that the international community intervene with concrete and effective plans to establish peace, promote freedom of religion and conscience, and eradicate religious fundamentalism, which has gone to the extreme level of violating human rights."

The *lectio magistralis* was followed by a time of dialogue on the topic with his Beatitude. Some pertinent questions were raised to which Cardinal George responded in a very friendly and realistic manner.

The president of the the Salesian Pontifical University's campus in Jerusalem, Rev. Dr Biju Michael informed that the institute is dedicating the whole academic year 2014-2015 to a deeper study of the Oriental/Eastern Churches through seminars and conferences. – Jack Budny, Romeero D'Souza and David Elweu for *Zenit*, Nov. 21.

WHILE FULLY PART OF THE UNIVERSAL CATHOLIC CHURCH, THE EASTERN CATHOLIC CHURCHES SUFFERED FROM THE PREJUDICES OF THE LATIN-RITE MAJORITY AND AN EMPHASIS ON UNIFORMITY AMONG ALL CATHOLICS, SAID THE HEAD OF THE CONGREGATION FOR EASTERN CHURCHES.

Marking the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council decree "*Orientalium Ecclesiarum*," which affirmed the

richness of the Eastern churches within the Catholic communion, Cardinal Leonardo Sandri said, "Diversity at the center of the church is something that reflects a project of God."

In his Nov. 20 message for the anniversary, the cardinal described "*Orientalium Ecclesiarum*" as the "crowning of an important journey in the Latin conscience" toward acceptance of the Eastern churches.

The Eastern churches historically faced "several prejudices" in the Catholic communion, namely an ecclesiology of "universal uniformity," which, he said, "considered the Latin church and its 'rite' as the universal model."

In addition, he said, because of a particular interpretation of the role of the Roman pontiff, "the rights and privileges of the Patriarchs were worn thin or dropped."

"At the base, there was perhaps a consideration of Eastern Catholic Christianity as quaint folklore, sometimes not deeply understood and confused with the Orthodox Church," he wrote.

However, the Second Vatican Council offered a new understanding of the Eastern churches and affirmed "the necessary diversity within the universal church," he said. It expressed "great esteem for their ways of governance, their canonical disciplines as regards priests -- including the married priesthood -- their piety, their ways of understanding the Christian mystery and their vision of the church," he wrote.

The Eastern churches were not, as previously understood, "caused by some historical contingency, but they exist by providential design," said Cardinal Sandri.

"Diversity is an indicator of communion and almost the condition for its possibility, not its negation," he wrote. "It is diversity, owed to the Spirit, and expressed according to the cultural horizon of each people who has welcomed the Gospel."

Praising the "witness of courage and hope" of the martyred Eastern Catholic churches, the cardinal also noted the significant challenges faced by many Eastern churches today as they minister in territories affected by war, political upheavals and humanitarian disasters.

Faced by these challenges, many Eastern Catholics have immigrated to countries where the Latin church is predominant, he said. In light of this migration, he said, the more numerous Catholic communities are called "to help Eastern

Catholic churches in the diaspora preserve, love and transpose ... their religious traditions in new cultural contexts." – Laura Ieraci for *CNS*, Nov. 21.

POPE FRANCIS GAVE THIS ADDRESS TO A GROUP OF FAITHFUL OF THE SYRO-MALABAR CATHOLIC CHURCH WHO HAD COME TO ROME FOR THE CANONIZATION of Kuriakose Elias Chavara and Euphrasia Eluvathingal on November 24:

Dear brothers and sisters,

I am pleased to join you in giving thanks to the Lord for the canonization of two new Indian saints, both from the State of Kerala. I take this opportunity to thank the Church in India, the Church in Kerala, for all its apostolic vigor and for your witness to the Faith! My heartfelt gratitude! Keep up the good work! Kerala is rich in vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Continue on this path, working through your witness. I thank Cardinal George Alencherry, the Bishops, priests, men and women religious, and each of you, dear brothers and sisters of the Syro-Malabar rite. I remember in a special way the Cardinal of the Syro-Malankara rite: thank you! Did you know that your Syro-Malankara Cardinal is the youngest member of the College of Cardinals?

You have come to Rome in great

numbers on this very important occasion, and have been able to live days of faith and ecclesial communion, praying also at the tombs of the Apostles. May this time of celebration and intense spirituality help you to contemplate the marvellous works accomplished by the Lord in the lives and deeds of these new saints.

Father Kuriakose Elias Chavara and Sister Euphrasia Eluvathingal, who was a member of the religious Institute founded by him, remind each of us that God's love is the source, the support and the goal of all holiness, while love of neighbor is the clearest manifestation of love for God. Father Kuriakose Elias was a religious, both active and contemplative, who generously gave his life for the Syro-Malabar Church, putting into action the maxim "sanctification of oneself and the salvation of others." For her part, Sister Euphrasia lived in profound union with God so much so that her life of holiness was an example and an encouragement to the people, who called her "Praying Mother." There are many consecrated religious here today, especially consecrated women. May you also be known as "Praying Sisters."

Dear brothers and sisters, may these new saints help you to treasure their lessons of evangelical living. Follow in their footsteps and imitate them, in a particular

way, through love of Jesus in the Eucharist and love of the Church. Thus you will advance along the path to holiness. With this hope and the assurance of my prayers, I impart to each of you and to all your loved ones my Apostolic Blessing. Thank you! – Vatican Website, Nov. 24.

ISLAMIC STATE (IS) MILITANTS BLEW UP WITH EXPLOSIVES THE SACRED HEART CONVENT IN THE NORTHERN IRAQI CITY OF MOSUL ON MONDAY, ACCORDING TO LOCAL CHALDEAN CHRISTIAN SOURCES CONSULTED BY FIDES NEWS AGENCY. The explosions badly damaged the convent, especially its church.

The reports said that the Jihadists made two attempts to blow up the convent but when the first explosion didn't work properly, they made a second attempt, this time using more powerful explosives.

Before carrying out the operation, the militants had warned people living in the nearby area and advised them to leave their windows open to avoid having them shattered by the force of the blasts.

The convent which belonged to the Chaldean sisters had been built with money donated by Iraq's former ruler, President Saddam Hussein. – Vatican Radio, Nov. 25.



Pope Francis asks for a blessing from Patriarch Bartholomew at the Ecumenical Patriarchate on November 30.

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