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A CONFERENCE ON 'THE CONTRIBUTION OF MOUNT ATHOS TO EUROPE'S RELIGIOUS AND INTELLECTUAL TRADITION' WAS HELD ON JULY 8-9, 2011, IN SALZBURG, AUSTRIA. It was organized by the Dialogue of Civilizations world public forum. Among the participants were Mr. Walter Schwimmer, former general secretary of the Council of Europe, Princess Katarina of Serbia, Great Britain, Prince George Yourievsky of the Romanov Family, Switzerland, representatives of the Friends of Mount Athos, Oxford, the Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies, Cambridge, the Amsterdam Center for Eastern Orthodox Theology, public and governmental bodies, the Catholic Church and the Church of England, business and scientific communities, as well as clergy from the Churches of Russia, Georgia, Greece and other Local Orthodox Churches and brethren from monasteries on the Holy Mount Athos.

The conference was opened by Mr. V. Yakunin, president of the Dialogue of Civilizations.

Rev. Andrey Yeliseyev, secretary of the Russian Orthodox Church representation to European international organizations in Brussels, read out a message of greetings from Metropolitan Hilarion, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations, which reads in particular, 'The existence of the European civilization is due to Christianity, as its basic values, mode of thinking and moral law which has prevailed for centuries – all go back to the evangelical mission of the disciples of Jesus Christ, the mission which embraced all the nations of the then oikoumene... The awareness of the contribution that Mount Athos has made in Europe's religious and moral tradition leads us to the important task to preserve the unique world of the Holy Mount for generations to come. This world has been created by the hands of a multinational monastic

community with their special way of life, diversity of monastic achievements, warm hospitality towards pilgrims and strict internal silence'.

Archimandrite Ephraim, abbot of the Vatopedi Monastery, one of the largest monasteries on Mount Athos, said in his address that 'the modern man, who has made a great progress in technological and economic development, has failed to find an inner peace. That is the presence of Christ in our hearts. The Holy Mount is a place of peace, repentance, humility and joy as a special state of holiness, which is a fruit of the presence of the Holy Spirit. People in the West often see in humility an inferiority complex, whereas it is the alpha and omega of spiritual experience... On the Holy Mount, one can meet truly humble monks and hear the Word given in experience'.

The official opening of the conference, which took place at the palace of Prince Archbishops of Salzburg, included an exhibition of the 19th century photographs from the album of Prince Constantine Constantinovich Romanov and today's archives of the Vatopedi Monastery.

On Saturday, July 9, Archimandrite Ephraim celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Romanian Orthodox church in Salzburg according to the Athonite rite.

During plenary and section sessions, participants spoke in one voice for the preservation of Mount Athos's unique status, the need for comprehensive legal defense of the principle of 'avaton' whereby women are not allowed to the peninsula, against turning the Holy Mount into a free tourist zone or a place of commercialization and pointed to the tendency of interference in the internal life of the monasteries.

Mr. Schwimmer, who is chairman of the international coordinating committee of the Dialogue of Civilizations forum, stated that 'the Holy Mount Athos is important for the cultural heritage of the whole world but in the first place for the spiritual and intellectual heritage of Europe. For this reason it is necessary to

protect this place and to involve various forces in Europe and the world in this endeavor'.

Mr. Jan Figel, chairman of the Christian Democratic Movements in Slovakia and former Euro-commissioner for science, education and culture, said, 'We [in the European Union] have a common market, a common currency but we still have failed to avoid a crisis... The importance of Christianity in Europe is enormous, and Christians have a clear system of values. Europe will be beautiful if the mosaic is united, not split into East and West'.

The director of the John XXIII Foundation for Religious studies, Alberto Meloni, Italy, put forward a proposal that Mount Athos become a training place for a new generation of young scholars who could work in today's 'post-secular' society to preserve the sources of understanding Christian life.

Mr. S. Scheblygin, president of the St. Andrew the First-Called Foundation, spoke about relations between Russia and Mount Athos through, among other things, bringing over its shrines, assistance in restoring the St. Panteleimon Monastery and support for historical and art studies. He said, 'We believe that the development of relations with Mount Athos as a center of religious, contemplative and spiritual life has a beneficial potential for the life of the whole Russian society. Indeed, Orthodox Christianity in Russia has become a spiritual foundation for people's life in the vast lands from the Baltic Sea in the west to the Pacific Ocean in the Far East'.

Mr. S. Khoruzhiy, senior researcher at the Russian Academy of Sciences Institute of Philosophy said in his remarks that the old trends of secularism and driving religion out of public life have encountered a new tendency of 'post-secularism' with its return to religious values and desire of secular people and institutions to enter into dialogue with people of religious traditions. For this reason, today's philosophers and anthropologists are seeking new ways of understanding what is

happening to man and society. And here the Athonite hesychasm as an inexhaustible source of not theoretical but empirical 'theology of energies' can offer much for the solution of this intellectual problem and open new prospects for the understanding of the 'synergetic' nature of man as participant in the Divine energy.

In summing up the discussions, Archpriest Anthony Ilyin, acting Russian Orthodox Church representative to European international organizations in Brussels, proposed to create 'a network community for support of Mount Athos not only within the European Union but also in the greater Europe' as 'a format for continued contacts between analysts and experts and for legal support of Mount Athos and as an internet portal'.

In his closing remarks, Archimandrite Ephraim invited the St. Andrew the First-Called Foundation to cooperation in studying and cataloguing Russian manuscripts found in the monastery. He also called upon them to use the spiritual fruits of Mount Athos, noting that there are spiritual fathers who can give answers to the most urgent questions of the modern man. – Website of the Serbian Patriarchate, July 13.

U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE HILLARY CLINTON ON JULY 16 CALLED ON ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW IN FANAR, ISTANBUL DURING HER VISIT TO TURKEY, WHERE SHE WAS WARMLY WELCOMED. Her meeting with the Patriarch was also attended by the Orthodox Archbishop of America Demetrios, who greeted her upon her arrival.

Sources in the Patriarchate later said that their talks had focused on issues of concern to the Patriarchate, including that of reopening the School of Theology on the island of Halki. On this, Clinton apparently remarked that "40 years of silence" for the seminary were enough and stressed the U.S. government's dedication to issues of religious freedom and its support for issues concerning the Patriarchate. – A. Kourkoulas for ANA, July 16.

THE ISTANBUL MUNICIPALITY AND THE PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION HAVE JOINED EFFORTS TO RESTORE THE BULGARIAN "ST. STEFAN" CHURCH.

According to *Hurriyet Daily News*, "the parts of the church that have become dirty and carbonated will be cleaned thoroughly with detergent water, while the missing ornaments on the façade will be replicated using original material. The

crooked parts of the roof will also be renewed."

The same publication informs that the restoration is scheduled to begin next month and will cost TRL 2.5 M

The Bulgarian "Saint Stephen" Church, also known as the Bulgarian Iron Church, is a Bulgarian Orthodox church in Istanbul, Turkey, famous for being made of cast iron. The parts were manufactured in Vienna and then transported via the Danube River to Bulgaria and through the Black Sea to Istanbul. The Church was inaugurated in 1898 by Exarch Joseph and marks the beginning of the Bulgarian exarchate.

According to a legend, Sultan Abdul Azis was not inclined to let Bulgarians have their own church, but yielded to the pressure under one condition – for the church to be built only in a month. Bulgarians found the solution by making the church from cast iron.

In the last few years, the Bulgarian State and the Istanbul City Hall have made significant efforts to raise funds for the church's renovation and maintenance, but those funds are still insufficient. The 110th anniversary of the iron church was celebrated at the end of 2008. – *Sophia News Agency*, July 19.

THE ARCHDIOCESAN YOUTH CHOIR OF THE GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA GAVE TODAY JULY 2, 2011 AT 7 P.M, A CONCERT IN HONOR OF HIS ALL HOLINESS ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW ON THE OCCASION OF THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ELECTION AND ENTHRONEMENT OF HIS ALL HOLINESS TO THE FIRST THRONE OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH.

The concert was held in the historic church of St. Irene, which stands next to "Agia Sophia" and was the site of the Second Ecumenical Synod in 381 A.D. The Archdiocesan Youth Choir is led by His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America in a tour to Constantinople, Cyprus and Greece, which will end with a performance at Ionian Village (Bartholomio, Greece) on July 12.

The Church of St. Irene, which is used as a venue for musical events and concerts, was an idyllic and meaningful location for a moving musical recital of angelic voices singing a rich and diversified repertoire of orthodox ecclesiastical pieces, traditional and modern Greek compositions and international selections.

Upon the conclusion of the performance, His Eminence Archbishop Deme-

trios publicly expressed his gratitude to the Ecumenical Patriarch for having accepted the offering of the concert in His All Holiness' honor and for his support in realizing the performance.

"Music is the vocabulary of love and is the way the heart communicates with the Creator," said the Ecumenical Patriarch addressing the children of the Choir, the delegation from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and the audience of the concert. His All Holiness praised the musical performance of the Choir and said that he had the opportunity to receive many expressions of love from the orthodox faithful of America in the past, manifestations and expressions of love which continue to this day with the presentation of this concert. "As in the past, these expressions of your love towards me personally and towards the Mother Church are supporting us and strengthen us- and the Mother Church is truly appreciative of this love and support we receive," said the Ecumenical Patriarch.

Tomorrow, Sunday July 3, His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew will preside at the Divine Liturgy in the Church of the Holy Trinity of the Monastery in the Theological School of Halki. Archbishop Demetrios, the Archdiocesan Choir and others from the United States will attend the liturgy. – Press Release, Greek Archdiocese, July 2.

THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT WAS RELEASED BY THE SECRETARIAT OF THE HOLY SYNOD OF THE GREEK ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE OF ANTIOCH:

On the basis of its rootedness in the Middle East, bearing a message of love, brotherhood, and interconnectedness with others, and interacting creatively with our Muslim brothers, our partners in the nation, to build an Arab civilization deeply rooted in this Middle East, and an effective Orthodox contribution, the Holy Synod affirms the centrality of the Muslim-Christian encounter as the bright side of the mission of the Arab Middle East.

At the heart of Orthodoxy is an intense desire to build a single humanity united by faith in the one God. It does not discriminate among God's creation according to color, race or religion, and has put this belief into practice through its relationships with Muslims and with all the churches and Christian groups.

The future of the Orthodox in the region is tied to the rootedness and history of their presence, a presence that has been built for centuries on the foundation of

total cooperation with all their brothers. There will be no true revival for the region without common effort in courage and objectivity about the domination, subjugation, ignorance, poverty, and unemployment that our countries suffer.

The Holy Synod calls upon its children to engage with the issues facing our countries and peoples, to hold fast to their land, and to develop their societies through the establishment of economic, civil, and educational institutions that will bring general benefit to all and will secure their existence in their land.

The Synod hopes that the political leaders and their peoples in all the Arab Middle East will rely on a language of dialogue and reason in resolving the problems that face them and that they will apply a policy of securing the citizens' interests, especially those directly affecting them, such as free education, health insurance, and an abundance of opportunities for jobs that provide suitable income and a dignified living in order to preserve stability and civil peace, economic flourishing, and to combat emigration.

In Lebanon, the Orthodox have continuously striven to build up a nation for all, not to divide it or to create distinctions within it. Their basic goal was to erect a regime based on equality and competence. However, faced with the current sectarian logic in Lebanon, we insist that our rights to political and administrative positions within the state not be encroached upon and we ask for assurance of total equity and a return to applying the principle of equality in appointments, especially in high administrative positions (first-class positions).

The Orthodox look to the state as an institution that embraces all its citizens within a framework of freedom and responsibility. For them, the state ensures the freedom of religious groups and individuals and it is not the religious groups that secure the freedom of the state. When Orthodox citizens had a distinguished role in establishing and spreading the Lebanese message of tolerance in the Arab Middle East, they established the political and administrative responsibilities that they set up as a means to build the foundations of the state and not as a means to attack it.

With regard to the composition of the new government in Lebanon, the Synod hopes that it will succeed in its difficult economic, social, and administrative tasks and it calls for earnest work to solve people's problems and concerns through the

realization of justice, stability, and flourishing for the mighty Lebanese people.

In light of the circumstances and current developments that the Arab world is witnessing, the Synod hopes that Syria, this Arab nation heroic both in its contemporary history and in its glorious past, will return internal stability in order to make it possible, through corresponding realization of the desired reforms, to fulfill its active role on the regional stage that has been and continues to be the pivotal point of its zeal and conscience.

The Synod believes that just and comprehensive peace in the region will not be realized except through a solution to the Palestinian issue that allows the Palestinians to reside in their own sovereign and independent country within the 1967 borders and with Jerusalem as their capital. The Palestinian state is a national right whose time for realization has come, so that the Palestinian people, wherever they are found, can return to their nation to live in honor, peace, and stability.

The Synod believes that the Arab world is urgently in need of general calm in which the leaders and authorities will apply themselves to developing their societies, modernizing the state, educating the people, and respecting the legitimacy of human rights. It calls upon the Arab states to effectively collaborate to anchor a world civilization in which the Middle Eastern spirit by which we are distinguished has the lofty position that it deserves. — *Notes on Arab Orthodoxy*, July 26.

THE GREEK ORTHODOX PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM, THEOPHILOS III, WAS INTERVIEWED BY PALESTINE-ISRAEL JOURNAL INTERN/JOURNALIST ANNA KOULOURIS. THESE ARE EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEW:

Palestine-Israel Journal: What is the significance of the Greek Orthodox Church for Jerusalem?

Patriarch Theophilos III: The role of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the church is extremely important for the current and future status of Jerusalem. Its history cannot be dissociated from the political and cultural-religious history of Jerusalem. It has an unbreakable historical presence for 2,000 years and is the only religious institution that has been here throughout the ages. Its purpose and mission continues to be crystal clear and purely religious and spiritual; it does not promote any other interests. Today, if Jerusalem enjoys a certain status and cul-

tural and religious character, it is due to the presence of the Patriarchate, which is the inheritor of the spiritual heritage, but also the natural heritage. By natural heritage I mean churches, basilicas, places of worship, holy places that have been handed over to the Patriarchate by the Byzantines who left Palestine in the 7th century with the coming of Omar ibn al-Khattab. It was at this time that the Patriarch of Jerusalem became both the spiritual and ethnic leader of the Greek Orthodox community.

Speaking of heritage, there have been accusations by some local Arab Orthodox residents that the Greeks have maintained cultural dominance and that Arabs have not been promoted to certain official positions in the church to the same degree as the Greeks have. Is this true?

There is a bigger question here. The name of the Patriarchate and all Eastern Orthodox Christians locally here is "Rum." This is how they are recognized and identified by the Muslim Arabs and Palestinians, in general. It is a matter of cultural identity or identity crisis that many people have difficulties understanding the meaning of "Rum." The West has also brought them confusion about their identity, which could be remedied with education and [an] understanding [of] history. And you have to refer back to your roots. You cannot disregard the Byzantine presence that was here. The stones are talking — everything is talking. I have prepared an academic study which gives a very thorough and complete analysis of the meaning of "Rum" and what it means to be a member of that church.

Although the Greek Orthodox Church has had a presence in Jerusalem since its existence, looking forward, there is a political agenda on the part of Israel. No one can deny they would like to gain property that the Patriarchate owns, especially in the Jaffa Gate area. Has this put pressure on the church?

You have touched upon a very delicate issue, the core of the importance and significance of the Patriarchate's presence and role concerning Jerusalem and the greater area. From the religious point of view, many of the holy places under the charge of the Patriarchate have remained accessible to all pilgrims and visitors without any discrimination whatsoever. It is due to the presence of the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulcher. What has been acknowledged by everybody locally, regionally and internationally is that if it were not for the presence of the Patriar-

chate here, most of the holy places would have been destroyed, or at the end of the day, turned into museums or archeological sites and tourist attractions. But so far, the holy places have been maintained as places of blessedness and worship.

In terms of culture and even politics, the Patriarchate is very important, first of all because it gives legitimacy to the historical claims that the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the PA have over the holy places — because they both have claims from the Muslim Caliph Omar ibn al-Khattab, when the Muslims took over the city of Jerusalem from the then-Patriarch of Jerusalem Sophronius, and it is well known that they made a peace covenant known as “the Covenant of Omar.” This fundamental agreement has been the basis of all the legal transactions or legal agreements that have taken place so far between the Patriarchate and the states and their respective authorities. The other thing is that the Patriarchate has been the inheritor of the natural heritage, that is to say, churches, monasteries and other properties, which later were augmented. This is what makes the Patriarchate important for the natural, the physical and the demographic [aspects] of Jerusalem. The Patriarchate continues to hold properties within and around the Old City — within politically strategic places.

Is any of this, the strength of the Patriarchate, a source of tension with the Israeli government today?

Jerusalem is [at] the heart of the political developments here, so it is natural that the Patriarchate is part and parcel of the political conflict and interests. But the mission of the Patriarchate remains spiritual and religious. Unlike the other Christian churches here — and they do have a lot of properties as well — the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate is the only church institution that is independent, autonomous and autocephalous. This means the properties of the Patriarchate are properties of the country here, the land here — they belong here.

As for the properties belonging to the other churches, for example, those belonging to the Roman Catholic Church or to the Russian Church, these are state properties. They do not belong here to the locality, but to the respective states. Some time ago, if you visited Notre Dame you could see written [there] “Vatican Property.” The same happened recently, the Russians asked for some properties to be restored and returned to their proper owners. But who is dealing with the state

about these properties, or with the Palestinian Authority? It is the state, not the church.

The other thing is that all the other churches have their point of reference far away from Jerusalem. The appointments of the leaders of the other Christian churches and institutions are coming from abroad, from outside — not from within. So you understand the importance of the Patriarchate; it is a local institution.

How much of a role does the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate play in speaking about Palestinian rights, especially with its close proximity to areas like Silwan? Does the church feel a responsibility to take a political stance on the issue?

We try not to interfere or turn ourselves into politicians, but at the same time this does not mean that we do not have compassion for the suffering and the affliction through which the people are passing here. And this is why the churches here have established a kind of council to discuss issues of common concern. We are addressing issues like the recent shooting in Silwan and others. Our purpose is to try, from our position, to contribute to mutual respect and understanding and to peaceful coexistence and symbiosis. This is the duty of the church. This is why we as churches have officially and repeatedly made statements and expressed our position over the status of Jerusalem.

Our position on Jerusalem is that we want it to be an open city, to be accessible to everybody, and that Jerusalem has enough space to accommodate all religious communities. We say it is enough for us to be allowed to visit and venerate the places that are commonly holy to Jews, Muslims and Christians. Even if we do not have claims over the site itself, we have claims to the holiness and sanctity of the place. The Temple Mount is an example. Another example is King David’s Tomb on Mount Zion. When we have our holy day of Pentecost, which we celebrate in our monastery and at the school on Mount Zion, after the service we go in our liturgical vestments in a procession to King David’s Tomb, which is a synagogue. There we go for worship, to say our prayers and leave. This is what we want. This is our understanding of the holy places. This is why I have said Jerusalem has enough space to accommodate everybody.

Politically speaking, everybody has claims over Jerusalem and everybody wants Jerusalem to be his or her own capital. But from the religious point of view,

Jerusalem is the capital of God. And my personal position is that Jerusalem breathes with three lungs: a Christian lung, a Jewish lung and an Islamic lung. And those lungs, they breathe harmoniously. This is how we see the future of Jerusalem.

What is your opinion about the ongoing negotiations of a taxation agreement between the Israeli government and the Vatican, which could mean that church institutions would have to pay income, property and municipal taxes? Does this Orthodox Church feel sidelined knowing that if an agreement is reached, it will set a precedent for the other churches?

The situation with the Vatican negotiations is far more complex. The Greek Orthodox Church is not sidelined because the legal status of the Patriarchate differs from the Vatican’s. It is the only church institution with Jordanian law. The Patriarchate is a local institution. The Vatican is a spiritual and political entity, so its representatives cannot speak on behalf of the local Christians here.

There are many videos online of infighting that takes place between the Greeks and Armenians in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. They seem shameful, and it is hard to understand how such clashes occur in holy places. How would you explain the dynamic here to an observer?

I understand your question, but people try to limit those religious conflicts and fights to certain events that have taken place between Franciscans, between Greeks and Armenians, Armenians and Syrians, Copts and Ethiopians, and so on. But, in fact, we must think a bit deeper and ask ourselves what the entire conflict is about between Palestinian Muslims and Jewish Israelis. Is it not about religion? It is about religion. What is the importance of Jerusalem, politically speaking? Is Jerusalem important for military or strategic purposes? It is purely religious, nothing else. The conflict here is religious. When you see clashes in Jerusalem, especially over the Temple Mount and al-Haram al-Sharif, what is it all about? Is it not about religious areas? So they focus on a particular point in the Holy Sepulcher; that makes sense; it is natural. But they cannot focus on the broader picture of what is going on here in the Holy Land.

Now, there is another thing that we should not forget; we have to take into consideration our human predicament. Actually, all the fights and clashes in the past were in the name of God. The Cru-

sades, what were they all about? Were they not in the name of God? And there are so many others. Today, it is not called "in the name of God," but in this game, in one way or another, religion is involved.

In the World Council of Churches, how does the Greek Orthodox Church view its need to be there or to be a participant?

The Orthodox Church and the Patriarchate of Jerusalem were among the pioneers, the founders of the World Council of Churches. It was established at the initiative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and then all the other churches followed. The council plays an important role in bringing together all the Christian denominations and has done great work because all sorts of prejudices have been dissipated.

The problem is this: During its inception years, the council focused on the unity of the Christian churches and denominations, but then the focus was diverted from a theological discussion to social matters because of the influence of the Protestant churches. Later on, in many cases, it got involved in political matters. Today, the council still plays an important role, but not as prominent as in the past because of many political changes and developments.

Still, the Orthodox Church is committed to the mission of the World Council of Churches. This is why we participate. I myself was the first representative of the Patriarchate to become a member of the central committee of the council. Now we have our current representative, and we have recently welcomed the new secretary-general of the World Council of Churches. We are trying to contribute as much as possible because today this is important, especially for our religion. It can help in the peace process and reconciliation, and to bring peace and justice as well. — *Palestine-Israel Journal*, Vol. 17, No. 12, 2011.

ON JULY 8, UPON THE CONCLUSION OF THE BISHOPS' COUNCIL OF THE UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH, THE JUBILEE COUNCIL OF THE UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH TOOK PLACE AT THE REFECTORY CHAMBER of the church of Sts Anthony and Theodosius of the Caves in the Kiev Laura of the Assumption. It was chaired by His Beatitude Vladimir, Metropolitan of Kiev and All Ukraine.

After a thanksgiving, His Beatitude Vladimir greeted the participants of the Council.

Archbishop Mitrofan of Belaya Tserkov and Boguslavsk, chancellor of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, read out messages of greetings from Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and Ukrainian President Victor Yanukovich.

Summing up the work the Ukrainian Orthodox Church had carried out since her previous Council on June 26, 1992, the Council thanked God for His mercy expressed in the restoration of full-fledged church life after decades of atheistic persecution in the 20th century and approved the decisions made earlier by the Holy Synod and the Bishops' Councils of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. The Council also approved the work of the Church's Synodal departments, ruling bishops, clergy and laity to revive churches and monasteries and develop missionary and educational activity and social service and charity.

The Council reaffirmed the devotional and canonical unity with the Russian Orthodox Church through which the Ukrainian Orthodox Church is united with all the Local Orthodox Churches. It was acknowledged that the present canonical status of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church as a self-governed Church with the rights of broad autonomy is a guarantee of the preservation of her internal unity and a foundation for restoring unity in Ukrainian Orthodoxy.

The Council thanked the Ukrainian state authority for good works and intentions, for having returned churches and monasteries and helped to restore them, while expressing hope that the tragic events of the stormy 90s of the 20th century became things of the past and authorities and statesmen would never again seek to use the Church in temporal earthly interests.

The Council members reaffirmed their willingness to develop further constructive church-state relations on the basis of partnership and mutual respect and for the benefit of the people and appealed to the President, Supreme Rada and Cabinet of Ministers to render assistance in solving a number of problems. Particularly, the Council deemed it necessary to adopt a new version of Ukraine's Law on Freedom of Conscience and on Religious Organizations so that the Ukrainian Orthodox Church could have an opportunity to obtain the status of legal entity and establish her own educational institutions on various levels. Participants also spoke in favor of introducing a course of basic Christian ethics, Orthodox culture and

religious instruction in educational institutions on all levels and giving the Church an opportunity for participation in training teachers of religion, local history and ethics for both public and private schools.

The Council deemed it necessary to establish an effective system of protecting public morality and preventing the propaganda of licentiousness and sin. The participants called upon the state to support the development of information projects for religious education through television, radio and other mass media and to join the Church's efforts to overcome poverty and organize the service of the neighbor, to create a system of the army clergy and to support the further development of pastoral care in penitentiaries and hospitals. It was deemed necessary to introduce a moratorium on the privatization of former church property and to define mechanisms for its return for the sake of restoring justice and ensuring the Church's life and work and social and charitable service. The state was also asked to consider a possibility for returning or allocating land to monasteries and parishes for their agricultural work.

The Council called the faithful of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church to pray more ardently for peace, tranquility and well-being of the Ukrainian people so that they may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way (I Tim. 2:2).

The Council appealed to those brothers and sisters who had fallen away from the Mother Church and stayed outside her grace-giving fold to repent and return to the house of the Father, to restore unity around the Eucharistic Cup, stressing that according to the biblical parable, one's return to one's own home is not humiliating or pitiful. It was reaffirmed that the stand of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church concerning the ways of overcoming the schism was a matter of principle not to be changed: restoration of the unity of Ukrainian Orthodoxy should take place in accordance with sacred canons without any interference from political forces and through the return of those fallen away into the fold of the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church. All the members of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church were called to lift up a continued prayer for the return of those who have fallen away, for termination of the strife, augmentation of love and restoration of unity commanded by the Lord.

With gratitude to God glorified in His saints, the Council noted that during the last 19 years the Ukrainian Orthodox

Church canonized 260 new saints and called the clergy and laity to follow the example of the newly-glorified saints, to build churches and monasteries dedicated to them and to propagate their veneration.

A special mention was made of the need to build a Cathedral of the Resurrection and a Religious Education Center in Kiev.

In conclusion of the Council, His Beatitude Vladimir once again appealed to its members to love one another and promote mutual understanding. –Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, July 9.

THE HEADS OF THE UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX CHURCHES OF THE KYIVAN AND THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATES – PATRIARCH FILARET (DENYSENKO) AND METROPOLITAN VOLODYMYR (SABODAN) – HOPE TO OVERCOME THE CHURCH DIVISION.

Patriarch Filaret has written to the bishops, clergy and laity of the UOC-MP present at the Jubilee Council on July 8 with a proposition to find church unity and a fruitful dialogue, while the head of the UOC-MP Metropolitan Volodymyr has in fact answered him in his report at that council by stating that the position of the UOC-MP is to unite all Orthodox Christians in the bosom of one canonical church through the repentance of those who separated.

Patriarch Filaret in his greeting address noted the 20th anniversary since the November 1-3, 1991, Council of the UOC (then still one church), which unanimously adopted a resolution about its autocephaly.

“Some of you were present at this council and signed the resolution. Two decades of church life have shown that the resolution on autocephaly was correct. This is evident in the fact that former opponents of this resolution have gradually become supporters,” writes Patriarch Filaret.

However, during the last 20 years, summed up the head of the Kyivan Patriarchate, the Moscow Patriarchate “does not actually want to hear to communal voice of the Ukrainian church, does not search for a way to resolve the urgent problems,” tries to “at any cost, even to the detriment of Orthodoxy, maintain its power over the UOC,” so that its status of independence and self-governance “is not filled with real meaning and so that the UOC-MP remains part of the Moscow Patriarchate in the way the Ukrainian SSR was part of the Soviet Union.”

Patriarch Filaret stated that in October 2009, “with great enthusiasm Ukraine greeted the beginning of a dialogue between the Kyivan Patriarchate and the UOC-MP.” But then, he said, “all saw well that Moscow feared a fruitful and constructive dialogue and has done everything possible to destroy it.”

Patriarch Filaret called upon the UOC-MP to move away from Moscow’s “way of animosity” and “to choose its own path of reconciliation and find church unity through a fruitful dialogue and understanding, by way of the ministry of Orthodoxy, not the ‘Russian World.’”

On July 8, the head of the UOC-Moscow Patriarchate Metropolitan Volodymyr in fact answered the head of the UOC-KP Patriarch Filaret in his report to the Jubilee Council of the UOC.

The metropolitan, like Patriarch Filaret, noted the importance of the UOC’s status of independence and self-governance, which it received from the ROC in 1990. He did not, however, mention the Hierarchical Council of 1991, when the bishops of his council appealed to the ROC with a request to raise its status to that of an autocephalous Orthodox Church.

On the contrary, the metropolitan noted as one of the main objectives of the council of July 8, 2011, to get the approval of the ROC and the UOC at least of the resolutions that were adopted regarding the canonical status of the UOC in 1990. As is well known, these resolutions are interpreted differently by the ROC (usually decreased) than by the UOC (usually augmented).

Speaking about the division, Metropolitan Volodymyr said that Orthodox Christians who found themselves outside the UOC-MP, also “praise the common faith with us.” However, due to the continuation of the division, they “cannot achieve the fullness of ecclesiasticism, which is given to someone through the grace of the Holy Spirit.”

“We will pray for you, even if you do not want this prayer,” said Metropolitan Volodymyr, so that God “unites the Church, unites the people.”

“Demonstrating the willingness to start a constructive dialogue with non-canonical church structures,” the UOC, according to Metropolitan Volodymyr, “simultaneously retains its principled position,” which “was and remains unchanged”: the unification of all Orthodox Christians in the bosom of a single canonical church by returning to it those who

separated from it. The way back involves repentance, which is not a “humiliating procedure,” said the metropolitan. The UOC-MP is “ready to forget the wounds” that were inflicted on it by those who separated from it, reports Religion in Ukraine. – *RISU*, July 11.

ON JULY 13, 2011, HIS HOLINESS PATRIARCH KIRILL OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA RECEIVED A DELEGATION OF THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF TRENTO, ITALY, LED BY ARCHBISHOP LUIGI BRESSAN, at the Myrrh Preparation Hall of the Patriarchal Palace in the Moscow Kremlin. Participating in the meeting were also Rev. Dimity Sizonenko, DECR acting secretary for inter-Christian relations, Rev. Andre Decarli, secretary of the Trent diocese, Rev. Corrado Prandi, dean of the churches in Trent, and Mr. Alessandro Martinelli, director of the ecumenical center.

During the talk, the Italian guests greeted Patriarch Kirill on the occasion of the Day of the Twelve Apostles and reminded him that the history of friendly relations between the Moscow Patriarchate and their diocese went back to 1975 when an official delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church came to Trent for the first time to attend Orthodox-Catholic theological talks. Archbishop Luigi Bressan also informed the Patriarch that at the town of Rovereto, a church, which is under restoration at the moment, has been transferred for use by the parish of the Russian Orthodox Church.

His Holiness Kirill thanked the guests for the long-standing and fruitful cooperation, making a special mention of the importance that pastoral care had for Russians, Ukrainians and Moldovans who have found themselves far from their homeland.

After the talk the sides exchanged tokens of the meeting. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, July 14.

ON JULY 14, 2011, RUSSIAN PRESIDENT DMITRY MEDVEDEV ACCEPTED CREDENTIALS OF AMBASSADORS FROM SEVERAL STATES INCLUDING THE VATICAN’S APOSTOLIC NUNCIO, ARCHBISHOP IVAN JURKOVIC, Interfax-Religion has reported. During the ceremony, the head of the Russian State pointed to a development in relations between Russia and the Vatican

“Russia’s historical ties with the Holy See are dynamically developing, now in the format of official diplomatic rela-

tions', said the president accepting the credentials of the head of the Vatican's diplomatic mission.

According to Mr. Medvedev, the cooperation between the two states is distinguished by their close stands 'on a considerable number of issues including questions of moral and legal priorities which are used in relations between the two states'.

'It is my conviction that on this basis we can do much for the development and broadening of the space of contacts between representatives of various religious confessions and cultures for solving the most acute humanitarian problems of today', the president added.

Archbishop Ivan Jurkovic was appointed as apostolic nuncio to the Russian Federation in February 2011. Earlier he headed the Vatican's diplomatic mission in Ukraine. He replaced Archbishop Antonio Mennini. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, July 15.

ON JULY 17, 2011, THE COMMEMORATION DAY OF THE HOLY ROYAL PASSION-BEARERS, METROPOLITAN HILARION, HEAD OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE'S DEPARTMENT FOR EXTERNAL CHURCH RELATIONS, CELEBRATED THE DIVINE LITURGY AT THE CHURCH OF OUR LADY THE JOY TO ALL THE AFFLICTED IN MOSCOW. He was assisted by the parish clergy and ordained staff members of the DECR. Among his concelebrants was also Rev. Dionisy Kazantsev, rector of the church of St. John the Theologian in Campina das Missioes, Brazil.

After the Divine Liturgy, Metropolitan Hilarion delivered the following sermon:

'Dear Brothers and Sisters, today, on the eve of the commemoration day of St. Sergius, the Abbot of Radonezh and Wonder-worker of All Russia, the Church celebrates the memory of St. Andrew Rublev, a great icon-painter and disciple of St. Sergius and monk of St. Sergius's Monastery of the Trinity, and the memory of the Holy Royal Passion-bearers – Emperor Nicholas Alexandrovich, Empress Alexandra Fyodorovna, Prince Alexis, Princesses Olga, Tatiana, Maria and Anastasia, who suffered martyrdom on that day at the hands of ungodly people.

Reflecting on the fate of the last Russian czar and his family, we see that from the very beginning this man and people tied with him by fate were as if destined to be sacrificed like lambs led to the slaugh-

ter. Every heir to the imperial throne inherited power by the right of succession. He did not receive it like it is received today, through elections. Nor did he receive it for some special merits but simply because he was the firstborn son of an emperor and was anointed and through this received God's blessing upon his rule.

The Emperor Nicholas Alexandrovich assumed the reins of government over the Russian Empire at a hard time when the people and the intelligentsia were driven by revolutionary moods, each seeking a 'real' and 'better' future; each having his own recipe for achieving this better future, and the royal throne remained the only steady factor in that situation. And when it was shaken the country was engulfed in a streak of great disasters totally unexpected by those who had offered their recipes and advice for building a better future for Russia. A storm of adversities and violence swept through the country sparing nobody. Having begun with aristocrats, the royal family and other members of the royal house, the Bolsheviks moved on to the nobility and the clergy and then dispossessed wealthy peasants thus delivering a terrible blow on the whole peasantry. In a word, it was violence against all the people, and there were none who did not suffer from that godless power to this or that extent.

Therefore, when we think about the fate of the royal family we cannot separate them from the fate of the whole people. Indeed, the royal family suffered the same as thousands of other families did. Indeed, repressed were innocent people regardless of their age, sex or social status. The godless ones killed adults and children, men and women, rich and poor, believers and non-believers alike. And when today we remember all Russia's passion-bearers and new confessors we realise that it is impossible to enumerate all their names because many of these names are unknown. We know about the death of the royal family because these people were in the public eye but there were a great number of similar families, similar young men and women who were executed by shooting, killed, thrown down mines, and nobody will ever know their names. Their names however are written in the Lord's kingdom.

Historians are still arguing about the role the last emperor played in the fate of the Russian Empire, about whether he ruled rightly and whether he made mistakes. The Church does not argue about it. She does not judge politicians and statesmen. She rather looks at how one lived,

how one built his relations with God and how one died. In the fate of the last Russian emperor we can see that, led to the slaughter, he sacrificed his life for his own sins, for the sins of the people and for the sins of our Fatherland. And today all this family, his faithful servants and all those who went the same way of martyrdom and passion-bearing, intercede for our sinful land, for our sinful people so that the Lord may have mercy upon us and may forgive our sins and that our people may at last see the sought-for bright future which they so much wanted to see and which they did not see in the decades of the godless power.

Today our holy Church is being reborn. Atheism and godlessness are almost underground. And we believe that this happens through the intercession of those who humbly and without a murmur accepted the suffering that came to their lot, who ascended Golgotha following Christ, each his or her own, so that they might die with the faith in Christ and come to the other life where they pray for us today. We believe that through their intercession our Church is reviving today and through their intercession our beloved Fatherland will be strengthened and through their intercession each of us will be able to follow the way to the heavenly Kingdom and take along our children and grandchildren.

I wish that through the intercession of holy new martyrs and confessors of Russia we all may walk this long path to meet our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.' – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, July 18.

ON JULY 19, 2011, AFTER HIS MEETING WITH HIS BEATITUDE DANIEL, PATRIARCH OF ROMANIA, METROPOLITAN HILARION, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations, made the following statement for the press:

'I have come to Bucharest with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia to meet with His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel and discuss with him a broad range of issues involved in the bilateral cooperation between our Churches. We had a substantial two-hour talk in which we considered a whole number of problems.

We discussed the general theme of Orthodox witness in today's world and the ways in which Orthodox Churches should build their mission in the secular society of today, particularly in the countries where the communist regime existed for a long time and now has ceased to exist. We

exchanged opinions on how our two Churches should participate in inter-Orthodox relations including the preparations for a Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church.

We could not avoid the complex issues on the agenda of our bilateral relations, particularly the problem concerning the activity of the Metropolia of Bessarabia. In the talk with His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel, I underscored that his problem, unfortunately, had not been removed from our agenda. Nevertheless, despite its existence, we should broaden our cooperation in various areas, for instance, in students' exchanges and cultural exchanges. We should also discuss on the bilateral level the problem of pastoral care for our faithful who reside in various countries.

I am very much satisfied with the results of our meeting and hope that it will contribute to further strengthening of relations between our two Churches and solution of the problems which still darken our relations'. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, July 19.

ON JULY 25, 2011, HIS HOLINESS PATRIARCH KIRILL OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA RECEIVED SOME HIERARCHS OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH OF ANTIOCH AT HIS WORKING RESIDENCE IN CHISTY PEREULOK, MOSCOW. Present at the meeting were Metropolitan Anthony of Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean and Venezuela, Metropolitan Damaskinos of Sao Paulo and All Brazil, Metropolitan George of Homs, and Archbishop Niphon of Philippopolis, representative of the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East to the Patriarch of Moscow.

Participating in the meeting were also Archpriest Nikolay Balashov, DECR vice-chairman, and Hieromonk Stephan (Igumnov), DECR secretariat for inter-Orthodox relations.

Welcoming the guests, Patriarch Kirill noted that in Latin American countries a special pastoral role and responsibility is placed on the Patriarchate of Antioch. 'The greatest number of Orthodox Christians there belongs to your Church. You have the largest parishes and the most active parish life, and this places on you a great responsibility before God and history for preserving and broadening Orthodoxy in the Latin American continent', he said.

Patriarch Kirill stressed that there were many faithful of the Russian Orthodox Church in Latin America, among them post-revolutionary emigrants and

those who left their homeland as a result of World War II, as well as people who have come to reside in that region in recent times.

Talking with his high guests, His Holiness made a positive assessment of the cooperation between the clergy of the Churches of Russia and Antioch in Latin America and expressed the wish that the fraternal Churches may support each other in the future too, sharing joys and hard moments in their life. 'We should support each other by all means in our bilateral relations and on the pan-Orthodox level', he said.

Metropolitan Anthony thanked His Holiness Kirill for the possibility to meet. He also expressed deep gratitude to the Russian Church for her support of the Orthodox Christians in the Middle East who are experiencing a hard time. He also informed the Patriarch about the way in which the Russian-speaking believers living in Mexico are taken care of in his dioceses.

Metropolitan George conveyed greetings from His Beatitude Patriarch Ignatios IV of Antioch and All the East and the Holy Synod of the Church of Antioch. He noted that for Christians in Syria and Lebanon it was very important to have the support of the Russian Church. He expressed gratitude for the support of the Christian minority in the Middle East. His words of gratitude were shared by Metropolitan Damaskinos.

During their talk, Patriarch Kirill noted that he personally and all the faithful in Russia were concerned for the fate of Christians in the Middle East, which is still uncertain. He cited Iraq in which an external interference in the life of the country led to a destabilization of the situation which affected in the first place the ethnic and religious minorities. Christians in Iraq were subjected to severe persecution, many of them died or had to flee the country. 'May God grant that the processes taking place in Arab countries today may not lead to political chaos and new persecution of Christians', he said. He also underscored that the Russian Church cannot but sympathize with her brothers in the Middle East since she has been closely connected with the Orthodox in the East throughout history.

Metropolitan George in his turn thanked Patriarch Kirill for the stand taken by Russia with regard to possible sanctions to be imposed on Syria. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, July 26.

ON 26 JULY 2011, HIS HOLINESS PATRIARCH KIRILL OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA MET WITH HIS HOLINESS AND BEATITUDE ILIYA II, CATHOLICOS-PATRIARCH OF ALL GEORGIA AT THE SYNODAL HALL OF THE KIEV METROPOLIA.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill opened the meeting and expressed his appreciation of the recent level of dialogue with the Georgian Orthodox Church. Regular exchange of delegations and participation in church celebrations allow us to state that we do not maintain so intensive contacts with any other Local Church.

"I believe it to be quite right and correct, as there are difficulties in the current relations between Georgia and Russia. When relations between the states become weaker, the ties between people of the same faith and relations between the Churches ought to be strengthened as Christ calls us to them. Eventually, the political situation will change, but Christian nations will stay united.

"May God grant our cooperation to serve to the good of our nations of the same faith and to the good of our Churches," His Holiness said in conclusion.

After the talk, the Primates met with the mass media. His Holiness Patriarch Kirill said, inter alia, "We have discussed the ecclesiastical situation in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and also certain questions of the general Orthodox nature. I should tell you that any time we met with His Holiness and Beatitude, beginning from 1968, I was most impressed by these meetings... It is quite evident that Abkhazia and South Ossetia belong to the canonical jurisdiction of the Georgian Patriarchate. On the other hand, there is a certain canonical disorder in both places at present. Recent events in Abkhazia have clearly shown the detriment brought by this disorder to spiritual life of people.

"We have agreed to continue our talks in order to find decisions that would help both Churches to promote the ordering of Orthodox people's life in the mentioned regions and to prevent any schismatic actions inflicting damage on the salvation of human souls.

"As I said, we have also discussed certain inter-Orthodox problems, and I thank God for coincidence of our views enabling us to speak on many issues, being of one mind."

His Beatitude Patriarch Iliya warmly thanked His Holiness Patriarch Kirill for the invitation to visit Kiev and continue the dialogue. He said:

“It is my first visit to this holy city. The country and the city have made an indelible impression on me.

We have talked in the spirit of brotherhood, and I thank His Holiness Kirill for confirming the jurisdiction of the Georgian Orthodox Church in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali.

“I believe that the continuation of our talks will also be good and that we shall find the solution of the problems. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, July 27.

DURING HIS PILGRIMAGE TO BYZANTINE HOLY PLACES IN TURKEY FROM JULY 10 TO 17, METROPOLITAN VLADIMIR OF KISHINEV AND ALL MOLDOVA, LEADING A GROUP OF PILGRIMS FROM RUSSIA, UKRAINE AND MOLDOVA, WITH THE BLESSING OF HIS HOLINESS PATRIARCH KIRILL OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA, MET WITH PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW AT HIS RESIDENCE IN ISTANBUL.

Metropolitan Vladimir told Patriarch Bartholomew about the church life in countries of the former Soviet Union and problems faced and achievements made by the Orthodox Church of Moldova.

Patriarch Bartholomew showed a great interest in the problems raised and displayed a profound awareness of the church situation in the region. He expressed hope that all the difficulties would be soon overcome so that Orthodox witness might be strengthened and the religious and historical status of Orthodoxy in Moldova could be preserved in face of the challenges brought about by today's world. He also introduced the pilgrims to the present situation in the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Patriarchate's agenda.

The hierarchs expressed a high appreciation of the dialogue which took place and underscored the importance of consolidating inter-Orthodox unity and cooperation of which the organization of pilgrimages to holy places is a constructive and positive sign.

In conclusion of the talk Patriarch Bartholomew conveyed best wishes to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and pronounced benediction over the pilgrims and their journey back home. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, July 28.

HIS HOLINESS PATRIARCH KIRILL OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA WAS ON A PRIMATE VISIT TO UKRAINE FROM JULY 26 TO 28.

On July 26, Patriarch Kirill met Ukrainian President V. Yanukovich in the Crimea. Later that day, he arrived in Kiev. In his brief talk to the mass media reporters, he told them about the aims of his pastoral visit to Ukraine. After that His Holiness went to the Kiev Laura of the Caves, where he visited the church of the Elevation of the Cross, accompanied by Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev and All Ukraine. Then Patriarch Kirill proceeded to the synodal hall of the Kievan Metropolitanate to meet with His Holiness and Beatitude Iliya II, Patriarch-Catholicos of All Georgia.

On July 27, Patriarch Kirill met Ukrainian Prime Minister N. Azarov at the Kiev Laura of the Caves. After their talk he went up St. Vladimir's Hill.

On the eve of the Day of St. Vladimir Equal-to-the-Apostles and the Day of the Baptism of Rus', Patriarch Kirill, Catholicos-Patriarch Iliya and Metropolitan Vladimir said a thanksgiving at the monument to the holy prince at the St. Vladimir Hill.

In the afternoon, the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church met for a regular summer session at the Kiev Laura of the Caves. It was chaired by Patriarch Kirill.

After the Holy Synod's session, Patriarch Kirill attended the opening of an international forum on Orthodox Women: Unity, Service, Love.

In the evening, Patriarch Kirill met with higher education institutions' rectors at the Shevchenko National University in Kiev. He shared his thoughts about the importance of church tradition in history, culture and science.

On July 28, the commemoration day of St. Vladimir Equal-to-the-Apostles, Patriarch Kirill, Catholicos-Patriarch Iliya and Metropolitan Vladimir celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Kiev Laura of the Caves. After the service, Patriarch Kirill visited the Memorial of Eternal Glory at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the monument to the victims of the 1930s mass starvation in Kiev.

His Holiness concluded his primatial visit to Ukraine on Thursday. We was seen off at Borispol airport by Metropolitan Vladimir and bishops and clergy of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, the Patriarchal Press Service reported. – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, July 29.

THE TV PROGRAM “THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD” BROADCAST ON 23 JULY 2011 WAS DEDICATED TO THE 65TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MOSCOW

PATRIARCHATE'S DEPARTMENT FOR EXTERNAL CHURCH RELATIONS (DECR).

Metropolitan Hilarion, the sixth chairman of this Synodal institution, told the TV viewers at their request about the most important events in the DECR activities during the two years of his chairmanship.

According to him, the DECR is an analogue of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Department deals with the solution of problems appearing in the contacts of the Russian Orthodox Church with the world.

The staff has to deal with many issues, but first and foremost, with the issues of inter-Orthodox cooperation in preparation of the Pan-Orthodox Council at which the current problems in the life of the Orthodox Church will be discussed. ‘The process of preparation began in 1961 and is far from painless, as there are many differences to be surmounted by the Churches. This work demands profound attention and continual contacts among the Orthodox Churches. However, work intensity is increasing,’ Metropolitan Hilarion underscored.

Institutions located abroad play a great part in DECR's work, the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in particular. It was founded in the 19th century and has been very instrumental in maintaining our relations with the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the authorities of the State of Israel and of the Palestinian National Authority, and in our presence in the Middle East in general. We try to monitor the events in the region and help our Christian brothers and sisters who find themselves in an embarrassing situation, the DECR chairman continued.

Metropolitan Hilarion also spoke about the major historical landmarks in the life of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, which was founded in a difficult time. Metropolitan Nikolai (Yarushevich) became its head in 1946. ‘The revival of the Church began during the War and continued after it. One of the aspects of this revival was the appearance of the Russian Church on the international scene. The DECR was needed for this. It prepared the visits of Patriarch Alexis I, elected by the Local Council in 1945, to foreign countries and to most of the Local Orthodox Churches.’

Another important aspect was the re-establishment of relations with the compatriots who, living in emigration after the Revolution, had almost lost any ties with

the Church in the Fatherland.

“The last years of Metropolitan Nikolai in office coincided with the beginning of a new wave of persecution of the Church. Nikita Khrushchev put forward a task to do away with the Church in twenty years. Metropolitan Nikolai fell victim to this persecution. He was accused of an overly active position. He wrote an address, which Patriarch Alexis I delivered, saying that the Church has always been with its people and underscoring the historic role of the Church. This address provoked a negative reaction by the authorities, who demanded that Metropolitan Nikolai be discharged.”

Metropolitan Nikodim (Rotov) took over the leadership of the DECR in 1960. “This period was very difficult for the Church, as the decision to eliminate it was not annulled, though not physically, but ideologically. People with certain weakness were found and persuaded to denounce their faith and the Church. There were some notorious incidents; for instance, a professor of the Moscow Theological Academy renounced his faith publicly.”

According to Metropolitan Hilarion, all this caused very grave damage to the Church. “The authorities set themselves a task to reduce the number of bishops to zero. When an old bishop died, no one was appointed to replace him. Under the circumstances, Metropolitan Nikodim began a systematic work for making the episcopate younger in defiance of the authorities’ will and employing the external relations of the Russian Orthodox Church. He used to tell the authorities, “We cannot delegate old people to the international conferences on disarmament; we need young modern people.” Among them were his future successors as DECR chairman – Metropolitan Juvenaly of Krutitsy and Kolomna, Metropolitan Philaret of Minsk and Slutsk, and Metropolitan Kirill, now His Holiness the Patriarch.

In the 1970-80s, when the DECR was chaired by Metropolitans Juvenaly (Poyarkov) and Philaret (Vakhromeyev), theological dialogues were intensified, including those with the Roman Catholic Church, with the Old Oriental Churches, and with some Protestant Churches. “This was a very important development, as our Church was isolated from the whole world during the Soviet time and before the War in particular.”

‘Preparation for the revival of ecclesiastical life began in the 1980s. The Church started to prepare for the celebra-

tion of the Millennium of the Baptism of Russia. It was thought initially that it would be a closed church celebration, but it happened to be a nation-wide festivity, coinciding with the beginning of the disintegration of the communist ideology and the Soviet system. The year 1988, when Metropolitan Philaret chaired the DECR and took a most active part in preparations for the jubilee, has become a turning point in the history of our Church. We have counted the revival of the church life from that year.’

Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad, now the Patriarch, led the DECR during the post-Soviet period. Metropolitan Hilarion named the most important events of that time. ‘First of all, Church-state relations were developed not only in Russia, but in the whole post-Soviet space. After over two hundred years of the Synodal period and seventy years of persecution, it was very important to elaborate a model of Church-state relations that would be based on the principle of mutual non-interference into internal affairs of one another and at the same time would allow active cooperation.’ Metropolitan Hilarion thinks highly of the services of Metropolitan Kirill who initiated the document called “The Foundations of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church” that formulated principles of cooperation between the Church and the state.

Most of the Synodal departments of the Russian Orthodox Church were founded by Metropolitan Kirill. The re-establishment of Eucharistic communion between the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia and the Moscow Patriarchate was another most important event of that period.

As to the DECR’s work at present, Metropolitan Hilarion said, ‘The presence of the Russian Orthodox Church on the international scene is very active. It is aimed at witnessing the beauty of Orthodoxy and the truth kept undamaged by the Orthodox Church. As a matter of fact, this is a missionary task to perform. For instance, when we speak at inter-Christian forums, we speak of the teaching of the Orthodox Church, and often enough this is the first encounter with Orthodox for many people.’ – Press Release, Moscow Patriarchate, July 30.

A FUNDRAISING RECEPTION FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE SERBIAN HILANDARI MONASTERY ON MOUNT ATHOS WAS HELD ON JULY 28TH

AT THE OFFICIAL HOME OF THE FAMILY OF THE PRINCE OF WALES and was hosted by Charles, the Prince of Wales.

Specifically, on Thursday afternoon, about 100 guests from the United Kingdom, Europe, the U.S. and prominent members of the Serbian Diaspora, gathered to raise money for lab equipment to maintain icons and manuscripts, which are part of the priceless treasures of Hilandari Monastery.

It should be noted that the Head of the Foundation of Hilandari Monastery, Milinots Radic, said the charity event was organized by Prince Charles to support the Monastery.

“We also had two other charity events in London, and the money received was for the rehabilitation of bakery equipment and the library of the Monastery,” added Mr. Radic.

Prince Charles regularly visits Mount Athos and Hilandari Monastery, during which he has seen up close the extent of the destruction caused by the fire on 4 March 2004.

It is true that Prince Charles and his father the Duke of Edinburgh, honorary members of the Friends of Mount Athos in the United Kingdom, contributed actively to Mount Athos and the Monastery.

The Abbot of the Monastery, Archimandrite Methodios, in his statement said that the Prince of Wales cares for the course of the reconstruction of the Monastery, but the work has been affected by the economic crisis, as the Serbian and the Greek governments are unable to contribute.

It is worth noting that the abbot of Hilandari, Methodios, met with Prince Charles and briefed him on the renovation work and especially the restoration of the west wing.

Prince Charles reported on the sustainable development of the Monastery and told the abbot that some money will be invested in vineyards and olive trees, which will contribute to the normal life of the Monastery.

Finally, the abbot of Hilandari during his stay in the United Kingdom visited the Church of St. Sava in London, and the Monastery of St. John the Baptist in Essex. – Press Release, Serbian Patriarchate, July 30.

THE WORKING SESSION OF THE HOLY SYNOD OF THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OF 21 JULY 2011, APPROVED THE CANONIZATION OF THE METROPOLITANS OF TRANSYLVANIA

ANDREI ȘAGUNA (CELEBRATED ON 30 NOVEMBER) AND SIMEON ȘTEFAN (CELEBRATED ON 24 APRIL), as a result of the synodal proposals of the Metropolitan Synods of the Metropolitan Sees of Transylvania and of Cluj, Alba, Crișana and Maramureș.

Metropolitan Șaguna Andrei (baptised Anastasie) was Metropolitan of Transylvania (of Aromanian origin). He was born on 20 December 1808 (1 January 1809 st. n.) in Mișcolț, Hungary, and passed away on 16/28 June 1873 in Sibiu (buried in Rășinari). He attended the courses of the secondary school in Mișcolț and Pesta (graduated in 1826), then philosophy and law at the University of Pesta (1826 – 1829) and theology at the Orthodox Seminary of Vârșeț (1829 – 1832). After finishing the theological studies he joined the community of the Serb monastery of Hopovo, where he became a monk, with the name of Andrei (24 October 1833), and was ordained hierodeacon (February 1834); professor at the Theological Seminary of Carloviț and secretary of the “Archdiocesan Consistory” over there (since 1834), hieromonk (29 June 1837), protosingelos, metropolitan counsellor and “administrator” and proxy of the abbot at Iazac monastery (1838) and then at Beșenovo (1841); archmandrite and abbot at Hopovo Monastery (1842), and then at Covil (1845); after 1842, he worked for a time as professor at the Romanian section of the Theological Seminary of Vârșeț and “counsellor” of the Consistory over there. On 15/27 June 1846, he was appointed “general vicar” of the Diocese of Transylvania, seated in Sibiu; on 2 December 1847, he was elected bishop (confirmed on 5 February 1848, ordained at Carloviț on 18/30 April 1848); on 12/24 December 1864, he was appointed archbishop and metropolitan of the re-established Metropolitan See of Transylvania, seated in Sibiu.

Metropolitan Simion Ștefan was metropolitan of Transylvania and passed away in June /July 1656 in Alba Iulia. He studied at the Academic College of Alba Iulia; he became a monk at the Romanian Monastery in the city. In 1643, he was elected metropolitan of the Transylvanian Romanians seated at Alba Iulia (Bălgrad). During his pastoral rule the New Testament “from Bălgrad” was printed, the first complete Romanian translation (1648), with a remarkable preface by the metropolitan in which he discussed the unity of the Romanian language. It was re-edited in 1988 and 1998. In 1651 he printed a

Psalter Book in Romanian. – Press Release, Romanian Patriarchate, July 22.

BULGARIA'S EU COMMISSIONER KRISTALINA GEORGIEVA HAS CONGRATULATED PATRIARCH MAXIM, THE HEAD OF THE BULGARIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH, ON THE OCCASION OF THE 40TH YEAR SINCE HIS ENTHRONEMENT.

"This is not just your personal celebration; it is also a celebration for the entire Bulgarian nation. In the last four decades you have navigated the ship of our holy church through the ruffled sea of history, preserving its unity. I admire your dedicated and fruitful work for the benefit of our fatherland," Georgieva states in her address to Patriarch Maxim of Bulgaria.

"Our church has always been with the nation and its aspirations for freedom, humaneness, and well-being. Thanks to you, it has remained invariably by its side, and has continued to listen to the nation's voice," the congratulatory address reads.

An official solemn Mass marking the 40th anniversary of the enthronement of Bulgarian Patriarch Maxim was in Sofia's St. Alexander Nevski cathedral on Sunday.

The official commemoration of the 96-year-old Patriarch Maxim's enthronement started Saturday, when the relics of the great Christian Orthodox theologian St. Maximus the Confessor traveled from Mount Athos to be laid out for veneration in the Patriarchal St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral

Bulgarian President Georgi Parvanov, PM Boyko Borisov, Parliamentary Chair Tsetska Tsacheva, as well as former Tsar and Prime Minister Simeon Saxe-Coburg were among those attending the solemn Mass.

Patriarch Maxim was born as Marin Naidenov Minkov on October 29, 1914 and was raised in the Balkan Mountains village of Oreshak. He became a novice monk at the nearby monastery of Troyan before attending Sofia University, where he specialized in Orthodox Theology. He took Holy Orders in 1941.

After a number of promotions within the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, Maxim was appointed as Bulgaria's Patriarch on July 4, 1971, following the death of the incumbent, Cyril.

In the 1990s, following allegations that Maxim had collaborated with the former Communist regime, the church split, with a rival Bulgarian Alternative Synod being formed. Maxim gathered enough support to prevent a complete

schism in the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. – *Sophia News Agency*, July 4.

A MEETING OF THE HOLY SYNOD OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH OF GEORGIA TOOK PLACE IN TBILISI ON JULY 11. THE CHAIRMAN WAS ILIA II, CATHOLICOS PATRIARCH OF ALL GEORGIA

I. On 5 July 2011 Georgia's Parliament adopted amendments to the Civil Code of Georgia. General displeasure was expressed in the Synod in connection with the fact that, in spite of the obligations contained in Constitutional Concordat, there was no preliminary consultation either with the Georgian Patriarchate or with society at large; this became the reason for the disturbance of both the religious personnel of the Georgian Church and its many laity.

Resolution:

Based upon the Constitution of Georgia and legal norms recognized by the international community, the Georgian Orthodox Church acknowledges that people of all faiths residing in Georgia, as well as religious organizations, are equal before the law. The freedom of religious confession is not restricted according to whatever religious organization a citizen of Georgia belongs to. The special legal status of the Georgian Orthodox Autocephalous Church, based in the Constitution of Georgia and the Constitutional Concordat, expresses the will of the Georgian people, and does not restrict the freedom of other religious faith and their equality under the law.

Address to the Georgian government:

a) In the future, when bills concerning religion and other related questions are being considered, preliminary consultations should be taken with the Georgian Patriarchate in order that on such matters complication might be avoided.

b) Governmental negotiations should be started to discuss the status of eparchies of the Georgian Patriarchate and their property issues.

c) The state should be more active in its support for Georgian national and spiritual monuments that exist outside of Georgia.

d) The religious policy that was in place between the time when Georgia's independence and the Church's autocephaly were lost and their reinstatement should be considered non-canonical.

e) A commission should be formed to monitor fulfillment of the obligations of the Constitutional Concordat.

II. The Holy Synod heard a report on

the life and work of Anton II (Bagrationi) Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia and resolved that Catholicos-Patriarch Anton II (Bagrationi) should be recognized as a saint and that he would be called the Long-suffering Anton II, Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia; and that his day of commemoration would be 21 December (new style, 3 January) and that an icon would be painted and proper service material written.

III. The Holy Synod discussed the violation of moral norms by some clergy and decided that a Commission on the Violation of Moral Norms would be formed to investigate.

The Commission will consist of Andria (Gvazava) the Metropolitan of Samtavisi and Gori and Iakob Iakobishvili Bishop of Gardabani and Martqopi. -- Georgian Patriarchate, July 11.

THE GREEK COMMUNITY OF AMERICA, AND ESPECIALLY THE GREEK-CYPRriot COMMUNITY, IS CONSTANTLY VIGILANT AND STRUGGLES CONTINUALLY TO PROMOTE A PROPER SOLUTION TO THE CYPRUS PROBLEM, Archbishop of America, Demetrios, stated in Nicosia, Cyprus, on July 7.

Demetrios, who was speaking after a meeting with Cyprus Archbishop Chrysostomos II, earlier in the day at the Archbishopric, stressed that the Cypriot community in America plays a significant role in the promotion of orthodoxy and "global Hellenism" in America.

The Archbishop of Cyprus Chrysostomos II said that during the meeting they exchanged views on church-related issues, and thanked the Archbishop and the Greek community of America for their interest in the Cyprus problem.

Cyprus has been divided since 1974, when Turkish troops invaded and occupied its northern third. UN-led peace talks are currently underway between the leaders of the island's two communities, in an effort to find a negotiated settlement that will unite the country under a federal roof.

After the meeting, the Archbishop of Cyprus hosted a luncheon in honor of the Archbishop of America, also attended by Greek Ambassador to Cyprus, Vassilis Papaioannou and American Ambassador Frank C. Urbancic. -- ANA, July 7.

LEADING THE CHARGE AGAINST THE CYPRIOT GOVERNMENT YESTERDAY WAS ARCHBISHOP CHRYSOSTOMOS, WHO EXPRESSED DISMAY ON LEARNING THAT THE TURKISH CYPRIOT REGIME

WOULD BE SUPPLYING THE SOUTH WITH POWER.

"I'd rather get by with a lantern and flashlight," the Prelate remarked. "If they had asked me, I would have told them not to bring electricity from the occupied areas or to have electricity given to the Archbishopric."

He added: "Let's switch off the air conditioning units, sweat a little, experience some hardship and set aside our comforts. As far as I'm concerned, I have not been using the a/c in my office since that day [when the deal was announced]."

The top cleric recalled when a blaze broke out on the Pendadaktilos mountains, confessing that at the time he privately admired the Turkish Cypriots for turning down Greek Cypriot offers to help battle the flames: "I told myself that they have self-respect," he noted, perhaps hinting that the current government did not.

Speaking to newsmen after the National Council meeting, DIKO leader Marinos Garoyian said his party's concern was that the cooperation with the north should not entail any "direct or indirect recognition of the pseudo-state."

He added, somewhat philosophically: "The thought that is spinning in my head is how we have managed to get ourselves into this situation, to have to take electricity from the occupied areas. How did we do it?" -- Elias Hazou for *The Cyprus Mail*, July 19.

GREEK GOVERNMENT VICE PRESIDENT AND FINANCE MINISTER EVANGELOS VENIZELOS MET ON JULY 6 WITH ARCHBISHOP IERONYMOS OF ATHENS AND ALL GREECE and discussed outstanding Church finance issues.

Venizelos met with the Archbishop and members of the Holy Synod at the Church headquarters at Moni Petraki.

Ieronymos said afterwards that the meeting had been "beneficial," adding that all the Synod members were given the floor, while "answers were given to our requests, and these aim at progress."

He noted that the Church in Greece has always stood and fought at the side of the people and has given all that it could.

Venizelos in turn thanked the Archbishop for the "fruitful" discussion and praised the "great work" the Church has done throughout the years.

"It is our duty to safeguard our national unity and social cohesion," Venizelos said, adding "therefore, in both word and action, the Church is of decisive importance."

Venizelos expressed optimism that, following this meeting, "we can do very specific and practical things that will give relief to the people in need." -- ANA, July 6.

MINORITY CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS IN GREECE ARE CLOSING DOWN THEIR CHARITY WORK AND HAVING TROUBLE PAYING CLERGY SALARIES because of the economic crisis, according to church leaders in Athens.

"Like other Protestant churches, we're financially autonomous here and not supported by anyone but our own members, so our revenue has fallen sharply," said Dimitrios Boukis, general secretary of the Greek Evangelical Church, which has 29 congregations in two regional synods in Greece, and another in North America.

"We're already unable to pay the pensions of older pastors and their widows, and we've seen a rapid increase in requests for help from local parishioners. Although our church has been present in Greece since 1858, the state hasn't granted us the rights of a legal body, so our situation is highly fragile," he said

He was speaking after European Union finance ministers released emergency funding for the Greek economy, following approval by Greek parliamentarians of tough austerity measures by the center-left government of premier George Papandreou amid violent street protests as unemployment neared 23 percent.

Meanwhile, a Roman Catholic leader said his church would also be unable to pay clergy and staff salaries by the end of the year and is also closing a hospice and cutting aid for refugees and asylum-seekers administered by its Caritas organization and Mother Teresa's Sisters of Charity.

"We're only a small minority, with few properties and resources, and we've been burdened in recent years by many Catholics coming here from poor countries in search of a better life, using Greece as Europe's eastern gateway," Archbishop Nikolaos Foskolos, the Catholic archbishop of Athens, told ENInews.

"We get no help from the state and our faithful simply can't give any more. Since Greece joined the EU in 1981, we haven't received any help from Western churches either, since we're considered a rich country ourselves and they can only aid the Third World. But we have parts of the Third World here in Greece, and it's creating great pastoral and social hardships," he added.

The Orthodox Church of Greece, which covers 97 percent of the population of 10.4 million and enjoys state recognition, is also cutting back its social and charitable work, after being told its clergy must accept a 50 percent reduction in their state-paid salaries.

However, in his ENInews interview, Boukis said Orthodox priests were better able to cope, thanks to earnings from baptisms, weddings, funerals and other regular church ceremonies. The Greek constitution defines Orthodoxy as the "dominant religion" and requires public office-holders to take an oath before an Orthodox priest.

"If things get even worse for us here, we'll have to ask our fellow-Protestants around the world for help, while also finding more creative ways of generating income," Boukis said. — Jonathan Luxmoore for *ENI*, July 12.

THE CHURCH VEHEMENTLY DENIES ACCUSATIONS IT IS ONE OF GREECE'S BIGGEST TAX DODGERS AND SAYS IT IS PLAYING A VITAL SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND SPIRITUAL ROLE IN THIS TIME OF HARDSHIP.

With the third year of recession tormenting Greece's 11 million people, the Church has provided solace, comfort and nourishment but activists say it's now time to dig deep into its coffers to help with the bailout.

The Greek Orthodox Church has long enjoyed a privileged, some would say cosy, status when it comes to taxes in a country where it is responsible for the sole official religion, with one critic calling its complex finances at best opaque.

But the sovereign debt crisis that has rocked the Greek state, thrown hundreds of thousands of people out of work and forced painful cuts in salaries, pensions and benefits, has raised fresh questions about the Church's tax position.

More than 100,000 people have joined a Greek Facebook page "Tax The Church" and 29,000 have so far signed an online petition urging the state to harness "the huge fortune of churches" to reduce Greece's crushing budget deficit.

"The Church must pay its share of the tax burden," said former finance minister Yannis Papantoniou. "It is totally unreasonable in this situation that they contribute so little."

The Church angrily denies accusations it doesn't pay its fair share. "This is a lie. We pay more land tax than ordinary businesses and we pay 20 percent of our

rental income in tax," said Father Timotheos, the Greek Church's Holy Synod spokesman.

Despite the growing demands for more transparency, Prime Minister George Papandreou's Pasok socialist government doesn't dare take on the powerful Church, an adviser to the premier acknowledged, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Church finances, lands and other concerns are so labyrinthine they are hard to penetrate, analysts said. The Church's total tax payment is not made public and Father Timotheos said churches are responsible for their own taxes.

The Holy Synod paid 1.3 million euros in tax last year, said Father Timotheos, adding: "We could have challenged this in the European courts, but we didn't because we want to help the state and our homeland."

There is plenty of anecdotal evidence about the assets of the Church, which owns, for example, a stake of about 1.5 percent in Greece's largest bank, National Bank of Greece.

Given this kind of wealth, campaigners want the Church to pay more towards its own upkeep.

The state at the moment pays the salaries of about 9,000 black-robed priests, including about 100 metropolitans who run the Church, as well as the pensions of retired clergy.

It costs the public purse 268 million euros a year, Facebook campaigners say. Father Timotheos said that was justified as the Church handed over 96 percent of the land it held when Greece became independent from the Ottoman Empire in 1821.

Over the centuries before Turkish rule, Byzantine emperors gave vast swathes of the country to the men of God.

In the Ottoman era, many Greek families entrusted their property to the Church for safe-keeping to avoid expropriation by the Turks. Records were poor and it was not always returned.

The government is now under intense pressure from the IMF and the EU to sell off public assets, including real estate.

Part of the problem is no one knows how much property the Church has. Greece has no central land registry and the Church's decentralized structure means it does not know what it owns.

"The Greek Church is paying almost nothing in taxes to the Greek state for the total assets that it controls," one senior tax expert, who declined to be named, told

Reuters.

From the smallest village in northern Greece, where farmers pay rent to the Church, to the smart suburbs of Athens, where the Church owns prime real estate in the seafront millionaires' neighborhood of Vouliagmeni, the land holdings are enormous.

Stefanos Manos, another former finance minister from the early 1990s, said the Church's real estate portfolio was worth billions of euros but it had always resisted an outside audit.

Manos, a center-right liberal, clashed on television this month with the Metropolitan of Thessaloniki, demanding an independent survey of church property and arguing that it should take over the payment of clerical salaries and pensions.

Father Timotheos countered that the Church was effectively subsidizing the state. Several ministry buildings, universities and hospitals in Athens are on church property, leased to the state for a pittance or free of charge, he said.

The Church is currently lobbying authorities to be allowed to develop Vouliagmeni which is zoned as protected forest.

Archbishop Hieronymos of Athens, the head of the Greek Church, raised the issue with new Finance Minister Evangelos Venizelos at their first meeting, Father Timotheos said.

The implication is that even though the government is desperate for revenue, neither the state nor the Church has an interest in a public day of reckoning over taxes and land.

"It is scandalous that we don't know and indeed they don't know what they own," Manos said. "It all starts from this opaque situation. But no one wants to know. No one wants transparency."

The Church may not be the pillar of Greek life that it was a century ago but it still wields influence in this predominantly orthodox society and priests command respect and provide continuity in many communities.

"It's the third rail of Greek politics. If you touch it, you die," the adviser to Papandreou said, comparing the issue to the high voltage electrified rail on some train tracks.

Asked why he had not acted to make the Church pay more while he was finance minister in 1994-2001, Papantoniou said Pasok had taken a beating when the Church fought the government over national identity cards and had no stomach for another fight.

"It's a classic case of measuring the political costs," he told Reuters in an interview. "The government paid a high price over identity cards and before that in a battle in the 1980s over church property."

The clergy's ability to mobilize mass rallies was so great the current prime minister's father, Andreas Papandreou, had to abandon a plan to nationalize large tracts of church land.

No wonder one of Venizelos' first promises as minister last month was to keep paying clergy salaries and pensions.

The Church says it is pulling its weight in the crisis by stepping up assistance -- from soup kitchens to debt relief and counseling -- for Greeks who have fallen on hard times.

Church communities are providing 50,000 meals a day for the needy, an increase from 35,000 before the crisis, Father Timotheos said. In some places, they have started "social groceries," handing out staple foodstuffs free, he said, adding:

"We spent about 100 million euros on philanthropic acts in 2010 and we have increased since then. What more can we do?"

Churches were helping distressed people in debt to pay off small loans, either directly or by putting them in contact with wealthy donors, he said.

The Church is maintaining its own levels of employment at a time when public and private sector jobs are being axed. Priests are being trained to care for psychologically fragile parishioners at a time when the suicide rate is on the rise.

Father Timotheos bristled at the suggestion that the Church should be making a bigger contribution.

"People trust the Church above anyone else in this country. Whenever they have a problem, they don't knock on the prime minister's door or a minister's door," he said.

"Their doors are shut. Our doors are open." -- Paul Taylor and Renee Maltezou for *Reuters*, July 16.

ARCHIMANDRITE ALEXANDER GOLITZIN WAS NOMINATED AS THE CANDIDATE FOR BISHOP OF TOLEDO AND THE BULGARIAN DIOCESE OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA at the diocese's Fifth Congress-Sobor in Fort Wayne, Indiana, on June 9, 2011.

Last June, the Bulgarian Diocese initiated its search for a candidate to take on the ministry of diocesan bishop. At the close of the first phase of the search, the

diocesan Episcopal Search Committee reviewed the names of 22 possible candidates. After thorough review and discussion, the list was reduced to six names.

All six men were contacted and their suitability as candidates was further reviewed. Through this process, the Search Committee arrived at the two candidates presented to the Fifth Congress-Sobor -- Father Golitzin and Archpriest Paul Gasios.

A native of Saint Innocent Church, Tarzana, CA, Father Alexander Golitzin received a BA in English from UC Berkeley and an M. Div. from Saint Vladimir's Seminary. He spent seven years pursuing doctoral studies at Oxford University in England under His Eminence, Metropolitan Kallistos [Ware]. During this time, he also spent two years in Greece, including one year at Simonos Petras Monastery on Mount Athos.

After receiving his D.Phil. in 1980, Father Alexander returned to the US, where he was ordained to the diaconate in January 1982 and to the priesthood two years later. In 1986, he was tonsured to monastic orders. He served OCA missions in northern California and headed the Diocese of the West's mission committee. In 1989, he took a teaching position at Milwaukee's Marquette University in the Theology Department, a position which he holds today.

"We are very happy to reach the point of selecting our episcopal nominee, but we are aware that the process is not yet over," noted Episcopal Search Coordinator, Archpriest Andrew Jarmus. "Father Alexander's name will now be formally presented to the Holy Synod of Bishops. The Holy Synod will initiate its own review procedure and, God willing, this will result in Father's canonical election as bishop of our diocese. Once we reach that point, we will be able to issue information concerning Father Alexander's episcopal consecration and installation." The Bulgarian Diocese includes 19 parishes and missions and one monastery. -- OCA Press Release, July 9.

ON FRIDAY, JULY 15, 2011, BY INVITATION OF THE MOSCOW HISTORICAL ENLIGHTENMENT SOCIETY "RUSSIAN AMERICA," ARCHIMANDRITE ZACCHAEUS, REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA TO THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE, participated in events held in honor of the 270th Anniversary of the discovery of Russian America (Alaska) by Navigator-Explorers

V.I. Bering and A.I. Chirikov.

The events began with the celebration of a memorial panikhida at Holy Trinity Church near Moscow's Sukharov Square, designated as a "Sea Church." By invitation of a cleric of the church, Priest Aleksandr Kholmogorov, Father Zacchaeus led the panikhida, with visiting Archpriest Vladimir Berzonsky from Holy Trinity Church in Parma, Ohio, and Priest Aleksandr concelebrating. After the service, Father Zacchaeus preached on the importance of the discovery of Alaska, especially in relation to the Russian Orthodox Missionary work there that led to the spread of Orthodox Christianity throughout America. Following Father Zacchaeus' words, the President of the "Russian America" Society offered greetings to all gathered.

Following the panikhida, the clergy and those praying with them visited the Memorial Monument, erected in honor of the 300th Anniversary of the Russian Navy, at which prayers were offered for the departed and flowers were placed in their memory. -- OCA Press Release, July 16.

ARCHIMANDRITE ZACCHAEUS (WOOD), DEAN OF ST. CATHERINE THE GREAT MARTYR-IN-THE-FIELDS CHURCH IN MOSCOW AND REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA TO THE PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA HAS BEEN PLACED ON A LEAVE OF ABSENCE and recalled to the United States by His Beatitude, Metropolitan Jonah. He is prohibited from exercising any liturgical or sacramental ministry. Priest John Kechkin, who is attached to St. Catherine Church, will provide pastoral services for the time being. Archpriest Leonid Kishkovsky, Director of External Affairs of the Orthodox Church in America, will assume duties as the representative of the OCA to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia. -- OCA Press Release, July 28.

The Assyrian Church of the East

HIS GRACE MAR AWA ROYEL, BISHOP OF THE ASSYRIAN CHURCH OF THE EAST, DIOCESE OF CALIFORNIA AND SECRETARY OF THE HOLY SYNOD, WAS RECEIVED BY HIS EMINENCE MOR CLEMIS EUGENE KAPLAN, Syrian Orthodox Metropolitan of the Diocese of Western USA and His Eminence Mor Cyril Efram Karim, Syrian Orthodox Metropolitan of the Diocese of Eastern USA, at the diocesan headquarters and

episcopal residence of the Syrian Orthodox Archdiocese of Western USA, Burbank, California.

Accompanying His Grace were Rev. Dr. Chor-bishop Gewargis Toma and Rev. Genard Lazar, parish priests participating in the 25th Annual National Youth Conference of the Assyrian Church of the East, held in Los Angeles, California.

During this meeting, on 2 June, the prelates expressed their joy and brotherly love towards each other, while accentuating the significance and prospects of future dialogue between the two sister Churches, which will be seen as extremely effortless due to the undeniable fact that "we are one people and one faith."

It's inspiring to add that during the meeting, His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV, Catholicos Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East, contacted Chor-bishop Toma, enquiring into the outcome of the conference. When His Holiness was advised of the meeting of the two prelates, he extended his blessings and expressed his utmost pleasure and joy in the meeting.

On 1 July, His Eminence Mor Cyril Afram Karim attended the Conference's official dinner banquet along with His Beatitude Mar Aprem, Metropolitan of the Church of the East, Archdiocese of India; His Grace Mar Aprim Khamis, Bishop of the Diocese of Western USA and His Grace Mar Awa Royel, Bishop of the Diocese of California and Secretary of the Holy Synod. During his speech, His Eminence Mor Afram pledged that he would work for and promote the unity of our two sister Churches. These words garnered hearty applause from the youth present. – *Assyrian Church of the East News*, July 7.

The Oriental Orthodox Churches

ARCHBISHOP KHAJAG BARSAMIAN, PRIMATE OF THE DIOCESE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF AMERICA (EASTERN) AND PRESIDENT OF THE FUND FOR ARMENIAN RELIEF, WAS RECOGNIZED EARLIER THIS MONTH BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA on the occasion of his 40th anniversary of ordination into the holy priesthood and his 60th birthday.

Armenia's Prime Minister, His Excellency Tigran Sargsyan, personally presented the award and proclamation to Archbishop Barsamian on July 13, during the Primate's visit to Armenia.

Prime Minister Sargsyan expressed his gratitude to Archbishop Barsamian for

his efforts to help the Armenian people. The Prime Minister's proclamation noted Archbishop Barsamian's "work to strengthen state and church relations" and "his contributions to the education of Armenian youth."

Under the leadership of Archbishop Barsamian, the Eastern Diocese and its parishes have extended spiritual and material outreach to Armenia and Nagorno-Karabagh. In the past two decades, the Diocese has spearheaded a number of service and exchange programs, pilgrimages, publications, and other initiatives to build connections between the Armenians in the United States and their brothers and sisters in the homeland.

In addition, the Fund for Armenian Relief—which was established by Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, Kevork Hovnanian, and Dr. Edgar Housepian in the aftermath of the 1988 earthquake in Spitak and Gyumri—has grown under Archbishop Barsamian's guidance to become the homeland's leading humanitarian organization, offering programs in education, health care, child protection, and economic development.

Archbishop Barsamian also has been a great supporter of Holy Etchmiadzin, and with the blessings of the Mother See, has represented the Armenian Church on various ecumenical and interreligious boards worldwide, helping to raise the profile of the Armenian Church on the national and international levels. – Press Release, Armenian Eastern Diocese, July 28.

ON MONDAY 4 JULY 2011, THE MEMBERS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE HEADS OF ORIENTAL ORTHODOX CHURCHES IN THE MIDDLE EAST MET IN CAIRO. THE COMMITTEE WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1998, upon the decision of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III Coptic Orthodox Church, His Holiness Ignatius Zakka I Iwas Syrian Orthodox Church, and His Holiness Aram I Armenian Orthodox Church, Catholicosate of Cilicia.

The members of the Committee, Anba Bishop, Coptic Orthodox Church, Metropolitan George Saliba and Archbishop Nais, Syrian Orthodox Church, Archbishop Sebouh Sarkissian and Archbishop Nareg Alemejian, met with His Holiness Pople Shenouda III, before beginning their meetings. The agenda of the Standing Committee included: assessment of the Bilateral Theological Dialogues; relations with the World Council of

Churches and the Middle East Council of Churches and participation in these bodies; strengthening cooperation and coordination of activities between the three sister churches.

In its final statement the Standing Committee reaffirmed the unity of the faith that exists between them; recommitted them to face together challenges and developments in the Middle East; and reconfirmed their attachment to their ancient orthodox roots in the Region. – Press Release, Great House of Cilicia, July 8.

ON MONDAY 11 JULY 2011, REV. FR. RAPHAEL MINASSIAN VISITED HIS HOLINESS ARAM I ACCOMPANIED BY THE EDITOR SARKIS NAJARIAN. The Archbishop was recently appointed by the Vatican to serve the Armenian Catholic community in Armenia, Georgia and Russia.

His Holiness Aram I congratulated the Archbishop for his new pastoral ministry and said, "I am confident that you will serve Armenia and strengthen Armenia-Diaspora relations through your new ministry." – Press Release, Great House of Cilicia, July 12.

ON WEDNESDAY 20 JULY 2011, THE NEWLY CONSECRATED ARMENIAN CATHOLIC ARCHBISHOP, RAPHAEL OF ARMENIA, GEORGIA AND RUSSIA, and the Locum Tenens of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, Archbishop Nourhan, met with His Holiness Aram I to discuss cooperation between the Armenian Orthodox and Armenian Catholic Churches. The Dean of the Seminary, Archbishop Nareg Alemejian, was also present at this important meeting.

Catholicos Aram I thanked the two Archbishops for their visit, noting that because of historical reasons, the Armenian community had become ecumenical with the inclusion of the Catholic and Protestant Churches. "Today," he said, "it is important that all churches work together to serve the spiritual and national values of the Armenian people in Armenia and the Diaspora." – Press Release, Great House of Cilicia, July 23.

SOME 150 COPTIC PROTESTORS DEMONSTRATED ON JULY 18 ON THE GROUNDS OF ST MARK'S COPTIC ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL AND PAPAL HEADQUARTERS IN CAIRO, DEMANDING MORE LENIENT MEASURES FOR DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE. The demonstration was held in front of the office of the Clerical

Council, the body in charge of issuing divorce and remarriage permits for Coptic Orthodox men and women, with the protesters demanding that their cases be speedily resolved. Some of the divorce or remarriage cases, they claimed, have lain before the council for years without any decision taken.

News circulated that demonstrators had attempted to assault Anba Pola, Bishop of Tanta and head of the Clerical Council, after members of the security force of the Cathedral treated one of them roughly. Anba Pola remained indoors.

"We will hold a sit-in in front of the council, and we will not allow the bishop to go out until he resolves our cases and puts an end to our suffering," Mina Saad, one of the demonstrators noted. "Anba Pola insists on stubbornly standing against us. He practises flagrant favoritism; some couples are treated well and get their divorce and remarriage permits speedily, while others are treated abominably and have to wait for years for their cases to be resolved."

The demonstrators demanded that Pope Shenouda III should dismiss Anba Pola "who treats us with arrogance and disdain, as though we were criminals." They demanded that the Coptic Church should make divorce and remarriage easier. The Church currently restricts divorce to two reasons: adultery or conversion. "We will not be forced into conversion simply to end tortuous marriages. We insist that the Church should grant us divorce while we remain in our Christian faith."

They also demanded from the State a civil law for marriage and divorce.

As the demonstrators turned more violent and attempted to break into the building, the security officials at the Cathedral decided to keep them at bay by using a guard dog. But this terrorised the demonstrators. The police intervened, and the dog was taken away.

In the evening, the protestors decided to temporarily suspend their sit-in. Anba Pola and other priests who had been in the building with him left through a back door. Amir Mounir one of the protesters, said the decision was taken in order to give the Church an opportunity to reconsider.

On Monday evening, viewers of CTV heard Anba Pola, who was contacted by the channel, comment on the day's events. "What happened today crossed the boundaries of legitimacy," he said. He insisted the Church never fell short of resolving

the cases pending in the Clerical Council. The legal procedures, however, stipulate that couples obtain divorce from the civil courts first, then the case is independently viewed by the clerical council. The council may or may not grant a church divorce and, in case it does, it issues a remarriage permit only to the wronged party.

Even though a civil divorce is prerequisite for a church divorce, it in no way secures the latter.

"All Copts are treated equally by the Clerical Council," Anba Pola stressed, "In some instances the council moves to begin seeing their cases even before the court grants them divorce, just to save time."

Some Copts, he said, consider that the civil divorce automatically leads to a church divorce, and are disappointed to find out this is far from the truth. The Church cannot go against the Bible, he said. The passage of a unified family law for Christians, according to Anba Pola, would solve this predicament between the Church and the courts which would then judge according to the same rules.

When asked about the security clashes with the demonstrators that morning, Anba Pola said he never called the police, but had received a phone call from a police officer to find out what was happening.

On Tuesday morning the Coptic Orthodox Church issued an official statement in which it announced that: "The Church cannot, under any pressure or circumstances, go against the legislation instated by the Bible teachings."

The statement, signed by Fr Rweiss Eweida, Secretary of the Clerical Council, declared that the council respects the freedom of expression practised by the Egyptian people since the January Revolution. This, the statement said, includes the right to demonstrate, as long as it is conducted within the limits of respecting religious and public values as well as preserving public property.

It was denied that any assault had occurred whether against a church official or a demonstrator.

The statement explained that it is no legislating authority, but is merely an executive authority that applies what the Bible stipulates.

When cases lag on in the Clerical Council, the statement said, it is mostly because one party is not able to prove its claim against the other, or displays deviant behaviour. The statement also confirmed that the council cannot issue any divorce ruling unless a divorce had al-

ready been granted by the civil court. – US Copts Association, July 20.

ON TUESDAY, THE 12TH OF JULY, 2011, HIS EMINENCE, MOR CYRIL APHREM KARIM PAID A CORDIAL VISIT TO HIS HOLINESS, MAR DENKHA THE IV, PATRIARCH OF THE ASSYRIAN CHURCH OF THE EAST, who was paying pastoral visits to his churches in the area. His Eminence was accompanied by Rev. Father Gabriel Adde, pastor of St. Peter's Church in Long Island, New York. Mor Cyril conveyed to His Holiness, Mar Dankha, the brotherly regards of our Patriarch, His Holiness Mor Zakka I.

During the visit, relationships of the two sister Churches were discussed; the shared past with its glory and misfortunes, as well as the future plans for closer relationships they aspire for. His Holiness and His Eminence expressed their concern for the future of our people in the Middle East and prayed for God's care and protection during this very critical time in our homeland. – Press Release, Syrian Orthodox Eastern Diocese, July 13.

THE 48TH ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE SYRIAC ORTHODOX CHURCH OF ANTIOCH FOR THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA WAS UNDERWAY ON THURSDAY, JULY 21ST and began with a meeting of Clergy from the Eastern and Western Archdiocese. The opening prayer at this first session was delivered by His Eminence Mor Clemes Eugene Kaplan, Archbishop of the Western Archdiocese.

The meeting's agenda highlighted a Biblical presentation given by Very Rev. Rabban Raboula Somi from Sweden. The presentation was entitled "The Brothers of Jesus in the Syriac Tradition." Present also was the Very Rev. Fr. Joseph Shabo of Aleppo.

Decisions taken at this first session included a proclamation that the week between the two Holy Days of the "Consecration of the Church" and the "Renewal of the Church" be designated as a week of Bible Reading for our Syriac Orthodox Church in North America.

The second decision called for cooperation between the Eastern and Western Archdiocese in the publication of religious books and the standardization and printing of the Annual Calendar.

A discussion on continued education for clergy resulted in a decision requiring clergy to take refresher and self-improvement courses of study which include theology, sociology, management

and public speaking.

At the conclusion of this four hour session, His Eminence Mor Cyril Aphrem Karim, Archbishop of the Eastern Archdiocese gave closing comments and ended the meeting with a prayer. – Press Release, Syrian Orthodox Eastern Diocese, July 22.

The Catholic Churches

THE VATICAN WILL CO-PUBLISH A BOOK WITH DOCUMENTS AND INFORMATION ABOUT THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE. The papers are from the Vatican Secret Archives, and, to quote Mgr Sergio Pagano, the clergyman who runs the archives, “they make me feel ashamed to be a man. Without faith, they’d make me see only darkness.”

Mgr Pagano’s announcement was made today during the presentation of the ‘Lux in arcane’ exhibition, which opens next February in Rome to show one of the world’s most important collection of papers, with documents from the 8th century to the 20th century. Lined-up, they would cover 85 kilometres.

The presentation gave Mgr Pagano, prefect of the Vatican Secret Archives, an opportunity to announce that within two or three years, the papers concerning World War Two and the pontificate of Pius XII will be ready. The current Pope will then be able to decide whether to release them to the public, as many expect, or not.

With regards to the Armenian genocide, “when I read documents about the torture practices used by the Turks against the Armenians, I feel an irrepressible sense of pain and horror,” Mgr Pagano said. According to the prefect, some of the papers describe how Turkish soldiers “bet and played dice to guess the sex of a child before stabbing him or her with a bayonet after extracting them out of the womb.” – *AsiaNews*, July 5.

GREECE’S CATHOLIC CHURCH FACES DISASTER BECAUSE THE CURRENT ECONOMIC CRISIS IS FORCING IT TO END VITAL SOCIAL AND CHARITABLE PROJECTS, SAID ARCHBISHOP NIKOLAOS FOSKOLOS OF ATHENS.

“This crisis could be the worst in our history,” Archbishop Foskolos told Catholic News Service July 6. “There’s corruption everywhere, especially among our politicians. We get no help from the state or other Western churches, and our faithful can’t give any more. Our parishes and

dioceses are in deep trouble, and in a few months we won’t be able to support our staffers and employees.”

The archbishop voiced the concerns as European Union finance ministers released emergency funding to rescue the faltering Greek economy. Amid violent street protests the Greek legislature approved tough austerity measures and tax increases June 29, paving the way for the EU action.

The archbishop said the higher taxes would have more impact on the Catholic Church than on the country’s predominant state-supported Orthodox Church. But the Orthodox Church still faced “serious problems” after being told its clergy’s state-paid salaries would be cut by half, he said.

“We’re only a small minority, with few properties and resources, and we’ve been burdened in recent years by many Catholics coming here from poor countries in search of a better life, using Greece as Europe’s eastern gateway,” Archbishop Foskolos said.

“Since we joined the EU in 1981, we haven’t received any help from other Western churches, since we’re considered a rich country ourselves and they can only aid the Third World,” he added. “But we have parts of the Third World here in Greece, and it’s creating great pastoral and social hardships.”

Archbishop Foskolos said the crisis has forced Caritas Greece, the church’s aid and development agency, and the Sisters of Charity to reduce assistance to refugees and asylum seekers. The Catholic-run hospice and two soup kitchens in Athens also planned to close by the end of 2011 because of the government cuts.

“Many people are suffering real poverty in Greece. Though we are doing what we can, the situation can’t continue,” said the archbishop, who oversees a church numbering 200,000 Greek and foreign members in four dioceses. – Jonathan Luxmoore for *CNS*, July 8.

DURING THE MOST RECENT SESSION OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS OF THE ROMANIAN GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH, WHICH TOOK PLACE FROM JUNE 8 TO 10, THE COMPOSITION OF THE GREEK CATHOLIC COMMISSION TO PREPARE THE WORK OF THE JOINT DIALOGUE COMMISSION BETWEEN THE ROMANIAN GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH WAS DECIDED. At the same time, certain preliminary principles were adopted which will lie at the foundation of the

beginning of the activities of the commission to prepare for the resumption of the dialogue that was interrupted seven years ago. Consequently the Synod of Bishops of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church sent to the head of the Romanian Orthodox Church, His Beatitude Daniel, the following letter:

Your Beatitude:

The Synod of Bishops of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church, meeting in ordinary session in Blaj from 8 to 10 June of this year, considered your Beatitude’s letter 8693/2010 of March 2, 2011, referring to the approval of the Orthodox members of the Preparatory Commission for the Joint Commission for Dialogue.

In its letter nr. 39/5.11.2010, the Romanian Greek Catholic Church responded positively to the appeal you made “for the promotion of a fraternal and cooperative climate between the two Romanian Churches,” and the invitation to resume the activity of the Joint Commission for Dialogue. Along these lines, the Romanian Greek Catholic Church proposed the formation of this preparatory commission which will establish the agenda, principles, themes and working methodology of the Joint Commission for Dialogue between the two Churches.

In the official message, the Romanian Patriarchate let it be understood that the Romanian Orthodox Church wishes to begin a constructive dialogue with the Romanian Greek Catholic Church in order to begin a new stage in the history of relations between these two Romanian Churches.

Unfortunately, in the last month actions that were undertaken by representatives of the Romanian Orthodox Church in the designated territory that are contrary to “the promotion of a fraternal climate of cooperation,” the principle that you enunciated in the initial letter of invitation to dialogue nr. 4719/12.7.2010. Thus, Romanian Greek Catholic churches continue to be demolished, destroyed or re-consecrated, Romanian Greek Catholic faithful continue to be threatened and harassed, and not a few times representatives of the Romanian Orthodox Church have incited violence against Romanian Greek Catholic faithful.

What is more, recently the bishops of the two Metropolitan Synods, that of Transylvania and that of Cluj, Alba, Crisana and Maramures, meeting at Ramet monastery on July 4, 2011, resumed the same rhetoric against the Romanian Greek Catholic Church that only created enmity

and conflicts between Romanians over the past twenty years.

The Romanian Greek Catholic Church has been and always remains open to a constructive dialogue with the Romanian Orthodox Church, but we wish to see on the part of the Romanian Orthodox Church concrete steps showing that it is interested in a similar constructive dialogue; for this reason, before any future meeting of the Preparatory Commission, we ask:

1. An end to any actions that would change, alter, destroy, or effect in any way the architecture, form, or original appearance of Greek Catholic properties (churches, parish houses, cemeteries) received by the Romanian Orthodox Church in 1948 from the communist government.

2. An end to the re-consecration by the Romanian Orthodox Church of properties mentioned in point 1 above until such time as, in the Joint Commission for Dialogue, the Romanian Greek Catholic Church agrees with this on a case by case basis.

3. Unimpeded access by Romanian Greek Catholic priests and faithful to cemeteries in order to bury their dead or to visit the graves of the deceased.

4. An end to threats and harassment of the Romanian Greek Catholic faithful by representatives of the Romanian Orthodox Church.

5. The public condemnation of the 1948 decree dissolving the Romanian Greek Catholic Church as an unjust, abusive and criminal act against the Romanian Greek Catholic Church and its faithful and disassociation with its effects.

At the meeting of the Synod of Bishops of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church that took place from June 8 to 10 of this year, the composition of the Greek Catholic Commission to prepare for the Joint Commission for Dialogue was decided upon. The members are:

-- His Excellency Virgil, Bishop of Oradea-Mare – President

-- His Excellency Basil, Bishop of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia, Bishop of Maramures

-- Reverend Father Nicolae Anusca, Director of Caritas for the Metropolitan See of Blaj

-- Reverend Father Daniel Avram, Chancellor of the Eparchy of Cluj-Gherla

We request that official correspondence regarding the resumption of the dialogue be addressed to the President.

Even though the dialogue was unilaterally interrupted by the Romanian Ortho-

dox Church in 2004, and counterproductive actions have been taken against Romanian Greek Catholic communities in many localities, the Romanian Greek Catholic Church has always remained open to a constructive dialogue, in the light of Christ's Gospel, based on justice, charity, truth and reciprocal respect.

We believe that the ecumenical actions and the fraternal love that our Church has shown in many places, offering its own churches for alternating celebrations by the Orthodox communities, are proof of this.

"An amicable solution to some of the patrimonial disputes that appeared following some unfortunate historical circumstances," as you stated in your letter of March 2, 2011, cannot be realized using the same actions and the same rhetoric that have perpetuated these disputes. We wish to see, for this reason, concrete steps on the part of the Romanian Orthodox Church which would demonstrate that it really wishes a constructive dialogue, and the preconditions listed above are a first step in that direction.

We believe that the trust and cooperation already realized in small steps can be extended also to other areas of common concern, beyond the property issue.

With fraternal love in Christ the Lord,
+LUCIAN

Major Archbishop – [unofficial trans. by RGR] Website of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church, July 13.

THE HEAD OF THE UKRAINIAN GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH (UGCC),

MAJOR ARCHBISHOP SVIATOSLAV SHEVCHUK, SAID IN AN INTERVIEW WITH RISU THAT THE IDENTITY OF THE UGCC IS "THE IDENTITY OF KYIVAN CHRISTIANITY DURING VOLODYMYR'S BAPTISM, when the newly established church on the lands of Kyivan Rus' was also a subsidiary of the church of the Patriarchate of Constantinople and, on the other hand, in communion with the Apostolic See." According to the primate, the identity of the UGCC is "a testimony of the church when Christianity was not divided," and throughout the ages it faced various dangers and sometimes was not even recognized as a church.

The head of the UGCC said that in the third millennium the church should live this identity. He explained that the UGCC wants to be open "not only to all who live in Ukraine today, but also to other nations, nationalities, even other religions," to an interchurch and interethnic dialogue.

The primate explained that the church understands "that Kyivan Christianity from the very beginning strived to be a powerful center of Christianity on par with Rome, Constantinople, and later Moscow." According to Major Archbishop Sviatoslav, the UGCC should show how important and relevant Volodymyr's baptism is for ecumenical Christianity.

The Patriarchate of the UGCC remains an important question. "We still must strive to take this path to the end, and then obtain the name of the Patriarchal Church; then our identity will be clear to all," said the primate. "The Patriarchate is a structure that to a certain extent will help to protect our church from dissolving into the huge sea of the Catholic world."

As for the future of the churches of the Kyivan tradition, the head of the UGCC believes that "we should reflect on and actively implement the strategy outlined by His Beatitude Lubomyr in his programmatic sermon: 'One people of God on the land of the hills of Kyiv.'"

"In my opinion, the deeper and more fully we will discover the deep roots of Kyivan Christianity, the closer we will come to each other. We will then realize that we have much more in common than what divides us, as said the Blessed Pope John XXIII." -- *RISU*, July 18.

"WE CANNOT WAIT FOR POLITICIANS TO SORT THINGS OUT, WE HAVE GOT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE OURSELVES," THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY, ROWAN WILLIAMS, told reporters at the conclusion of a two-day conference at Lambeth Palace on "Christians in the Holy Land," which he jointly hosted with Archbishop Vincent Nichols, the leader of the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales.

The meeting, which was attended by more than 60 Christian, Jewish and Muslim faith leaders and politicians from the Middle East, Europe and North America as well as young Palestinian Christians, had been called to consider the decline in the Christian population in the Holy Land and how these communities could be assisted to remain.

Williams called for more backing for work undertaken by the ecumenical charity Friends of the Holy Land, which finances projects to assist the 200,000 Christians living mainly in Israel and the West Bank - about one per cent of the population - to stay in the region and not join the rising numbers emigrating. The

charity works in the field of housing, micro finance, the distribution of food and clothing and hosting pilgrimages by overseas visitors involving links with local communities.

Nichols stressed that the young Palestinian Christians attending the conference did not want to be seen as victims but as actors in history with a strong sense of dignity.

Earlier at a session of the Church of England Synod held last week, Williams launched a fund to be administered by Friends of the Holy Land from which it is hoped to derive a regular income for projects to be established with partners in the region. He said that he had returned from a recent visit with a strong sense that more had to be done for "brothers and sisters who are suffering and for whom we don't always ask ourselves what our response needs to be." – Martin Revis for *ENI*, July 19.

THIS IS THE SPEECH DELIVERED BY HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL JEAN-LOUIS TAURAN, PRESIDENT OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE, AT THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CHRISTIANS IN THE HOLY LAND in London:

"By sending me to you, Pope Benedict XVI manifests his deep interest in this conference and, having had the privilege of being a member of the Papal Suite during his pilgrimage to the Holy Land in May 2009, I can remember the impact of his farewell speech at Tel Aviv airport when he pleaded for a lasting peace which can only rest on justice, genuine reconciliation and healing. But he did not hesitate also to state that one of the saddest sights of his pilgrimage was the Wall.

During these two days of exchange, I think that everybody here is convinced that if a wall can protect, it also divides and makes suspicion and ignorance grow. So it is important that Christians in particular, who are the disciples of the One who broke down "the barrier of hostility" to quote Saint Paul (Eph 2.14), should be in a condition to freely contribute to harmony and dialogue in the Israeli and Palestinian societies.

But unfortunately, we have to recognize that the situation of Christians in the Holy Land, like in other Middle East countries, is marked by precariousness. We must remember that the political evolution of the last 50 years has made the presence and the leadership of Christians fragile: revolutions and wars have con-

tributed to weaken the Christian communities and favored the emigration of many families.

What we have to avoid is that the Holy Land becomes an archaeological and historical site to be visited like the Coliseum in Rome. For us Christians the Holy Land is the land of God's revelation, the place where Jesus lived, died and was resurrected. We cannot even think that Bethlehem or the Holy Sepulcher should become museums with entrance tickets and guides who explain beautiful legends.

For us the Holy Places, the shrines, are much more than stones. The Holy Places are living testimonies which have around them a population, families with their schools, their cultural patrimony, their languages, their folklore, their artisans, handicrafts as well as hospitals, etc.

We have been repeating for years that we are a Christian minority in the Holy Land and in the Arab world. I think it is enough to repeat such evidence. We are a minority, but we are a minority that matters. I think of our schools, universities and hospitals, which welcome everybody, regardless of his or her religion.

Today the time has come to reflect on the place and the mission of Christian communities in the Holy Land and in the Middle East.

First of all, our Christian brothers and sisters of that part of the world have to realize that they have a certain peculiarity, I should say a certain dignity: they all belong to apostolic churches. Missionaries from Rome or Constantinople did not bring the Christian faith there. Those communities have been built on the faith of the apostles. They are apostolic communities in the deepest sense of the word. Their practice comes through the faith of the apostles; this is their identity.

Their liturgical patrimony is of an exceptional value. (Let us mention by the way that in many Oriental Churches the Eucharistic Prayer is said in the language spoken by Jesus.)

It is important not to make of this rich heritage something we keep in a safe. There is a tendency to transform our Christian communities into cultural communities.

Secondly, Christians in the Holy Land and in the Middle East, are Arabs. They have been in that part of the world much before the Muslims. They are not asking asylum, they are rather at home. Our Christian brothers and sisters speak Arabic and for example, many Christians have contributed to the rebirth of Arabic litera-

ture at the end of the 19th century.

I remember that when I was serving in the Nunciature in Beirut at the time of the civil war (1979—1983), despite the bombing of the Christian part of Beirut the Pauline fathers continued to print the Koran in the Arabic language.

Arab Christians are a gift to the societies because they bring cultural openness, a sense of the dignity of the human person and particularly of women; a conception of freedom which harmonizes rights and privileges and a conception of political society which can lead to democracy.

Christians have the vocation to be a bridge. Then the question is not how the Christians are going to survive in the Holy Land and the Middle East, but how they are ready to be witnesses to their faith. I think that many Muslims are worried about the future of Christians in that region, because they know that Christians can help them to understand modernity and how to reconcile diversity and unity.

The Christians have been in the Holy Land without interruption for centuries. They have enjoyed national and international rights. We cannot neglect the importance of a solution of the juridical status of the most significant part of Jerusalem, that is to say where the main Holy Places of the three monotheistic religions are (practically the city *intra muros*). You know that the Holy See is in favor of a special status, internationally guaranteed, in order to preserve the uniqueness and sacredness of that part of the city.

For Christians, Jerusalem has a special significance. First of all, it contains the most precious places where Jesus lived.

Secondly, it is the city with an ongoing presence of a Christian community. So for the local Christians, like for the Jews and the Muslims, Jerusalem is not only a holy city, it is also their home city where they have a right to continue to live and to work. They must be granted and have secured the most fundamental rights: freedom of conscience and freedom of religion, freedom of movement, civic and historical rights, education, hospitals, the possession of their own institutions (seminaries, universities, monasteries, etc.).

Of course, all this has to be recognized not only for Christians, but for all the inhabitants of the Holy Land.

The three monotheistic religions recognize Abraham as their father. In spite of the fact that his heritage gives room to different interpretations, we can find a common message: to follow Abraham

means not to look back, but toward the future. Jews, Christians and Muslims must be heralds of hope. To follow Abraham means also to be attentive to the foreigner (remember the episode at the Tree of Mamre). To follow Abraham means never choosing to take the path that is a dead-end, but to be always a pilgrim.

Christians in the Holy Land do not pretend to be by themselves, to rule or to impose, but just to blossom where they have been planted by God, and to make their fellow citizens understand that every religion is an invitation to go along without idols, to be welcoming to newness, and to be always capable of solidarity.

Since Cain and Abel, exclusivism and the desire for security has always been in the heart of man. But history, like religion, teaches us that there is only one future: a shared future. What is important is not to stop but rather to continue our dialogue, our pilgrimage towards the truth, with the conviction that "it is not because things are difficult that we do not dare; it is because we do not dare that they are difficult." You will have recognized a quotation from the Roman philosopher Seneca. So let us follow his advice: Let us dare."

RETIRED CARDINAL KAZIMIERZ SWIATEK OF MINSK-MOHILEV, BELARUS, DIED JULY 21 AT AGE 96.

He retired just five years ago after more than 65 years of active ministry and several run-ins with the Soviet police.

In a telegram of condolence, Pope Benedict XVI said, "I recall the courageous witness he gave to Christ and his church in particularly difficult times, as well as the enthusiasm with which he later contributed to the spiritual rebirth of his country."

He was born Oct. 21, 1914, into a Polish family in Valga, now in Estonia. When he was a young boy, he and his family were exiled to Siberia by the Russian czar.

The whole family was allowed to return to Belarus after the 1917 Russian Revolution, and he was ordained to the priesthood in 1939. Two years later, he was arrested by Soviet police and condemned to death as a "reactionary cleric."

He escaped and resumed his pastoral work when Nazi Germany's army invaded in June 1941. But in 1944, when Belarus changed hands again, he was arrested again, sentenced to 10 years in a labor camp and sent back to Siberia.

Released at the end of his sentence in 1954, Cardinal Swiatek ministered in Pinsk until 1991 when Pope John Paul II created the Archdiocese of Minsk-Mohilev and named him archbishop. Created a cardinal in 1994, he continued to serve as

archbishop until 2006 when he was already past the age of 91.

In 2004, he was honored by an Italian Catholic foundation as a living witness of the faith; in his acceptance speech he said that in Belarus "every parish, every village, every family has its witnesses of faith who suffered, some even offering up their lives for their faith."

Meeting the cardinal and foundation members later, Pope John Paul said the cardinal had followed "the Way of the Cross of persecution, carrying the cross of prison, of unjust condemnation and of the labor camps with their burden of toil, cold and hunger." – Cindy Wooden for *CNS*, July 21.

THE HOLY FATHER HAS GIVEN HIS CONSENT TO THE CANONICAL ELECTION CARRIED OUT BY THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS OF THE GREEK CATHOLIC UKRAINIAN CHURCH OF FR. DMYTRO (BOBDAN) HRYHORAK O.S.B.M., apostolic administrator of the eparchy of Buchach of the Ukrainians, Ukraine, as bishop of the same eparchy (area 4,829, population 405,000, Catholics 216,000, priests 201, religious 22). The bishop-elect was born in Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine in 1956 and ordained a priest in 1992. – *VIS*, July 23.



His Beatitude Ilia II, Catholicos-Patriarch of Georgia, with His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, meeting in Kiev on July 26, 2011.

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