

HOLY WISDOM

Peace: Showing that Others Matter!

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Publication of the Syrian Orthodox Church in America on United Nations Affairs. This publication is disseminated to the entire membership of the Church throughout the world on a quarterly basis. Please bring this information to the attention of your parishioners and all those under your care. The Earth is holy and a manifestation of God. Pray for peace and the UN.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: It is necessary through the collaboration of NGOs to raise awareness among communities as we promote peace. If you will, the need for community consciousness is a way we can connect parties and others. It is important at this time that all parties begin to realize that they are a part of a larger picture, that they are in it together and they have common concerns. If there is a conflict all parties have contributed to the conflict and they have the power to come together to develop a non-violent intervention to result into a resolution. It is time for us as people to acknowledge that there is something more that exceed our own individual positions and needs. The United Nations, religious institutions and NGO can be an avenue to promote community consciousness to encourage global consciousness, clear and realistic decisions as they promote non-violent solutions to conflicts!

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OUR WORK AT THE U.N.

Concert and Reception for Ms. Roza Otunbayeva

Drs. Antoinette and Andrea DeLuca representing our SOCA NGO, were invited and attended a concert and reception for Ms. Roza Otunbayeva, former president of the Kyrgyz Republic and founder of the "R.O. Initiative" International Public Foundation (www.roza.kg) on Monday December 10, 2012 at the Bulgarian Consulate. The Foundation conducts work in the inter-sectorial field of education and health rights advocacy and campaigning for improved quality and access to services for childhood, parenthood, and youth; providing capacity building and training on improving skills for healthy living especially among disadvantaged and rural-urban migrants and rural residents of Kyrgyzstan. There is fund raising for breast cancer awareness, rural libraries on healthy lifestyle and nutrition. (SOCA has made a financial contribution to the Foundation.) Remarks were made by the General Consul of Bulgaria, the Permanent Representative of Kyrgyzstan and an address by Her Excellency, Otunbayeva. (When the latter was Foreign Minister 2005, Ambassador DeLuca helped orchestrate her presentation at Columbia University. See www.ignatiusU.org, School of Diplomacy.)

Breaking the Cycle of Religious Intolerance

11-15-12- UN

By Christopher Casais, Youth Rep of SOCA

The Committee of Religious NGOs at the United Nations held a roundtable discussion this past November 15, 2012 entitled Breaking the Cycle of Religious Intolerance. The featured presenter at this discussion was Dr. William Vendley who is affiliated with Religions for Peace. Dr. Vendley began this insightful and significant discussion on religious intolerance by describing to us that the perception of feeling like global citizens who express and feel tolerance towards themselves and others is an essential goal we should strive for. He cited how the U.S. law cannot ask us to love, but religious communities can undertake an exemplary and necessary role by respecting differences of each religion. The way to do this is through tolerance, but moreover, it is by looking at each person as filled with dignity. In order to stress the awfulness and putridness of religious intolerance, Dr. Vendley told us the story of a martyred Anabaptist from the 1500s Netherlands who turned around to rescue his pursuer who had fallen through a sheet of ice, only to be tortured and killed for his faith afterwards. Briefly, Dr. Vendley also discussed the role that Track 1, 1 ½ and 2 initiatives have for the preservation of freedom of speech, and tolerance and respect for religious affiliation. These initiatives have as a consensus or goal, the desire to collaborate in

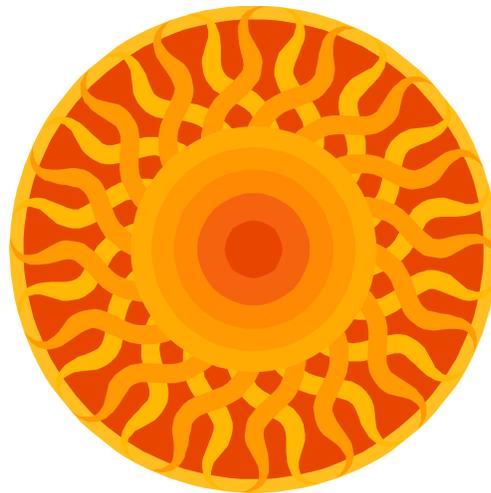
creating a working platform to facilitate cooperation among states, intergovernmental bodies and faith-based civil society organizations for peace.

WORK OF DR. ANNE RICCITELLI, our MAIN SOCA REPRESENTATIVE

Dr. Riccitelli worked on auditing workshop transcripts from the 64th UN/NGO Conference in Bonn, Germany at request of 2011 NGO/DPI Conference Media Chair, Estelle Perry.

NGO YOUTH REPRESENTATIVES AND WAGNER COLLEGE, STATEN ISLAND, NY.

Dr. Anthony DeLuca, Chaplain at Wagner College and SOCA Newsletter Advisor, has linked students from the College into becoming our SOCA NGO Youth Representatives to DPI. Students have been able to use their work at UN as part of Wagner academics.



COMMUNICATING ACROSS GENERATIONS: DEFINING THE CHALLENGE OF NEW LANGUAGE, NEW MEDIAM NEW RESERACH . DPI-NGO, DECEMBER 13, 2012.

Meeting attended by Dr. Anthony DeLuca and Patricia McCaffrey, Wagner College.

" One of the challenges. however, that we have faced since launching our social media initiatives has been to ensure that we are engaging all generations at equal levels. It is no secret that, when people are raised in different eras, their views of the world can vary, causing potential for communication barriers across generations. But with the 2015 deadline of the Millennium Goals rapidly approaching, and with much work still to be completed to achieve them, our only hope is to join forces across generations to tackle the pressing challenges facing our globe."

Inside Look at UN Actions & Events



“On this UN Day, let us reaffirm our individual commitment and our collective resolve to live up to the ideals of the United Nations Charter and build a better world for all.”

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

Message on the occasion of UN Day, 2012

In 1947, the UN General Assembly declared 24 October, the anniversary of the Charter of the United Nations, as which “shall be devoted to making known to the peoples of the world the aims and achievements of the United Nations and to gaining their support for” its work. In 1971 the General Assembly adopted another resolution (United Nations Resolution 2782), declaring that United Nations Day shall be an international holiday and recommended that it should be observed as a public holiday by all United Nations member states.

We are living through a period of profound turmoil, transition and transformation. Insecurity, inequality and intolerance are spreading. Global and national institutions are being put to the test. With so much at stake, the United Nations must keep pace across the spectrum of its activities — peace, development, human rights, the rule of law, the empowerment of the world's women and youth.

There has been important progress on many fronts. Extreme poverty has been cut in half since the year 2000. Democratic transitions are under way in many countries. There are encouraging signs of economic growth across the developing world.

Now is the time to raise our collective ambitions. With the 2015 deadline for the Millennium Development Goals fast approaching, we must intensify our efforts to reach all of these lifesaving targets. We must prepare a bold and practical post-2015 development agenda. And we must continue to combat intolerance, save people caught in conflicts and establish lasting peace.

The United Nations is not just a meeting place for diplomats. The United Nations is a peacekeeper disarming fighters, a health worker distributing medicine, a relief team aiding refugees, a human rights expert helping deliver justice.

In carrying out this global mission we rely on countless friends and supporters. Non-governmental organizations, scientists, scholars, philanthropists, religious leaders, business executives and

concerned citizens are critical to our success. No single leader, country or institution can do everything. But each of us, in our own way, can do something.

On this UN Day, let us reaffirm our individual commitment and our collective resolve to live up to the ideals of the United Nations Charter and build a better world for all.

Ban Ki-moon

AHEAD OF CLIMATE TALKS, UN REPORT WARNS GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS STILL INCREASING

New York, Nov 21, 2012

As countries prepare to meet next week at a major United Nations meeting on climate change, the world body today released a new report which finds that the concentration of warming gases like carbon dioxide (CO₂) has increased by 20 per cent since 2000.

The Emissions Gap Report, coordinated by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the European Climate Foundation, also shows that greenhouse gas emissions levels are now around 14 per cent above where they need to be in 2020.

“If no swift action is taken by nations, emissions are likely to be at 58 gigatonnes (Gt) in eight years’ time,” states the report, which has involved 55 scientists from more than 20 countries.

Previous assessment reports have underlined that emissions need to be on average at around 44 Gt or less in 2020 to lay the path for the even bigger reductions needed at a cost that is manageable.

Action on climate change needs to be scaled-up and accelerated without delay if the world is to have a running chance of keeping a global average temperature rise below two degrees Celsius this century, the report notes.

“There are two realities encapsulated in this report – that bridging the gap remains doable with existing technologies and policies; that there are many inspiring actions taking place at the national level on energy efficiency in buildings, investing in forests to avoid emissions linked with deforestation and new vehicle emissions standards alongside a remarkable growth in investment in new renewable energies worldwide, which in 2011 totaled close to \$260 billion,” said UNEP’s Executive Director, Achim Steiner.

“Yet the sobering fact remains that a transition to a low-carbon, inclusive green economy is happening far too slowly and the opportunity for meeting the 44 Gt target is narrowing annually,” he added.

The report estimates that large emission reductions are possible from sectors such as power generation, transport and forestry, as well as boosting the energy efficiency of buildings, which could help bridge the gap by 2020, in addition to providing examples of policies in each sector that countries can implement at a national level.

Greenhouse gases will feature prominently on the agenda of the UN Climate Change Conference beginning on Monday in the Qatar capital of Doha, and which brings together the 195 Parties to the

UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the parent treaty of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol.

“Governments meeting in Doha for COP18 now need to urgently implement existing decisions which will allow for a swifter transition towards a low-carbon and resilient world,” said the Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC, Christiana Figueres.

“This notably means amending the Kyoto Protocol, developing a clear vision of how greenhouse gases can be curbed globally before and after 2020, and completing the institutions required to help developing countries green their economies and adapt,” she added, “along with defining how the long-term climate finance that developing countries need can be mobilized. In addition, governments need to urgently identify how ambition can be raised.”

The Kyoto Protocol has been ratified by 192 of the UNFCCC Parties.

Under the Protocol, 37 States – consisting of highly industrialized countries and countries undergoing the process of transition to a market economy – have legally binding emission limitation and reduction commitments.

“Doha successfully concluded the previous round of climate negotiations, paving the way to a comprehensive, legally binding agreement by 2015,” said a statement issued by Mr. Ban's spokesperson.

“The Secretary-General believes that far more needs to be done and he calls on governments, along with businesses, civil society and citizens, to accelerate action on the ground so that the global temperature rises can be limited to 2 degrees Celsius,” it added.

Recent UN-led reports have pointed to the urgency of keeping global average temperatures from rising beyond an internationally agreed level of 2 degrees Celsius, beyond which climate change would have serious impacts.

Earlier this week, Mr. Ban had expressed his hope for five key “deliverables” by governments in Doha, beginning with the adoption of a ratifiable second commitment period of the Protocol.

He also expected progress on long-term climate finance, and ensuring that the institutions set up during previous conferences in Cancun and Durban to support mitigation and adaptation by developing countries – including the Green Climate Fund and the Climate Technology Centre and Network – are fully equipped and effective.

In addition, the Secretary-General expected governments to demonstrate, with no ambiguity, that negotiations on a global and legally binding instrument remain on track, and to show how they intend to act on the gap between mitigation pledges and what is required to achieve the 2 degrees target.

Today's statement said that Mr. Ban will increase his personal involvement in efforts “to raise ambition, scale-up climate financing, and engage world leaders as we now move towards the global agreement in 2015.”

Secretary-General's Message for 2012 International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

"Rampant poverty, which has festered for far too long, is linked to social unrest and threats to peace and security. On this International Day, let us make an investment in our common future by helping to lift people out of poverty so that they, in turn, can help to transform our world."

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

Message for the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

The International Day for the Eradication of Poverty has been observed every year since 1993, when the UN General Assembly, by resolution 47/196, designated this day to promote awareness of the need to eradicate poverty and destitution in all countries. Fighting poverty remains at the core of the UN development agenda.

For more information, as well as the message of the Secretary-General for the 2012 International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, visit the UN Webpages on poverty.

SENIOR UN OFFICIAL CONCERNED OVER KILLING OF SYRIAN CHILDREN AMIDST ONGOING VIOLENCE

New York, Oct 19, 2012

A United Nations senior official today expressed serious concern over the killing and maiming of children in Syria, particularly by Government forces.

"Too many children have been killed already," the UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Leila Zerrougui, said in a news statement.

Over the past few days, according to the statement, Syrian Government jets intensified airstrikes on residential areas, particularly in the provinces of Idlib and Aleppo, killing and injuring dozens of civilians. In one such attack on Maaret al-Numan village, two residential buildings and a mosque, where women and children were taking refuge, were destroyed, reportedly killing more than 20 children.

“I call upon all parties to the conflict in Syria to refrain from acts against the civilian population, including children, and to respect today’s call of the Secretary-General and the Arab League for a ceasefire, if not for the sake of Syrian children,” she said.

Earlier today, the Secretaries-General of the UN and the League of Arab States – Ban Ki-moon and Nabil El Araby – called on all warring parties in Syria to heed the call of their Joint Special Representative for the crisis, Lakhdar Brahimi, for a ceasefire in all its forms during the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Adha, and called on international actors to support this appeal.

Ms. Zerrougui echoed their calls, appealing to all parties to stop the violence to ensure the well-being Syrian children.

Taking place on Friday, 26 October, the religious observance of Eid al-Adha – or the Feast of the Sacrifice – commemorates the willingness of Abraham to sacrifice his son Ishmael as an act of obedience to God.

More than 20,000 people, mostly civilians, have died in Syria since the uprising against the regime of President Bashar al-Assad began some 20 months ago. A further 2.5 million Syrians urgently need humanitarian aid and more than 340,000 have fled to neighboring countries according to UN estimates.



The UN Security Council holds its first-ever debate on the rule of law and ICC. UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

As the United Nations (UN) Security Council (“Council”) yesterday held its first-ever debate on peace and justice with a special focus on the role of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Coalition members called on the Council to adopt a more consistent approach in its referrals of situations for investigation by the ICC prosecutor.

According to a concept note, the purpose of the debate was “to explore how the Court, as a tool of preventive diplomacy, can assist the Council in carrying out its mandate to uphold the rule of law, maintain peace and security, and combat impunity while ensuring accountability for mass atrocities. It would also examine how the relationship between the two bodies had developed over the past decade and to consider the way forward in strengthening their linkages.”

Opening remarks were given by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, followed by statements by ICC President Sang-Hyun Song, Phakiso Mochochoko of the ICC Office of the Prosecutor, and President of the Assembly of States Parties Ambassador Tiina Intelmann, as well some 50 UN member states.

Videos of the debate are available on the UN website

Under the Rome Statute—the ICC’s founding treaty—the Council has the power to refer situations for investigation by the ICC prosecutor. To date, the Council has referred the situation in Darfur, Sudan (2005), and in Libya (2011) to the ICC Prosecutor. There have been many calls for the ongoing situation in Syria to be referred to the ICC, including from many inside Syria, in neighboring states, the European Union, the Arab League, the Friends of Syria group, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay and civil society organizations the world over, including many Coalition members. However, a Council referral not been forthcoming.

In a May 2012 letter to UN member states, the Coalition expressed support for a proposal put forward by a group of five countries (Costa Rica, Jordan, Liechtenstein, Switzerland and Singapore), commonly referred to as the “S-5 Resolution”, calling on permanent members of the Council to consider “refraining from using a veto to block Council action aimed at preventing or ending genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.”

Switzerland also circulated a sign-on letter to the UN member states calling on the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the ICC prosecutor.

ERADICATING SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT NOT ‘A MISSION IMPOSSIBLE’ – UN SENIOR OFFICIAL

New York, Oct 18 2012

The elimination of sexual violence in conflict is not impossible, a United Nations senior official said today, stressing that to fully eradicate this scourge there needs to be a stronger political will from governments as well as adequate legal frameworks in place to prosecute perpetrators.

“As daunting as the road ahead is, I do not think eradicating sexual violence in conflict is a mission impossible,” the Secretary-General’s Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Zainab Bangura, told reporters in Geneva.

“We have the tools to combat this scourge, but we need the political will to implement the relevant Security Council resolutions and a commitment from governments to enforce them,” she added.

Ms. Bangura outlined six objectives she will pursue in her new capacity. They consist of: addressing impunity and justice for victims; protecting and empowering affected women; strengthening the political will for implementing Security Council resolutions pertaining strategies to combat and prosecute sexual violence; coordinating the response of the international community to sexual violence; understanding rape as tactic of war; and encouraging local and national ownership of the problem and its solution.

“Sexual violence in conflict needs to be treated as the war crime that it is,” she said. “It can no longer be written off or treated as an unfortunate collateral damage of war or unavoidable byproduct of political strife.”

Ms. Bangura also noted that sexual violence in conflict is no longer a gender issue as men and boys are increasingly becoming victims of sexual violence in conflict situations. In particular, she said, her office is monitoring the situation in Libya and Syria, where sexual violence has been used to get testimonies and information.

Ms. Bangura stressed that the problem is not particular of one region, but is recurrent all over the world. “This is not only a women’s issue and it is a global issue. It is occurring in Serbia, Cambodia, Sudan, Sri Lanka, Colombia, and Nepal, among others,” she said.

In addition, the Special Representative underlined that the focus must shift from the victim who is stigmatized by society to the perpetrator.

“We must work with national governments. We must allow them and force them to take leadership in this to be able to build a national framework that will be able to ensure that the cases are prosecuted and the victims have their day in court. Let us put the light on the perpetrators not the victims,” Ms. Bangura said, noting that to do this it will be necessary to build capacities to investigate sexual violence, train magistrates to prosecute these sexual violence crimes, and help countries build legal frameworks.

She added, “The message for perpetrators must be ‘there is no hiding place in the world. Wherever you are we will get you.’”

Defining al Qaeda

October 18, 2012 by Scott Stewart

The Obama administration's efforts to counter the threat posed by al Qaeda and the wider jihadist movement have been a contentious topic in the U.S. presidential race. Political rhetoric abounds on both sides; administration officials claim that al Qaeda has been seriously crippled, while some critics of the administration allege that the group is stronger than ever. As with most political rhetoric, both claims bear elements of truth, but the truth depends largely on how al Qaeda and jihadism are defined. Unfortunately, politicians and the media tend to define al Qaeda loosely and incorrectly.

The jihadist threat will persist regardless of who is elected president, so understanding the actors involved is critical. But a true understanding of those actors requires taxonomical acuity. It seems worthwhile, then, to revisit Stratfor's definitions of al Qaeda and the wider jihadist movement.

A Network of Networks

Al Qaeda, the group established by Osama bin Laden and his colleagues, was never very large -- there were never more than a few hundred actual members. We often refer to this group, now led by Ayman al-Zawahiri, as the al Qaeda core or al Qaeda prime. While the group's founders trained tens of thousands of men at their camps in Afghanistan and Sudan, they initially viewed themselves as a vanguard organization working with kindred groups to facilitate the jihad they believed was necessary to establish a global Islamic caliphate. Most of the men trained at al Qaeda camps were members of other organizations or were grassroots jihadists. The majority of them received basic paramilitary training, and only a select few were invited to receive additional training in terrorist tradecraft skills such as surveillance, document forgery and bomb making. Of this select group, only a few men were invited to join the al Qaeda core organization.

Bin Laden envisioned another purpose for al Qaeda: leading the charge against corrupt rulers in the Muslim world and against the United States, which he believed supported corrupt Muslim rulers. Al Qaeda sought to excise the United States from the Muslim world in much the same way that Hezbollah drove U.S. forces out of Lebanon and Somalia forced the U.S. withdrawal from Mogadishu.

Al Qaeda became a network of networks -- a trait demonstrated not only by its training methods but also in bin Laden's rhetoric. For example, bin Laden's 1998 "World Islamic Front" statement, which declared jihad against Jews and Crusaders, was signed by al-Zawahiri (who at the time was leading the Egyptian Islamic Jihad) and leaders of other groups, including the Egyptian Islamic Group, Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Pakistan and the Jihad Movement of Bangladesh.

Following the 9/11 attacks, the United States applied against the al Qaeda core the full pressure of its five counterterrorism levers: intelligence, military, law enforcement, diplomacy and financial sanctions. As a result, many al Qaeda members, eventually including bin Laden, were captured or killed and their assets were frozen. Such measures have ensured that the group remains small for operational security concerns. The remaining members of the group mostly are lying low in Pakistan near the Afghan border, and their isolation there has severely degraded their ability to conduct attacks. The al Qaeda core is now relegated to producing propaganda for guidance and inspiration for other jihadist elements. Despite the disproportionate amount of media attention given to statements from al-Zawahiri and Adam Gadahn, the al Qaeda core constitutes only a very small part of the larger jihadist movement. In fact, it has not conducted a successful terrorist attack in years.

However, the core group has not been destroyed. It could regenerate if the United States eased its pressure, but we believe that will be difficult given the loss of the charismatic bin Laden and his replacement by the irascible al-Zawahiri.

In any case, the jihadist movement transcends the al Qaeda core. In fact, Stratfor for years published an annual forecast of al Qaeda, but beginning in 2009, we intentionally changed the title

of the forecast to reflect the isolation and marginalization of the al Qaeda core and the ascendance of other jihadist actors. We believed our analysis needed to focus less on the al Qaeda core and more on the truly active and significant elements of the jihadist movement, including regional groups that have adopted the al Qaeda name and the array of grassroots jihadists.

Franchises and Grassroots

An element of the jihadist movement that is often loosely referred to as al Qaeda is the worldwide network of local or regional militant groups that have assumed al Qaeda's name or ideology. In many cases, the relationships between the leadership of these groups and the al Qaeda core began in the 1980s and 1990s.

Some groups have publicly claimed allegiance to the al Qaeda core, becoming what we refer to as franchise groups. These groups include al Qaeda in Iraq, al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. Even though these franchises bear the al Qaeda name, they are locally owned and operated. This means that the local commanders have significant latitude in how closely they follow the guidance and philosophy of the al Qaeda core.

Some franchise group leaders, such as AQAP's Nasir al-Wahayshi, maintain strong relationships with the al Qaeda core and are very closely aligned with the core's philosophy. Other leaders, such as Abu Musab Abd al-Wadoud of AQIM, are more distanced. In fact, AQIM has seen severe internal fighting over these doctrinal issues, and several former leaders of Algeria's Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat left the group because of this conflict. Further, it is widely believed that the death of Somali al Qaeda leader Fazul Abdullah Mohammed was arranged by leaders of Somali jihadist group al Shabaab, which he had criticized sharply.

The last and broadest element of the global jihadist movement often referred to as al Qaeda is what Stratfor refers to as grassroots jihadists. These are individuals or small cells of individuals that are inspired by the al Qaeda core -- or increasingly, by its franchise groups -- but that may have little or no actual connection to these groups. Some grassroots jihadists travel to places such as Pakistan or Yemen to receive training from the franchise groups. Other grassroots militants have no direct contact with other jihadist elements.

The core, the franchises and the grassroots jihadists are often interchangeably referred to as al Qaeda, but there are important differences among these actors that need to be recognized.

Important Distinctions

There are some other important distinctions that inform our terminology and our analysis. Not all jihadists are linked to al Qaeda, and not all militant Islamists are jihadists. Islamists are those who believe society is best governed by Islamic law, or Sharia. Militant Islamists are those who advocate the use of force to establish Sharia. Militant Islamists are found in both Islamic sects. Al Qaeda is a Sunni militant Islamist group, but Hezbollah is a Shiite militant Islamist group. Moreover, not all militant Muslims are Islamists. Some take up arms for tribal, territorial, ethnic or nationalistic reasons, or for a combination of reasons.

In places such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Libya and northern Mali, several militant groups are fighting foreign forces, their government or each other -- and sometimes all of the above. Some of these groups are jihadists, some are tribal militias, some are brigands and smugglers, and others are nationalists. Identifying, sorting and classifying these groups can be very difficult, and sometimes alliances shift or overlap. For example, Yemen's southern separatists will sometimes work with tribal militias or AQAP to fight against the government; other times, they fight against these would-be allies. We have seen similar dynamics in northern Mali among groups such as AQIM, Ansar Dine, the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa, various Tuareg groups and other tribal militias in the region.

Taxonomy becomes even more difficult when a group uses multiple names, or when multiple groups share a name. Groups adopt different names for discretion, confusion or public relations purposes. AQAP called itself Ansar al-Shariah during its fight to take over cities in southern Yemen and to govern the territory. But radical cleric Abu Hamza al-Masri, who was arrested in the United Kingdom in 2004 and extradited to the United States in 2012, has long led a movement likewise called Ansar al-Shariah. Even the Libyan jihadist militia that attacked the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi uses the same name. But just because these groups share a name, and just because members or leaders of the groups know each other, does not necessarily mean that they are chapters of the same group or network of groups, or that they even subscribe to the same ideology.

As we mentioned long before Moammar Gadhafi was ousted in Libya, jihadists and other militants thrive in power vacuums. This assertion has proved true in Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia, and more recently in Libya, northern Mali and now Syria. Weapons flooding into such regions only compound the problem.

Militant Islamists have seized the opportunity to grow in influence in such places, as have the subset of militant Islamists we call jihadists. So in this context, while the al Qaeda core has been crippled, other portions of the jihadist movement are thriving. This is especially so among those that aspire to mount local insurgencies rather than those more concerned with planning transnational attacks. The nuances are important because as the composition and objectives of jihadist groups change, so do their methods of attack.

AT MEMORIAL SERVICE, UNITED NATIONS PAYS TRIBUTE TO STAFF WHO FELL IN LINE OF DUTY

New York, Nov 14, 2012

United Nations staff, led by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, today paid tribute to colleagues who perished in the line of duty over the past year, at a memorial service at the world body's headquarters in New York.

"My fervent wish is that an event like this would never be necessary – that all our staff could do their job without facing risks to their lives," Mr. Ban said. "Yet we know that United Nations peacekeepers and all personnel are increasingly exposed to high risk environments."

Between 1 November 2011 to 31 August 2012, 29 men and women – civilian, military and police staff members – died across 11 duty stations around the world, representing 16 nationalities. Their deaths were due to malicious acts, natural disasters, accidents at work and other emergencies.

Mr. Ban called on governments to uphold their responsibility to provide security and prosecute those who target UN staff.

“Today is yet another reminder of the dangers and vulnerabilities of those serving around the world to promote the universal goals of the United Nations Charter,” Mr. Ban said. “It is also a moment to take strength and resolve to carry forward the work for which our fallen colleagues gave everything.”

“Let us resolve to continue that vital work in the name and memory of all those we honor today. May the rest in peace and eternity as we carry on their vital mission,” he added.

While ceremonies to honor fallen UN staff are held on an individual basis, last year marked the first time that a ceremony to honor pay tribute to all of them was held.

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL’S MESSAGE FOR INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR TOLERANCE

16 November 2012

Building tolerance and understanding is fundamental for the twenty-first century. In an increasingly globalized world – in which societies are growing more diverse – tolerance is central to living together.

Yet tolerance is being tested. In the face of economic and social pressures, some seek to exploit fears and highlight differences to stoke hatred of minorities, immigrants and the disadvantaged. To counter the rise of ignorance, extremism and hate-based political appeals, the moderate majority must speak up for shared values and against all forms of discrimination.

Our goal must be more than peaceful coexistence. True tolerance requires the free flow of ideas, quality education for all, respect for human rights, and the sharing of cultures for mutual understanding. As we advance these values, let us draw strength and guidance from the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity.

Tolerance is both a condition of peace and an engine for creativity and innovation. In our evermore interconnected world, promoting tolerance is the way to build the harmony we need to address pressing challenges and secure a better future.

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL MESSAGE ON WORLD DIABETES DAY

14 November 2012

Diabetes is one of the most common non-communicable diseases. Three hundred and fifty million people worldwide live with diabetes – 80 per cent of them in the developing world – and the disease is becoming more widespread each year due to a combination of ageing populations and the globalization of unhealthy lifestyles.

Unless diagnosed and treated early, diabetes can lead to serious ill-health. Every year, more than three million people who have had diabetes die from problems such as heart attacks, strokes and kidney failure. According to the World Health Organization, diabetes-related deaths will increase by two-thirds by 2030.

Diabetes is a development issue. The poor are disproportionately at risk, and affected families are often pushed further into poverty. Diabetes is also straining national health systems and threatening to reverse hard-won development gains in low- and middle-income countries, as well as the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

Governments across the globe are struggling to protect their citizens from factors that increase the risk of diabetes. These include unhealthy diet, physical inactivity and alcohol abuse. Many governments also face challenges in providing essential diabetes information, treatment and care to those who need them most.

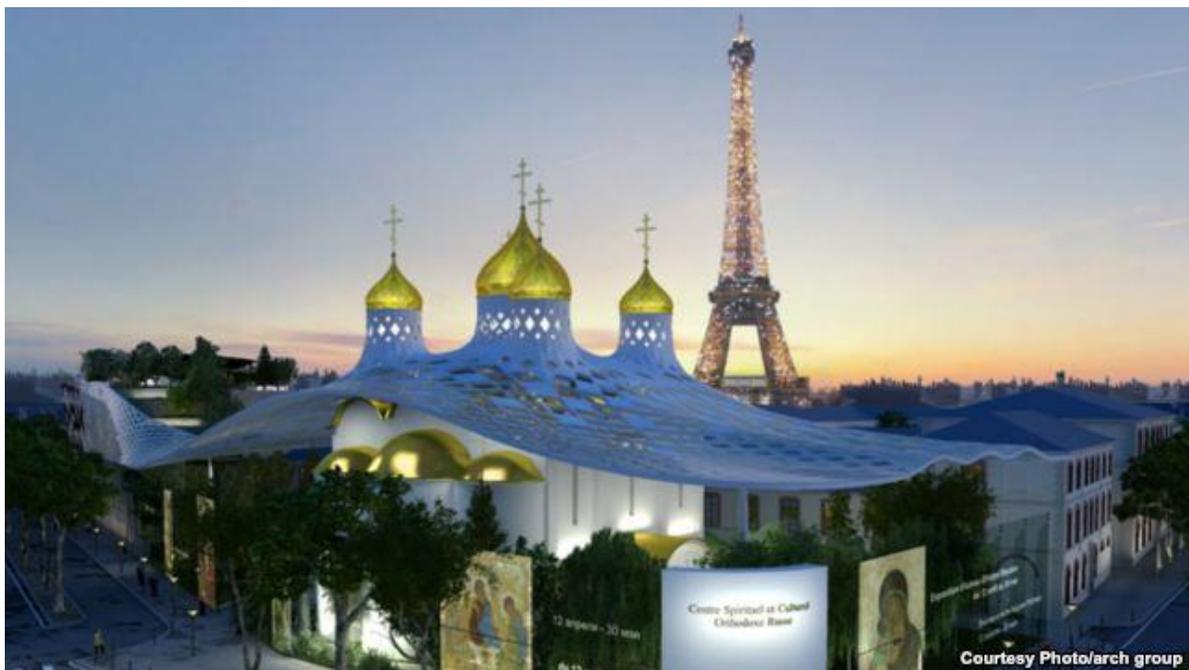
In September 2011, the United Nations General Assembly recognized diabetes and other non-communicable diseases as a global health and development challenge, and committed to strengthen their prevention and control. At the World Health Assembly in May 2012, Governments established a new and welcome goal of reducing premature mortality caused by chronic diseases by 25 per cent by 2025.

We can significantly advance this goal by raising awareness of the threat of diabetes. Physical activity and healthy diet are effective remedies that should be actively promoted by all governments. Primary health care should be strengthened to diagnose and treat diabetes early. Health companies can contribute by developing affordable medicines and technologies, such as low-cost devices to check blood sugar. And businesses – especially those that profit from selling processed foods to children – can commit to marketing healthier, more sustainable goods.

On this World Diabetes Day, let us commit to greater collective effort to prevent diabetes and improve the quality of life of all who suffer from it, particularly the poor and disadvantaged.

[Onion Domes On The Seine? Orthodox Cathedral Sparks Controversy In Paris](#)

By Antoine Blua



November 13, 2012

Orthodox cathedrals with their trademark golden onion domes are a familiar sight across Russia. And one may soon become part of Paris's famed skyline, near the Eiffel Tower.

French President Francois Hollande has just weeks to decide on a controversial plan to build a massive Russian Orthodox Spiritual and Cultural Center in downtown Paris on the banks of the Seine River, on a UNESCO-protected world heritage site.

The project is staunchly opposed by Paris Mayor Bertrand Delanoë, who has described the architecture as "pastiche" and "mediocre." But Moscow is reportedly putting diplomatic pressure on Hollande to approve the project and allow construction of the golden-domed, white limestone and glass structure to proceed.

In 2011, the online real-estate television station La Chaine Immo announced plans for the cathedral with enthusiasm, describing the building as a "happy marriage between tradition and modernity."

According to the report, architect Manuel Nunez Yanowsky's design comprises "two buildings dominated by five bulbs, one of which will be 27-meters high. An immense glass veil will serve as a roof and a 3,400-square-meter garden will be open to the public."

However, opposition to this ambitious plan has quickly mounted in the French capital, where preserving the integrity of the city's famed architecture is taken seriously.

In February of this year, Delanoë called on UNESCO to prevent the project's authorization.

In response, Viktor Khrekov, a spokesman for the Kremlin Property Office, said Delanoë was only expressing "his personal opinion," which "has no legal significance."

Hollande's Dilemma

The reported deadline for Hollande to make a decision is November 29. With this red-letter day looming, the president finds himself on the horns of a dilemma.

As the French weekly "Journal du Dimanche" reported on November 11, he could either defy Delanoë, a close political ally, or risk straining diplomatic relations with Moscow.

The weekly added that Aleksandr Orlov, the Russian ambassador to France, has been calling officials nonstop to press for the project's approval.

Adding to the pressure, the cathedral is expected to be on the agenda when Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev visits Paris for talks with Hollande on November 27, just two days before the deadline.



Russia reportedly spent 70 million euros on the 4,500 square meters of land where the cathedral is to be built. (artist's impression)

On November 12, Delanoë reiterated his "aesthetic" opposition to the project, telling journalists that it would create a "bad image" of Russia and Orthodox religious authorities.

In what appears to be an attempt to find a compromise, the French Culture Ministry says it is holding talks with Russian government and Orthodox Church officials to identify "adaptations and improvements to the project to permit its construction."

'A Strong Symbolic Place'

Mikhail Krymov, who works at the Moscow-based Arch Group architectural firm that participated in the original project, told RFE/RL that his company was "required to sign a contract agreeing to leave the project."

"I really don't know what's going on," he said. "I suspect the project has changed a lot. How it has changed, I don't know. I don't know how much the building that is meant to be built corresponds to the original concept. Perhaps the two are exactly the same or perhaps they have changed it completely."

In 2010, Russia reportedly spent 70 million euros (\$91 million) on the 4,500 square meters of land where the cathedral is to be built. An official request for construction was filed in January 2012, with total costs estimated at more than 30 million euros.

According to French media reports, the idea for the project, aimed at promoting "Russian civilization," came directly from President Vladimir Putin.

In a 2010 interview, Ambassador Orlov described it as "unique by its location and its nature." He noted that tens of thousands of Russians live in or near Paris and that a "strong symbolic place" was needed for them.

Paris's Aleksandr Nevsky Cathedral currently houses the archbishop's palace of the Russian Orthodox Churches in Western Europe. At least two other Russian Orthodox churches are located in the French capital.

ON WORLD PHILOSOPHY DAY, UN HIGHLIGHTS IMPORTANCE OF CRITICAL THINKING AND REFLECTION

New York, Nov 15, 2012

The diversity of philosophies prevalent around the world is humanity's greatest asset to building an inclusive and tolerant global citizenry, the head of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) said today, marking the tenth edition of World Philosophy Day.

In her message for the Day, UNESCO's Director-General, Irina Bokova, called on nations to invest more in philosophical training for schoolchildren while stressing the "urgent need" to pass on to the world's youth "the taste for philosophy, its rigor and its joys, from the earliest age."

"UNESCO reaffirms the power of philosophy to change the world, because it can help us to change ourselves by giving weight to our indignation before injustice, lucidity to ask the right questions, and conviction to defend human dignity," Ms. Bokova said.

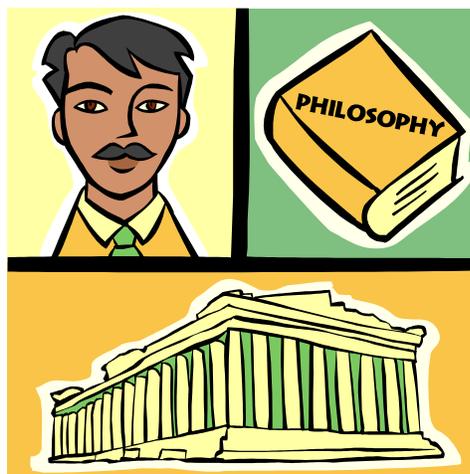
"In all these ways, it holds the key to a new humanism," she added, underlining the significance of philosophy in making "sense of questions of peace and sustainable development."

World Philosophy Day is celebrated every third Thursday of November since 2002, with the aim of making philosophical reflection accessible to all -- professors and students, scholars and the general public -- thereby enlarging the opportunities and spaces for the stimulation of critical thinking and debate.

The Day -- for which the theme this year is 'future generations' -- is being celebrated with a number of events, including roundtables, debates and concerts, held in Paris, where UNESCO is headquartered, and at other venues around the world. In addition, a group of schoolchildren will place messages in a time capsule destined to be eventually opened by children of their own age in the year 2062.

Ms. Bokova pointed out that the philosophical tradition was both a meeting point and a culmination of UNESCO's mandate, providing meaning to the content of culture and science and drawing on the free movement of ideas.

"Beyond all of our differences, we are all equal in the exercise of reason," she continued. "This is the sure way to build fairer, more equitable societies, sustained by the energy of critical thinking."



RELIGION NEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Torkom Manoogian, Archbishop of Armenian Orthodox Church, Dies at 93



**His Beatitude
Archbishop Torkom Manoogian
96th Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem**

Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, the longtime leader of the Armenian Orthodox Church in the United States and a savvy communicator who used his pulpit in New York to broaden public awareness of the Armenian genocide, died on Oct. 12 in Jerusalem. He was 93.



Archbishop Torkom Manoogian presides over the traditional Armenian Easter celebrations.

He had been hospitalized since January with cardiac problems, church officials said in announcing his death.

From 1966 to 1990, Archbishop Manoogian was primate of the [Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church in America](#), the larger of two dioceses in this country, where most of about 700,000 church members live. (The Western Diocese comprises Arizona and California.)

A skilled fund-raiser, the archbishop led the final phases of construction of [St. Vartan's Cathedral](#), the first Armenian cathedral in North America. A work in progress on the East Side of Manhattan (Second Avenue at 34th Street) since the 1950s, the cathedral, with a gilded 120-foot-tall dome, was consecrated in 1968 in a ceremony attended by the city's civic and religious leaders, including Mayor John V. Lindsay.

In April 1975, to mark the 60th anniversary of the start of the Armenian blood bath, Archbishop Manoogian sponsored a series of public events, including one at Madison Square Garden, that brought new attention to the mass deaths and the Turkish government's continued refusal to accept responsibility for them as acts of genocide.

Like many ethnic Armenians in the United States, Archbishop Manoogian was a descendant of the large Christian population that was expelled from what is now Turkey in a campaign of ethnic cleansing undertaken by the Ottoman military between 1915 and 1923. An estimated one million Armenians were killed or starved to death. The archbishop was born in an Armenian refugee camp near Baghdad after his parents fled their Turkish town during the killings.

The Turkish government maintains that many died on both sides of an ethnic conflict between Armenians and Turks during World War I, but that Turkish authorities never adopted a program of genocide. Armenians have long demanded Turkish atonement for what most historians consider the first organized genocide of the century.

Archbishop Manoogian enlisted the American Catholic Conference, the American Jewish Committee and the Islamic Center of Washington to join in demanding that Turkey acknowledge the atrocities. Gov. Hugh L. Carey of New York signed a proclamation demanding the same.

The historian Barbara W. Tuchman, whose grandfather Henry Morgenthau Sr. was the United States ambassador to the [Ottoman Empire](#) in 1915, related his eyewitness account of the massacres before a standing-room-only crowd at the Felt Forum in Madison Square Garden.

Peter Balakian, author of ["The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America's Response,"](#) said the scale of the 1975 commemoration was groundbreaking and well timed.

"Holocaust studies and a new American human rights culture had emerged in the '60s and '70s," he said, and "the archbishop was astute in seizing that moment" to place the Armenian genocide "within the new arc of Americans' commemorative memory."

Several days of 60th-anniversary observances culminated in a march from St. Vartan's Cathedral past the United Nations and into St. Patrick's Cathedral. There, in his sermon, Archbishop Manoogian addressed an audience of survivors, their descendants and other supporters.

"We are here," he said. "And we were not supposed to be."

Many were involved in organizing the events, but Archbishop Manoogian was the survivors' spokesman, said Christopher Zakian, a diocese spokesman and editor of ["The Torch Was Passed: The Centennial History of the Armenian Church of America."](#)

"He was a witness to the genocide," Mr. Zakian said. "And — not saying this to diminish his dignity and stature in any way — he was also a P.R. genius."

Torkom Manoogian was born on Feb. 16, 1919, one of six children of Nargiz and Vahan Manoogian. His parents owned a photography studio in a southeastern Turkish town near the Iraq border. He was sent to school in Jerusalem at 12 and ordained as a priest in 1939.

He arrived in the United States for the first of several church assignments in 1946, serving in California and Pennsylvania. He was primate of the Western Diocese in 1962 and named a bishop the same year. He became an archbishop in 1966, soon after he arrived in New York.

After the 1988 earthquake in Armenia, which killed more than 50,000 and left many more homeless, he spearheaded church relief efforts in the United States.

In 1990, Archbishop Manoogian was appointed patriarch of Jerusalem, a primarily diplomatic post that he held until his death.

Archbishop Manoogian was an authority on Armenian sacred music and on the work of the musician-priest Komitas, who became mentally ill during the Armenian genocide and is considered one of its martyrs. He died in 1995 in Paris. The archbishop also wrote poetry under the name Shen Mah and completed an Armenian translation of Shakespeare's sonnets.

His survivors include a sister, Dzovig Devletian, and two brothers, Khachig and Sooren, all of whom live in the United States.

Remembering Archbishop Torkom Manoogian



22 October 2012

Reflections of Archbishop Khajag Barsamian

On Monday, October 22, 2012, the funeral service was performed for His Beatitude Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, of blessed memory, the late 96th Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem, and former Primate of the Eastern Diocese, who passed away on October 12. On the prior evening, the casket was carried in a procession from the Jaffa Gate to Sts. James Armenian Cathedral, where the Divine Liturgy was celebrated on Monday morning. The Patriarch was subsequently interred at the Holy Savior Monastery at the Zion Gate.

Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Diocesan Primate, has been in Jerusalem this week, to pay his final respects to Patriarch Torkom. What follows is his reflection on the Patriarch's life and ministry.

IN THE HOLY CITY OF JERUSALEM TODAY—after a procession through the streets once walked by Jesus Christ, and having observed the ancient rituals of the Armenian Church—we laid to rest the mortal remains of the 96th Armenian Patriarch: His Beatitude Archbishop Torkom Manoogian.

It has been a day to reflect on history: the history of Jerusalem itself; the history of the Armenian Patriarchate; and the history of a single man's life, spent in humble, devoted service to our church, our people, and our risen Lord.

One moment of history I envision happened almost a half-century ago. It was 1968, and His Holiness Vasken I, the late, great Catholicos of All Armenians, was departing from America, having recently consecrated St. Vartan Cathedral in New York. In a parting statement to the community, Vasken Vehapar had this to say:

"We convey our affection to Archbishop Torkom, who is a youthful and energetic asset, a ray of hope for you and for us. We see that his task is difficult: a heavy responsibility weighs upon his shoulders. Help him; gather round him—hand in hand, clergy and laymen alike—so that in an atmosphere of solidarity and a spirit of unity you may accomplish even greater things than you have thus far."

Vehapar spoke to the Armenians of America as a proud father giving encouragement to his children. And chief among those children was the talented *arajnort* of the Diocese: Torkom Srpazan.

In the years—the long years—that followed, that relationship grew, and became deeper. To Vasken Vehapar, Torkom Srpazan was like the son whom a father relies on to uphold the family honor and name. And Torkom Srpazan was more than a son to the Catholicos: he was his close advisor, his loyal champion in the field, his strong right arm who always lifted up the Catholicos and the dignity of our church.

I personally saw this relationship expressed again and again: during the Karabagh crisis; at the time of the earthquake; and in countless moments behind the scenes.

I recall these matters because they show that Torkom Srpazan, throughout his ministry, was not merely a talented priest, or an energetic primate, or a distinguished patriarch. He was one of the very few churchmen of his generation to carry the weight of our church on his shoulders.

To be sure, he shared that weight with others. But even in that small group of indispensable figures, Torkom Manoogian was the one who stood out: who *shined*; and who seemed to combine all the grace and dignity of the Armenian past, with all our fondest hopes and aspirations for the future.

He came out of the deserts of Baghdad: a boy with the name of Avedis. And when he chose to answer our Lord's call to become a priest, it was indeed a *medz avedis* for an Armenian Church which bore the fresh scars of the Genocide.

From the positions of authority he occupied—whether at St. Vartan Cathedral, or the Throne of St. James—Torkom Srpazan was a man of towering stature in religious and national life. He was a fixture in ecumenical and interfaith circles, who built enduring relationships, and friendships, with his fellow religious leaders.

To thousands of people across our Diocese—not only in our parishes, but in the surrounding society—Torkom Srpazan was the compassionate face of the Armenian Church of America: vigorous, spiritual, always impressive.

His was the beautiful, poetic voice of our people—advocating forcefully for our rights and aspirations, while always exemplifying the great Armenian civilization that had bestowed works of profound art and spirituality on world culture.

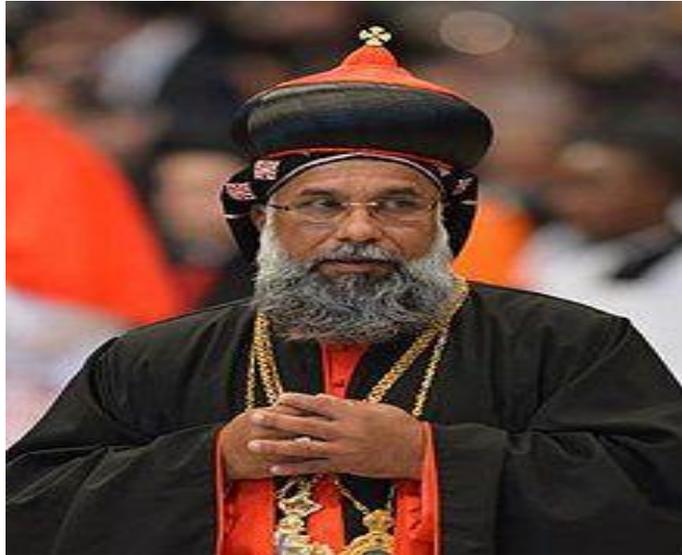
Above all, Archbishop Torkom insisted on the dignity of the Church, as the foremost institution of the Armenian nation: the greatest expression of our national genius. It was through the church, he reminded us, that the Armenians had produced a Vartan, a Nersess Shnorhali, a Krikor Naregets, and a Gomidas Vartabed.

Now today, we bury Torkom Srpazan alongside figures of similar stature: the Armenian Patriarchs of ages past. We remember his name with theirs: Koushagian, Tourian—all the way back to Abraham the Chain-bearer. And we affirm that, surely, *this* is the company in which Patriarch Torkom belongs for all eternity.

Now, in death, they are all together—along with our other great figures like Gomidas, and Vasken Vehapar, and others too numerous to name. From the perspective of the world, they are all together in history. But to us as followers of the risen Christ, *they are alive*, and merely sleeping; waiting for the day when they will join in that heavenly chorus of the saints—to which Torkom Manoogian aspired his entire life, and where his strong, powerful, inspirational voice will be heard once again.

Today we cherish and bless his memory, and express gratitude to God, as we pray for the soul of His devoted, princely servant. Amen.

Baselios Mar Cleemis, Major Archbishop of the Syro Malankara Catholic Church, Cardinal of the Catholic Church



ROME Nov 25: The Christian Church in Kerala grabbed international attention for the second time this year as Pope Benedict XVI installed Baselios Mar Cleemis, Major Archbishop of the Syro Malankara Catholic Church, Cardinal of the Catholic Church at a ceremony at the St. Peter's Basilica in The Vatican on Saturday.

The Pontiff placed the beret and presented Mar Cleemis the ring at 4.10 p.m., marking a new high for the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. Along with him, the Pope installed five other Cardinals, all of them, like Mar Cleemis, from non-European nations. Earlier this year, the Pope had installed Mar George Alancherry of the Syro Malabar Catholic Church Cardinal. With Mar Cleemis' ascent to the College of Cardinals, Kerala has the rare distinction of being home to two Cardinals.

As the Pontiff placed the red and black beret, specially crafted to symbolize the traditions of the oriental Church, over Mar Cleemis' head, loud cheers and prayers rose from the hundreds who had gathered at the St. Mary's Basilica at Pattom here and at his hometown Mallappally in Pathanamthitta district to watch the historic moment live on TV.

At The Vatican, an official delegation led by Rajya Sabha deputy chairman P.J. Kurien, Union Minister of State for Civil Aviation K.C. Venugopal and E.T. Mohammed Basheer and Jose K. Mani, both MPs, a delegation representing the capital city led by Mayor K. Chandrika, Cardinals led by Cardinal George Alancherry, and Thiruvananthapuram Latin Archbishop Susaipakiam, all Bishops of the Syro Malankara Catholic Church, and a multi-religious delegation comprising Swami Sookshmananda of the Sivagiri Math, Palayam Imam Jamaluddin Mankada, Swami Gururathnam Jnanathapaswi of the Santhigiri Ashram, Bishop Joseph Barnabas of the Marthoma Church, CSI Bishop Dharmaraj Rasalam, among others, were present to witness the installation of the new Cardinal.

Shortly after his installation, the new Cardinal told television channels: “I place on record my respect for our nation. Let Kerala receive the blessings of God. I pray for all Malayalis. Let God lead our State from prosperity to greater prosperity”.



Tutu with his daughter Mpho Andrea

UN HONOURS ARCHBISHOP EMERITUS DESMOND TUTU FOR HIS CONTRIBUTION TO HUMAN RIGHTS

New York, Nov 28, 2012

Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and activist Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu will be honored for his contribution to building a universal culture of human rights around the world, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) announced today.

Mr. Tutu was selected to receive this year’s UNESCO/Bilbao Prize, for “the outstanding role he played in building the new democratic, non-racial South Africa and his invaluable contribution as Chairperson of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, to national reconstruction which became a model for other post-conflict societies,” the agency said in a news release.

The Prize recognizes his activism, particularly with young people, to promote non-violence and oppose all forms of discrimination and injustice.

The jury also stressed Mr. Tutu’s contribution to the work of the UN on various human rights issues, including the promotion of a culture of human rights.

Mr. Tutu will be formally awarded the prize on 10 December, which is observed globally as Human Rights Day, by UNESCO’s Director-General, Irina Bokova, at the agency’s headquarters in Paris. The

Mayor of Bilbao, Iñaki Azkuna, will also be in attendance.

During the ceremony, the 80 singers of the Choir Invisible, Desmond and Leah Tutu Choir for Peace, UK, will perform a capella compositions inspired by South African gospel and soul music to lyrics by Archbishop Tutu.

The UNESCO/Bilbao Prize is given out every two years and is funded by a donation from the Spanish city. It succeeded the UNESCO Prize for Human Rights Education that was set up 30 years ago. The Prize includes a \$30,000 cheque, a diploma and a bronze trophy designed by Japanese artist Toshimi Ishii.

The prize was first awarded to Stéphane Hessel, a French human rights advocate, in 2008.

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL--MESSAGE ON HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

10 December 2012

Everyone has the right to be heard and to shape the decisions that affect their community. This right is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and fully integrated in international law, especially in article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Over the past century, we have made undeniable progress along the path of inclusion.

Yet far too many groups and individuals face far too many obstacles. Women have the right to vote almost everywhere, but remain hugely under-represented in parliaments and peace processes, in senior government posts and corporate boardrooms, and in other decision-making positions. Indigenous people frequently face discrimination that denies them the opportunity to make full use of their guaranteed rights or fails to take account of their circumstances. Religious and ethnic minorities – as well as people with disabilities or those with a different sexual orientation or political opinion – are often hampered from taking part in key institutions and processes. Institutions and public discourse need to represent societies in all their diversity.

More generally, in several parts of the world, we have seen alarming threats to hard-won gains in democratic governance. In some countries, civil society groups face growing pressures and restrictions. Legislation has been introduced specifically targeting civil society organizations and making it almost impossible for them to operate. Champions of democracy have encountered new confrontational measures. We should all be troubled by such backsliding.

Even in societies with a good track record, there is room for improvement. No country has succeeded in ensuring that all its inhabitants are able to participate fully in public affairs, including the right to be elected to public office and to have equal access to public services.

Enacting new rights or removing unjust laws is not always sufficient. Too often, discrimination persists in practice, creating barriers and mindsets that can be hard to overcome.

Vibrant civil society groups are among the keys to the well-being and functioning of any nation, and the United Nations deplores measures taken to suppress them. That is why, on this Human Right Day, the United Nations is highlighting the right to participate and the associated rights that make it possible – freedom of expression and opinion, and peaceful assembly and association.

International law is clear: No matter who you are, or where you live, your voice counts. On this Day, let us unite to defend your right to make it heard.



LOCAL ECCLESIASTICAL NEWS

Parliament Member from Sweden Visits with Mor Cyril Aphrem Karim



Robert Halaf, a member of the Swedish Parliament from the Christian Democratic Party visited His Eminence Mor Cyril Aphrem Karim on August 31, 2012. Discussions were had about the present situation in Syria and the struggle of our Syriac Orthodox Church and people due to the present circumstances in that country. His Eminence voiced his deep concern about the safety and wellbeing of our people and asked Mr. Halaf to do what he can to be of assistance to them in light of his position in the Parliament. Mr. Halaf also shared his concern with His Eminence and assured the Archbishop of his support in the matter. Mr. Halaf, along with a delegation from Sweden, is presently visiting the United Nations in New York City. Gabriel Akyon, Habib Howsho and Lahdo Yildiz, of our St. Gabriel Parish in Hackensack, accompanied Mr. Halaf during his visit with the Archbishop.

Immediately after the meeting, Mor Cyril Aphrem Karim accompanied the honored guest for a tour of the Midland Avenue Property and shared the plans for the new Archdiocesan Center with him.

Also present at the meeting was the Very Rev. Fr. Yacoub Tahan, pastor of the Mother of God of the Zunoro Cathedral in Homs Syria who is also visiting our Archdiocese and Elias Sarkar, AEC Public Relations

His Holiness the Patriarch and Members of the Holy Synod visit the President of Lebanon



On Thursday, September 13th at 10am, His Holiness the Patriarch of Antioch and all the East, His Holiness Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas, accompanied by members of the Holy Synod, their Eminences the Archbishops of the Church, visited the President of Lebanon, His Excellency Mr. Michael Sleiman. In his opening remarks His Holiness thanked President Sleiman for receiving the members of the Holy Synod. His Holiness highlighted the role of the president in ensuring stability and peace in Lebanon at a time when the region is going through very difficult times. In his answering remarks, the president of Lebanon offered his best wishes for the success of the Holy Synod meetings. He likewise, expressed his appreciation to the Syriac Orthodox Church for its many contributions to the Lebanese society.

The visit comes during the convocation of the Holy Synod which is held at the Patriarchal Institutions in Atchaneh, Lebanon from September 10-15.

Statement of the Holy Synod of the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch



September 10 – 14, 2012

St. Jacob Baradeus Convent, Atchaneh, Lebanon

The Holy Synod, presided by His Holiness Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas, Patriarch of the Holy See of Antioch and all the East, Supreme Head of the Universal Syrian Orthodox Church in the World, convened at St. Jacob Baradeus' Convent in Atchaneh-Bikfaya, Lebanon, from September 10th till the 14th.

The opening session started with prayers and supplications to the Lord for blessing the Holy Synod and allowing it to convene in Atchaneh, where once before the Holy Synod convened in 1971.

Present from all over the world were their Eminences, Archbishops and Bishops, of the Apostolic See of Antioch. They discussed the situation of the Church in general and the Middle East, particularly in Syria, Iraq and Lebanon, where people are experiencing difficult times. The Hierarchs prayed for peace and tranquility to dwell there for all denominations, faiths and religions. They also prayed for mercy and eternal rest for the souls of the victims who died, healing for those afflicted with wounds or infirmities and for the gathering of those who have been displaced and forced out of their homes.

The holy fathers stressed on the fact that the Middle East countries ARE our homeland that we are proud to belong to, where our Lord and God was born and raised. Our forefathers lived there from ancient times. They were the ones who established the first civilizations of the world. Today we share with our brothers and sisters the same life and destiny. We are filled with sorrow for the immense catastrophes, troubles, instabilities and violence that people face, especially loss of life and violations of human dignity, places of worship and religious, social and national institutions.

It pains the Church fathers to see what is happening in Beloved Syria, which carries our name and embraces our civilization and heritage. It likewise embraces the Apostolic See of Antioch. They prayed for stability and peace for people and institutions.

The Holy Synod feels the responsibility of all parties to stop violence, the language of weapons, killings and violations at all levels. They urge everyone

to promote the dialogue of peace, which is basic for all reforms and solutions of the current crises. In this regard, they wish to affirm that the only official speaker on behalf of the Syrian Orthodox Church is the Holy Synod, headed by the Patriarch, who represents our Church and people in local, regional and international arenas throughout the world.

The Church fathers are convinced that the best service men of good conscience and good will can offer is prayer and supplications to God Almighty, to ease the difficult times peoples of this area are going through, and to bring back home the refugees and displaced families; for immigrations from our countries are a killing hemorrhage that erases our identity and threatens our existence in the land of our forefathers and destroys our authentic heritage.

The convened fathers discussed the following subjects that were on the Synod's agenda:

The situation of the Church in the Middle East.

Our Church affairs in India.

The affairs of Our Archdioceses in the entire world.

Our role in the Ecumenical movement.

The date of celebrating the feast of Easter.

The role of laymen in the service of the Church.

Other topics.

Fathers of the Holy Synod concluded their meetings by urging children of the church to be patient and take the Lord as their refuge, for He answers the believers' requests. They asked all, first and foremost, to resort to words of wisdom and dialogue as a principle that leads to safety. People who work for peace deserve God's promise: "Blessed are the peace makers, for they are called the children of God". Matthew 5:9.

Demolition Now in Process at Midland Avenue



Demolition work at the existing Archdiocesan Center Building on Midland Avenue in Paramus is in progress and on schedule. The interior of the five floor building is being demolished and being prepared for renovation to

accommodate the new Archdiocesan Center. According to Biniamin Malki, Archdiocesan representative on site, the fourth and fifth floors are completely demolished and the remaining floors will require a week each with the exception of the first floor which will take approximately three weeks. Mr. Malki said, “Barring any unforeseen issues, we should be ready for the renovation to begin by the end of November.” The demolition work is being carried out by Hanna’s Construction.

His Eminence Mor Cyril Aphrem Karim Ordained Dr. George Kiraz Deacon (Ewangeloyo)



On Sunday evening, October 14 at St. Mark’s Cathedral, His Eminence Mor Cyril Aphrem Karim ordained Dr. George Kiraz Deacon (Ewangeloyo) in a grand ceremony which included numerous clergy and deacons from the archdiocese. Guests at the ordination ceremony included Syriac scholars from Ivy League Universities from the United States and Europe, notably Dr. Sebastian Brock and Dr. Margaret McVey.

In his address, His Eminence praised Dr. Kiraz for his contributions to the Syriac Orthodox worldwide community and his commitment to our Holy Church noting that Dr. Kiraz is truly worthy of being an Ewangeloyo. The Archbishop said that Dr. Kiraz is admired by many of his piers for his accomplishment and also acknowledged Dr. Christine Kiraz, the newly ordained deacon’s wife, for her support of her husband’s mission of promoting and fostering Suryoyutho.

Immediately following the ordination ceremony, a procession was carried out with Dr. George Kiraz and his family being escorted by his fellow deacons into the Cathedral’s Social Hall. This was followed by the introduction of His Eminence Mor Cyril Aphrem Karim escorted by an entourage of clergy from the Archdiocese. The Archbishop was received by the faithful with a standing ovation and continuous applause. The traditional “To Bashlom” was sung by the clergy, deacons and all the faithful in Honor of His Eminence. At the

conclusion of the grand entrance, His Eminence gave his blessings to all those in attendance. Everyone present was invited by George and Christine Kiraz to enjoy a sit down dinner, which they offered, in appreciation for sharing this blessed and happy occasion with them.

Annual Oriental Orthodox-Roman Catholic Consultation



The annual Oriental Orthodox -Roman Catholic Consultation was held at the Divine Compassion Spirituality Center in White Plains, New York Monday, October 15th – Tuesday, October 16th.

Meetings held on both days were chaired by the two co-chairs of the Consultation; His Excellency Howard Hubbard, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Albany, NY and His Eminence Mor Cyril Aphrem Karim, Archbishop of the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch for the Eastern USA. Archbishop Aphrem Karim was accompanied by Rev. Fr. Eli Shabo and Rev. Fr. Joseph Chamoun. In addition to the Roman Catholic members of the consultation, participants included representation from the Armenian Orthodox Church, Coptic Orthodox Church, Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Malankara Archdiocese of our Syrian Orthodox Church.

The two major topics of discussion included ministry to the new immigrants and Christians in the Middle East, in light of His Holiness Pope Benedict's visit to Lebanon

last month. Ms. Julianne Barsoum Jabaly reported on our Archdiocese's effort in resettling the new immigrants and refugees who came from the Middle East in recent years.



New Sunday School Curriculum Resources

The journey to creating an innovative curriculum for the Syriac Orthodox Church has been a long one. After decades of efforts from many people, Parables & Books has been working diligently for the past year on a new unified Sunday school curriculum to be implemented by both the archdioceses of the East Coast and West Coast of America. This monumental endeavor marks the first time a curriculum of such magnitude will be produced.

In its final form, eight distinct grade levels will be available complete with student workbooks, teachers' manuals and various supplemental materials including posters, additional activity/coloring pages and more.

His Holiness Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas Blesses the New Sunday School Curriculum



His Holiness Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas blesses the new Sunday school curriculum with His Eminence Mor Cyril Aphrem Karim and His Eminence Mor Clemis Eugene Kaplan during the Holy Synod of the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch, in Lebanon.

We thank everyone who contributed to making this dream come into a reality.

The Patriarchal Secretary Fr. Matta Alkhoury is consecrated as an Archbishop



On Sunday, the 4th of November 2012, at 10 o'clock in the morning, His Holiness, Moran Mor Zakka I Iwas, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East, celebrated the Holy Qurbano (Divine Liturgy) at Sts. Peter & Paul's Cathedral, in St. Aphrem's Patriarchal Complex, Ma'arat Seydnaya. Several Archbishops attended this spiritual event. During the celebration and in an awesome and spiritual atmosphere, H.H. laid his hand on Very Rev. Raban Matta Fadel Alkhoury and elevated him to the rank of an Archbishop giving him the Episcopal name of Mor Timotheos. The Archbishop was carried on a chair on the shoulders of the clergy, to read the gospel of the Good Shepherd.

Archbishop Timotheos gave a speech of thanksgiving and concluded the service of the Holy Qurbano. When the celebration finished, His Holiness and the newly-ordained Archbishop were carried on chairs to St. Aphrem's Patriarchal Hall, at St. Aphrem the Syrian Monastery, where they both received the congratulations of the attendees, after which everybody was invited for a luncheon.

Patriarchal Secretary for India is Consecrated an Archbishop



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Syria Relief Appeal

Dearly Beloved in the Lord:

May the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

The unrest in Syria did not subside; more churches are burnt, more people are killed and many more are forced to leave their homes. In addition to this misery, kidnapping of our people for ransom increased. Your contributions which were sent to our Syriac people were greatly

appreciated by the recipients who needed them badly. With the donations that you and other churches will give, our Church in Syria will be able to serve our community better in providing food, shelter and other basic necessities.

With the coming of Christmas and New Year's celebrations, we can't help but remind you that your brothers and sisters in Syria will not have the chance to celebrate any of these events, due to the horrible conditions they're going through. We are appealing to your generosity and Christian love, and asking you to contribute to a special collection at your church. The collection will be held on two successive Sundays: December the 9th, and December the 16th. We will channel your contributions, as usual, through Our International Christian Outreach (Suryoyo Relief Fund) directly to our Churches in Syria.

We ask the Prince of peace to bless you in the coming Holy celebrations of Christmas and New Year, and send peace and tranquility to our people throughout the World.

Yours in Christ,

Mor Cyril Aphrem Karim

Archbishop

Patriarch Ignatius IV Hazim passes away



It is with great sorrow that we report the passing away of His Beatitude Ignatius IV Hazim, Patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch. His Beatitude was suffering from a stroke and on Wednesday, December the 5th passed away at the age of 92 at St. George's hospital in Beirut, Lebanon.

Patriarch Hazim was born in Mhareh-Homs, Syria. After finishing his studies there, he moved to Lebanon, where he became active in the church and community. He was ordained Bishop of Palmyra, in 1961 and in 1971 was consecrated a metropolitan for Lattakia, Syria.

Ignatius IV Hazim was consecrated the Patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch in 1979. By his passing away, the Greek Orthodox community lost a great pillar of the Faith. We pray to our Father Almighty to bless his soul and give him eternal rest in the heavenly Jerusalem. We also pray that He will watch over the Greek Orthodox Church in the East our sister church, during these difficult times.

His Holiness Patriarch Zakka participates in the installation of Pope Theodoros II



On November 18th, 2012, His Holiness Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East, joined our sister Coptic Orthodox Church in the installation of the new Patriarch, His Holiness Pope Theodoros II, on the Holy See of Alexandria. Pope Theodoros II is the 118th Pope in the line of succession presiding over the Coptic Church of Alexandria. This celebration took place at St. Mark's Cathedral in Abbasia, Cairo.

H.H. Mor Zakka I led a delegation of seven Archbishops and a number of priests and monks from our Church. Patriarchs of other Orthodox and Catholic Churches also attended this celebration in addition to many officials and dignitaries from the Egyptian government.

After the installation ceremony, H.H. Mor Zakka I presided over special prayers and hymns from the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch. In conclusion, His Holiness our Patriarch delivered a speech in which he thanked God and praised Him for sending His Holy Spirit to choose the Pope, bless him and install him as the successor of St. Mark the Evangelist on the Holy See of Alexandria. He congratulated the new Patriarch, Pope Theodoros and

wished him success in his mission, asking God to grant him wisdom, patience and perseverance to carry this huge responsibility well.

His Holiness Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas added: “As the Patriarch of the Syrian Orthodox Apostolic See of Antioch and in observation of our authentic Oriental tradition, we extend the hand of recognition and apostolic communion to His Holiness Pope Theodoros II, asking the Lord God, Who chose him to this high rank, to bless him in all his works, for the glory of the Holy Trinity and the advancement of the Holy Church.”

After concluding his speech H.H. Mor Zakka I presented H.H. Pope Theodoros the Pontifical Pastoral staff, as a symbol of his “Good Shepherd’s” appointment. The new Pope blessed the faithful, and thanked Patriarch Zakka for his love, participation and support.



Archbishop Barnabas, former head of Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church of North America, passed away December 8, 2012 in India.

OTHER RELATED NEWS

ON THE OCCASION OF MOM'S 100TH BIRTHDAY. NOVEMBER 4, 2012

Given by son, Anthony DeLuca



Anna Scarano DeLuca



Birthday Cake



Friends and Family at the 100th Birthday Celebration

Fr. Anthony celebrates Holy Qurbono for Mother's 100th Birthday



Presbytera Dr. Andrea DeLuca reading the life of the Centenarian



Father Anthony with his mother Anna Scarano DeLuca at her 100th Birthday - Mass and Reception (11/4/12).

Dear Family and Friends,

What a glorious event it is to celebrate your one hundredth birthday- everybody's dream. And our mom did it. And she survived Hurricane Sandy- the worst in over a hundred years.

Last year we remembered the 100th wedding anniversary of mom's parents, Pellegrino and Vittoria Scarano. And in good Italian tradition, within a year of their marriage, our mother was born.

The earliest photo I remember seeing of her was when she was a child of about three and she is at a washboard scrubbing clothes or so it appears. And one of my latest memories is seeing her put clothes into the washing machine. So you can connect the dots between the earliest and the latest which formed her life - and it was one of hard work and determination. She drove her car well into

her nineties voluntarily giving it up saying, "If an accident happens, they blame it on the old lady, so why give them that chance."

Mom has two children, two grandchildren and two great grandchildren. Along with God, my sister Angela is probably one of the major reasons that mom is here today. So if you want to live to be 100, hire my sister. Only joking, she's already spoken for.

Mom has endless stories of her childhood on the farm and incidentally only recently has she spoken of some intriguing new chapters which we have never heard before- a tribute to her great memory. So Sister Clara (not a nun) -her sister and mom would get up at 5 to begin to prepare breakfast for the dozen. The winters were bitter cold -no central heating; and they relied mainly upon the fruits and vegetables in the cellar to see them through with the supply dwindling as spring approached.

I am intrigued about her education initially in a one room school house in Liberty Corner - especially the Teacher's Cottage -still there- where the spinster teachers lived with the stern principal presiding next to the school. My goodness what a novel one could write- The Teachers' Cottage. I asked her how they got along and she told me they would fight every month. Some of them did not want to live there so they boarded at a home in a nearby farm. The younger teachers would go home on weekends. She told me that one of her brothers was unruly and always on the edge of being expelled- one wonders what they could possibly do with an expelled child did in those days- go and live with the animals in the woods? Anyway her father would leave chickens and eggs at the Teachers' Cottage and probation was granted her brother.

Life seemed to have been lived between the Farm in New Jersey and the house in New York. And this back and forth, I have never been able to figure out. Maybe it was an earlier version of a work-study program. She tells about her life-long friend Aida and how their father would kill them if they became friends with... we will call her Gloria. (Actually mom did tell me her real name but we have a couple of lawyers here). I guess Gloria may have been far ahead of her time and would fit splendidly into any school today.

Mom went to Jamaica High School (NY) where she met my father. Ms. Styles taught math at Andrew Jackson High School where Angela and I went to school. Mom told me to ask Ms. Styles whether she remembered Anna and Stanley Scarano when she taught at Jamaica High. Yes, indeed she said, but Stanley was much better than Anna in math. I don't think I brought this story home. They were top notch high schools especially Jamaica. These schools are now periodically closed because the level of criminality makes education impossible undoubtedly a tribute to the advances in civilization since mom's day.

As a toddler, I remember back and forth from New York to New Jersey and my earliest frightened memory of seeing my mother go after a runaway cow. As very young children, Angela and I both have life-threatening health issues and incidents and I remember mom ever at our side to see us through and for the rest of our lives for that matter. Mom said, I was dying of pneumonia as a toddler and the doctor told her she was young and would have other children. And she tried to get a Catholic priest to come but they told her it was too far. So a local Protestant Minister came. I asked her what he said. He prayed to God to take pity on the suffering mother. I recovered. Then Uncle Caesar and Aunt Cornelia came with the truck and said we are taking him to the Farm where

it's warm and they wrapped me in a blanket between them in the front seat. God bless them all, so that I am here to tell this in memory of them.

Freud tells us that the unconscious is timeless and so she is forever mother and we little children.

Besides being super-mom, she had an egg route, waitressed all over the New York, managed a Laundromat, worked in sales at Gertz (what an elegant department store it was back then) and Lord and Taylor and a carpet store well into her seventies. And Mother Mary only knows what else which reminds Angela and me that she was so tired that when she started to sing the Marian Hymn , "Mother Dearest", you better run- you have really pushed the envelope.;; and the chanting of "O Mary conceived without sin" meant you were at death's door.

And of course her earnings were used to make Angela's and my life better. And her obsession even till this day with thrift shops- excuse me antique stores.

We almost forgot her love of gardens from farm field work, Victory Gardens throughout World War II and beyond, to selling her creative wreathes to stores, the Crofton Garden Club where she received many awards for her floral designs. She has an inborn aesthetic sense transforming all things over the course of life - the unsightly, the tragic, and the plain- making them all beautiful through her work.

She loves poetry and instilled in me the same -so we fittingly we close with an old favorite "Ithaca":

So mom, you have arrived at Ithaca; a long journey -full of adventure; you have overcome the Lestrogonians and the Cyclops; the road is long with markets, merchandise, ebony, perfume; you have learned so much; don't hurry- let it last for many years; arrive when you are old; you never expected riches from Ithaca; you wanted a marvelous journey and Ithaca gave it.

GOD BLESS YOU ALWAYS MOM, FROM ANGELA AND ME, YOUR WHOLE FAIMLY AND ALL YOUR FRIENDS.

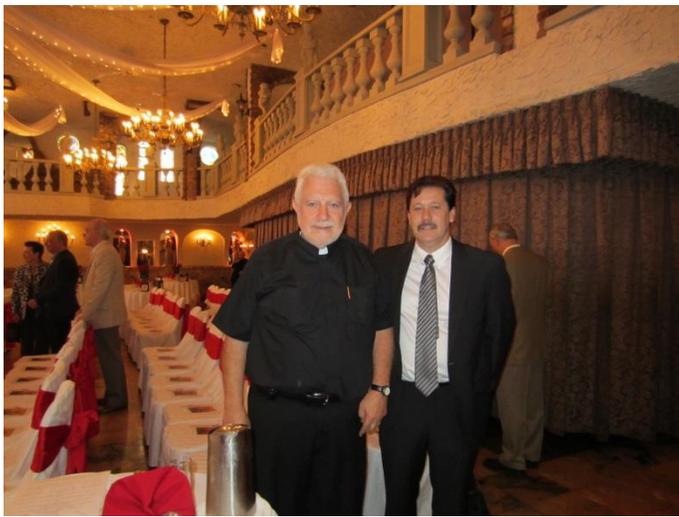




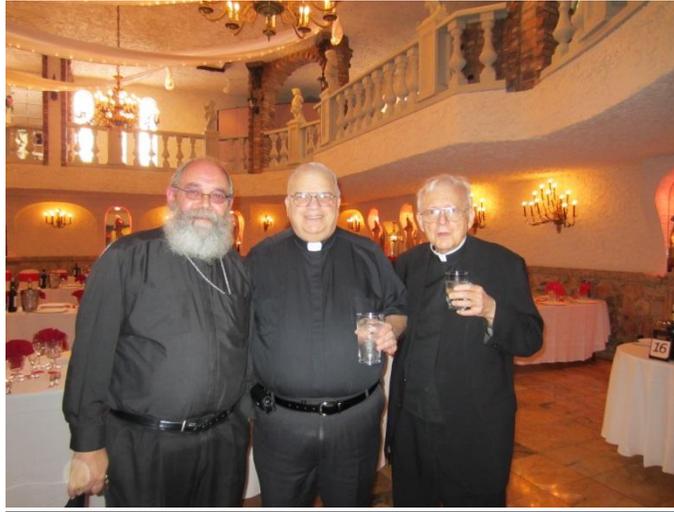
Baptism (6/2/12) of Luke Anthony grandson of Father Anthony DeLuca at Our Lady Queen of Martyrs RC Church; middle:Dr. Helena DeLuca and Charles Weitman, Esq., parents.



Fr. Michael E. Verra Celebrates 40th Anniversary of Priesthood



Fr. Michael, Mark Andresen



Fr. Faustino, Fr. George, Fr. Anthony



Niece Gina, Sister Margaret, Mom Fanny, Fr. Michael



CHRISTMAS REFLECTION 2012

By Anthony DeLuca

"The compassion shown by an NYPD officer on a cold November night has brought an outpouring of praise from around the country. Officer Lawrence DePrimo has been labeled a hero not because he solved a cold case or stopped a robbery- but because he supplied a pair of boots for a homeless man.

DePrimo ... never sought recognition for his good deed- after he saw the man barefoot in Times Square ..., he bought a pair of boots for \$75, plus socks, and returned and put them on the man's feet.

Watching the scene was Jennifer Foster, She snapped the picture, shared it with the NYPD, and it soon exploded with popularity across the web.

'The officer expected nothing in return and did not know I was watching,' she told the NYPD. 'I have been in law enforcement for 17 years. I was never so impressed in my life. It is important, I think, for all of us to remember the real reason we are in this line of work.'

On the NYPD Facebook page, thousands shared how DePrimo has been an inspiration. 'This story of Officer DePrimo's generosity and empathy for his fellow man melted my heart,' said one poster.

Said another: 'Good Job!!! If everyone would look out for another as this special officer did, our world would be a happier place to live.'

“(Ken Paulsen, Staten Island Advance)

The story did not say the cop was white and the man was black but excuse me if I am politically incorrect. The idea that the homeless man may have been deceptive about his needs does not vitiate this story but rather enhances it. Officer DePrimo still extends himself in spite of being street smart enough to know that things might not always be as they seem. It does not stop his love. Perhaps, there echoed some place in DePrimo's mind the words of St. Paul, "Love is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope and to endure whatever comes." (1 Cor. 13)

This event got me freely associating right away to some well-known gospel stories of Jesus.

"And he got up from table, removed his outer garment and, taking a towel, wrapped it around his waist; he then poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and wipe them with a towel he was wearing. ... If I do not wash you, you can have nothing in common with me. 'Do you understand', he said, 'what I have done to you? You call me Master and Lord, and rightly, so I am. If I, then, the Lord and Master have washed your feet, you should wash each other's feet. I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you.' "(John 13)

It also reminds me of another passage;

"For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome; naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me. Then the virtuous will say to him in reply, 'Lord when did we see you hungry and feed you; or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and make you welcome; naked and clothe you; sick or in prison and go to see you? 'And the King will answer 'I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the least of the brothers of mine, you did it to me.' "(Matthew 25)

And another parable:

"But the man was anxious to justify himself and said to Jesus, 'and who is my neighbor?' Jesus replied, ' A man was once on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of robbers; they took all he had, beat him and then made off leaving him half dead. Now a priest happened to be traveling down the same road, but when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. In the same way, a Levite who came to the place saw him and passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan traveler who came upon him was moved with compassion when he saw him. He went up and bandaged his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them. He then lifted him on his own mount, carried him to the inn and looked after him. Next day, he took out two denarii and handed them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and on my way back I will make good any extra expense you have.' 'Which of these three, proved himself a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands?' 'The one, who took pity on him,' he replied. Jesus said to him, 'Go and do the same yourself.' " (Luke 10)

The last story is a commentary on Judaism of the time and who you would consider neighbor and accordingly has obligations or no obligations. There was a very bad relationship with the Samaritans. Not too unlike the attitude of blacks and whites today- disdain, rage and contempt amongst a slew of other things. There will be needed many years of the reconciliation process before this is resolved in America. And it seems that it has not even begun and is not on the agenda.

So we had on Staten Island, a black woman pleading with a white man to help her with her two small children being swept out to sea. He didn't help. We don't know the mental state of this white man any better than we know the mental state of the black man needing the shoes. Let's hope it was a mental condition in both cases. The alternative is devastating.

Let us turn back to DePrimo whose mental state we can all appreciate. I presume from the name and the looks that he was from an Italian background and probably Catholic. So it may not be too much to presume that he was instructed in these three passages we have considered and they became integrated into his personality.

So which is the best religion? Or maybe no religion.

This looks pretty good for the Catholic Church because it conveyed the message to DePrimo that everyone is your neighbor and welcome. In fact, the Catholic Church from the beginning has always taken very seriously the mandate of Christ to "Go forth and teach all nations." Unfortunately, history shows that at the same time, great injustices were carried out by the same church in all nations. What about the Protestants? After they stopped killing the Catholics and vice versa in the Hundred Years War, they also taught and welcomed all nations but they had their problems too. What about Orthodox Christians? Very problematic. While great work is done within each of these national churches, one might ask how welcome is a non-Serbian in the Serbian Orthodox Church or a non-Romanian in the Romanian Orthodox Church etc. etc. etc... I think you get the message on Orthodoxy.

What about Islam? Well there are some very beautiful things in the Koran about neighbors and some not so beautiful leaving the door open for interpretation. And history shows us that those less inclined to a benevolent interpretation have not done the best for mankind.

What about the Jews? Well from the Samaritan story, they had neighbor problems in the past. Today, their philanthropic contributions are excelled by few others. What about Buddhists and Hindus? Apparently very peace loving and accepting of others but given the wrong circumstances they too can become pretty crazy and have brought bloodshed as have all of the above.

Reflect on Hurricane Sandy and maybe you can get the answer to the question, if you remember it and I hope you don't.

Somehow the song "Suzanne" has been ringing in my brain. And as a psychoanalyst I always say it must have a connection to something currently going on now even though it may be deeply buried. It was written by Leonard Cohen in the 70s, a nice Jewish boy coming from a family well educated in Judaism. Remember Kohen are the Jewish priests. So Leonard said, "I had a Messianic childhood. I was a descendant of Aaron, the high priest."

If you listen carefully, you will hear about Hurricane Sandy and Staten Island and us even though written some forty years ago:

**And Jesus was a sailor
When he walked upon the water
And he spent a long time watching
From his lonely wooden tower
And when he knew for certain
Only drowning men could see him
He said, " All men will be sailors then
Until the sea shall free them."
But he himself was broken
Long before the sky would open
Forsaken, almost human
He sank beneath your wisdom like a stone
And you want to travel with him
And you want to travel blind
And you think maybe you'll trust him
For he's touched your perfect body with his mind.**

**Now Suzanne takes your hand
And she leads you to the river
She is wearing rags and feathers
From Salvation Army counters
And the sun pours down like honey
On our lady of the harbor
And she shows you where to look
Among the garbage and the flowers
There are heroes in the seaweed
There are children in the morning
They are leaning out for love
And they will lean that way forever
While Suzanne holds the mirror
And you want to travel with her
And you want to travel blind
And you know that you can trust her
For she's touched your perfect body with her mind.**

Happy Birthday Jesus, from Staten Island.

