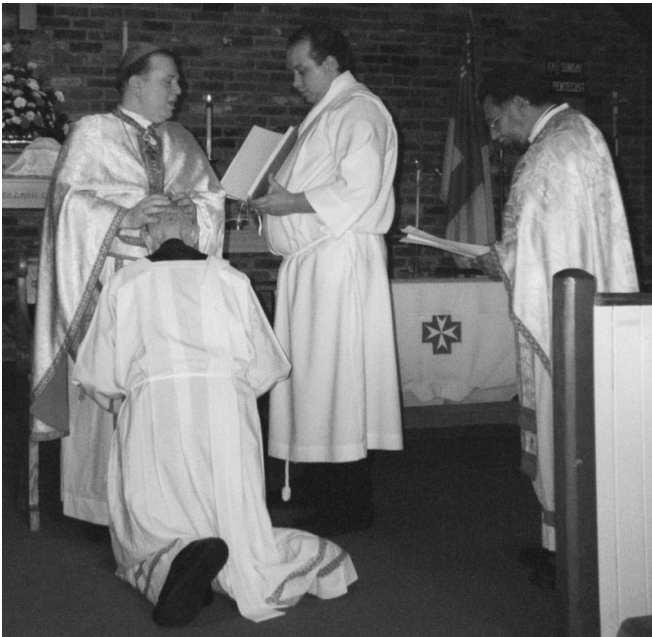


THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN HERALD

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE ROMANO BYZANTINE SYNOD OF THE ORTHODOX CATHOLIC CHURCH
PO Box 16201 • Duluth Minnesota 55806-1612

"Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you..." I saiah 43:1-2



Metropolitan Stephen Ordains Basil Koch to the Priesthood as Brother Timothy Kjera and Bishop Lukas Prieto assist.

CONSECRATION AND ORDINATION IN VIRGINIA

[Norfolk] On Saturday, October 16, 1999, His Eminence, Metropolitan Stephen, consecrated as an Auxiliary Bishop of the Metropolitanate, and Administrator of the Archdiocese of The Americas, Most Reverend Lukas Pedro Prieto CIHM. The consecration took place at Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church of Norfolk, thanks to the generosity of its pastor, Reverend William Hoffman. Bishop Lukas has been serving the Archdiocese since 1998 as its Locum Tenens.

Also, on the same day, was ordained to the Sacred Priesthood Reverend Basil James Koch SSS. Father Koch serves as rector of the

Archdiocesan Holy Family Seminary in Tacoma Washington, and is a canon lawyer currently serving as Judge of the Western Region Tribunal of the First Instance. Father Koch has been in seminary training since 1995, and was recently awarded his Master of Canonical Jurisprudence degree from Romano Byzantine College. Father resides in Tacoma Washington with his wife, Irene Iris, and their children, Jason and Jeremy, and

granddaughter

Jennifer. He plans to establish Saint Basil's Parish in Tacoma Washington later in 2000. Presbytera Irene Koch is a member of the Secular Servants of Mercy, and she currently serves as Moderator General.

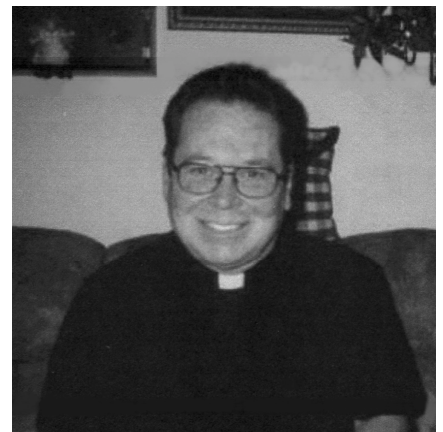
BROTHER CLOTHED AND PROFESSED

[Michigan City IN] Brother Timothy Aaron John Kjera SSS was blessed as a Subdeacon and Clothed as a Professed Brother of the Society of the Sacred Sacrament on September 15, 1999, at St. Thomas Chapel, by His Eminence the Metropolitan Hierarch. Brother Timothy will be assigned as financial officer of the Synod, and will continue his

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studies in canon law and for eventual ordination as deacon. Currently, he holds two associate degrees from Brainerd Community College and Hellenic Orthodox University and a Bachelor of Canonical Jurisprudence from Romano Byzantine College. He is now working towards his Master of Canonical Jurisprudence degree. He resides in Duluth Minnesota in the Central Archdiocesan Region.



Father John Bliss

MISSOURI PARISH JOINS SYNOD

[Independence] Father John Bliss SSS was received into the Romano Byzantine Synod on September 24, 1999 from another jurisdiction. He is pastor of St. Nicholas Chapel in

Continued on page 5

ORDINATIONS AND RELIGIOUS CLOTHINGS

✦ Timothy Aaron Kjera SSS, Professed Vows as Religious Brother and Subdeacon at the provisional Chapel of St. Thomas, Michigan City Indiana, on September 15, 1999.

✦ Basil William Koch SSS, Ordained Deacon at the provisional Chapel of St. Thomas, Michigan City Indiana, on September 15, 1999.

PROMULGATION OF NEW CANONS (STATUTES) & CANONICAL NORMS

✦ It has been approved by the Commission on Religious Counseling and Healing, and ratified by the Synod, that three specialty areas be added to the discipline of Chiroprathy. The Review Committee consisted of Dr. Carnel Baker, Commission President; Rev Dr. George Gonzalez, Canon Lawyer; Dr. William Meeks, Chairman of Chiroprathy Board; and Timothy Aaron Kjera SSS, Synodal Consultor. It was then ratified by the Synodal Judicial Vicar for the Synod. The new specialty areas are Ozone Hyperthermia, Nutritional Microscopy, and Bio-Meridian Therapy. A directive concerning this matter will be sent to all licensed practitioners of the Commission. Each was found to be safe and beneficial to the wellness of those who wish to avail themselves to such services.

APPROBATION FOR ISSUANCE OR DISSOLUTION OF CHARTERS

✦ St. Nicholas Parish, Independence Missouri, September 24, 1999.



NEWS FROM AROUND THE CHUCH WORLD

DIOCESE OF IMO STATE NIGERIA

[Ezindo] The Most Reverend Samuel Akanwa has announced that his diocese has a new priest who formally was a catechist in the Roman Catholic Church. Father Raymond Onuoha joined the Diocese of Imo State Nigeria in 1995 where he was trained for service in the Orthodox Christian Church. He was ordained a deacon in 1997 and a priest in July of 1998. He currently serves the Diocese of West Africa in Nigeria. Father Onuoha plans to continue his education in Canon Law at Holy Family Seminary in Tacoma Washington.

CENTRAL REGION PLANS PARISHES

[Duluth/Superior] Plans to establish St. Spyridon Parish in Superior Wisconsin will be finalized around August, 2000. Another parish will be formed in Duluth Minnesota and opened on April 2, 2000. This parish will be named St. Mary the Theotokos.

INCARDINATIONS

- ✦ Father John Bliss SSS, September 24, 1999, Central Region.
- ✦ Father Patrick Lemming SSS, September 29, 1999, Western Region.

MARRIAGE VOWS

- ✦ Steve and Sherry Tedesco, married on Sunday, October 16, 1999, Norfolk VA.

PRAY FOR THE ILL AND SUFFERING

- ✦ Hampton Bumgarner, Denver Colorado
- ✦ Sr. Irene Koch, Tacoma Washington
- ✦ Bishop Lukas Prieto, Norfolk Virginia

PRAY FOR THE DECEASED

- ✦ Please pray for all the clergy who have served the Church faithfully, and now rest in the peace of our Lord.



IMPORTANT NOTES

- ✦ The Archdiocese of Norfolk Virginia and The Americas has been divided into three geographical regions to serve the United States and Canada. These are the Eastern Region (U.S. and Canada), Central Region (U.S. and Canada), and the Western Region (U.S. and Canada). The Central and South American territories form their own regions under the Archdiocese for now. Guatemala continues to be a diocese under the Archdiocese.

***Are you
praying for peace
but
paying for war?***



The Peace Tax Fund would allow people opposed to war because of deeply-held beliefs to stop paying for it. They could pay their full taxes into a fund that would be used for non-military purposes only.

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HISTORY OF OUR CHURCH

The Romano Byzantine Synod is one of many autonomous jurisdictions that make up the Orthodox Christian Family. In addition, there are the Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Ukrainian Orthodox, Old Calendar or Hellenic Orthodox, Japanese Orthodox, and many others including the Oriental Orthodox, e.g., Armenian, Syrian, and Ethiopian Orthodox Churches. All of these have their own Synod and a Hierarch who is referred to as Patriarch, Catholicos, Metropolitan Hierarch, Primate or Ruling Bishop. Many Orthodox Christians acknowledge the Patriarch of Constantinople as their spiritual leader and First Bishop Among Equals of Orthodox Christianity, but all jurisdictions may not be in union with the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Although the jurisdictions are divided in language, politics, and certain liturgical customs, they are all united in the same Faith. The first of the Orthodox to set foot on American soil was the Russian Orthodox Church when in 1794 eight monks from Russia founded an Orthodox monastery on Kodiak Island which then was part of Russia, but later became part of the United States. By 1840, a Russian Orthodox Bishop was consecrated for Alaska. In 1872, the seat of authority was moved to San Francisco and in 1905 to New York City. Today the Orthodox Church is divided into more than 24 different jurisdictions and not all are in communion with one another.

The Romano Byzantine Synod had its beginning in Wisconsin where Joseph Rene Vilatte labored among various ethnic groups and formed parishes to take care of their spiritual needs. Joseph Rene was born in France and had been raised in the National Catholic Church of France. He had been

gifted with a vision of a Catholic Church that could carry on the work of Christ free from Roman Catholic domination and control. On June 7th, 1835, Joseph Rene Vilatte was ordained an Old Catholic priest by Bishop Eduard Herzog in Berne Switzerland. He was commissioned to maintain a faith and order among his people that existed before the Great Schism of A.D. 1054, when the Roman Church separated from Orthodox Catholicism. Father Vilatte worked for six years in establishing parishes throughout the Northcentral and Northeastern parts of the United States and various locations in Canada. As the Church began to grow and flourish, Father Vilatte saw a real need for the Church in America to have its own bishop. He approached Russian Orthodox Bishop Vladimir Sokolvaky who submitted a petition to the Holy Russian Synod in Moscow which declared in part: “*Western Orthodox American Catholic clergy and faithful with and including Father Vilatte are True Catholic Orthodox Christians, under the patronage of the Russian Orthodox Church...*”.

However, due to politics and poor communication, never was approval granted by the Russian Synod for the consecration. So, a petition was then sent to the Patriarchal See of Antioch where a positive response was given. A Patriarchal Bull [Mandate] permitted the archiepiscopal consecration of Father Joseph Rene Vilatte and invested him with authority of primatial apostolic dignity. A verbatim translation from the authentic Syrian original follows:

In the name of the Essential, Eternal, Self-existing, Almighty God: His servant, Ignatius Peter III, Patriarch of the Apostolic See of Antioch and the East.

We, the humble servant of God, hereby allow the consecration by

the Holy Ghost of the Priest Joseph Rene Vilatte, elected for Archiepiscopal dignity, Archbishop Metropolitan, in the name of Mar Timotheus, for the Church of the Mother of God in Dykesville Wisconsin, United States, and other churches in the Archdiocese of America, viz, the churches adhering to the Orthodox Faith, in the name of the Father, Amen, of the Son, Amen, and of the Living Holy Ghost, Amen. We stand up before the majesty of God raising up our hands towards His Grace. We pray that the Holy Ghost may descend upon him as he did upon the Apostles at the same time of the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom they were made Patriarchs, Bishops, and Priests, and were authorized to bind and loose, as written by St. Matthew. We, therefore, by virtue of our authority received from God, exclaim, Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison. Again, we pray to God to grant him cheer of face before His Throne of majesty, and at all times forever and ever.

Given on the seventeenth of Conoon Kadmoyo, of the year of our Lord, eighteen hundred and ninety one (December 29th, 1891), from the Patriarchal



Archbishop Vilatte

Palace of the Monastery of Mardin.

So it was on May 29th, 1892, Priest Joseph Rene Vilatte was consecrated to the episcopate in Ceylon, which is now Sri Lanka. He was consecrated by Archbishop Francis Xavier Alvarez, a former Roman Catholic priest, assisted by the Syro-Antiochene Metropolitans from India, Paul Athanasius (Bishop of Kottayam) and George Gregorius (Bishop of Niranam and later Saint of the Church). Mr. Samuel Morey, United States Consul in Ceylon, was in attendance and witnessed the ceremony. The Eastern and Western rites were used simultaneously making Archbishop Vilatte bi-ritual.

Upon his return to America, Archbishop Vilatte continued his labors and many new parishes were established. However, from 1907-1908, the Archbishop encountered heated attacks upon himself and the Church by both the Roman and Episcopal Churches. This caused separation between Archbishop Vilatte and these jurisdictions. The Russian Orthodox Church rose in defense of the Archbishop in the person of Very Reverend Ingram Irvine, Dean of St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Cathedral in New York. He issued a declaration in March 1909 voicing his total dismay at the actions and behavior of both the Roman Catholic Church and the Episcopal Church in this country for their unfounded and baseless attacks on Archbishop Vilatte. On January 1, 1910, at a Consistory of American Bishops, it was decided that the American Archdiocese would guide its own affairs and become autonomous. This was adopted by unanimous vote. The Protocol Statement stated in part:

We are a Church open to all people, of all nationalities, having residence on the cultural, social, and secular soil of this

land, and we remain united under the true Catholic and Orthodox Faith of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We acknowledge as the Only Universal Head of the Church Christ, Who is our one High Priest, and that we are imbued with the essence of the western spirit and the American concept of liberty and freedom. Our reality as a branch, a part of the true Catholic and Orthodox Church of God, is not dependent upon the recognition of any ecclesiastical authority outside the Councils of our own American Ecclesiastical Consistory and (National) Synod of Bishops and Clergy.

In the years following this statement, there were several schisms within the Church especially after the death of Archbishop Joseph Rene Vilatte. Some defectors and schismatics formed churches that no longer held true to the teachings of the Orthodox Faith. Others went so far as to even break from Apostolic Tradition and begin ordaining women to the priesthood and episcopacy which is contrary to the practice of all other Orthodox Christian Churches and the Church of Rome. Many of these groups proclaim they are the true successors to the original jurisdiction but are merely splinters of it. The succession of Archbishop Vilatte passed on to Archbishops Frederick Lloyd and Daniel Hinton before even more schisms resulted. For many years after, bishops fought bishops and priests fought priests and all claimed to be the true beneficiaries of the original Archiepiscopal See of America. Then, in the late 1970's, Archbishops Joseph Sokolowski (Indiana) and Daniel Brown (Ohio) came together and vowed to bring back the structure and intentions of the original See. Archbishop Sokolowski possessed Apostolic Successions from both

the Russian and Syrian Churches, and Archbishop Brown possessed the Apostolic Succession of the Old Catholic Church from Archbishop Matthew. Both had consecrators who came from Archbishop Carmel Henry Carfora's Succession that originated from Archbishop Vilatte. This was achieved, and due to the ill health of Archbishop Brown, Archbishop Joseph Sokolowski became the V Archbishop Metropolitan of the Church.

Since Archbishop Sokolowski's death in 1988, American prelates have been Metropolitan Archbishop Stephen Thomas, Archbishop John Marie Utz, and the current Locum Tenens of the Archdiocese of the Americas, Bishop Lukas Pedro Prieto. The See of the Archdiocese is now located in Norfolk Virginia, while the Metropolitanate is located in Duluth Minnesota. There was an attempt by some malicious, vindictive, and disciplined clergy and others to damage the Synod, but this only made it stronger by bringing all its members closer to one another and to God. Today, there are approximately 25,000 members living in various parts of the world including Belgium, Dominican Republic, England, Guatemala, India, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Africa, Spain, Tanzania, the United States, and Zaire. Many other missionary territories are forming as of this writing. Today, the Church maintains dialogue with the Hellenic (Greek) Orthodox Church of Athens, and it has cordial relations with the Western Orthodox Church of Yugoslavia, among others.

Now I praise you, brethren,
that you remember me in all
things and keep the
traditions just as I delivered
them to you.

I Corinthians 11:2

Continued from page 1

Independence Missouri. Father Bliss holds degrees in Accounting, Theology, and Pastoral Counseling. St. Nicholas Parish becomes the first for the Romano Byzantine Synod in the State of Missouri. It is now part of the Central Region of the Archdiocese of The Americas.

ARIZONA PRIEST JOINS SYNOD

[Safford] Father Patrick Lemming CIHM was received into the Romano Byzantine Synod on September 29, 1999 from the Anglican Church. He was originally ordained a priest in the Roman Catholic Church. Father Lemming currently serves as a prison chaplain where he cares for the spiritual needs of over 500 inmates. Father Lemming is now part of the Western Region of the Archdiocese of The Americas.

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ASSOCIATIONS

The North American Canon Law Society is now listed in this publication and standard guide to Associations, Societies, and other Nonprofit Organizations. You can order this publication from Gale Research, P.O. box 9204, Farmington Hills MI 48333-9204, or by calling (248) 699-4253 or (800) 347-4253, or faxing (248) 699-8070.

NATIONAL TRADE & PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES

[Columbia Books Inc., 1212 New York Avenue NW, #330, Washington DC 20005] The North American Canon Law Society, which oversees the Commission on Religious Counseling and Healing, is now registered in the National Trade & Professional Associations,



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COMMUNITIES MERGE

The Metropolitanate has announced that the Servants of Christ the Merciful (founded 1982) and the Society of the Sacred Sacrament (founded 1980, canonized in 1994), both diocesan congregations, have now merged into the Society of the Sacred Sacrament; This has been under consideration since March 5, 1999, and was officially concluded on August 24, 1999. Bishop Joseph Mpongo previously was the SCM Superior General, and Bishop John Marie Utz was administrator of the Society. The merger now calls for the Most Reverend Joseph Mpongo SSS to serve as new Superior General, and Most Reverend John Utz SSS as Provincial of the United States. Combined, it is estimated that there are now over fifty members serving the Archdiocese of the Americas, Archdiocese of Zaire, Diocese of Nigeria, and the Deanery of Belgium.

NEW OFFICERS

[CRCH] The Synod has announced that the new

officers for the Commission on Religious Counseling and Healing are:

President, Dr. Camel Baker (Texas); Vice President, Dr. Peter Smyth (Ontario Canada); and Commission Examiner, Vacant. Terms will expire in 2001.

O Lord my
God, I cried
out to You,
and You
healed me.
Psalms 30:2

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