

Lesson 23 - The Church in a New Age

Objectives

By the end of this lesson the student should know that:

- Know that the "Age of Revolutions" signaled the end of Europe's old kingdoms and the idea of a "state religion."
- Understand that the Industrial Revolution brought many impoverished Eastern Christians to the United States in search of freedom and prosperity.
- Know that World War I, the Communist Revolution in Russia, and the rise of Nazi power in Germany brought about the greatest persecution of Christians in history.
- Recognize that Eastern Catholics today are called to witness wherever they are to the work of God in their Church throughout the ages.

For the Catechist

In earlier lessons we reflected how God had worked in Old and New Testament times to further Salvation History even through famines, exiles, and imperial conquests. God continued to work in the era of the Church to extend the Gospel, despite the sinfulness and divisiveness of Christians. The last one hundred fifty years saw the same process at work again and again. The poor conditions in which Eastern Christians lived brought about great hardships. These same conditions prompted many to emigrate and establish churches throughout the world, witnessing to their historic Tradition on every continent as never before. The horrors of Communism and Nazism destroyed thousands of churches and martyred countless believers. Yet as always, the blood of these martyrs has watered the garden of the Church, giving it new life.

Catechists should consult with their parish clergy for material concerning the history of their own eparchy and parish when discussing the establishment of Eastern Churches in the West. Older parishes may have photographs or publications detailing the experience of the pioneers. Newer communities may have living founders who can present their experience in establishing the parish. Similarly, each community may have survivors of persecution or hardship with their own stories to tell. Bringing these witnesses or resources into the class will make these experiences real for today's students.

It is not possible to see the future of our Church today. The secular culture in which we live may so choke the hearts of Christians that faith will be all but extinguished, as happened in Israel in the days of the prophets. Christians may experience new hardships and even persecution from powers yet unknown. Churches may be divided yet again over new challenges to the apostolic faith. That God will be at work to further Salvation History, nonetheless, is the final message of this lesson and of the entire history of God's People. Whatever else happens, God will remain God and the only true Lover of humankind.

Materials Needed:

Opening Prayer: Icon corner, student texts

Introduction: Easel or wall pads, markers,

Guided Reading: Parish memorabilia, story-tellers

Activity A: "Your Church History" Worksheet, "Story of Our Church" Fact Sheet

Activity B: "Persecution" Worksheet

Activity C: Kingdom Tree Worksheet

1. Opening Prayer

Recite the Prayer for Unity on page 116 in the student text. Remind the students that Christ deeply desires the unity of the Churches so that the world may believe their message.

2. Review

Review the main points of the previous lesson using the pages from your wall or easel pad. Use the time line on the Unit Page to recall that the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries saw a number of partial unions of Eastern and Western Christians but that the full reunion of the Churches was not achieved.

3. Introduction

Begin by asking the students what they know about American history: how many revolutions were there? Help the students recognize that the political revolution of the colonists against the British was only one revolution.

The "second revolution" was the separation of church and state. Remind them that the first colonies had been established for different Churches such as the Puritans (Massachusetts), the Anglicans (Virginia), and the Catholics (Maryland). The Constitution, however, said that there were to be no state churches: religion was not the business of the state.

Help the students identify that the "third revolution" was the industrial revolution, which provided hosts of new jobs in manufacturing for which workers were often recruited abroad. These last two revolutions offering freedom and work would draw Eastern Christians to the "New World" in the nineteenth century.

Background Reading (Eastern Churches in the West):

"In the nineteenth century the ancient Eastern Churches began a new phase of their story. Because of economic and political circumstances in their home countries, many of their members began to immigrate to the United States of America. They had heard that it was a land of opportunity and religious freedom. Many came searching for a new home; many came to work for fortune and return to their native land. For these a return was not always possible and others loved their new country so much that they did not wish to return. For them, the United States was a beacon of hope, attracting them with the eloquent words inscribed on the Statue of Liberty, 'Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free' (Emma Lazarus, 'The New Colossus').

"There were Russian and Greek immigrants to America as early as the end of the eighteenth century. With the American purchase of Alaska and as the number of immigrants increased, parishes and dioceses would be established. Today there are 29 Eastern Orthodox jurisdictions in the United States in addition to an Assyrian diocese and several Oriental Orthodox (non-Chalcedonian) jurisdictions, such as the Armenian, Coptic, Makankarese and Syriac dioceses"

(TEE 59 - continued on next page)

4. Guided Reading,
Pages 117 - 118

23 The Church in a New World



The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had seen Europe move in new directions. Explorers searched to what they called the "East Indies" (southeast Asia) and the "West Indies" (the Americas). The Protestant Reformation had changed the Western Church's focus. The Eastern Catholic Church had changed the face of Eastern Christianity. But the sea of change was not over.

Beginning about 1770 the Western world began to experience an age of revolutions. Uprisings in England, the American colonies, and France freed the minds of people elsewhere in Europe and in the Middle East. In the nineteenth century Belgium, Greece, Russia, and Serbia won their independence from the Ottoman Empire. After World War I and the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the remaining Christian populations in the Middle East (Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria) began moving toward independence as well.

Another kind of revolution would affect Eastern Christians in Europe and the Middle East: the Industrial Revolution in the United States would offer to the poor of these countries new possibilities for prosperity and freedom as miners and factory workers. The waves of migration to both Canada and the United States backed people from Europe's farming areas to work their future on lands far away from the taking. The Age of Immigration had begun.

God With Us Grade 6 Unit 6: God Works in the Church 117

Prosperity in the West

Europeans had been coming to America throughout the sixteenth century. Germans and Irish were followed by Italians, Scandinavians, and Greeks. Beginning in 1875, people from Poland, Romania, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire joined the procession of immigrants to the West. Within fifty years almost half the Greek Catholics in the Austro-Hungarian Empire had emigrated. They were followed in a few years by Middle Eastern Christians seeking new lives.

All these people brought with them their faith in God and their own way of expressing this faith according to their Byzantine tradition. They found themselves isolated. Christians already in America were of other traditions or Roman Catholics with different languages and different ways. In 1882 a group of Greek Catholics emigrated to Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania petitioned the Metropolitan of Lviv to send them a priest. "... we are not exactly the same as our own people and country, because something is lacking to us. Lacking to us is God, or God whom we could understand, whom we could call on in our own way. ... Therefore we have to grow as our parents, give our offering towards the building of churches, so that in the new land we may have churches in which to adore the Lord of All." There would be the first Greek Catholic parish in the United States.

The immigrants had little or nothing to start with. Many were farmers who could not read or write. Yet they set about organizing parishes, offering grounds to serve them and finding places where they could worship. The people themselves often built their own churches or adapted buildings to serve as churches. Finally, in 1907, the first Greek Catholic bishop to serve in the United States arrived from Europe. We remember those pioneers and pray for them in the Liturgy in the world and ever-memorable prayers and supplications of the holy church.



118

Before the reading, **summarize the objectives of the lesson** on a wall pad or easel pad so that the page can be preserved and used for review next week.

Have the students read quietly **the first three paragraphs** on page 117, identifying the main results of the age of revolutions for Eastern Christians. (*Independence from the Ottoman Empire, possibility of freedom and prospering in the New World*)

Ask the students what American monument symbolized the immigrants' dream in the nineteenth century. (*The Statue of Liberty*) See whether the students have read Emma Lazarus' poem inspired by the statue. (*"Give me your tired, your poor..."*) You might wish to obtain a copy and read it to the group.

Stress, however, that America could not fulfill all the dreams of the Eastern Christian immigrants. Read the section "**Prosperity in the West**" (p. 118), and focus special attention on the immigrants' letter to the Metropolitan of Lviv. Ask:

- There were already many churches in America, but what two things did the immigrants miss? (*Understanding, i.e. their own language, and worshipping in their own way.*)
- What two things did they ask for? (*Priests and churches*)

Background Reading (Eastern Churches in the West - continued):

"Immigrants from Eastern Europe and the Middle East followed the path taken by the Irish, the Germans and other Christians of previous generations and brought their faith with them to the new world. For most of the immigrants, the standard of living was considerably improved, and they chose to stay in their new country and to become citizens and part of the American community. It is not possible to pretend, however, that this process of assimilation was easy for them. As with today's immigrants of other backgrounds, they came to a country not knowing its language or customs. They were foreigners and strangers, and their own ways and traditions were not always welcomed or understood. They often had to work at the lowliest and dirtiest jobs for the smallest salary. They were exploited at times by unscrupulous managers. They had to live together for company and band together for mutual support, though often they were betrayed by their own people who wanted advancement more quickly". *TEE 59-60- continued on next page)*

Share any material you have collected on the founding of your parish: photos, videos, or print material. If your parish was started by nineteenth or early twentieth century immigrants, describe some of the hardships under which they lived (e.g. tenement life), how little they had, and what they did to build and pay for their church (e.g. sell pastries).

If you have **any older parishioners** who remember the early days of the parish invite them to share their reminiscences. If your parish is newer, you may still have some of the original founders who can tell the class their experiences.

Discuss what you would do if you had to move to an area in which there was no Byzantine parish (*e.g. travel hours to attend the Liturgy or talk to people about starting a church of your own*). Remind the students that many parishes were started by people like ourselves who moved from one state to another.

Remind the students that we do not build churches just for ourselves or for our families. God brought us (our ancestors) here so that we could make the Eastern Tradition available to others too.

Background Reading (Eastern Churches in the West continued):

"The first Eastern Catholics arrived about 1870. Since they came from a number of areas in eastern Europe subscribing to the unions of Brest and Uzhorod mentioned in the last chapter, Rome had given them all the generic name 'Ruthenian.' This was the beginning of a massive immigration, so great that a whole new Church could be established. These immigrants were lonely in the new land and longed for their own traditions. Greek Catholics living in Shenandoah, Pennsylvania and working in coal mines there, sent a heartfelt plea to the Ukrainian Metropolitan Sylvester Sembratovich which well expresses the longing of many Eastern Christian immigrants. 'We came here full of trust and hope, Vladyko ('Master,' the Byzantine title for a bishop), but we were blind and naive. We are not the same people that we were in our homeland, because there is something lacking. We are in need of God... We pray thus: give us priests from the Old Country, give us your blessing to build churches, in order that we would have in this foreign country all that is holy in Rus'.'

"Metropolitan Sylvester responded by sending Father Ivan Wolansky, who arrived in Shenandoah in 1884. His presence immediately provoked the hostility of the Polish Roman Catholic clergy and rejection by the Roman Catholic archdiocese of Philadelphia. Father Wolansky wrote that, 'Since no mention was made of my being subject to the local Roman Catholic Church authority, the Greek Catholic archbishop [in Ukraine] suggested that I notify the local Roman Catholic bishop.. .about my mission'" (*TEE 60-61 continued on next page*).



Introduce this section by noting that some parishes here were founded by people fleeing persecution or oppression because of their faith. Ask the students what they know about the Nazis or Communists, being sure to supply some correctives if needed, such as:

- Nazis did not just kill Jews but other minorities and whoever tried to help them. Remind the students that last year they learned about the Blessed New Martyr Emilian Kovtch, a priest who helped rescue Jews and who was killed by the Nazis.
- Communist and Russian are not synonymous. Atheistic Communists killed thousands of Russian bishops, priests and ordinary Christians because they were believers.

Point out that during the Communist regime, it was illegal to have icons, Bibles, or religious literature. People secretly printed pamphlets or distributed small portions of the Bible that they could hide. People from the West often tried to smuggle religious writings into Communist countries or gave away their own Bibles and crosses to Christians they met while visiting those countries.

If you have parishioners who survived this era in a Communist country, you may ask them to share some reminiscences.

Background Reading (Eastern Churches in the West continued):

"The first Eastern Catholics arrived about 1870. Since they came from a number of areas in eastern Europe subscribing to the unions of Brest and Uzhorod mentioned in the last chapter, Rome had given them all the generic name 'Ruthenian.' This was the beginning of a massive immigration, so great that a whole new Church could be established. These immigrants were lonely in the new land and longed for their own traditions. Greek Catholics living in Shenandoah, Pennsylvania and working in coal mines there, sent a heartfelt plea to the Ukrainian Metropolitan Sylvester Sembratovich which well expresses the longing of many Eastern Christian immigrants. 'We came here full of trust and hope, Vladyko ('Master,' the Byzantine title for a bishop), but we were blind and naive. We are not the same people that we were in our homeland, because there is something lacking. We are in need of God... We pray thus: give us priests from the Old Country, give us your blessing to build churches, in order that we would have in this foreign country all that is holy in Rus'!

"Metropolitan Sylvester responded by sending Father Ivan Wolansky, who arrived in Shenandoah in 1884. His presence immediately provoked the hostility of the Polish Roman Catholic clergy and rejection by the Roman Catholic archdiocese of Philadelphia. Father Wolansky wrote that, 'Since no mention was made of my being subject to the local Roman Catholic Church authority, the Greek Catholic archbishop [in Ukraine] suggested that I notify the local Roman Catholic bishop.. about my mission'" (TEE 61 continued on next page).

When Bishop Basil's body was exhumed thirty years later, it was found to be fully intact. Today his relics are enshrined in Wimping's St. Joseph's Church, a martyr of the suffering Church in Europe who added his dies to the Church of the New World.



When the Soviet Union collapsed, all Christians were freed from state control and Greek Catholic bishops were allowed to return from exile or come out of hiding to reorganize their Church, which seventy years of persecution had failed to destroy. The number of people who were still faithful amazed the world.

Christians Suffer in the Middle East

While not subjected to persecution by the state, Christians continue to be discriminated against in many parts of the Middle East. This has driven many people to emigrate, leaving the Holy Land almost empty of Christians. In other Islamic countries such as Indonesia and Pakistan, Christians are often killed or attacked.

While persecution and hardship has brought great sorrow to many, it has also caused Eastern Christians to establish communities throughout the world where they can witness to their rich heritage as the descendants of the very first Christians.

The story of the Church today is our story. Know your history - know your spiritual ancestors, those who brought our Church to this country and those who suffered under anti-Christian rule.

120

Read the section "**Christians Suffer in the Middle East**" (p. 120) and note that there is religious persecution today in some other Islamic countries as well, such as Indonesia and Pakistan. Sometimes this is at least tolerated, if not organized, by the government. You may find instances of such behavior on religious news websites that you can share.

Discuss what you today might do if American Christians:

- Were not permitted to go to church, read the Bible or religious books, or have icons as was the case in the Communist era.
- Had to give up their homes or lands if a Muslim had lost his home in an earthquake, as recently happened in Pakistan.
- Were not allowed to build new churches or repair old ones as is common in Egypt.
- Were not allowed to wear a cross or religious T-shirt to school as has happened in some school districts here in the United States.

End by reading **Metropolitan Andriy Sheptytsky's Vision of the Future** (p. 121). It shows how he believed that the persecution would end one day and that God would deliver the Christians of Ukraine.

Background Reading (Eastern Churches in the West continued):

"Because of long-standing ethnic rivalries, Rome separated the Carpatho-Rusin, Hungarian, and Croatian parishes (hereafter called 'Ruthenian') from those of Ukrainian background. When Bishop Ortynsky died in 1916, two separate exarchates were created and, in 1924, two bishops were appointed: Constantine Bohachevsky for the Ukrainians with his see in Philadelphia and Basil Takach for the Ruthenians, with his see in Pittsburgh.

"After World War II additional immigrants arrived from eastern Europe, swelling the size of the Ukrainian community. In 1956 a second Ukrainian exarchate was established in Stamford, Connecticut and two years later a metropolitan province was established. Additional eparchies would be created with bishops in Chicago (1961) and in Parma, Ohio (1983). In 1963 a second Ruthenian diocese was established in Passaic, New Jersey and in 1969 Pittsburgh was made a metropolitan see, with Passaic and the newly-established Diocese of Parma, Ohio as suffragan dioceses. The vitality of its western mission was recognized in 1982 with the establishment of a diocese in Van Nuys, California. The Ruthenian Church, together with the Melkite Church, pioneered the use of the vernacular language in the United States, and Liturgies were celebrated in English as early as 1951" (TEE 61-62 - continued on next page).

Stress with the students that, whatever may happen in the future, we should remember the great lesson of Salvation History: God will still be at work, no matter what happens, to complete His Plan of Salvation for us. This is why believers have not feared losing their homes, jobs, freedom, or even their lives. Whatever earthly things they lost, they knew that no one could ever take away God's love for them.

5. Activity A (Your Church History)

Distribute the Church History Fact Sheet appropriate to your jurisdiction and have the students read the story of their Church in this country. Distribute the Activity A Worksheet and have the students compile the information requested from the Fact Sheet and from your parish history materials.

If you have parishioners who have agreed to be interviewed about the parish history, have the group first determine from three to ten interview questions your group would like answered. Be sure the questions concern things people can tell about from first-hand experience and that the questions require more than a Yes or No answer. Then invite the interviewee to join the group.

Background Reading (Eastern Churches in the West continued):

"Melkite Greek Catholics began to arrive in the United States in the middle of the nineteenth century. The first Melkite missionary priest arrived in 1889, and founded the community of St George in Manhattan. Churches were also established in Chicago in 1890, Omaha in 1893 and Lawrence, Massachusetts in 1896. By 1910 there were about 15 Melkite churches in the United States. They were under the jurisdiction of the local Roman Catholic bishop and the nominal leadership of a patriarchal vicar. Immigration dropped off sharply after World War I and the vicariate was allowed to lapse. With increasing tensions in the Middle East after the establishment of Israel in 1948, immigrants from all Middle Eastern countries, including many Melkites, would find homes in the United States. Finally, in the wake of Vatican II, an exarchate was established (1966) with its center in Newton, Massachusetts. In 1974 it was raised to the status of an eparchy (full diocese).

"The last major group of Byzantine Catholics to be organized into a diocese was the Romanian community. As is the case with the other ethnic groups from Eastern Europe, there was a large immigration of people fleeing the harsh economic conditions in Romania at the end of the nineteenth century. The first Romanian parish was established in 1905, St Helena's Church in Cleveland, Ohio. Several parishes were organized in the following decade, and today there are sixteen Romanian Greek Catholic parishes in the United States. Romanian Byzantine parishes were under the jurisdiction of the Roman Catholic bishops until 1982, when an exarchate - later an eparchy - was established with its center in Canton, Ohio. Byzantine Catholics of Russian and Byelorussian ethnic backgrounds are still under the jurisdiction of the Roman Catholic bishops, but there is not a sufficient number of parishes to organize into a jurisdiction. . . .

"The United States was not the only destination of immigrants from the homelands of the Eastern Catholic and Orthodox Churches. Australia, Brazil, Canada and countless countries of Western Europe, Central and South America accepted their share of these seekers. In Canada today, for example there are Melkite, Slovak and Ukrainian Greek Catholic dioceses as well as Maronite and Syrian dioceses and an Armenian Catholic exarchate in addition to a number of Orthodox jurisdictions" (*TEE* 62-63).

6. Activity B (Facing Persecution)

Distribute Worksheet B and assign different students to read one of the stories; then have a student summarize each story and discuss the questions that follow.

7. Activity C (The Kingdom Tree)

Remind the students of Jesus' Parable of the Mustard Seed (Matthew 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32) and the project of the Kingdom Tree. Have the students add a branch representing the emigration of Eastern Christians abroad and the persecutions of the twentieth century.

8. Time Line

Refer to the time line poster. Have the students brainstorm the names of people mentioned in this lesson (*Eastern Christian immigrants to the West, the Blessed New Martyrs of the twentieth century*) and indicate the period in which each lived. Write in the names and dates under each appropriate heading.

9. Summary

End the lesson by summarizing the lesson from the aims on page 316, from the elements in the student text on which you focused and/or from any other points raised in the lesson.

10. Closing Prayer

Conclude by praying in your own words for those who are being persecuted for their faith in Asia and Africa and throughout the world, that the Lord may strengthen them in their trials and that He may keep the remembrance of them in our hearts.

Close with the invocation:

*v. Holy New Martyrs,
r. Pray to God for us.*

If you wish, you may mention all the names of the martyrs listed in the sidebar on page 121 of the students' text or the Fact Sheet on page 324 of this Teacher's Manual (e.g. Holy Hieromartyr Leonid, pray to God for us. Holy Hieromartyr Nicholas, pray...).

Other New-Martyrs of the Communist Era

Blessed Hieromartyr Kamen Vitchev (1893-1952)

A Bulgarian Greek Catholic priest, Father Kamen was the director of a seminary in Plovdiv. On 4 July 1952 he was arrested, accused of heading a "Catholic conspiracy against the State." He disappeared, along with 40 others who were condemned as "spies for the Vatican and the French and conspirators, seeking to foment an imperialist war against the USSR, Bulgaria and the Popular Democracies."

Blessed Hieromartyr Basil (Hopko) the Confessor (1904-1976)

A Greek Catholic priest serving in Prague and Presov, Czechoslovakia, he was ordained Auxiliary Bishop of Presov on May 11, 1947, in the face of a growing and systematic "Sovietization" of Czechoslovakia. On April 28, 1950, the Communist government "abolished" the Greek-Catholic Church of Czechoslovakia and arrested its bishops. After more than a year of interrogation under torture, Bishop Basil was condemned to 15 years in prison and a loss of all civil rights for 10 years. While in prison, in addition to other tortures, he was given small doses of arsenic which caused a chronic poisoning, as was later verified by an analysis of his bones.

On May 12, 1964 he was released from prison for health reasons, suffering from grave physical ailments and chronic depression caused by the constant torture and inhuman treatment. On June 13, 1968, the Greek-Catholic Church of Czechoslovakia was re-established after 18 years of open persecution and Bishop Basil returned to Presov where he remained until his death on 23 July 1976.

Blessed Hieromartyr Paul Gojdich (1888-1960)

Born in a village near Presov, Peter Gojdich followed in his priest-father's footsteps and became a priest as well. After eleven years as a parish priest he entered the Basilian Monastery, taking the name Paul. In 1927 he was ordained Bishop of Presov and in 1939 he was given the additional responsibility of administering the Slovak Eparchy of Mukachevo.

When the Communist government outlawed the Greek-Catholic Church in 1950, Bishop Paul was arrested for high treason along with two Roman Catholic bishops. Sentenced to life imprisonment, he was offered freedom if he would sever communion with Rome and head an independent Church. Refusing, he suffered years of punishment and humiliation, forced to do the most difficult and degrading jobs. In a 1953 amnesty, his life sentence was changed to 25 years but he was already 66 years old and his health deteriorated continuously. Yet all further requests for amnesty were refused and he died in a prison hospital on his 72nd birthday, July 17th, 1960.

His body was buried in the prison cemetery as "Prisoner 681," where it remained until 1968. With the easing of the political situation in Czecho-Slovakia, his remains were taken to Presov and interred in the Greek-Catholic Cathedral of St John the Baptist in Presov. Legally rehabilitated in 1990, Bishop Paul was decorated posthumously with the Order of T. G. Masaryk (II class) and with the Cross of Pribina (1st class).

The Story of Our Church

In analyzing our origins, we will find roughly three separate groups of people who make up this local Church. Probably the oldest group in most parishes consists of the sons and daughters of Melkites who emigrated from the Middle East during the years 1880 to 1920. They came, usually in groups, from a host of cities, towns and villages in present-day Lebanon and Syria. They settled in the growing industrial cities of the northeast, along the railroad lines of the midwest, on farms and ranches in the plains - and slowly became part of the American scene.

A few enterprising Syrians had previously taken advantage of the land grants offered by the US. government to help settle the newly opened territories in the central plains. It is recorded that Fr Flavian Kfoury, a priest from the Monastery of St John in Khonshara, visited his countrymen here as early as 1849 to solicit help in reconstructing the monastery. Fr Clement Shami from the Holy Savior Monastery near Saida made a similar visit in 1883. Presumably word of the immigrants' successes must have become known abroad.

It was in the larger urban centers such as New York, Boston, Chicago and Detroit that sizeable communities began to gather. And it was in lower Manhattan, directly across the bay from the immigration center at Ellis Island, that the first organized ministry of the Melkite Church in America began. Economos Abraham Beshawate, designated patriarchal vicar for the Melkites in America by Patriarch Gregory II, arrived in New York in 1889. Out of this fledgling community was to grow the St George parish in Manhattan and the Virgin Mary parish in Brooklyn. Other early communities were St Mary, Omaha (1890), St John the Baptist, Chicago (1892), St Joseph, Lawrence, Ma (1896), St Joseph, Scranton, Pa (1898), St George, Rugby, ND (1902), Assumption, Du Bois, Pa (1903), and Our Lady of Lourdes, La Crosse, WI (1906). The 1909 Catholic Encyclopedia states that by that year there were also Melkite communities in Boston, Joliet, IL and Pawtucket, RI. Four years later Fr Basil Kherbawi's book, *History of the Syrian Immigration, Illustrated*, lists additional communities in Cleveland, Las Vegas, NM, Los Angeles, New Orleans and Shenandoah, Pa. Several of these parishes were closed over the years due to shifting populations or the lack of a permanent priest. Of some of them nothing is known.

The first priests who came here from the Middle East exercised an itinerant ministry as well. Armed with letters of introduction from the patriarchal vicar, they would travel from one city to another gathering their people around them, serving the Liturgy and administering the sacraments. ... In some places the presence of a visiting priest served as a catalyst for organizing the local community as a prelude to forming a parish. People would frequently form religious societies, begin collecting money and, in a few cases, actually buy property for a future church.

While Fr Bechawate represented the patriarch in America and served as a kind of clearinghouse for communities and clergy in the early years, no Melkite diocese was established here during this peak period of immigration from the Middle East. ... In 1966, shortly after the close of the [second Vatican] council, an exarchate was established for American Melkites and a bishop named to head it in the person of Kyr Justin Najmy, who had served as pastor of Rhode Island's two Melkite parishes since 1947.

(Abridged from *Bearers of the Mysteries*, Diocese of Newton, 1988)

Melkite Hierarchs in the United States: Bishop Justin Najmy (exarch 1966-1968); Archbishop Joseph Tawil (exarch, then eparch 1970-1990); Bishop Ignatius Ghattas (eparch 1990-1992); Bishop John Elya (eparch 1994-2004); Archbishop Cyril Boustros (eparch 2004-) Bishop Nicholas Samra (auxiliary, 1989-2004).

The Story of Our Church

We find Romanians in America as far back as 1700, but the true emigration had hardly started by the end of the 19th century. At that time men were leaving their families in their own countries and were coming to the USA to earn, by hard labor, a thousand dollars plus the money to return home. (Their motto was: "one thousand plus money for the return trip.") They were leading a provisional life, with no thought at all of founding institutions in the New World.

The majority of them came from Transylvania, Banat, and Bucovina where, besides being very poor, they were also deprived of freedom and therefore of the possibility to improve their social condition. Here in America they worked in steel mills, in coal mines, and on the railroads (only a few chose farm work) and so the majority settled in industrial centers. Some earned their thousand dollars and returned to their native country. Others, preferring a more commodious life, brought their wives and children, their relatives and friends from their own town and formed a small Romanian environment around the mills where they were working.

In their town in the Old Country the Church played an essential role in their lives, and so Romanians used to solve every problem with the help of their priest. Arriving in the New World, the Romanian was deprived of this essential help in his life. He had found here houses consecrated to God; but they were so different from those he left in his country. These were cold and empty. The services were different and performed in a language incomprehensible to him. Even stranger to him was to see people like himself working in the mills, setting themselves up as preachers of the word of God.

And so, on Sundays, after a week of hard work, he stayed home embittered -thinking of the beautiful religious services in his hometown and looking with envy at those of other denominations who were able to find consolation in their own churches. He discharged his bitterness in letters sent home, complaining that they would be able to build their own churches, but they had no priests. Because, according to one of their typical representatives, the cantor Peter Killian, "A priest can live without a church, but a church cannot live without a priest."

Our first priests who came to America, officially sent by the Romanian Byzantine Catholic hierarchy with the approval of the ecclesiastical authorities from Rome, found a suitable terrain for organizing parishes. The period between 1906 and 1920 may be called the period of formation of the Romanian Byzantine Catholic communities and of the construction of churches. (Adapted from Rev Georghe Rus, *The Romanian Byzantine Catholic Church in the USA*.)

Romanian Hierarchs in the United States: Bishop Louis Puscas (exarch, then eparch 1983-1993); Bishop John Michael Botean (eparch 1996-).

The Story of Our Church

Greek Catholics of the Ruthenian Metropolia came originally from the land at the foot of the Carpathian Mountains, east of what was then Czechoslovakia, south of Poland and north of Romania, in what is now the southern Ukraine. From there our ancestors migrated to Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Croatia.

Ruthenians or Carpatho-Rusyns have never had their own state and have lived since the sixth and seventh centuries as a national minority, first in the kingdoms of Hungary and Poland, then from the late eighteenth century to 1918 in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Since the end of World War I, borders have changed frequently, and Carpatho-Rusyns have found themselves living in several different countries.

Beginning with the 1880's Ruthenian emigration was on the rise until World War I, when almost half the Ruthenian population of the Austro-Hungarian Empire made its way to America. Most of the earliest immigrants in the 1870s and 1880s were young males who hoped to work a year or so and then return home. Some engaged in seasonal labor and may have migrated back and forth several times between Europe and America in the decades before 1914. Others eventually brought their families and stayed permanently. Whereas before World War I, movement between Europe and America was relatively easy for enthusiastic young laborers, after World War II, communist rule in the European homeland put an effective end to virtually all cross-border emigration and season migration.

Since earning money was the main goal of the immigrants, they settled primarily in the northeast and north central states, in particular the coal mining region around Scranton and Wilkes-Barre in eastern Pennsylvania, and in Pittsburgh and its suburbs in the western part of that state. Other cities and metropolitan areas that attracted Carpatho-Rusyns were New York City and northeastern New Jersey; southern Connecticut; the Binghamton-Endicott-Johnson City triangle in south central New York; Cleveland and Youngstown, Ohio; Gary and Whiting, Indiana; Detroit and Flint, Michigan; and Minneapolis, Minnesota. By 1920, nearly 80 percent of all Carpatho-Rusyns lived in only three states: Pennsylvania (54 percent), New York (13 percent), and New Jersey (12 percent). Today the number of Americans of Carpatho-Ruthenian descent is estimated to exceed the half-million mark.

Since the Church was an integral part of their life, they brought their priests and traditions with them, often times mortgaging their own homes to build their churches. There was, however, no central authority for the fledgling churches. The Byzantine Catholic Church, during its formative years in America, faced many obstacles. One of the greatest difficulties was the unfriendly attitude of the Roman rite clergy.

The first Byzantine Catholic Bishop for the United States, named in 1906, was Soter Stephen Ortynsky, a Basilian monk, highly educated and an outstanding orator. He was to be the bishop for Byzantine Catholics from both Carpatho-Ruthenia and Galicia. His appointment, however, was strongly opposed by the American hierarchy, who forced the Holy See to concede full control of Bishop Ortynsky's activities to the local Roman Catholic bishops. It was not until 1913 that an Exarchate for Byzantine Catholics in the United States was established.

In 1924 a separate, single ecclesiastical jurisdiction for the United States was organized for Carpatho-Ruthenian Greek Catholics which would become the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Pittsburgh forty-five years later. Through intermarriage and an attraction for Eastern spirituality, many more have joined or transferred to our Church. Because of this, our Church in the United States became known as the Byzantine Catholic Church to reflect that it is not an ethnic Church per se, but one that is open to all peoples. After World War II, many Eastern Catholics began moving to other parts of the country and additional Eparchies were established: Passaic (New Jersey) in 1963, Parma (Ohio) in 1969, and Van Nuys (California) in 1982.

Ruthenian Hierarchs in the United States: Bishop Basil Takach (exarch 1924-1948); Bishop Daniel Ivancho (exarch 1948-1955), Bishop Nicholas Elko (exarch, then eparch of Pittsburgh 1955-1967).

Pittsburgh Archeparchy: Bishop Stephen Kocisko (auxiliary, eparch, then metropolitan 1967-1990), Metropolitan Thomas Dolinay (1991-1993), Metropolitan Judson Procyk (1994-2001), Metropolitan Basil Schott (2002-), Bishop John Bilock (auxiliary 1973-1994)

Passaic Eparchy: Bishop Stephen Kocisko (1963-1967); Bishop Michael Dudick (1967-1996); Bishop Andrew Pataki (1996-) (Bishops Thomas Dolinay, George Kuzma and Andrew Pataki, auxiliaries).

Parma Eparchy: Bishop Emil Mihalik (1969-1984); Bishop Andrew Pataki (1984-1996); Bishop Basil Schott (1996-2002); Bishop John Kudrick (2002-)

Van Nuys Eparchy: Bishop Thomas Dolinay (1982-1990); Bishop George Kuzma (1991-2000); Bishop William Skurla (2002-)

The Story of Our Church

About the year 1876 the first large groups of Ukrainian immigrants began arriving in the United States. Ukraine was then under the rule of the Austro-Hungarian and Russian Empires and Ukrainian cultural, religious, political and economic life were being suppressed. Almost half were illiterate and few were aware of their own Ukrainian nationality.

Extreme poverty was caused by overpopulation and the small land holdings of the peasants. Without education or land, young Ukrainians were exploited for labor and paid at a rate of only 10 cents per day for 14 to 16 hours work by landlords. Some went to Germany for seasonal labor. Stories soon started to circulate that in the United States, it was always called America, you could earn 25 cents per hour! The first Ukrainian immigrants discovered that the U.S.A. was indeed the land of opportunity although the back-breaking labor was no easier. But they were willing to work because they saw a promising future.

Letters home to relatives and friends were a sensation in the small villages. They contained news of American opportunity and the valuable American dollars in the envelopes were proof of success. Many immigrants came at first just to work to make enough money to buy a farm at home, but most eventually stayed and brought over their families. Some young men came to the United States to avoid the compulsory military service in the Austrian army.

American companies, especially the coal mines and the steel mills, in their search for laborers helped to promote immigration by agents. They worked gradually across Europe from the west so that Poles and Czechs started to arrive much sooner than the Ukrainians. It was the coal mines which were the great magnet which attracted thousands of Ukrainians to Pennsylvania. Since they spoke no English, the Ukrainian workers were often used as strike breakers by the companies. This developed strong antagonisms among the older immigrants, such as the Irish.

In 1884, at the request of the local community, Fr Ivan Volansky was sent from Lviv and proceeded to organize the first Ukrainian Church in the United States. It was named St. Michael the Archangel and was built in Shenandoah, Pennsylvania in 1885. The following year Fr Volansky organized five other church building committees among Ukrainians in Pennsylvania: Olyphant, Shamokin, Wilkes-Barre, Freeland and Kingston as well as in Jersey City, New Jersey and Minneapolis, Minnesota. Other priests followed and churches were organized throughout the northeast. Fr Volansky also organized the first Ukrainian-American organization, the St. Nicholas Brotherhood; began the first Ukrainian-American newspaper; and took part in the labor movement. By 1890 there were ten priests in the Ukrainian community. Since they were better educated than most immigrants, they soon took the initiative and the leadership of the community in establishing churches, societies, schools and other institutions. Within ten years, 42 churches had been established in the community, of which 29 were Catholic and 13 were Orthodox. There were also 107 fraternal organizations in existence located in 94 towns and cities.

Within a few years Greek Catholic priests began requesting that a bishop be appointed for their growing community. Since the Roman Catholic bishops in America opposed this, nothing happened until Bishop Andriy Sheptytsky became Metropolitan of Lviv. He persuaded Pope Pius X to agree to their request and in 1907 Bishop Soter Ortynsky was named bishop for the Greek Catholic immigrants in the United States. By the time of his death in 1916, there were 286 Greek Catholic churches in the United States, 220 priests and half a million faithful.

After Bishop Soter's death, his exarchate was divided and a separate exarchate was established for the Carpathian parishes. Bishop Constantine Bohachevsky was named exarch for the Ukrainian parishes and headquartered in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. After World War II, a large number of Ukrainians fleeing Soviet rule settled in the United States. In 1958 the exarchate became the seat of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic metropolitan. Other eparchies were established in Stamford, Connecticut (1956); Chicago, Illinois (1961); and Parma, Ohio (1983).

Adapted from an article in FORUM No. 34 Winter 1976-77 and other sources

Ukrainian Hierarchs in the United States: Bishop Soter Ortynsky (bishop, then exarch 1907-1916).

Philadelphia Archeparchy: Metropolitan Constantine Bohachevsky (exarch 1924-1958, metropolitan 1958-61), Metropolitan Ambrose Senyshyn (1961-1976), Metropolitan Joseph Schmondiuk (1977-1978), Metropolitan Myroslav Lubachivsky (1978-1981), Metropolitan Stephn Sulyk (1981-2000), Metropolitan Stefan Soroka (2001-). Bishop John Stock (auxiliary 1971-1982), Bishop Walter Paska (auxiliary 1992-2000), Bishop John Bura (auxiliary, 2006-).

Stamford Eparchy: *Bishop Ambrose Senyshyn (exarch, then eparch 1956-1961), Bishop Joseph Schmondiuk (1961-1977), Bishop Basil Losten (1977-2006), Bishop Paul Khomnitsky (2006-).*

Chicago Eparchy: Bishop Jaroslav Gabro (1961-1980); Bishop Innocent Lotocky (1981-1993); Bishop Michael Wiwchar (1993-2003), Bishop Richard Seminack (2003-).

Parma Eparchy: Bishop Robert Moskal (1983-).

Your Church History

Read the Church History Fact Sheet and your own parish history to find the answers to these questions.

1. What was the overseas origin of your parish (*country, patriarchate, or diocese*)?

2. Where was the first parish in your jurisdiction organized?

3. In what year? _____

4. When was your parish organized? _____

5. Where did the first parishioners come from? _____

6. Why did they come to your city? _____

7. Where did the current parishioners come from? _____

8. What is the name of your bishop? _____

9. Where is his see or headquarters? _____

10. Who is the chief bishop of your Church (*patriarch or metropolitan*)?

Persecution of Christians Continues

Christians are still regularly oppressed in Communist countries such as China and Islamic countries such as Indonesia and Pakistan. Here are some recent articles from world news services.

Indonesian Christians under Threat of Terrorist Attack during Christmas Season

Indonesia's police force began to step up security measures to guard against attacks targeted on churches and Christians at Christmas season, as Christians made public their complaints over the authorities' indifference to ongoing persecutions.

Indonesian national police chief General Sutanto issued a nationwide order last Thursday to step up security measures around churches and other public buildings against possible terrorist attacks that might occur during the Christmas season, according to a report by Italy-based *AsiaNews*.

The call comes in the wake of the horrific beheadings and shootings in the religiously divided Poso region of Central Sulawesi over the last three weeks.

Late last month, three Christian teenage girls were beheaded by a group of five masked men riding on motorcycles on their way to school. In less than ten days after the triple murder, two more girls were shot, one fatally, in the same area on Nov. 8 despite the 1,000-man troop sent by Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono to secure the troubled city.

Although it has not yet been proved whether or not the two incidents were related, a written note found alongside with the heads of the three slain girls warning that, "another 100 Christian teenagers would be killed" has alarmed the police.

Difficult as it is, Yarni's father and the parents of Alfita and Teressia have released forgiveness to the murderers of their daughters. They believe that it is God who will judge them. Markus Sambuwe, the father of one of the girls, remarked, "I am really angry, but the Holy Spirit touched my heart and changed me. I forgive them just as Jesus has forgiven my sins."

Christians Persecuted in the Holy Land

By Chris Mitchell *CWNews*

Two thousand years after the birth of Christ, Christians are leaving the Holy Land in record numbers. Now, a new report suggests persecution against Palestinian Christian believers is getting worse.

Charred ruins are all that remain of 14 homes set a blaze in the West Bank village of Taybeh. An angry Muslim mob, from a neighboring village, attacked the Christian town last September. They said they were avenging the dishonor of a Muslim woman allegedly impregnated by her Christian employer from Taybeh. Taybeh is the only West Bank village completely inhabited by Christians, about 2,000 of them. Originally, it was called Ephraim in the Old Testament; and in the book of John it is mentioned as a village where Jesus stayed.

David Khoury is the Mayor of Taybeh. He says the attack would not have occurred if Taybeh were a Muslim village instead of a Christian one. Palestinian officials are downplaying what happened here—depicting it as a dispute between families—the result of an out-of-wedlock romance. But some villagers insist the incident was "pure religious hatred"—that Taybeh Christians were used as scapegoats. Some of the 400 attackers were reportedly heard shouting "*Allahu akbar*—Allah is great"—as they threw molotov cocktails at Christian houses.

The attack on the village of Taybeh is one more example of the precarious position of Christians in the West Bank and throughout the Middle East." Last February, hundreds of Druze Muslims attacked Palestinian Christians in the northern Israeli village of Mughar. Rioters damaged 125 homes and businesses after a Druze teenager spread the false rumor that Christians had posted pornographic images of Druze women on the internet.

International Human Rights attorney Justus Weiner has researched the plight of Palestinian Christians for more than eight years. His findings were recently published by the Jerusalem Center For Public Affairs. Weiner warned, "Palestinian Christians are in very dire straights..." He also says Palestinian Christians are now living in fear because persecution against them is increasing.

Western leaders say elections scheduled for January prove the Palestinians are committed to establishing a democratic society. But the draft Palestinian constitution shows a government consigned to institutionalizing Islam. While the draft constitution pledges to guarantee freedom of worship: Islam is stated as the official religion of Palestine. Shariah law is stated as the primary source of legislation. Under shariah law, any Muslim who leaves Islam and converts to another faith must be killed. So it was for Ahmad El-Achwal, former owner of a falafel stand. The father of eight, he converted to Christianity and held regular Bible studies in his home.

But, he suffered repeated arrests and torture at the hands of Palestinian authority police. Human Rights attorney Weiner met and interviewed Ashwal prior to his death in January 2004. Weiner attested, "He showed me, at the time, the results of his—what were then—recent arrests, which included burns all over his body. Where hot pieces of sheet metal were taken from a fire and touched to his skin. And, on January 21st, 2004, someone knocked on the door - he opened the door and he was met with a hail of bullets. And he was shot dead in the entrance to his apartment."

One recent population study shows that the Christian presence in Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority has declined from 26 percent in 1914 to 9 percent today. While their numbers may be fewer, and persecution against them is increasing, thousands of Christians have chosen to remain in the Holy Land....and some are quietly leading Muslims to Christ...

Persecution Strengthens Chinese Church

Rome (AsiaNews/KF) - Fr Yang Jianwei, a priest of the Roman Catholic Church in China was arrested on the afternoon of November 12, together with ten seminarians, including four from Baoding (Hebei). The arrest was carried out by around 20 public security officials in Xushui City in Hebei province. The reasons for the arrest are not yet known.

Police confiscated several religious books and 7,000 yuan (around 725 euros). After being detained for three days, the six seminarians, who hail from outside Baoding, were released and sent back to their home towns instead of to the seminary. The other four — Fan Fubin, Wang Yongliang, Wang Chunlei and Li Yutao — are still in police custody and their whereabouts are unknown. Fr Yang is still under arrest too. He was ordained to the priesthood in 2000 and comes from a village of Xushui City, Shakou; there are around 1000 members in the underground Catholic community there.

Saturday's arrests are the latest episode in a recent drift towards tightening control on China's Roman Catholic Church. The campaign of repression is striking Hebei province hardest of all; the underground Catholic community here is larger. On November 8, Bishop Giulio Jia Zhiguo of Zhengding (Hebei) was arrested for the eighth time within a year. The day before the bishop's arrest, Fr Li Suchuan, 40, and Fr Yang Ermeng, 35, both from the diocese of Bishop Jia, Zhengding, were arrested by security officers and taken away from their parishes in the villages of Zhoujiazhuang and Zhoutou, both in Jinzhou area.

On October 29, the public security authorities arrested two priests of the Wenzhou diocese, in the western province of Zhejiang. Fr Shao Zhumin, diocesan vicar-general and the chancellor, Fr Paul Jiang Sunian, had just celebrated the concluding mass of the Year of the Eucharist.

All of them received the same treatment: "study sessions" consisting in endless hours of brainwashing to get them to join the state-controlled Patriotic Association.

The two priests arrested on November 7 were released but warned to "give up evangelizing" and "go work on a farm." A priest from one of these communities told *AsiaNews*. "We shall not go back to till the soil. Times have changed and the way the government is treating the Church is childish. It only strengthens the faith and the enthusiasm of the faithful. It helps spread the Church's influence more rapidly".

Vocations are up in Hebei, where persecution is greatest. One of the smallest underground dioceses has 70 priest and 140 seminarians. "We have many difficulties but I am happy to see us grow stronger and our ranks swell. I am happy to see our lay people less concerned about careers, amusement, and consumerism and more about their commitment to the faith."

Questions

- Why would more people focus on their faith in times of persecution?
- Why would people seek to become priests, monks or nuns when they know it means that they will be arrested?
- Why would Muslims become Christians when they know they will be killed as a result?
- Why would parents forgive the people who beheaded their children?
- What would you do?

The Kingdom Tree

Add a branch marked The Church in a New World, representing the emigration of Eastern Christians abroad and the persecutions of the twentieth century.

