

Speakers - Abstracts

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Mercy and forgiveness

in collaboration with the Orthodox Churches

WALTER Card. KASPER

Walter Card. Kasper

Christian Forgiveness and Reconciliation among the Churches

Walter Kasper (born 5 March 1933, in Heidenheim an der Brenz, Germany) is a German cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church. He is president Emeritus of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, having served as its president from 2001 to 2010. From 1957 to 1958 he was a parochial vicar in Stuttgart. He returned to his studies and earned a doctorate in dogmatic theology from the University of Tübingen. He was a faculty member at Tübingen from 1958 to 1961 and worked for three years as an assistant to the conservative Leo Scheffczyk and Hans Küng. He later taught dogmatic theology at the Westphalian University of Münster (1964–1970), rising to become dean of the theological faculty in 1969 and then the same in Tübingen in 1970. In 1983 Kasper taught as a visiting professor at The Catholic University of America. He was editor of the *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*. Kasper was named Bishop of Rottenburg-Stuttgart, Germany's fourth largest Catholic diocese, on 17 April 1989. On 3 March 1999, Kasper was appointed President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity – and as such, President of the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews – and resigned from his post in Rottenburg-Stuttgart. He was elevated to the cardinalate by Pope John Paul II in 2001. His books cover all the main areas of theological research and represent one of the main contributions to post-conciliar Catholic theology.

ABSTRACT

The theme of mercy is central in the Bible, both in the Old and in the New Testaments. One could even summarize the whole Gospel under the title of mercy... Who of us has no need of mercy and of merciful people? This central and fundamental theme has been unpardonably neglected by systematic theology and reduced to a small paragraph under justice... God should condemn and punish the evil and reward the good. What a poor and miserable idea of God, of a God compelled to act according to our ideas of justice, a God who is an idol of our concepts, an executor and prisoner of our requests of an order imagined just!

Such a God would no longer be God, but an idol that becomes ideology.

KALLISTOS WARE, Metropolitan of DIOKLEIA

Kallistos Ware

The Dynamic of Forgiveness in Easter Fathers

Born Timothy Ware in Bath, Somerset, England, Metropolitan Kallistos was educated at Westminster School and Magdalen College, Oxford, where he took a Double First in Classics as well as reading Theology. In 1958, after embracing the Orthodox faith, he travelled throughout Greece, spending a great deal of time at the Monastery of St. John the Theologian in Patmos. He also frequented other major centers of Orthodoxy such as Jerusalem and Mount Athos. In 1966, he was ordained to the priesthood and was tonsured as a monk, receiving the name Kallistos, in honour of St. Kallistos Xanthopoulos. In the same year, he became a lecturer at Oxford, teaching Eastern Orthodox Studies, a position which he held for 35 years until his retirement. In 1979, he was appointed to a Fellowship at Pembroke College, Oxford, and in 1982, he was consecrated to the episcopacy as a titular bishop with the title Bishop of Diokleia, appointed to serve as the assistant to the bishop of the Ecumenical Patriarchate's Orthodox Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain. Despite his elevation, Kallistos remained in Oxford and carried on his duties both as the parish priest of the Oxford Greek Orthodox community and as a lecturer at the University. Since his retirement in 2001, Kallistos has continued to publish and to give lectures on Orthodox Christianity, travelling widely. Until recently, he was the chairman of the board of directors of the Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies in Cambridge. He is the chairman of the group Friends of Orthodoxy on Iona. He serves on the advisory board of the Orthodox Peace Fellowship. On March 30, 2007, the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate elevated the Diocese of Diokleia to Metropolis and Bishop Kallistos to Titular Metropolitan of Diokleia.

ABSTRACT

“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Matt. 6:12). The prayer given to us by Jesus, while comprehensive, is also exceedingly concise. If, then in this short yet wide-ranging prayer, nearly a quarter is devoted to the theme of forgiveness, this indicates how crucially important it is in God's sight that we should forgive and be forgiven. In the words of the Russian Orthodox starets St Silouan of Mount Athos (1866-1938), “Where there is forgiveness...there is freedom”. If only we can bring ourselves to forgive—if we can at least want to forgive—then we shall find ourselves in what the Psalms call a “spacious place” or “a place of liberty”: “We went through fire and water, but Thou broughtest us out into a place of liberty” (Psalm 66:12). Forgiveness means release from a prison in which all the doors are locked on the inside. Only through forgiveness can we enter into what St Paul terms “the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Rom. 8:21).

JOHN BEHR

“The Name of LORD God, Merciful and Gracious” (Ex 34,5)

Fr. John Behr is the Dean of St Vladimir's Seminary and Professor of Patristics, teaching courses in patristics, dogmatics and scriptural exegesis at the seminary, and also at Fordham University, where he is the Distinguished Lecturer in Patristics.

Fr. John hails from England, though his family background is Russian and German - and clerical on both sides. From the Russian side, his great-grandfather was sent to London by Metropolitan Evlogy to serve there as a priest in 1926; his father was also a priest, ordained by Metropolitan Anthony (Bloom), as are his brother (at St Paul's Monastery on Mt Athos) and his brother-in-law (Sts Cyril and Methodius, Terryville, CT). His maternal grandparents met at Karl Barth's graduate seminar in Basel, and served in the Lutheran Church in Germany, where his grandfather was a Lutheran pastor.

After completing his first degree in Philosophy in London in 1987, Fr. John spent a year studying in Greece. He finished an M.Phil. in Eastern Christian Studies at Oxford University, under Bishop Kallistos (Ware), who subsequently supervised his doctoral work, which was examined by Fr. Andrew Louth and Rowan Williams, now Archbishop of Canterbury. While working on his doctorate, he was invited to be a Visiting Lecturer at St Vladimir's Seminary in 1993, where he has been a permanent faculty member since 1995, tenured in 2000, and ordained in 2001. Before becoming Dean in 2007, he served as the editor of St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly, and he still edits the Popular Patristics Series for SVS Press.

His early work was on issues of asceticism and anthropology, focusing on St. Irenaeus of Lyons and Clement of Alexandria. After spending almost a decade in the second century, Fr John began the publication of a series on the Formation of Christian Theology, and has now reached the fifth and sixth centuries. He has recently completed an edition and translation of, and introduction to, the remaining texts of Diodore of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia. He has also published a synthetic presentation of the theology of the early centuries, focused on the mystery of Christ.

ABSTRACT

The God of the Scriptures is a God of mercy: this is proclaimed repeatedly by the prophets and especially in the Psalms. “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children, to the third and fourth generation.” (Ex 34:5-7).

Yet, the words from Exodus also indicate that the covenant that the Lord establishes is a terrible work – something never seen before in all the earth or in any nation.

When these events and words surrounding the exodus from Egypt are seen as a type and a prefigurement of the awe-inspiring event of the Passion, then we are drawn into an even profounder understanding of the mercy of God, revealed as Christ passes over in his own exodus through the Cross (cf. Luke 9:31). The mercy and faithful love of God is indeed not temporary or transitory, but eternal – stretching out from the beginning to the end, creation to recreation, in an all embracing economy or pedagogy, bringing us, through suffering, death, and repentance, to share in his life and to show the same mercy towards others that God shows towards us. For the God who is known as the God of mercy, calls us to this: “Be ye merciful, even as your Father is merciful” (Luke 6:36)

EUGEN J. PENTIUC

Eugen J. Pentiu

Forgiveness in the Old Testament. Joseph and his Brothers

Tenured Professor of Old Testament and Hebrew at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, and Associate Dean of Academic Affairs for Hellenic College and Holy Cross in Brookline, MA, The Very Rev. Dr. Eugen J. Pentiu devotes the bulk of his time to teaching and research in the areas of Old Testament and Semitic languages and civilizations. He is currently engaged in research on the religious and literary ties of Emar civilization to the Hebrew Bible, as well as the ways the Eastern Orthodox tradition received and interpreted the Old Testament.

Father Eugen has been the recipient of the Excellence in Teaching Award given by Hellenic College Holy Cross Student Association on separate occasions (2005, 2006, 2007, 2009). During his sabbatical of 2009-2010, as a recipient of Fulbright and Lilly Fellowships, he conducted research at the University of Athens and École biblique et archéologique française in Jerusalem. During the summer of 2013, Pentiu was invited to work at École biblique on the newly international Bible project created and led by this famous Dominican biblical school. The project was entitled “The Bible in Its Traditions” and Fr. Eugen’s major contribution was the authoring of a new translation and notes, on the Book of Hosea.

A prolific author, Fr. Eugen has authored numerous books and articles, and is also one of the editors-in-chief of *The Orthodox Study Bible: The Old Testament* published by Thomas Nelson in 2008. His most recent book, *The Old Testament in Eastern Orthodox Tradition*, was published by Oxford University Press in January, 2014. Father Pentiu has recently signed a new contract with Oxford University Press for a book tentatively titled *Hearing and Seeing the Scripture: The Liturgical Exegesis of the Old Testament in Orthodox Tradition*. The proposed book is a florilegium of Orthodox “liturgical exegesis” of the Old Testament. Aural (e.g., hymnography, psalmody, lectionaries, homilies) and visual (e.g., iconography, architecture, liturgical acts) liturgical productions are examined with respect to each book of the extended Old Testament canon, consisting of 39 canonical and 10

ABSTRACT

Genesis 37-50, one of the most elaborate narratives of the Bible, sets the stage for a subtle process of reconciliation where every character actively involved in the story undergoes a profound transformation. At the first sight, “Joseph and His Brothers” looks like a story of revenge, where Joseph, an angry viceroy and former pampered teenage-shepherd, seeks to pay his brothers back for their crime. However, Joseph’s harsh attitude towards his brothers had only one goal: to make sure that the perpetrators have changed or repented. In both traditions, Jewish (teshubah “return”) and Christian (metanoia “change of mind”), repentance is neither a feeling nor a declaration but rather a call to action: “Return / Change your mind!” Return to what? To oneself, one may answer.

If sinning is estranging from oneself, repentance is moving away from sin by returning to oneself (Is 55:7; Jer 31:18). According to Maimonides, the “true repentant” (ba’al teshubah, lit. “master of repentance”) is that person who confronted by a similar circumstance wherein (s)he transgressed, (s)he abstains from committing the same mistake, thus proving that (s)he changed / returned to oneself. Similar circumstances to the ones wherein the brothers sold Joseph to the Ismaelites are recreated, so that the main characters of the story may be tested again. The paper examines in detail the inner transformations of the main cast (i.e., Jacob, Judah, Reuben, and Joseph), as prerequisite for forgiveness and reconciliation.

ARSENIJ SOKOLOV

The Three Parables of God’s Mercy in Luke 15

Arsenij Sokolov

Igumen Arsenij (Sokolov) was born in Russia in 1968. After studying history at the University of Tomsk he became a monk. He was ordained deacon in 1992 and priest in 1998. He received his theological formation at the Moscow Theological Academy and the Biblical Institute in Rome. In 2012 he obtained a doctorate at the Ss Cyril and Methodius School of Post-Graduate and Doctoral Studies of the Moscow Patriarchate after defending a thesis on the Jewish and patristic exegesis of the Book of Amos. Since 2013 he has been an ordinary member of the Italian Biblical Association. In 2014 he was named representative of the Moscow Patriarchate to the Patriarch of Antioch.

DIMITRIOS MOSCHOS

Dimitrios Moschos

Mercy in the Life and Teachings of St Pachomius

Dimitrios Moschos studied Theology at the Theological Faculty of Athens University/Greece (BA, 1982) and Byzantine

Studies at the Ludwig-Maximilian-University of Munich/Germany (MA in 1994). In 1996 he was named Ph.D. by the Theological Faculty of Athens and 2007 Doctor Habilitatus (Post-doctorate Degree) in Church History by the Theological Faculty of University of Rostock/Germany.

1992 to 2007 he served as a Religion high school teacher. In 2007 he was elected Lecturer and 2012 Assistant Professor in Church History at the Theological Faculty of Athens University. Since 2007 serves also as adjunct professor (Privatdozent) at the Theological Faculty of Rostock University. He is member of the editorial board of the theological review "Synaxi" and of the Board of directors of Volos Academy for Theological Studies.

His research interests focus on the interrelation between broader religious and cultural currents like asceticism or Greek philosophy as well as between institutional transformations and social history within Christian Church especially Orthodox during the ancient and medieval period. Main monographs: *The philosophical presuppositions of the Nicephoros Gregoras' opposition to Hesychasm* [in Greek], Athens 1997, and *Echatology in Egyptian Monasticism. The Role of Christian Eschatological Models of Thought in the History of Early Egyptian Monasticism and Its Social Function* [in German], Tübingen 2010, publ. by Mohr-Siebeck.

ABSTRACT

In Upper Egypt in the fourth century Christians probably come from Judeo-Christian communities, in which mercy through sacrifice in honor of Jesus Christ and the celebration of Easter and through the imitation of this sacrifice in martyrdom are what the believers seek above all. The same thing exists from ancient times in native Egyptian cults. Pachomius, who understood and shared these ideas, thought of the collective reconstitution of the image of the New Israel in the monastic community, which lives the Lord's mercy and pardon through the active organization of relations based on love that characterize the Church and demand action and the practice of evangelical precepts, together with bodily asceticism, virginity, prayer, and continual meditation on the Gospel. The pachomian community experiences mercy through the organization and participation in various services, thus serving as a model for the modern world.

ALEXIS TORRANCE

Alexis Torrance

Repentance and Divine Mercy in the Monastic Community: The Monks of Gaza

Alexis Torrance (D. Phil., Theology, University of Oxford) did his doctoral work on the concept of repentance in Christian Late Antiquity, with special reference to ascetic theology from the fifth to seventh centuries. He is currently Assistant Professor of Byzantine Theology in the Department of Theology of the University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana. He has researched and published on diverse aspects of patristic ("Precedents for Palamas' essence-energies theology in the Cappadocian Fathers", in *Vigiliae Christianae* 2009); "Standing in the Breach: the Significance and Function of the Saints in the Letters of Barsanuphius and John of Gaza", in *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2009), Byzantine and modern orthodox Theology ("The Love-Hate Relationship: Christ's commandment of hatred in the theology of Archimandrite Sophrony", in *Journal of the Orthodox Center for the Advancement of Biblical Studies* 2013). While his work currently concentrates on monastic theology, sanctity, and the history of doctrine, he likewise has a strong interest in modern Eastern Orthodox thought and East-West relations. His first monograph is entitled *Repentance in Late Antiquity: Eastern Asceticism and the Framing of the Christian Life, ca. 400–650* (Oxford University Press). He recently co-edited an interdisciplinary volume on *Individuality in Late Antiquity* (Ashgate) and is currently working on a monograph with the tentative title, *Holy Persons: The Human Ideal in Byzantine Theology*.

ABSTRACT

Among the preoccupations of Barsanuphius, John, and Dorotheos of Gaza is a constant attentiveness to the dynamics of repentance and divine mercy. One could say that between these two concepts lies the whole of the Christian life. In this paper, some pertinent features of the Gazan vision of repentance and mercy will be highlighted. First, the emphasis on mercy belonging to God, not to us, will be dealt with. Despite frequently being asked directly for mercy by their interlocutors, Barsanuphius and John almost invariably shift such language to highlight the source of mercy in God alone, rather than the elder. That said, while mercy belongs properly to God and is given by Jesus Christ, its acquisition is always mediated for the Gaza Fathers through a combination of the prayers of the saints and the repentance of the faithful. The actual lived experience of God's "great mercy" in the Christian life is what most concerns the Gaza Fathers, something that comes only to the humble, patient soul. Their concern to prioritize humble repentance in the quest for mercy leads them to denounce counterfeit, even demonic, forms of mercy that must be resisted: these include forced or feigned compassion and theories of apocatastasis, both of which militate against the hope of divine mercy.

SEBASTIAN BROCK

Sebastian Brock

Isaac the Syrian: Justice and Mercy in God

Sebastian Paul Brock is generally acknowledged as the foremost academic in the field of Syriac language today. He was born in 1938 and studied Classics (Greek and Latin) and Oriental Studies (Hebrew and Aramaic) at Cambridge University before doing a DPhil. at Oxford University on the text of the Septuagint. He is a former Reader in Syriac Studies at the University of Oxford's Oriental Institute and currently a Professorial Fellow at Wolfson College. He has written extensively on Syriac subjects and served on the translation panel which produced: *The Psalms: A New Translation for Worship* (1977). He is a member of the Editorial Board of *Sobornost/Eastern Churches Review*, and is curator of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts at the Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham. Before taking up his present position, Dr. Brock taught in the Department of Theology at the University of Birmingham and in the Faculty of Oriental Studies at the University of Cambridge. He is a widely published author on Syriac topics. He has taught at the Universities of Birmingham, Cambridge, and (from 1974 until his retirement in 2003) Oxford, where he was Reader in Syriac Studies. He has published extensively in the field of Syriac and has edited a number of new texts. Among the more recent publications we remember: *From Ephrem to Romanos: Interactions between Syriac and Greek in Late Antiquity*, Aldershot 1999; with D. G. K. Taylor, E. Balicka-Witakowski, W. Witakowski, *The Hidden Pearl, the Syrian Orthodox Church and its ancient Aramaic heritage*, Trans World Film Italia 2001; *The Wisdom of Isaac of Nineveh*, Piscataway NY 2006; with G. Kiraz, *Ephrem the Syrian. Select Poems*, Chicago IL 2006; *An introduction to Syriac Studies*, Piscataway NY 2006; *The Bible in the Syriac Tradition*, Piscataway NY 2006.

ABSTRACT

The Syriac Christian tradition inherited from Judaism the concept of the balance between the two attributes of God, Justice and Mercy. For the seventh-century monastic author Isaac the Syrian, however, 'Just as a grain of sand cannot counterbalance a great weight of gold, so, on the scales, is God's employment of his justice by comparison with his compassion'. The paper explores how, for Isaac, God's mercy does not just outweigh his justice, but transcends it. It was on the basis of this understanding that Isaac was led to his views on universal salvation, set out in most detail at the end of the Second Collection of his writings.

ELENA ROMANENKO

Repentance and Mercy in Nil Sorskij

Elena V. Romanenko, candidate of history, is the editor of the section on medieval Russian history of the Orthodox Encyclopedia, at which she has worked since 1999. She studies history at the Moscow State University, then worked as a researcher at the Cyril of Beloozero Museum. She has written books on the daily life in medieval Russian monasteries and on Nil Sorskij, as well as articles, among them more than 100 contribution to the *Orthodox Encyclopedia*, on medieval Russian hagiography. She has received the award in memory of Metropolitan Makarij (Bulgakov).

ABSTRACT

Nil Sorskij (1433^o1508) was a true monk. His asceticism was measured not by physical acts, but by a radical renunciation of the world as a structure of life opposed to monasticism. This renunciation was realized through spiritual and material non-possession: the monastery was not to possess lands worked by others so as not to be involved in their administration and possible conflicts. A letter of his addressed to a monk speaks of God's great mercy and of the consolation that comes from communion with God. I will discuss the circumstances of its writing and the probable identity of the person addressed.

VASSILIOS THERMOS

Vassilios Thermos

Reciprocal Forgiving and Care of the Other

Fr. Vassilios Thermos was born in 1957 in Lefkada (Greece) and studied Medicine and Theology in the University of Athens. He holds a Ph.D. from the Theological School of Athens University; his dissertation dealt with the psychology of priestly vocation. He currently teaches in the Theological School of the University of Athens and in the Upper Ecclesiastical Academy of Athens. He has lectured as a Visiting Scholar at Harvard Divinity School, Boston College and Andover Newton Theological School. He has served as a married priest since 1986 in the Metropolis of Thebes and Libadeia near Athens, and works as a psychiatrist for children and adolescents in private practice. He has lectured extensively on subjects pertaining to the well-being of clergy and their families, as well as working actively in the field of clergy preparation and training. He serves as a member of the Church of Greece's Committee on Marriage and Family Life. He has taught at the seminary of the Orthodox Church of Albania. He is the author of several books and numerous published articles. His writings have been translated into English, French, Russian, and Romanian. Among them his essay, *In Search of the Person: True and False Self according to Donald Winnicott and Saint Gregory Palamas* (english edition 2002). He regularly publishes theological articles in the Greek theological periodical *Synaxis*. In addition to his scholarly writings, Fr. Thermos also writes poetry.

ABSTRACT

Forgiveness is real and has sense when it is accompanied by care of the other, that is, when the other is perceived as a unique person. I will take into consideration psychoanalytic contributions (Donald Winnicott, Otto Kernberg) and patristic sources (John Chrysostom, John Climacus, Sophronius Sakharov), who describe the conditions of authentic forgiveness. These include being able to take an interest in the other, to love him, to discern one's own errors and injury caused to others, and finally to imitate God by forgiving.

BASSAM A. NASSIF

Bassam A. Nassif

Pastoral Mercy and Matrimony. An Orthodox Perspective

Fr Bassam Nassif is Assistant Professor in Pastoral Theology at St John of Damascus Institute of Theology of the University of Balamand.

As a pastor in the Antiochian Orthodox Church, Rev. Dr. Bassam Nassif is concerned with integrating the pastoral theology of the Orthodox Church with the research and experience of the human sciences, leading to the formation of a therapeutic pastoral care approach. Rev. Nassif's aim is to deal with modern challenges facing the Church in a pluralistic and secularized world. Building on scientific research and on the rich tradition of the church, he endeavors to offer a modern approach to pastoral care leading to the righteousness of modern man. He joined the faculty in 2005.

ABSTRACT

Marriage, as a sacrament, is indissoluble. If, however, pastoral efforts deployed to restore a broken marital relationship have not succeeded, would the Orthodox Church dispense the spouses from the marital bond, out of mercy for the innocent party? Could the Church accept a civilly married faithful back into the Eucharistic communion? The speaker presents the Orthodox Church's perspective on these issues, using related case studies to discuss both canonical impediments and pastoral implications. Since canonical strictures may, in some cases, be inadequate as therapy for human souls, the speaker investigates the pastoral practice of *oikonomia*, a catalyst of mercy and compassion used by the *oikonomos* to help the faithful attain forgiveness and find salvation in Christ.

BASILIO PETRÀ

Basilio Petrà

Pastoral Mercy and Matrimony. A Roman Catholic Perspective

Basilio Petrà, of Greek origin, born in 1946, is a Roman Catholic priest of the diocese of Prato (Italy). Ordinary professor of Moral Theology and of Marriage Ethics at the Theological Faculty of Central Italy (Florence); invited professor of Eastern Moral Theology at the Alfonsiana Academy and at the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome; a member of the Board of Governors of the Intams (International Academy for Marital Spirituality-Bruxelles). Among his publications: *Il matrimonio può morire? Studi sulla pastorale dei divorziati risposati*, EDB, Bologna 1996; *Preti sposati per volontà di Dio ? Saggio su una chiesa a due polmoni*

, EDB, Bologna 2004; *Divorziati risposati e seconde nozze nella chiesa. Una via di soluzione*, Cittadella Editrice, Assisi 2012; *Divorzio e seconde nozze nella tradizione greca. Un'altra via*, Cittadella Editrice, Assisi 2014. He has translated into Italian many books and essays of Greek theologians: Christos Yannaras, Georgios Mantzaridis, S.S. Harakas, Anastasios Yannoulatos, Jannis Zizioulas.

ABSTRACT

Confronted with the transformations of the traditional family in the last centuries, the Catholic Church has always sought to unite fidelity to the Christian vision of matrimony with an attitude of mercy towards man in the concrete and his objective possibilities. The development of theological thought about matrimony has been accompanied by an increasing attention to the concrete, as shown especially in pastoral care of remarried divorced persons. At present the Church must be able to open wider pastoral spaces, with a renewed understanding of matrimony and becoming again capable of bringing forth from her treasure "old things and new things" (Mt 13,52).

GRIGORIOS, Bishop of MESAORIA

Grigorios of Mesaoria

Christian Love and Mercy in Church's Activity

Bishop Gregory (Hatzouraniou) of Mesaoria is the titular bishop of Mesaoria of the Archdiocese of the Church of Cyprus. He was born on February 25, 1968. He graduated at the Theological Faculty of the University of Athens in 1990 and pursued his post-graduate studies at the University of Birmingham (England) and at the University of Athens, finishing in 1996. After defending his dissertation entitled, *The Structure and Interpretation in the Beatitudes of St. Gregory of Nyssa* he was awarded a diploma in Patrology by the University of Athens. From 1989 to 2000, he was a research associate in field of Patristic Theological Studies at the University of Athens. In 1992 he was appointed as lay preacher of the the Archdiocese of Cyprus by Archbishop Chrysostomos I. During the period 1992 to 2000, he also served the Archdiocese of Athens with catechism classes as well as directing the Student's College of the Metropolis of Elia in Athens. Having chosen a monastic life with the name Gregory, he was ordained a deacon on May 6, 2001 and a priest on March 24, 2002. Between 2001 and 2008, he taught in the secondary school system. On March 21, 2008, he was elected assistant Bishop of the Archdiocese of Cyprus with the title of Bishop of Mesaoria, and was consecrated on March 30, 2008, by Archbishop Chrysostomos II . He has published essays and articles in collective volumes and scientific magazines of the Patriarchate of Alexandria and the Church of Greece. He represents the Church of Cyprus, both inland and abroad, in pan-orthodox meetings and international scientific conferences. He participated in the Fourth Precouncil Pan-Orthodox Conference, in Chambesy (Geneva) on June 2009.

ABSTRACT

I understand the topic of my contribution, "Christian love (?????) and mercy (?????) in Church's Activity", as an enlightenment to the central topic of the conference, "Mercy and Forgiveness". The revealed truth that "God is love (?????)" (I John 4, 8), which is written by the Evangelist John in the first Catholic Epistle, offers us today, in the 21st century with its many and unprecedented problems that torment humankind, the means to find courage and hope. To find our very beginning beside God the Creator from Whom the man took his psychosomatic existence.

Since, "Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them." (I John 4, 16). God is the source of all virtues. Therefore, love is emanated from God, in the same way mercy is emanated from the plenteous in mercy God. How can a Christian live according to God if he doesn't possess this love and mercy, as gifts and blessings, in his daily activity within the Church? When we speak about the Christian love and mercy, we must not forget that the Christian who experiences these gifts within the Church, feels such completeness that no gaps remain in his personality, so as to have a feeling of deficiency, therefore a need to seek substitutes of these divine gifts. The completeness that a man feels is also a gift from the Holy Spirit.

We observe that this gift of the Holy Spirit is realized in people's activity within the Church, which has many forms. I am referring to some such aspects of the divine love and godly mercy, which every Christian is called to value and multiply with sobriety, modesty, humbleness and faith. We identify them in their most authentic form in the Holy Scripture, in both Old and New Testament. In the life of the first Church at Jerusalem, Antioch, at the apostolic missions, with the opening of Saint Paul towards Cyprus, Asia Minor and throughout the Mediterranean. We also identify them in the ascetic life of the Church, in the departure far away from the world or into the world, ie. in the daily life of the human society. We will also make reference to the multilateral pastoral activity of the Parish, as it was formed through the diachronic course of the Church for 2.000 years. God's love (?????) and mercy (?????) are necessary values that every man should enable in his life.

NATALIJA BOLŠAKOVA

Natalija Bolšacova

Announcing God's Mercy in the Contemporary World: Father Aleksandr Men'

Natalija I. Bolšakova, born in Pjatigorsk in 1952, is president of the International Humanitarian Society Aleksandr Men' and editor of the literary-theological almanac Christianos, which she founded in 1991. She is the author of numerous articles on theology, and literary and theatrical criticism published in many European countries, as well as of two books, on the history and life of the Pokrov Monastery in Bussy-en-Othe in France and a biography of Bishop Mefodij (Kul'man). She has organized and participated in many international conferences on religious and theological topics. Her main fields of interest are the history of the Church in the twentieth century, Russian emigration, the literary remains of mother Maria (Skobcova) and of father Aleksandr Men'. Since 1977 she has lived in Riga.

ABSTRACT

The figure and activity of Father Alexander Men' (1935–1990) is seen within a society completely sovietized. After years of bloody persecution, the Church was left with a marginal post. Father Men's spiritual roots will be considered, which tie him to the elders of Optina. In a period of suffering and persecution, in which the springs of mercy were dried up, Father Men' was able to announce the Gospel with a new language and to make himself a

servant of God's mercy, showing those who met him the merciful image of Christ, to the gift of his own life.

EPIPHANIOS, Bishop and Igumen of ST MACARIUS THE GREAT

Amba Epiphanios

A Teacher of Mercy. Fr. Matta el Meskin

Anba Epiphanios was born in Tanta, Egypt, in 1954. After studying medicine, in 1984 he entered the monastery of St Macarius the Great in the Scete desert. In 2002 he was ordained to the priesthood. He is a disciple of Matta el Meskin, superior of the monastery 1969–2006. In the monastery he worked for its publishing house and as editor of its journal, *Saint Mark*, as well as serving as the community's doctor. In 2013, after the resignation of bishop Mikhail of Assiut, abbot of the monastery, he was elected abbot of the community and pope Tawadros II ordained him bishop. Upon becoming abbot he has continued to work as the monastery's librarian and custodian of its manuscripts. He is the author of numerous publications, among them the edition and numbering of the Arabic version of the *Apophthegmata patrum*, a translation with commentary of the euchology of the White Monastery, and the translation with commentary of the liturgies of St Basil and St Gregory. He is a member of the commission for the promotion of culture of the Holy Synod of the Coptic Church.

ABSTRACT

Matta el Meskin (1919–2006) was monk and igumen of St Macarius Monastery in the Scete desert. With special human and spiritual charism, he was a luminous figure among Egyptian Christians and father of a remarkable spiritual and monastic renewal within the Coptic Church. Mercy and pardon occupied an important place in his life and preaching. For him they represented an index of the the new man created in us by Christ. The injured party has the obligation to take up the burden of mercy by imitating God's love, who humbled himself so that Adam the lost sheep, might return to his original glory. In the world turned upside down by Christ, in which to be first it is necessary to become last, to forgive is an act of great interior force. Love is the ultimate reality, in which humanity will live forever.

MAXIMOS VGHENOPOULOS, Metropolitan of SILYVRIA

Maximos Vghenopoulos

Forgiveness between the Churches: the Tomos agapis

Maximos (Vgenopoulos), Metropolitan of Sylivria, was born in Patras where he studied at the Ecclesiastical Lyceum. He studied orthodox theology at the Ecclesiastical School of Athens, at the Theological School of Belgrad and at the University of London, Heythrop College, where he graduated in 2008, with a Ph.D. in Systematic

Theology. He served as the Great Archdeacon of the Ecumenical Throne until his election on Tuesday, July 15, 2014. On Sunday July 27, 2014, fest of St Panteleimon, at the Cathedral of St. George in the Phanar (Constantinople) His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew consecrated him Metropolitan of Sylivria (succeeding to the late Metropolitan Emilianos Timiadis, died in 2008, an outstanding figure of orthodox contemporary ecumenism. and a great friend and brother of the Community of Bose): the Metropolis of Sylivria is an historical metropolis of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, with see in Sylivria, Eastern Thrace, which lost his flock since the tragic exchange of population in 1922. Metropolitan Maximos' recent book, *Primacy in the Church from Vatican I to Vatican II: An Orthodox Perspective* (Northern Illinois University Press 2013), is based on his doctoral dissertation. In this fine theological work, of great value for Catholic-Orthodox relations, Metropolitan Maximos analyzes the response of major Orthodox thinkers to the Catholic understanding of the primacy of the pope over the last two centuries, bringing together writings by Greek and Russian Orthodox theologians and systematically comparing them to demonstrate the emergence of a concordance between the canons of the Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church.

ABSTRACT

The tragic events that followed the schism of 1054 between Western and Eastern Christianity fostered fear, mistrust, and anti-Roman feelings among the Eastern Orthodox Churches and a polemical attitude toward the Roman Catholic Church. That attitude notwithstanding, in 1980 an official theological dialogue began between the two churches. This irenic rapprochement is a result of the ecumenical spirit and commitment to unity with other Christian that was adopted by the Roman Catholic Church at Vatican II, of a spirit of reconciliation between Rome and Constantinople, and of the unanimous readiness of the Orthodox churches to initiate a dialogue of truth and love with the Roman Catholic Church.

KRASTU BANEV

Krastu Banev

Dr. Krastu Banev is Lecturer in the Department of Theology and Religion at Durham University. His research interests include classical rhetorical theory and Christian preaching; early Christian asceticism and later Orthodox spirituality; Byzantine hymnography; the cultural and religious links between Byzantium and the Slav world. He has also been investigating the theological responses to the Balkan Wars and WW1 in the works of the Bulgarian writer Yordan Yovkov.

Among his books, *Theophilus of Alexandria and the First Origenist Controversy*, Oxford University Press, 2015. Among his recent works: "Questions of War and Peace in the Theology of Archimandrite Sophrony Sakharov (1896-1993)", *Journal for Eastern Christian Studies* 66, 3/4 (2014); *Theophilus of Alexandria and the First Origenist Controversy*, Oxford University Press, 2015.

ANTONIO MENNINI

Antonio Mennini

Antonio Mennini, born in Rome in 1947, studied at the Almo Collegio Capranica and was ordained priest in 1974. He served as priest in the Rome diocese, then studied at the Pontificia Accademia Ecclesiastica. In 2000 he was ordained bishop to the titular see of Ferento and named by pope John Paul II apostolic nuncio to Bulgaria. In 2002 he was transferred as apostolic nuncio to Russia and in 2008 also to Uzbekistan. In 2010 pope Benedict XVI named him apostolic nuncio to Great Britain.

DESPINA D. PRASSAS

Despina D. Prassas

Dr. Despina D. Prassas, Ph.D. Catholic University of America, 2003, teaches and publishes in the area of Historical Theology. Dr. Prassas works primarily in the late antique and the early byzantine period, specifically looking at the monastic and ascetical writings of St. Maximos the Confessor. Another area of interest is the modern ecumenical movement, and she is currently a participant on several ecumenical dialogues.

Her publications include *St. Maximus the Confessor's Questions and doubts: Introduction and translation* (Northern Illinois University Press, 2009). Dr Prassas also has articles with The International Association of Orthodox Dogmatic Theologians, as well as other publications.

FILARET KU?EROV, Bishop of L'VIV

Filaret Kru?erov

Bishop Filaret of Lviv was born in 1972. After medical studies, in 1996 he received monastic tonsure at the Monastery of the Caves in Kiev. He studied theology at the Moscow seminary and the Kiev Theological Academy. In 2011 he was named vicar bishop of the Lviv eparchy, which he has headed since 2012. From 2003 to 2011 he directed the synodal department of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of social assistance to minors; since 2011 he has been president of the synodal department of pastoral care of the sick.

CHRISTOS YANNARAS

Cristos Yannaras

Christos Yannaras was born on April 10, 1935, in Athens. He studied theology at the University of Athens and Philosophy at the Universities of Bonn and Paris. He holds a Ph.D. of the Faculty of Theology of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, and also of the the University of Sorbonne (Paris). He has been nominated Doctor of Philosophy, honoris causa, at the University of Belgrade and at St. Vladimir's Seminary (New York) and the Holy Cross School (Boston); Visiting Professor at the Universities of Paris (Catholic Faculty), Geneva, Lausanne and

Crete; Professor of Philosophy at the Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences in Athens, from 1982 to 2002; and was elected member of the Hellenic Authors' Society. He is one of the outstanding and most influential theologians of contemporary Orthodoxy, with a wide popularity in all the Christian world. He is the most prolific Orthodox writer alive today and published more than 50 books, translated into different languages, English and Italian included. Among them: *The Freedom of Morality*; *Person and Eros*; *Postmodern Metaphysics*; *Against Religion: The Alienation of the Ecclesial Event*; *Relational Ontology*. The main area of Christos Yannaras' work is in the study and research of the differences between Greek and Western European philosophy and tradition. These differences are not limited solely at the level of theory, but also define a mode of life (praxis). Yannaras is convinced that the essential freedom is possible in and through a rediscovery of ourselves as members of the local community of the Church. This involves the rejection of individualism and pietism, two reductions which have profoundly misshapen the experience of Christianity in our time.

GEORGE DEMACOPOULOS

George Demacopoulos

Memory and Forgiveness in Christian Identity Construction. The Case of the Crusades

George Demacopoulos, Professor of Historical Theology of the Fordham University (New York), Director and Co-founder of the Orthodox Christian Studies Center. Professor Demacopoulos' research and teaching interests are in the fields of Early Christian and Byzantine Church History. He specializes in the relationship between the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches during the middle ages. His most recent book is *The Invention of Peter: Apostolic Discourse and Papal Authority in Late Antiquity*, Philadelphia PA 2013. Demacopoulos graduated with a B.A. in Medieval History from the University of Tennessee in 1992. He earned a Master of Theological Studies, with highest honors, at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in 1995 before enrolling at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he earned an M.A. and Ph.D. in Religious Studies. He is the author of numerous scholarly articles and of *Five Models of Spiritual Direction in the Early Church*, South Bend IN (2007). He published a translation (from Latin) of St. Gregory the Great's Book of Pastoral Rule for St. Vladimir's Seminary Press' Popular Patristic Texts series. He is the co-editor with Aristotle Papanikolaou of *Orthodox Readings of Augustine*, Crestwood NY 2008 and *Orthodox Constructions of the West*, Oxford NY 2013, and he is co-editor with Aristotle Papanikolaou of the Fordham University Press series, "Orthodox Christianity and Contemporary Thought". Professor Demacopoulos' current research project is a reevaluation, via Postcolonial critique, of medieval encounters between Eastern and Western Christians in the era of the Crusades.

PORFIRIJE PERI?, Metropolitan of ZAGREB-LJUBLJANA

Memory and Forgiveness. Reconciliation among Nations Today

Metropolitan Dr. Porfirije (Peric) of Zagreb-Ljubljana was born on 22 July 1961 in Becej, northern Serbia. He was ordained a monk according to the rite of small schism by his spiritual father, then hieromonk Dr. Irinej (Bulovic), at Decani Monastery in 1985. In 1999 he was elected as Bishop of Jegar, Vicar of the Bishop of Backa, and in 2014 metropolitan of Zagreb-Ljubljana.

He graduated from the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Belgrade in 1986 and attended postgraduate studies in Athens from 1986 until 1990. That year, upon the blessing of Bishop Dr. Irinej of Backa, he joined the monastery of Holy Archangels in Kovilj, near Novi Sad, where he was ordained as hieromonk and became its abbot. Many young monks and novices came to the monastery following him. These were the years when the Kovilj Monastery became a spiritual center for many young people: intellectuals, artists, popular actors and rock musicians, especially from Novi Sad and Belgrade. Since then abbot Porfirije has particularly dealt with drug-addicted patients. For this purpose he formed (in 2005) a therapeutic community called "The Land of the Living", which is recognized as the most successful project for therapy of drug-addiction; under the leadership of Bishop Porfirije, it has more than hundred residents in camps throughout Serbia at the time being.

He defended his PhD thesis Possibility of knowability of God in St. Paul's understanding according to the interpretation of Saint John Chrysostom at the Faculty of Theology of the University of Athens in 2004. He became a lecturer at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology - Department of Pastoral Psychology in Belgrade. The Assembly of the Republic elected him as representative of all Churches and religious communities, to be a member of the Council of the Republic Broadcasting Agency, and in 2008 the RBA elected him its president.

ABSTRACT

Christ's evangelical call to forgiveness, "But if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Mt 6: 14-15) is a Christian imperative. It cannot be humanly attained, but can only happen with Divine help and grace. However, it is not a mechanical event; knowledge of one's own mistakes and repentance are required. To forgive someone in heart, through love—that is a victory over one's own pride, a true miracle. To forgive the other, to receive forgiveness from the other! That is a true return from alienation to unity; from hate to love; from being apart to being united.

In order to reach "reconciliation among nations," it is necessary, on the one hand, to cultivate a culture of remembrance, as opposed to resentment, and on the other hand, actively to practice the basic Gospel call to forgiveness. It is essential to admit one's sin and repent for it; only then a mutual acceptance of forgiveness and reconciliation are possible.

SABINO CHIALÀ

Sabino Chialà

Sabino Chialà, monk of Bose, is a scholar the Semitic languages, especially Syriac. He studied at the University of Turin and the Catholic University of Louvain-le-Neuve. He has studied the apocrypha, publishing a translation with commentary of the *Book of the Parables of Enoch*. In his Syriac studies he has concentrated his attention on Isaac of Nineveh, translating some of his writings into Italian and publishing a critical edition of the *Third collection* (Isaaco di Ninive. *Terza collezione*. CSCO 637–638; Script. Syr. 246–247. Louvain 2011), and has also published various studies on Isaac. He has also written on Eastern Syriac monasticism and on the exegesis of the Syriac fathers. In collaboration with Ignazio De Francesco he has also published in Italian a collection with commentary of the Islamic sayings attributed to Jesus. He is a member of the Accademia Ambrosiana of Milan and president of the Association of Syriac Studies in Italy.

MITROFAN OF SEVEROMORSK AND UMBA

Bishop Mitrofan (Badanin) of Severomorsk and Umba was born in 1953 in St Petersburg. He served in the Navy until 1997. In 2000 he made his monastic profession and was ordained to the priesthood. In 2009 he obtained the title of candidate of theology with a dissertation on St Trifon of Pe?enga; from 2010 he is a member of the Union of Russian Writers. In 2013 he was elected bishop of Severomorsk and Umba, at the same time being superior of the Holy Trinity-St Trifon Monastery in Luostari in the Murmansk district.

ABSTRACT

The conversion of ancient Rus' to Christianity is connected with the figure of great prince Vladimir (†1015). Sources close to his time describe the radical conversion of Vladimir's way of life after his baptism. The chronicle, in particular, shows the contradiction between the newly converted merciful prince and the necessity to administer justice in the state. Vladimir's sons Boris and Gleb, the first saints of the Rus' Church, will realize the radical character of evangelical mercy, opposed to the struggle for power. Their violent deaths appeared to Christian Rus. as the direct response to the Gospel call: "He who says: I love God, but hates his brother, is a liar" (1Jn 4,20).