

# Eastern Catholic Bishops meet in St. Louis

The Eastern Catholic Associates (ECA), the Eastern Catholic Bishops of the United States, held its annual meeting in St. Louis, Mo. at the Pastoral Center of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon. The meeting was hosted by Bishop Robert Shaheen on April 2-3, 2008.

Present at the meeting were: Archbishops Basil Schott, Stefan Soroka, Cyrille Salim Bustros and Bishops Jacob Angadiath, John Michael Botean, John Bura, Gerald Dino, Ibrahim Ibrahim, Sarhad Jammo, John Kudrick, Basil Losten, Gregory Mansour, Nicholas Samra, Richard Seminack, Robert Shaheen, William Skurla, and Joseph Mar Thomas. Not able to be present were Bishops Manuel Batakian, Robert Moskal, and Joseph Younan.

Presentations followed by discussion were held on the following topics: Eastern Catholic Associates, Region XV of the USCCB, Eastern Catholic Diocesan Directors of Religious Education (ECDD), Clergy, Finances, World Youth Day - Australia, Catholic Home Missions, Eastern Membership on the National Advisory Council (NAC), Seminaries and Seminary Formation Collaboration, Papal Visit and Encounter-2011.

Bishop Nicholas Samra, liaison to the ECDD, gave his report and Father Gregory Noga, treasurer of the ECDD, presented the financial report for 2007 as well as a budget for 2008. Mr. James Dubois, Region XV NAC representative, gave a review on the recent meeting of the National Advisory Council of the USCCB.

Of particular interest to the bishops was the update on the death of Archbishop Paulos Faraj Rahho, Chaldean Catholic Archbishop of Mosul in Iraq given by Bishops Ibrahim Ibrahim and Sarhad Jammo, Chaldean Catholic Bishops in United States. A statement was issued concerning this tragic death of the archbishop as well as the critical situation of all Christians in Iraq.

It was agreed to hold an Encounter of all the Eastern Catholic Churches in the United States and Canada in 2011. The planning committee will consist of Archbishop Basil Schott and Bishops Jacob Angadiath, Gregory Mansour, Nicholas Samra and bishop representatives from Canada.

The United States is unique in that there are 18 arch/eparchies and Apostolic Administration of the Armenian, Chaldean, Maronite, Melkite, Romanian, Ruthenian, Syrian, Syro-Malabar, Syro-Malankar and



The Eastern Catholic Associates meeting of Eastern Catholic Bishops of the United States was held on April 2-3 in St. Louis, Mo. Attendees included: *front row, left to right*: Bishop Joseph Mar Thomas; Bishop Sarhad Jammo; Archbishop Stefan Soroka; Bishop Robert Shaheen; Archbishop Basil Schott; Bishop Ibrahim Ibrahim; Bishop Basil Losten; Bishop John Bura, Bishop Jacon Angadiath; Bishop Gerald Dino; *back row, left to right*: Bishop John Kudrick; Archbishop Cyrille Bustros; Bishop Gregory Mansour; Bishop Richard Seminack; Bishop Nicholas Samra; Bishop John Michael Botean; Bishop William Skurla.

Ukrainian Churches. There are also faithful of the Coptic and Ethiopian Churches in the United States.

Archbishop Basil Schott, president of the Eastern Catholic Associates, noted that "this meeting is always a graced time

for the Bishops of the Eastern Catholic Churches in the United States to share their concerns, hopes and blessings." ■

## Statement of the Eastern Catholic Bishops of the United States regarding the killing of Archbishop Paulos Faraj Rahho of Mosul

ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI, APRIL 3, 2008

We are the bishops of the Eastern Catholic Churches in the United States of America, the "Eastern Catholic Associates." We also, as a body, comprise Region XV of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. At our annual meeting in St. Louis, Missouri, on April 2-3, 2008, we addressed the circumstances faced by the Chaldean Catholic Church in connection with the tragic abduction on February 29 and brutal death on March 13, 2008, of Archbishop Paulos Faraj Rahho, Chaldean Catholic Archbishop of Mosul in Iraq.

First, we extend our condolences to His Beatitude, Emmanuel III Cardinal Delly, Patriarch of Babylon of the Chaldeans, together with his Holy Synod, at the loss of their esteemed colleague in the episcopal ministry in Iraq. At the same time, we express our profound shock and sympathies to our brother and sister Catholics who are members of the Chaldean Church in Iraq and throughout the world. In particular, as Americans, we share our sorrow and express our solidarity with the Chaldean Catholic community in the United States, represented by the Chaldean Catholic Dioceses of St. Thomas the Apostle in Detroit, Michigan, and St. Peter the Apostle in San Diego, California.

We are also shocked and saddened about the murder of Father Raghid Ganni of Mosul along with three subdeacons in June, 2007, as well as the killing of Archbishop Rahho's driver and two companions at the time of his abduction, and the abduction and ransoming of ten Chaldean Catholic priests in Baghdad in 2006-2007. Continued abductions of the Chaldean people and other Christians, demands for protection money by terrorists, and conversions to Islam forced by threat of death, all point to the current state of extreme vulnerability of the Chaldean Catholic Church in Iraq. We believe that it is no exaggeration to say that Christians are the most threatened minority in Iraq and face the very real possibility of extinction in their very homeland, where they have been in existence far longer than those who presently constitute the majority.

As Americans, we call upon our government to continue and expand its mission of protecting the fragile Christian community and other ethnic minorities in Iraq.

Finally, in fraternal communion with our fellow Christians in Iraq, we pray for the blessed repose of the soul of the departed Archbishop Rahho. May he find rest in the bosom of Abraham, and may his martyrdom be the source of new courage and a new devotion to peace and reconciliation on the part of Christians everywhere. We call upon our Eastern Catholic people in the United States to lift their voices in trustful prayer to the one God, who is the Lord of history and the protector of the defenseless, for the salvation and divine protection of all the Christians of Iraq.

We implore likewise the protection of Mary, the Most Holy Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, upon her devoted children in Iraq. Through her intercession, may the Chaldean Catholics and all Christians of Iraq receive new strength to withstand their current violent trial.