

## The Most Reverend John Michael Botean, Bishop of the Eparchy of St. George in Canton

We are privileged to have in the area surrounding St. Joseph Catholic Church (Randolph), a number of Eastern Catholic Churches that are in Communion with the Pope in Rome. They celebrate the Liturgy using a different Rite; for example, Byzantine, Armenian, Syrian, and Coptic. Recently in the National Catholic Reporter Bishop Botean from Canton, Ohio received special and very positive notice.

Bishop Botean, born in Canton, OH, in 1955, is Bishop of the Eparchy of St. George in Canton. His jurisdiction extends over the entire United States and Canada. He has been Bishop for almost 24 years.

Recently Bishop Botean along with fourteen other U.S. Eastern Rite Catholic bishops and eparchs made their *ad limina* visit to the Vatican. Bishop Botean is among a small handful of U.S. Bishops who have made four *ad limina* visits - - twice under John Paul II, once under Benedict XVII and now under Francis.

In the article of the National Catholic Reporter, Bishop Botean reflects on the different tenor that seems to pervade the Vatican leaders at this time. Let me repeat a small section of his interview as described in the National Catholic Reporter, March 6 – 19, 2020.

Echoing what prelates from other regions have said, Botean described a noticeable difference in meetings with Vatican officials under the first Argentine pontiff. "Last time, one thing I realized after we came here is, 'Oh my God, they can yell at all of us all at once,' " the bishop joked, before adding: "Not now. It's been wonderful."

"Our last *ad liminas* as bishops was [under] Pope Benedict, of course, and it was a different atmosphere," the bishop added later.

"To hear the leaders of the [Vatican] congregations now encouraging us to get deeper into the Christian mysteries and reflect the openness and joy the Gospels are supposed to provoke, instead of getting into the nitty-gritty of disciplinary issues, has been really, really refreshing," he said.

Botean recounted Cardinal Luis Ladaria, the head of the Vatican's powerful Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, telling the Eastern rite prelates: "The church is beautiful. We have to tell the story of the beautiful church."

"Coming from the ... Holy Office of the Inquisition, as it used to be known, that's a great thing to hear," said the bishop, before correcting his century-old reference with a deadpan: "It's a venerable institution in the church, with a history that one cannot forget."

"What's going on now is vastly different," he continued. "It was about control. I don't think that's the emphasis as much."

Asked what he's planning to say to Francis in their meeting, Botean responded: "What I'm mainly going to want to say is thank you."

"I wish that was a little more of a common sentiment I would hear among bishops in the U.S.," said the prelate. "But I don't hear too much, and I keep my own counsel," he quickly added. "That's another advantage of being a nobody bishop of a nothing diocese."