



EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

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The nine candidates recite troparia and hold lit candles as part of the ordination ceremony

SAINT NICHOLAS PILGRIMAGE REVITALIZED Nine Men Ordained to Minor Orders

By Seminarian Paul Varchola West

Sunday, July 9, 2017, marked a significant day for the Eparchy of Passaic as this was the date that the Saint Nicholas Pilgrimage would be revitalized at the Carpathian Village Retreat Center in Cresco, PA. This was also personally significant as it would mark my return to the place where I spent many years of my youth attending Altar Server Camp. It is a sincere honor that I am able to recount this day.

From the start, the Lord was on our side as the pilgrimage was blessed with picture perfect weather. As the pilgrims entered the retreat site nestled in the serene Pocono Mountains of NE PA, they received a blessing and were promptly directed to the Saint Nicholas Shrine where a fitting Moleben to Saint Nicholas was taking place. The Moleben was followed by an extremely solemn Devotion to Our Lady, Helper of Mothers, including the presence of

the Helper of Mothers Icon and a special Anointing with Marian rose oil. Pilgrims were also graced with the presence of our Lord through the Mystery of Holy Anointing.

Of course, all this praying made the pilgrims hungry! There was an ample amount of wonderfully prepared food available throughout the day to help keep the faithful strong. Additionally, there were scheduled events for children and people could be seen throughout the day taking advantage of the various nature trails and paths present throughout the Carpathian Village. Confessions were offered during the Pilgrimage and there was no shortage of places for silent prayer and reflection for the pilgrims who numbered over two hundred.

The highlight of the day was the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy, celebrated by Bishop Kurt, during which the pilgrims were blessed to

witness nine men receive tonsure and minor orders as they take one more step along their journey to the service of our Lord through Holy Orders. The Ordination to Minor Orders consists of three stages. First, the candidate receives a lighted candle that they may shine forth with the Light of Christ. Next, he must chant a troparion. Finally, the hair on his head is snipped in the form of a cross (the tonsure) and is presented with the Epistle Book so that he may chant a reading. Once

der of Reader as the congregation sings " Axios!" affirming the ordination. Present at the Divine Liturgy were priests from around the eparchy, as well as altar boys, cantors, seminarians, and many of the faithful of the Eparchy of Passaic. It was a full house indeed! The day was brought to a close with a Panachida celebrated in Church Slavonic. A wonderfully solemn end to such a prayer-filled day. To see so many of the faithful of our Eparchy interacting with one another, praying together, old friends



Father Jack Custer blesses the arriving pilgrims

Congratulations and many happy years to the newly-ordained Readers and their families!

Richard Ballard
Jens Bargmann
Anthony Blair
James Fraser
John Harden

Robert Knapp
Ryan Liehaber
John Reed
Richard Terza

this is concluded, the candidate receives the designation to the Or-

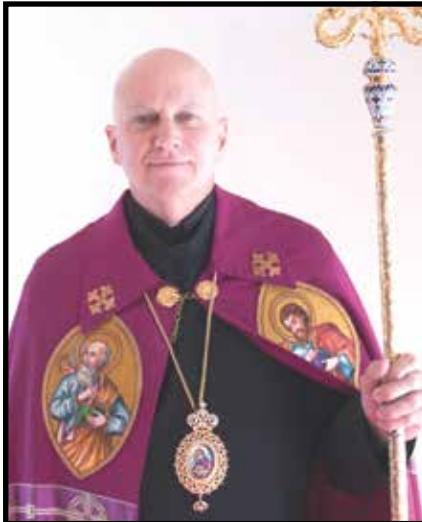
reuniting, new relationships being forged, was the true blessing of the
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I LIFT UP MY EYES...

Pastoral Reflections of Bishop Kurt



SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD: CONVOCATION OF CATHOLIC LEADERS

Within the past years, the leadership in the Church in the United States began promoting an event in Orlando, Florida, called the *Convocation of Catholic Leadership*. At the New Jersey bishops' meeting, everyone asked, "What is this?", "Why are we doing it?", and "Who's paying for it?" When I was talking to a bishop from Indiana, he said the same things, and the Indiana bishops were equally mystified. In November, Cardinal Dolan stood up and posed the same three questions, and he answered them: "What is it? It's a meeting of local leadership. Why are we doing it? We did it 100 years ago; it seems like it's time to do it again." Then, "Who's paying for it? You are!", he roared with a laugh. Some of the Eastern bishops thought that if they invite us, we should go. So we went.

We were told to invite the diocesan leadership, but it seemed to me that I already meet with them regularly and they already have the most say in what happens in the eparchy, so I decided to take a variety of people, and see what happens... after all, no one really seemed to know why we were going, or what would happen. So I asked a priest to help me organize, and we chose a variety of lay people, deacons, and parish priests. Everyone wondered why we were going to central Florida in July, but the organizers told us it was very simple, the hotels are the cheapest then. It's true that we stayed in very good hotels in Orlando at bargain prices. Even traveling to Orlando with a priest, I had to tell him jokingly that we still didn't know why we were going, but I reckon we all trusted that if we prayed to the Holy Spirit, and had an open heart, that good things would happen.

When we arrived, I knew of one good thing—or great thing—that would happen. Our pastor in Orlando, Father Salvatore Pignato, was being installed as the State Chaplain of the Knights of Columbus. Saturday morning, Father Sal scheduled a Divine Liturgy according to our traditions at the largest Roman Catholic Church in Orlando and asked me to be the main celebrant. It is a great honor to have one of our priests as State Chaplain. Everyone asked whether it was the first time. As a matter of fact, Msgr. John Sekellick was the State Chaplain of the Knights of Columbus for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, so it wasn't the first time. In Pennsylvania, he is called the Commonwealth Chaplain instead of the State Chaplain? I could see that the Knights have great respect for Father Sal, and deep affection as well. Father Sal preached a sermon to the assembled leadership on the importance of staying true to the teachings of the Church and helping the poor as Jesus admonishes us in His description of the Last Judgment: "When I was hungry you fed me, when I was thirsty you gave me a drink, when I was naked you clothed me, when I was sick or in prison you visited me." I know the Knights in Florida are in good hands with the strong spiritual leadership of Father Sal.

The Convocation began that afternoon. During the next few days, we attended talks in a huge assembly hall by powerful speakers, followed by breakout sessions in smaller rooms on any number of topics of the contemporary Church. Everyone knows that churches around the country are changing, for better or for worse. In the northeastern United States, the authorities are closing churches, but in the southwest, they are opening new churches.

In my experience, our entire country is experiencing a shift in culture, perhaps unprecedented in the history of the human race. Young people will not do things just because their parents and grandparents did them. This shift may be taking place because of the access to information and connection through digital media that has never existed before. Church leaders who see this shift as a threat are discouraged by it. On the other hand, in my experience, this change means that many more people are interested in what we have to offer in our churches and are willing to join our churches than ever before. We can see this change as a threat or as an opportunity. Those who see it as a threat will bury their talent in the ground and hear the Lord say, "You worthless lout," and those who see it as an opportunity will multiply their talents and hear Jesus say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." If God sends us people who are looking for His good news, and we turn them away, then we deserve to be called worthless servants.

What did we learn from the keynote speakers? Well, I don't remember very much. They were inspiring pep talks. I do remember Bishop Caggiano spontaneously saying, "No one here is going to save the Church. If any of you thinks he is going to save the Church, try to remember, we already have a savior—His name is Jesus Christ." That statement actually got the biggest standing ovation in the entire conference. The other speaker that I remember was Archbishop Gomez. Towards the end of his talk, he became much more personal than all the others. He told us that the single most important change took place in his life when he began to go to daily Mass as a teenager. He then looked a little sheepish and said, "Maybe I shouldn't tell you this...but it was really for the car keys. I noticed that when I asked my father if I could use the car, if it was to be with my friends, he would say, No! If I asked to use the car to go to Mass, he quickly handed me the keys."

Another speaker who was rather impressive was a young woman in a traditional nun's habit. She appeared an angel of peace, but when she opened her mouth it became apparent that she was quite a tough cookie. She was a champion athlete who was already a promiscuous alcoholic drug addict by her early twenties. She found out the hard way that the glamor of worldly success doesn't bring the happiness it promises. When she found God, she didn't just make a U-turn, she drove as fast as she could in the opposite direction.

Although the leadership invited us Eastern Catholics to the event, I'm sorry to say that there was no Eastern liturgy of any kind. We found that a little ironic since they talked about inclusion and diversity all the time, but then they left us out. So on Sunday, we had our own Divine Liturgy at St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church in Orlando. We were joined by lay people, clergy, monks, and bishops from other Eastern Catholic churches, including Romanian, Ukrainian, Melkite, and Armenian. The church was full, the singing was full voiced, and it really was a supreme act of worship. I am so grateful to God that He made me Byzantine Catholic, just as I thank all the people of the Eparchy of Passaic for making me welcome in your lives. At the last minute, I asked Father Noga to try to get us our own "hospitality room". I was afraid that our little delegation would disappear in the crowd, so I wanted us to be able to meet somewhere. I thought, with such a large convention, that the hospitality rooms would be all taken, but it seems we were the only ones who got one. Father Noga got us an enormous room with floor-to-ceiling windows on a high floor—it was spectacular. Some of the other Eastern Churches used our room too. Each evening, we met after all the events to talk about what we learned and what we could do for our churches. People were so enthusiastic that they talked for about two hours every night.

The first night, Father Noga said that our main goal in life is to be saints, and so we should be seeking holiness first. Therefore the Church should be a place to help each other in holiness. We all agreed to look for holiness in all the presentations.

One of the speakers talked about the need to increase the presence of women in leadership roles in the Church. One of the women in our group brought that up and said that she agreed with the speaker—she feels excluded from parish decisions. A spirited discussion arose in which several of the clergy said that they think that women already call the shots in our Church. It was perhaps the only time in our discussions that people had such divergent points of view. Someone suggested that we should offer to pray with people after services. It's true that in our church most prayer is formal, or if someone asks for prayers, we promise to do it later. Having the priest or someone pray with people about their problems on Sunday was proposed, as well as a monthly anointing service for the sick.

One of our priests with a doctorate in family theology went to workshops on our shifting society, and the rejection of traditional sexual morals. Although no one suggested that we should justify sin, he said he learned the importance of working with people as they are, not as we wish they would be. Father Joe Ridella was one of our great builders on the west coast. He used to say, "You have to take people where they're at."

A deacon who attended workshops on youth said that a shocking number of young people nowadays have no one that they trust! What a

sad thing to hear. My own experience with young people is that they are indeed searching for older people who have what they want. In my own life, it seems that I always had a role model at each stage, someone that I admired and wanted to learn from. Young people are watching older people constantly. I remember a great olympic athlete who said that he saw a 15-year-old smoking outside the sports club, and so he confronted him, "Why are you smoking?" The reply was, "Because you do." He stopped smoking as a result of that meeting. The experts say that nowadays, the young are looking for authenticity—they have a very sensitive "hypocrisy meter" built in to them.

We have moved from a society in which people inherit a faith, to a society in which they choose a faith. I say to that, "Hallelujah!" Saint Peter said, always be able to give an answer for your hope. If you don't know what we believe, or why we believe it, then find out!

One of the best things to come out of the meetings was a commitment to have more listening in the future in our parishes. Father Mensinger suggested that we have our own convocation using the same plan for our young adults. We have youth events, but nothing on a large scale for young adults.

Everyone learned a lot, and proposed many good ideas, but it all came down to what Father Noga said at the first meeting. Our only task in life is to die a saint. First of all seek holiness. Whether we are worshipping God, or studying our faith, or teaching our faith, or praying and fasting, the goal is holiness. As Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, "Seek first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all else will be given to you besides."

+Kurt Burnette



"**L**et the faithful rejoice in glory, shout for joy and take their rest." These words sung at the Divine Liturgy were in our hearts on the morning of Sister Leona's falling asleep in the Lord on June 20, 2017. After 81 years of faithful service to the Lord, she surely deserved both the glory and the rest, and while we could not picture her "shouting," we could certainly share in her joy.

Sister Leona was born in the village of Hrabske in what was then Czechoslovakia, the daughter of the late John and Mary (Hrabar) Trudich. She entered the Sisters of Saint Basil the Great from Saint John the Baptist Church in Lansford, PA, on June 23, 1936, at the tender age of 16, and she made her Solemn Profession of Vows on November 30, 1944.

Sister Leona served from Chicago to the East Coast in the ministry of education as principal, teacher, and catechist. During her long

+SISTER LEONA TRUDICH, OSBM WELCOMED INTO THE KINGDOM

"She was a familiar face at the welcome table at Pilgrimage for many years."

academic career, fortified by both a B.S. and M.S. in Education, she taught in 18 schools. When teaching was no longer an option, Sister Leona served in parish ministry in the Hazleton area before retiring to the monastery in 2005. There she looked forward to participating daily in the prayer and activities of the Sisters. One could always depend on meeting Sister Leona in the halls with her rosary beads in her hand.

Sister Leona carried this same spirit of prayerfulness with her when she became a resident at Mount Macrina Manor in 2013. Her Vespers book was well-used, as she prayed it from cover to cover because she said, "the prayers are so beautiful!" At the age of 82, together with her good friend, Sister Leonora, who preceded her in death by several weeks, she took up learning to play the violin, and both Sisters were featured in the local newspaper lauding their taking this step in their mature years.

Sister Leona wanted to be remembered for her love of teaching, her love for her parents and family, and for her spirit of trust, love, and gratitude to the Sisters. To this she added forgiveness and "many thanks to everyone." Those who knew her or who worked with her would add the qualities of kindness and thoughtfulness of others. As one of the clergy noted, Sister Leona was the perfect person to be at the Welcome Table during Pilgrimage, as she was always ready to greet each pilgrim with a smile.

In his homily, Archbishop William reflected on how a mother bird feeds her young ones, feeding them directly, or teaching them to find food for themselves. This nurturing of young ones could be compared to the same nurturing which Sister Leona did throughout her many years of teaching. Most importantly, she taught the children about Jesus, the Bread of Life, the Eucharist, which nurtures and strengthens us for the journey of life. This is where Sister Leona found her strength, and surely, this is why, when the Lord came to call her, her face lit up with a big smile.

Sister Leona was the last surviving member of her immediate family, having been preceded in death by her parents and her sisters Mary Bujnak, Anna Oross, and Julia Dotsey. In addition to her community, she is survived by several nieces and nephews and their families.

The Parastas Service was celebrated by Monastery Chaplain, Father Michael Huszti. In attendance was Father Ronald P. Larko. The Funeral Divine Liturgy was celebrated by Archbishop William with Father Michael Huszti as concelebrant. Assisting was Father Andrew Deskevich. In attendance were Very Rev. Archpriest John G. Petro and Father Ronald P. Larko.

May God grant to his handmaiden, Sister Leona, eternal memory and peaceful repose.

THE BYZANTINE CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF PASSAIC subscribes to the

Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People

adopted by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The Eparchy, within all its parishes, institutions and programs, is committed to assuring a safe environment in ministry for its children and young people that conforms to Charter requirements.

For further information regarding the Eparchial Safe Environment Program please contact:
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PEOPLE YOU KNOW AROUND THE EPARCHY

IN POCONO SUMMIT...

A Special Day at Saint Nicholas of Myra in Pocono Summit, PA

On June 15, 2017, the Feast of Vladimir the Great, Equal-to-the-Apostles and Baptizer of Rus', Joshua and baby son, Jonah, were both enlightened with the Holy Mysteries of Christian Initiation at Saint Nicholas of Myra Byzantine Catholic Church in Pocono Summit, PA.



The newly-enlightened servants of God, Joshua and Jonah, with their family and sponsors



Baby son, Jonah, receiving full immersion baptism



Joshua receiving Holy Chrismation after his baptism

IN PITTSBURGH...

MCI Summer School Emphasizes Collaboration, Sound

The first summer music program of the Metropolitan Cantor Institute was held at the Byzantine Catholic Seminary in Pittsburgh on July 12-14. Eight cantors (four of whom are also choir directors) studied ways to make liturgical music a more effective support for congregational prayer, and how to encourage congregational singing. Each student received a 30 minute voice lesson daily from an experienced vocal instructor, and students ate together and celebrated Vespers. Courses were taught by Deacon Jeffrey Mierzejewski, with the assistance of Nicholas Nagrant, Sue Ann Rudolphy, and Shawn Daly.

Several themes came up repeatedly during the course, especially the use of traditional ("natural") harmony to enhance our plain chant, and prospects for teaching music fundamentals in a parish setting to help the people take their part in singing our services. There was general agreement on the need for new books for the funeral services, Christmas and Holy Week, as well as a comprehensive hymnal. Several participants are planning to work with Deacon Jeffrey, the director of the Cantor Institute, in assembling recorded examples of traditional plain chant harmonies to assist in teaching a richer congregational singing style.



Cantors from Pittsburgh, Passaic, and Parma at the MCI Summer School

SUNDAY AFTERNOON DIVINE LITURGY IN BAYONNE PARISH SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST

15 EAST 26TH STREET, BAYONNE, NJ
All Welcome to Attend!

For the convenience of the area faithful, Bishop Kurt has introduced the celebration of a Sunday afternoon Divine Liturgy at Saint John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church, Sundays at 4 PM

Father Marcel Szabo, Pastor, together with Byzantine Catholic clergy from Northern and Central New Jersey, will provide a weekly schedule of service which will include:

- The Holy Mystery of Reconciliation prior to services
- 3:30 PM - Prayer Service (Moleben) to Blessed Miriam Teresa
- 4:00 PM - Celebration of the Sunday Divine Liturgy.

Saint John Church is the baptismal parish of Blessed Miriam Teresa Demjanovich.

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**WALK IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF JESUS!!
DON'T MISS THIS TRIP OF A LIFETIME!!**



Left to Right: (Row 1): Sister Margaret Ann Andrako, OSBM (Admin. Assistant), Leonard Mier (Chicago), Andrew Gill (Pittsburgh), Robert Jones (Pittsburgh), Robert Knapp (Passaic), Joseph Lavinio (Stamford), Father John G. Petro (Co-Director), Professor Sandra Collins (Row 2) Father Stelyios Muksuris, Patrick Cullen (Phoenix), John Reed (Passaic), Anthony Blair (Passaic), Jonathan Dean (Phoenix), Gregory Gath (Phoenix), Ryan Liebhaber (Passaic), Father Donald Bolls (Row 3) Father Robert M. Pipta (Co-Director), John Harden (Passaic), Richard Ballard (Passaic), Lawrence Hruska (Parma), Richard Terza (Passaic), Timothy Belke (Phoenix)

STRANGERS...TO FRIENDS...TO BROTHERS

A Reflection on the Deacon Formation Program

By Reader John Harden

Between June 18 and July 1, 2017, sixteen men from six different eparchies gathered at Saints Cyril and Methodius Byzantine Catholic Seminary in Pittsburgh to continue their study and formation for the diaconal ministry. This two-week intensive is an integral part of the Deacon Formation Program. The program, co-directed by Archpriest John Petro and Father Robert Pipta, prepares men to serve at the Holy Table, to proclaim the Word of God, and to serve the needs of the Byzantine Catholic faithful.

The deacon students come from all walks of life. They span several decades in age. Many of them are married or engaged. Combined, they have a total of fifty-one children and twenty-three grandchildren. Among them is a Major in the US Army, an FBI agent, a correctional psychologist, a diocesan administrator, a mechanical engineer, a pharmaceutical researcher, and a stay-at-home dad.

Each day of formation begins around 7:30 AM and ends after 9:30 PM. During this time, the candidates pray the Divine Office, celebrate the Divine Liturgy, receive instruction in Byzantine Catholic theology, study Sacred Scripture, practice preaching homilies, and learn how to serve as deacons at the Liturgy. One of the most enjoyable and rewarding parts of the formation is the fellowship the candidates have with each other. Most of the men had never met each other before arriving at the Seminary. Now they have become friends, or to be more accurate, brothers.

During the remainder of the year, the students continue their education through personal study and pastoral formation at their local parishes. They meet regularly with a spiritual director and a mentor, and they take part in a yearly retreat.

This is the deacon students' third year in the four-year program. As they complete the next two years of the program, some will receive the minor orders of candle-bearer, reader, cantor, and sub-deacon. When their formation is completed, they will be ordained as deacons, God-willing, and assigned to serve at parishes around the country.

Preparing for diaconal ministry is hard work. It takes a strong commitment, a dedicated prayer-life, and a continual pursuit of holiness. The deacon students are grateful for the continued support, sacrifices, and prayers of their families, their parishes, their bishops, and the staff of the Byzantine Catholic Seminary. Please keep these men in your prayers as they continue their journey to the diaconate.

Speaking on behalf of Father Robert Pipta, Co-Director, and Sister Margaret Ann Andrako, Administrative Assistant, Archpriest John Petro noted: "This is another exceptional group of men who are offering their lives and their talents to the service of our Church. During this two-week program, their wonderful and lusty participation in the liturgical services of our Church, their assiduous involvement in their classes (nine hours per day!), their hearty appetites and even their after-hours dedication to their on-going cultural formation was truly noteworthy. Our Church will be blessed by their ministry."



Reader John Harden, Reader John Reed, Reader Richard Ballard, Reader Anthony Blair, Reader Ryan Liebhaber, Reader Robert Knapp, and Reader Richard Terza

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Kolachi • Farmers Market

Nourishment for the Mind

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Nourishment for the Soul

Slavic Religious & Folk Art • Bookstore • Arts, Crafts & Polka Lessons
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Concert of Sacred Slavic Music at 1:30 pm
Epiphany Slava Men's Chorus

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SAINT NICHOLAS PILGRIMAGE REVITALIZED

Continued from page 1

day. This day was a gleaming testament to both the faith of our people and the strength of our

Church. I pray that we, as an Eparchy, continue to support such wonderful events as this and the treasure that is the Carpathian Village.

On behalf of the entire Eparchy of Passaic, I would like to thank Bishop Kurt and all those who put forth effort in the revitalizing of the

Saint Nichols Pilgrimage, especially Father Michael Salnicky, who worked tirelessly to ensure the pilgrims had a fitting venue to host such a blessed event. To those nine men who received Tonsure and Minor Orders on that day, let us all exclaim with joy: *Mnohaja l'ita!* **ECL**



Please Consider a Charitable Gift Annuity with the Byzantine Catholic Seminary

Secure an income which is guaranteed for life and, at the same time, provide future support of the Byzantine Catholic Seminary

Example of Charitable Gift Annuity

Bonnie Weber, 69 years old, has watched interest rates fluctuate for years.

She has not been satisfied with her money market fund currently earning 0.5% or her CD rates of about 1%. She has looked at ways she could get back to the 5-6% rate of return she was used to. However, she does not want to increase her market risk by investing in securities that would fluctuate in value.

For a number of years, she has been actively involved with her church and enjoys volunteering. She is very interested in the future of the Byzantine Seminary. One day, Bonnie had an opportunity to drop in on the Development Officer and ask him if there was anything that she could do that could help the Byzantine Seminary and provide Bonnie with some additional income. Bonnie excitedly brought back a brochure on Charitable Gift Annuities to show her daughter.

Bonnie and her daughter visited with the Development Offices. The Development Officer

explained that a Charitable Gift Annuity is a contract between Bonnie and the seminary. The seminary will promise to pay Bonnie a fixed rate of return for her life. In this case, Bonnie was thinking of a \$100,000 annuity. Based on the market conditions and other factors, such as her age, the rate* suggested by the American Council on Gift Annuities (ACGA) is 5.0%. This means that the Villa promises and guarantees to pay her \$5,000 a year, regardless of changes in interest rates, for the rest of her life. Because she is not using appreciated assets to fund the gift annuity, part of her payment will be considered tax-free return of principal for Bonnie.

Based on current calculations*, \$3,980.00 of the \$5,000 annual income will be free from income tax for 16.4 years. Also, part of her \$100,000 is a charitable gift and therefore she gets a charitable tax deduction in the current year of \$36,814.00. That deduction could save Bonnie \$12,885 this year (based on her 35% federal tax bracket). These numbers do not consider any state taxes that may be applicable. The tax deduction and tax-free income means Bonnie's effective annuity

rate (what she would have to earn to equal it with fully taxable income) is 8.14%.

Bonnie is happy with the increased income and the tax savings, and she is really excited about what her gift will mean to the Seminary and the future of her church. A graphic illustration of a charitable gift annuity is below.

Example assumes a 2.0 percent applicable federal rate (AFR) and a federal income tax bracket of 35%. State tax liability is not considered. The IRS allows the AFR from the current or one of the two previous months to be used. For a gift annuity, the lower the AFR, the higher the tax free portion of the annuity payments. A higher AFR increases the charitable tax deduction.

* Based on the ACGA suggested rates

** Adjusted upward because the tax-free portion of \$3,855 makes the \$5,000 annuity equivalent to \$7,091.92 of taxable income for a beneficiary in the 35% income tax bracket and the \$36,814 charitable tax deduction reduces the cost of the gift by \$12,885.

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- Income that is tax free
- An income tax deduction for a portion of your gift
- No up-front capital gains tax due when funding this with appreciated securities
- The knowledge that your gift will help you now and also provide valuable resources to the Byzantine Catholic Seminary.

For more information on the Byzantine Catholic Seminary's Charitable Gift Annuity Program and to receive a no obligation illustration of the benefits, please email the Development Office at development@bcs.edu or complete the form to the right and return it to the seminary.

Name _____

Address _____

City State Zip _____

Dates of birth: 1st annuitant _____ 2nd annuitant _____

I am considering a Gift Annuity of \$ _____

Phone _____

—Please send me language for my will that will be helpful in leaving a legacy gift to the Byzantine Catholic Seminary.

Byzantine Catholic Seminary – 3605 Perrysville Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15214



ASK A PRIEST A QUESTION

Father Vasyl Chepelskyy

WHAT IS A VOCATION? HOW CAN ONE DISCOVER WHAT IS HIS VOCATION?

What is a *vocation* in the Catholic Church? The word derives from Latin and means *to call*, so a vocation is a *calling*, which means it comes from without and we cannot call ourselves; the one who is calling has to be someone else. It is God himself who calls us. In Matthew 9:9 we read: "As Jesus was walking along, He saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and He said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed Him." These same words, "Come, follow me," God says to each one of us, inviting us to respond to his call by living our life according to God's plan, by following His will and growing in love.

All of us are called to **love**, as Saint John Paul II explains in *Familiaris Consortio*: "God is love and in Himself He lives a mystery of personal loving communion. Creating the human race in His own image and continually keeping it in being, God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation, and thus the capacity and responsibility, of love and communion. Love is therefore the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being."

We are also called to **holiness**. While many of us think it is restricted only to a few, the *Second Vatican Council*, in the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, speaks with clarity of the universal call to holiness, saying that no one is excluded: "The forms and tasks of life are many but holiness is one – that sanctity which is cultivated by all who act under God's Spirit and... follow Christ, poor, humble and cross-bearing, that they may deserve to be partakers of his glory" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 41).

So, we are all called first and foremost to be holy and to love. Anything and everything else we do must be at the service of this call to holiness and to love. Besides this general vocation to grow in love and to become holy there is also an individual vocation of each, a unique call from God directed to each of us.

The Catholic Church recognizes four main vocations: The Clerical Life, Religious Life, Marriage, and Single Life. God calls everyone to follow Him in one of those four states of life. Here is a brief outline of the four vocations:

The Clergy are those ordained by the Church to fulfill specific roles in the theological, liturgical, and administrative life of the Church. **A Bishop** possesses the fullness of the priesthood of Jesus Christ, being a successor to the Apostles in ministering to the needs of the Church through teaching and leading the People of God in his eparchy/diocese. He ordains priests, deacons, and other holy orders to assist him in carrying out his ministry to the Church. **A Priest** is a man ordained to proclaim the Good News, teach the Catholic faith, minister the Sacraments, work to build up their local faith community and lead their faith community in worship. **A Deacon** is a man, married or single, who answers the call to service of the church as an adjunct to the bishop and/or priest in his duties to the parish or diocese. Although he cannot administer any of the holy mysteries (sacraments), he still performs a liturgical role in the liturgical life of the church, proclaiming the Word of God and assisting the priest in the ministry to his parish. The bishop also ordains **Lectors** and **Subdeacons** to assist in the liturgical life of a parish.

A religious priest, brother or sister (nun) commits his or her life to sharing in the life and mission of their religious community. Religious embrace the call to poverty, chastity, and obedience, and nurture their call through a life of celibacy, faith, prayer, and service. Religious serve in areas such as education, health care, parish, youth ministry, aged care, spirituality,

pastoral ministry, social work, amongst the poor and as a contemplative, and many will serve as missionaries in other cultures.

A married person lives a vow of faithful love to a spouse through the sacrament of Marriage. Husbands and wives share a self-giving, love-giving and life-giving relationship with their spouse, and are committed to helping their spouse grow to human and Christian maturity. They seek to form a family home, and are together the first teachers of their children in Christian faith and values.

A person called to **single life** comes to believe that remaining single is the true and right way to faithfully live his or her baptismal call. Single men and women embrace the gift of celibacy while living alone, with a family or with others who are single. They are able to devote time and energy in service of others, and may serve in their parish community or in the Church in a number of different ways.

In each vocation, the person lives a life of faith and prayer to continually grow in relationship with God. The Church recognizes that each vocation is equal in the sense that no vocation is better or less than any other. However, because God calls you to a particular vocation – whether marriage, priesthood, religious life or single life – that vocation is the best one for you, and the one that will "fit" you best and make you the happiest. Our life is an opportunity for us to find out what our vocation is and to fulfill it. When we live our vocation, we find peace and harmony, because we do exactly what God wants us to do. Actually, this interior peace is one of the most important signs of our vocation, and if we do not have this peace, it may be an indication that this call is not coming from God, but is something else – our own chosen path, something others insist or encourage us to do against our will, etc. Our true vocation is something which we may not be able to describe in words, but what is rooted deeply in our heart. **ECL**



63rd ANNUAL HOLY DORMITION (ASSUMPTION) PILGRIMAGE

AUGUST 12 – 13, 2017

SISTERS SERVANTS OF MARY IMMACULATE ST. MARY'S VILLA / SLOATSBURG, New York

Theme: Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate Celebrate 125 Years Glory to God! Honor to Mary! Peace to Us!

CONFESIONS ARE AVAILABLE THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE WEEKEND

Saturday, August 12

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| 12:00 p.m. | Food Available at Pavilion |
| 1:00 p.m. | Akathist to the Mother of God – Rev. Jack Custer, SSL, STD, Rector of St. Michael's Cathedral, Passaic, NJ |
| 2:30 p.m. | Presentation – Sr. Janice Soluk, SSMI (St. Mary's terrace) former SSMI Superior General – theme: " Glory to God! Honor to Mary! Peace to Us! " |
| 3:15 p.m. | Children's Activity – Sr. Eliane, SSMI (St. Mary's terrace) |
| 3:30 p.m. | Blessing of the Sick (Grotto steps and St. Mary's Chapel) |
| 5:00 p.m. | Blessing of Religious Articles (front of St. Joseph's Home) |
| | Divine Liturgy – Fr. James Spera , main celebrant / homilist (grotto – English) Choir: St. Mary's Byzantine Catholic Church, Hillsborough, NJ |
| | Divine Liturgy followed by Blessing of Water at St. Mary's Fountain |
| 7:30 p.m. | Panakhyda (Blessed Mother's circle in front of St. Mary's Villa) |
| 8:00 p.m. | Moleben to the Mother of God with candlelight procession (grotto – English) Most Rev. Kurt Burnette – Bishop of Passaic Eparchy - main celebrant / homilist |

Sunday, August 13

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| 8:30 a.m. | Materi Molity / Mothers in Prayer – Rosary / Singing (St. Mary's chapel) |
| 10:30 a.m. | Pontifical Divine Liturgy with procession to the grotto
Most Rev. Stefan Soroka, Metropolitan Archbishop of Philadelphia
Most Rev. Paul Chomnycky, OSBM, Bishop of the Eparchy of Stamford (homilist)
Most Rev. Bohdan Danylo, Bishop of the Eparchy of Parma
Most Rev. John Bura, Auxiliary Bishop for the Philadelphia Archeparchy
Most Rev. Basil Losten, Bishop Emeritus of the Eparchy of Stamford
Choir: Holy Ghost Ukrainian Catholic Church, Brooklyn, NY |
| 12:00 p.m. | Divine Liturgy followed by Blessing of Flowers
English Divine Liturgy - Rev. Bohdan Hedz, main celebrant / homilist (St. Mary's chapel) St. John the Baptist Ukrainian Catholic Church, Riverhead, NY |
| 1:30 p.m. | Blessing of the Sick (Grotto steps and St. Mary's Chapel) |
| 2:00 p.m. | Blessing of Religious Articles (front of St. Joseph's Home)
Presentations -
Sr. Tekla Gnatyuk, SSMI (St. Mary's terrace - Ukrainian)
Sr. Janice Soluk, SSMI (Our Lady of Perpetual Help Shrine - English) |
| 2:30 p.m. | Stations of the Cross – Basilian Fathers |
| 2:45 p.m. | Children's & Teens' Activity - Sr. Eliane, SSMI, Sr. Natalya, SSMI (St. Mary's terrace) |
| 3:30 p.m. | Moleben to the Mother of God (Grotto)
Rev. Andriy Dudkevych - St. Nicholas, Passaic, NJ – main celebrant / homilist
Blessing of cars and buses – Rev. Ivan Tyhovych - Holy Ghost Parish, Brooklyn, NY |

A DVD of the Life & Ministry of the SSMI's will be showing throughout the weekend in the Gallery

Rt. Rev. Mitred Msgr. John Terlecky, Pilgrimage Spiritual Moderator



SISTERS OF SAINT BASIL TO CELEBRATE 83RD ANNUAL PILGRIMAGE

The 83rd Annual Pilgrimage in honor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help will be held at Mount Saint Macrina in Uniontown, PA., September 2 and 3, 2017. This year's theme is Mary: Life-Giving Spring. Preparations for this year's Pilgrimage have already started and will continue throughout the summer.

As in previous years, the Sisters will welcome all those pilgrims who come from all over the country and beyond. They will continue to welcome those who come early and camp on the race track or stay on the Mount. Light fare will be available at the lunch stand starting on Friday evening. Liturgical prayers will be held at the Shrine Altar on Friday evening for those arriving early and Divine Liturgy will be celebrated on Monday morning, September 4 for those who stay on Sunday evening.

Pilgrimage 2017: Participation? People?

By Sr. Elaine Kisinko, OSBM

I love our Pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Perpetual Help at our monastery in Uniontown. I appreciate the ways in which Jesus is glorified and His Mother is honored. I am very grateful for the prominence and renown it provides for our Byzantine Catholic Church. And maybe most of all, I am taken by the fact that we are all there together.

We Sisters are privileged to welcome our bishops and guests, priests, deacons, seminarians, other religious, families, groups, individuals and everyone who comes. We are all there united in purpose: to pray, to receive the healing and life-giving mysteries of the Church, to enjoy the beauty of Mt. St. Macrina, to meet friends old and new, and to be a part of this unique event which in itself is a phenomenon of God's grace.

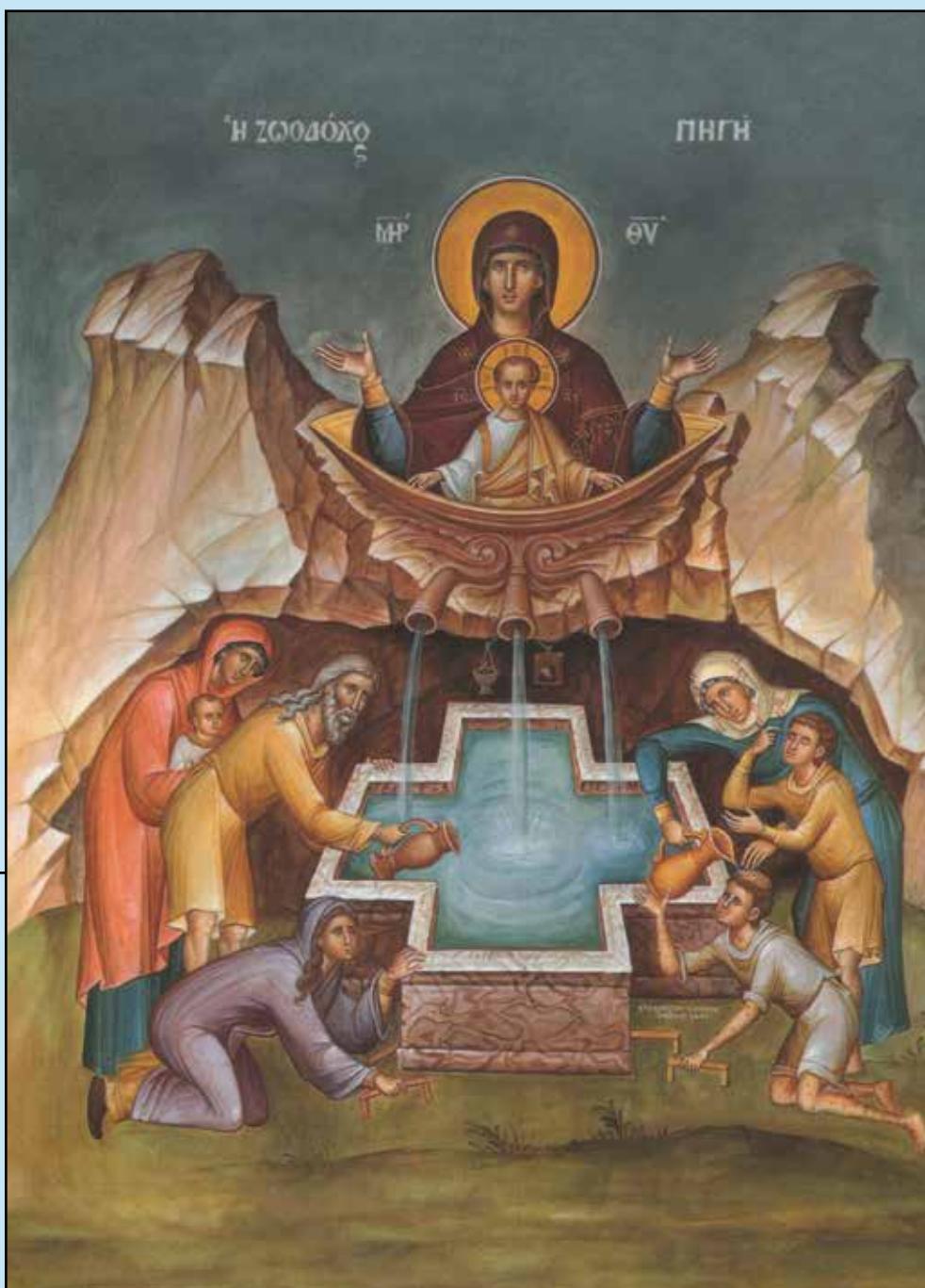
We live in a time where "virtual reality" seems in many ways to have become the norm. Even small children can text messages. Games are played electronically. Play dates are arranged rather than youngsters spontaneously meeting for outdoor games. Watching television can replace conversation and communication.

"Our guest this year is Bishop Peter Libasci, an American prelate of the Roman Catholic Church who serves as the tenth and current Bishop of the Diocese of Manchester, NH. Bishop Libasci is bi-ritual and celebrates the Divine Liturgy in the Byzantine Ruthenian Catholic Church," said Sister Ruth Plante, Provincial.

The Festal Icon Walk that was popular last year, will be repeated at the Pilgrimage this year.

Other plans for the weekend include many opportunities for participation in the Divine Liturgy of the Byzantine Catholic Church. Also scheduled are Matins, Vespers, sacrament of reconciliation, activities for teens and children, and other services in honor of the Mother of God.

The Pilgrimage holds the distinction of being the oldest and the largest Byzantine Catholic Pilgrimage in the country.



Pilgrimage Icon: Mary, Life-Giving Spring

So, as we become a part of the crowd that is making the Pilgrimage journey this year, let us recognize and be thankful that for these short days our reality is holy, shared, and alive. We may jostle with someone while walking on a pathway. Grumbling might be heard in a too long line at medovniki, light lunch, or the

gift shop. The favorite spot for your lawn chairs could be occupied. But we are there.

We are praying either individually or as one at the impressive liturgical services. We are inspired by the uplifting of our souls as we beautifully raise our voices in hymns. We are healed by the power of the reception of the mysteries of Reconciliation and Eucharist. We are heartened by the presence of so many young families, children, youth and of the not so young who have been faithful pilgrims for countless years. And as we see our bishops, priests, deacons, seminarians, sisters, our fellow parishioners, family members and friends all around us, we know that it is very good to be here and to be a part of this Pilgrimage and to belong to our Byzantine Catholic Church.

Every person who journeys to become a pilgrim brings a blessing to be shared. And, as always, one who gives receives much more in return. Please plan to be at Pilgrimage 2017.

PILGRIMAGE IN HONOR OF OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP SCHEDULE

Friday, September 1

7:00 PM—Office of Small Compline at Shrine Altar

Saturday, September 2

7:00 AM - 12 NOON—MYSTERY OF RECONCILIATION (Confessions)
House of Prayer Patio

OPENING OF PILGRIMAGE

8:00 AM—MATINS at Shrine Altar

9:45 AM—Procession with icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help from
House of Prayer to Shrine Altar

10:00 AM—DIVINE LITURGY
Welcome: Sister Ruth Plante, OSBM

Divine Liturgy to be followed by procession to Lourdes Grotto for the Solemn Blessing of Water; procession to return to the House of Prayer at the conclusion of the Blessing.

1:00 – 5:00 PM—MYSTERY OF RECONCILIATION (Confessions)
House of Prayer Patio

1:00 PM—MOLEBEN at Shrine Altar

2:00 PM

CHILDREN'S PILGRIMAGE at Children's Tent

ORIENTATION for TEENS at Prayer Garden

ENRICHMENT SESSION at Trinity Center

MYSTERY OF ANOINTING at Shrine Altar

FESTAL ICON SHRINE WALK

3:00 PM—TEEN PILGRIMAGE at Prayer Garden

4:00 PM—VESPERS with DIVINE LITURGY at Shrine Altar

6:00 PM—ENRICHMENT SESSION at Mausoleum

7:15 PM—Procession from House of Prayer to Mount Macrina Cemetery

Sunday, September 3

7:00 AM—MATINS at Shrine Altar

7:00 AM—DIVINE LITURGY House of Prayer Chapel

7:30 AM - 12 NOON—MYSTERY OF RECONCILIATION (Confessions) House of Prayer Patio

8:30 AM—DIVINE LITURGY in Slavonic Shrine Altar

10:30 AM—DIVINE LITURGY Shrine Altar

12:30 - 5:00 PM—MYSTERY OF RECONCILIATION (Confessions)
House of Prayer Patio

1:00 PM—CHILDREN'S PROCESSION with Special Blessing for Youth & Young Adults - from House of Prayer to Mother of God Shrine

1:30 - 2:30 PM—MYSTERY OF RECONCILIATION (Confession for the infirm, sick and physically challenged) Manor Gazebo

2:00 PM

CHILDREN'S PILGRIMAGE at Children's Tent

ENRICHMENT SESSION at Trinity Center

TEEN PILGRIMAGE at Prayer Garden

MYSTERY OF ANOINTING at Shrine Altar

3:45 PM—Procession from House of Prayer to Mother of God Shrine

4:00 PM—DIVINE LITURGY Mother of God Shrine

Words of Gratitude: Sister Ruth Plante, O.S.B.M.

7:15 PM—Procession from House of Prayer to Mother of God Shrine

7:30 PM—CANDLELIGHT PROCESSION
(Beginning and ending at the Mother of God Shrine)

CLOSING OF THE PILGRIMAGE

Following the Candlelight Procession::

TEEN SOCIAL Prayer Garden Area

YOUNG ADULT SOCIAL Trinity Center

Monday, September 4

9:30 AM DIVINE LITURGY at Shrine Altar

Please note: Curfew is 1:00 AM for those participating in Chaperoned Youth Activities. For all other youths, the curfew is 12:00 Midnight. Although casual attire is acceptable, participants are asked to be mindful of the religious nature of the services and activities that take place and to dress accordingly to traditional Christian values and standards of modesty. Thank you!

BYZANTINE CARMELITE NUNS OF SUGARLOAF, PA CELEBRATE 40 YEARS A MONASTIC COMMUNITY



Vacationing in Maine this Summer?

Please join us at the Divine Liturgy!

Byzantine Catholic Association of Maine

(Melkite Greek Catholic Eparchy of Newton, MA)

Father Basil Parent, Chaplain

The Divine Liturgy (for Sunday) is celebrated on Saturday evenings at 5:30 PM Holy Cross R.C. Church, 1080 Lisbon Street, Lewiston, ME

For more information please call:
207.783.3472

Or visit us on Facebook: Keyword -
Byzantine Catholic Association of Maine

Northern Byzantine Catholics Moving to or vacationing in Florida?

Come join us for Liturgy
Sundays at 10:30 AM

All Saints Byzantine Catholic Church

We are located in Southwest Florida, just off I-75, exit 143, in North Fort Myers.

Visit us online:
www.allsaintsbyzantinechurch.com
or call: 239-599-4023



FAITH AND COMMUNITY ISSUES

By Father Carmen Scuderi, OFM, Ed.D., P.C.C.

THE JOY IN LIVING A GRACED LIFE

Saint Seraphim of Sarov—illuminated by Grace

Discussing the relationship of grace in the life of the aspirant to the Holy Life, Lodyzhenskii makes the distinction within the ascetical life of the mystical-contemplative and the active life. These perspectives, though distinct, are not mutually exclusive but rather serve to complement one another. Lodyzhenskii utilizes Saint Seraphim of Sarov as an example of a life that has found a balance between the mystical-contemplative and the active expressions of dedicated life.

In his text, (2011, "Light Invisible: Satisfying the Thirst for Happiness" Holy Trinity Publications, Jordanville, NY), Lodyzhenskii proffers as the major premise of Saint Seraphim's lifestyle the words of the saint himself: "the purpose of life of each person should consist in the *acquisition of the Holy Spirit of God* (italics, author's)" (p. 20). Establishing an appreciation of the implications and meaning of this statement, Lodyzhenskii launches with a discussion of how the general intellectual world defines the purpose of life. From Lodyzhenskii's perspective, for the intellectual philosopher, such purpose occupies itself with the acquisition of knowledge, insight into the previously unknown. This acquisition reaches beyond the intellectual limit but rather, encompasses the total person: mind, body, and spirit, the goal being the acquisition of knowledge *in ipse*.

Saint Seraphim's perspective, according to Lodyzhenskii, markedly differs from the secular perspective. There is a deeper path that is taken by the saint. The awareness of a higher reasoning, a perspective that takes one into the inner recesses of the mind and heart where "The consciousness of this reason does not concern itself with investigations, as we are accustomed to understand this expression. It lives in the intuitive perception of a higher super-universal power. And the Holy Spirit can illuminate with Its grace the whole man..." (2011, Light Invisible... p.21).

This is Divine Illumination, a phenomenon that is beyond the capacity of the mind to exhaustively comprehend. Such illumination can take place, according to Lodyzhenskii, "like a streak of lightning that no human mind can keep up with" (p. 21). In such a revelatory experience,

the interior and external senses are completely overwhelmed, according to Lodyzhenskii, who quotes as his authority Theophan the recluse, an ascetic "This state... cannot be compared to any natural delight. It is exceptional and is experienced only by the Lord touching the soul" (2011, Light Invisible... p. 21).

For Lodyzhenskii, such an experience defines, in as much as such an experience can be defined, the acquisition of the Holy Spirit of God. The consequence of this sacred encounter is not the acquisition of knowledge as if to put God to the test for the purposes of objective verification as the goal of a scientific investigation, but rather, for the ascetic. The end result is the overshadowing of the individual by the Divine Presence, an activity of grace within the person lavishly bestowed by a loving God. This ravishing, this possession by the Creator, to His creature is the desired goal and end result of the strivings of the ascetic in his search for divine knowledge. All else beyond the "acquisition of the Holy Spirit of God" (p. 21) is clearly secondary in nature.

According to Lodyzhenskii, Saint Seraphim was born 1750, in the City of Kursk, of what today would be considered a middle-class to upper middle-class family. He died at the age of seventy-four in the year 1833. What is so remarkable about Saint Seraphim is his ability to live deeply both the contemplative and the active lives as complimentary rather than adversarial. According to Lodyzhenskii, the development of these two charismata "did not proceed simultaneously, but rather they were cultivated consecutively, one type after another" (p. 22).

Lodyzhenskii points out that the active lifestyle was a later development in the life of Saint Seraphim, well after the contemplative elements of ascetical life were well integrated and developed. Such development had its price. According to Lodyzhenskii, Saint Seraphim's ascetical life was harsh. Yet even with this harshness Saint Seraphim was "so filled with spiritual joy, he was never seen to be sad or despondent, and he tried to transmit to others this joyful frame of mind" (p. 22).

According to Lodyzhenskii, it was at the tender

age of seventeen that Saint Seraphim made the move to embrace the monastic life, his relatives close and distant encouraged this decision. All Saint Seraphim had to go on for education was the book of hours and the Psalter.

Lodyzhenskii takes great lengths in describing the life of Saint Seraphim, particularly the patient bearing of sufferings for the sake of all; the abstemious lifestyle of prayer and fasting he particularly practiced for the sake of those in need of prayer and divine intervention; and his desire to attain the Spirit of God above all, even to the practicing of severe penances for the sake of purging the sinful aspects of living in a broken world. The results of all this ascetical practice was a profound experience of the Presence of God which manifested itself in a joy that none could take away or dissuade in any manner. Indeed, it was Saint Seraphim's mission in life to share this profound insight with all who had ears to hear and a heart willing to understand and be filled with God's Spirit of Love. Charismatic gifts such as discernment of spirits, the ability to read the human soul, clairvoyance, and the ability to communicate meaningfully with animals, were apparent in Saint Seraphim despite the physical infirmities he patiently bore. All of this bore testimony to the working of God's grace within him and his openness to the operations of the Divine within Seraphim's person, body mind and spirit.

Such intimate interaction with the Divine Presence and the radical openness to the operations of the Divine Spirit of God produced in Saint Seraphim a profound joy that no power on earth or beyond could disturb or remove. In fact, the very presence of the saint effected a profound experience of peace healing and joy upon any who found themselves in the saint's presence, according to Lodyzhenskii a testimony to the reality that the experience of true joy is the fruit of an intimate relationship with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

In our next presentation a look at the mysticism of the Founder of the Order to which I belong, Saint Francis of Assisi, and his unique experiences of both God's Presence and the resultant Joy of that encounter will bring these presentations to a close. **ECL**



LIFE, LOVE, AND THE HUMAN PERSON

By Ann M. Koshute, MTS

LEADING FROM BEHIND

It's not what you think; the title of this column, I mean. In case you're not a cable news junkie or politically engaged, the phrase "lead from behind" characterizes a foreign policy strategy (both praised and ridiculed) employed in the previous presidential administration. But this isn't a political commentary (Lord knows there's enough of that!). Rather, I'd like to propose the

phrase "leading from behind" as a "way of discipleship." What does that mean, and what does it have to do with you and me? Well... everything.

When we hear the word "apostle" we naturally think of the original Twelve called by Jesus; the men who followed and learned from Him, ran away scared, (even denied and, for one, betrayed

Him and was lost) but went on to establish His Church. We may also think of certain women whom Tradition calls Apostles: women like Mary Magdalene, who announced the Resurrection, and Photini, the Samaritan Woman who was converted in her encounter with Christ at the well and vigorously proclaimed the Gospel. The word "disciple" is a bit trickier. We know that Jesus

sent the Disciples out in twos to preach and heal. We know that, after the Resurrection, Jesus commanded the remaining eleven Apostles to “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations...” (Matthew 28:19). Who were the people Jesus sent out in twos – and who did they “make” into disciples? Do we know their names? Yes, we do. The “disciples,” and the ones who are sent out to “make disciples,” are the same: you and me.

I’m not using hyperbole. We were given our mission as disciples at our baptism, when we died with Christ and were re-born as God’s sons and daughters. At Chrismation, the Holy Spirit empowered us to carry out this mission. All of the Holy Mysteries – especially Confession and Eucharist – fuel our missionary spirit and give us the courage and ability to share the love of God, and invite those we meet to experience it for themselves. The call to discipleship is simple: to know Christ in an intimate, personal way; to love as Christ loves; to model our lives on Christ’s life; and to invite others to know, love and live in Him, too. Knowing Christ is more than saying our prayers – though that’s essential. How can you have a relationship with someone if you don’t spend time with them? Cultivating a relationship with Christ requires recognizing just how much He loves you! It is acknowledging that you’re a son or daughter of God, open to being converted

and shaped by His love. As with all relationships, you must make time to be with Him, talk with Him, and listen to Him.

When you work at deepening your relationship with Christ, and really believe that He loves you deeply and beyond measure, you’ll want to be like Him. But how? By living a “Christ-life,” letting Him shape and inform every aspect of your life: how you speak to (and about) other people, in your gift of time and treasure, and by putting others before first in selfless acts of generosity (even when it’s uncomfortable or inconvenient.) To love and be loved by Christ, and strive to model His way of living and loving, is to be His disciple! But there’s more. There is the active witness to Christ in our every day lives, the bold proclamation of the Gospel, and the desire to invite others into a relationship with Him. That’s the scary part, and what we laypeople mistakenly think is the job of priests and religious. It is their job of course. But as Christ’s disciples, we, too, are charged with making disciples for Him. We are charged with “leading from behind” Him.

We tend to think evangelization and discipleship means preaching from a pulpit – or a street corner – or knocking on doors and giving people religious tracts. There’s a place for that, of course. But for you and me, discipleship really is about

“leading” people to Jesus by getting “behind” Him in everything; following wherever He leads us. If Jesus is our leader, our example and the One with Whom we are truly in love, then our words and actions will “be His” words and actions. Discipleship and inviting people to know and love Jesus is meeting people where they are (just as Jesus did) and introducing them to a new way of living. Discipleship is refraining from gossiping and tearing people down, and instead having the courage to build people up. Being a disciple is saying grace in a public place, adding “God” to the “...bless you” we offer when someone sneezes. Being a disciple is telling someone who has been away from God how much He loves them – and praying patiently, for as long as it takes, for those who aren’t ready to hear that message, all the while loving being a friend to them. Discipleship knows when to speak boldly – and when to be a silent and true witness.

The first step in being a disciple is knowing that you’re called! The rest of the steps come by praying, participating in the Holy Mysteries, and asking God where and how He wants you to lead others to Him. Regardless of your age or ability, God has called you to be His Disciple – and to invite someone to discipleship too. Don’t be afraid! Follow Christ – and He’ll make you a leader. [ECL](#)



SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

Father Jack Custer, S.S.L., S.T.D.

AUGUST IN THE MOUNTAINS

When it comes to vacations, there are beach people and mountain people. The Church calendar for August clearly prefers the mountains. That’s where the two great feasts we celebrate this month are set: the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor and the Dormition on Mount Zion.

The New Testament accounts do not actually name the mountain on which Jesus’s divine glory was briefly visible in His human body (Matthew 17: 1-9; Mark 9: 1-13; Luke 9: 27-36 and II Peter 1:16-18). Mount Tabor stands 1,834 feet high, some 6 miles from Jesus’ hometown of Nazareth. It is the scene of several Old Testament events (Joshua 18, Judges 4, Judges 8). Tabor was already known to Christians as the site of the Transfiguration in the 4th century, when Saint Helena erected the first Christian church there.

We sing “Tabor and Hermon rejoice in Your name” (Psalm 89:12) at both Vespers and Matins of this feast. What is the connection between Mount Tabor in Galilee and Mount Hermon, which straddles the Syrian-Lebanese border north of Israel at a height of 9,230 feet.

Something similar happens in Psalm 47:3, the first antiphon for the feast of the Transfiguration: “Mount Zion, the slopes of the north, is the city of the great king.” You would have to be standing in the Negev Desert, on the way to Egypt, to call Mount Zion a “northern” slope. It rises 2,550 feet on the southwestern side of Jerusalem.

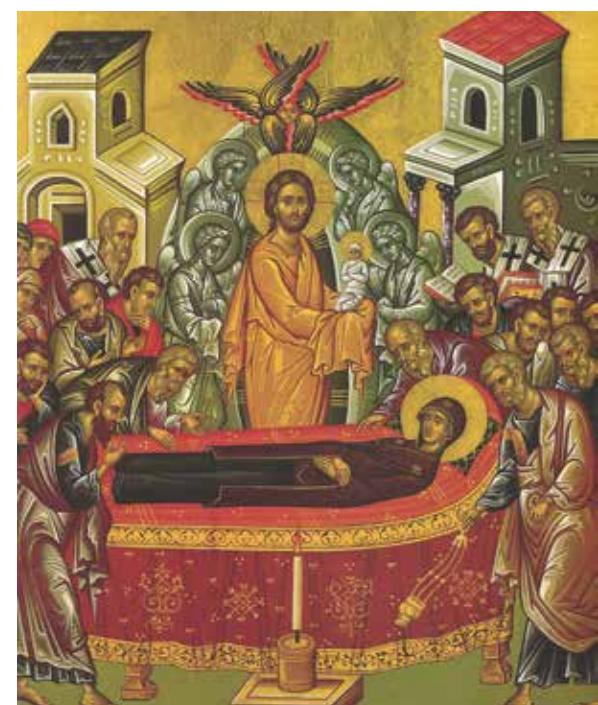
The Psalmist seems to be equating Zion with the much loftier mountains of the north, where the Canaanites believed their gods lived. In Psalm 89, the Psalmist is claiming for the Lord these northern mountains that had also been sacred to Israel’s pagan neighbors. The point is that the Lord God is the only Creator and Lord

of all things. There is no other God.

Moses and Elijah (Elias), who appear along with Jesus at His Transfiguration, had their most powerful experiences of God’s presence on mountains. Moses encountered the Lord in the burning bush on Sinai (Exodus 3) and later received the Law there (Exodus 19-20). From Mount Nebo, on the east bank of the Jordan River, Moses looked across to see the Promised Land before he died (Deuteronomy 34). On Mount Carmel, some 20 miles west of Tabor near the Sea, Elijah challenged and defeated the 300 priests of the false god, Baal (I Kings 18). On Mount Horeb (another name for Sinai), the dejected prophet experienced the Lord not in a dramatic windstorm, earthquake or fire as Moses had, but rather in a “still, small voice” (I Kings 19).

The Bible does not mention the death, burial and assumption of the Mother of God but the oldest traditions locate these events on Mount Zion in Jerusalem. There was already a Christian church there when the Romans besieged Jerusalem in 70 AD and again in 134 AD. Saint Helena built a monumental church on the site of Mary’s Dormition in the 4th century.

The name Zion originally referred to the fortified citadel taken from the Jebusites by King David to become his capital, Jerusalem (II Samuel 5:6-10). Also known as the “City of David,” Zion was the first resting place of the Ark of the Covenant in Jerusalem. When King Solomon built the Temple on the adjacent hill (the “Temple Mount”) and moved the Ark there (I Kings 8), the name “Zion” seems to have traveled with it. In the Psalms and the Prophets, “Zion” becomes another name for the whole city of Jerusalem with the Temple at its center.



Dormition of the Theotokos

In Byzantine liturgical hymns like the Akathist, the Mother of God is often called both “Ark” and “Temple.” That Mary should end her days on earth where the Ark and the Temple stood makes perfect sense. She really did what they only seemed to do: she contained God.

But centuries earlier, the Prophet Isaiah (especially chapters 60-66) had often spoken about Zion as God’s beloved spouse and the mother of His people. When we call Mary “Zion” in the Paschal Canon of Saint John Damascene (“O Zion, now dance and be glad”) we are quoting Isaiah 60. The Prophet’s focus –and God’s! –was always a person, not a piece of real estate.

It’s probably no coincidence that August is pilgrimage time on the Byzantine Catholic calendar and that most of our pilgrimage sites are on mountains. As you make your way to Slovensburg or Sybertsville or Uniontown, let the uphill journey prepare you to expect your own mountain-top transformation: “I lift up my eyes to the hills, from where shall come my help? My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth” (Psalm 121: 1-2). [ECL](#)



UNDERSTANDING ICONS

Father Joseph Bertha, Ph.D.

THE ART HISTORY OF THE PANTOCRATOR

Location of the Pantocrator Icon

Previous scholarship has overlooked an integral factor in the identification of the Pantocrator icon of Christ: LOCATION! Exactly where this icon of Christ Pantocrator was positioned inside of church architecture is the single most important definition of this type of Christ icon. The highest point of the interior of the Byzantine church, the central dome, is the favored location of the Pantocrator icon. The icon of Jesus Christ Almighty, the Sustainer, is placed overseeing the entire cosmos from His heavenly vantage point, and is able to descend and ascend via the church pillars from heaven to earth in the nave.

This architectural location, the central dome, is identified as the capstone or head of the entire church structure. In his book *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration*, Otto Demus identifies and articulates the threefold hierarchy of the interior of the Byzantine church. He delineates the highest position in the church architecture as the central dome and the type of Christ icon to be placed in the central dome in the heavenly dimension is a bust figure of Christ Pantocrator.

Link to the Jewish heritage of the Temple

Certainly, the prototypical model for the entire Byzantine world is the Great Church, Hagia Sophia, the Holy Wisdom of God, Jesus Christ in the capital of Constantinople. At its dedication on December 27, 537, Emperor Justinian proclaimed: "O Solomon, I have outdone you!" By this proclamation, Justinian linked the Byzantine

The architectural location of the Pantocrator is in the primary location, the capstone of the church, the most prominent and majestic placement and the highest point of the interior. The central dome, the apex of Hagia Sophia, rises some 180 feet from the nave, supported by forty ribs which admit an abundance of light into the church. Pause for a moment and reflect on how this architectural masterpiece adorned the isthmus in Constantinople, crowning the hilltop and serving as a beacon as it was illuminated by candlelight during the darkness of night.

The pre eminence of Hagia Sophia, the prototypical church pattern

The central dome symbolizes typologically heaven, the place where Jesus ascends in glory, forty days after His Resurrection. It is originally thought that an Ascension mosaic of Christ was placed in Hagia Sophia's central dome. However, because of the many collapses and rebuilding through the centuries, it is thought, in the ninth century, that a Pantocrator icon of Christ was placed in the central dome, following the Iconoclastic controversy in the preceding century.

Theologically, the Ascension of Christ reflects not only the departure of Christ the Messiah from the face of the earth, but also His continued presence among His faithful according to the covenant He establishes with them. Christ is shown seated on a throne ascending into the heavens. He is shown enthroned upon the heavens, portrayed as *Pantocrator*, the All Powerful, the Sustainer of All. By the ninth century this

church, the Great Church, Hagia Sophia in Constantinople.

A sophisticated articulation of the New Covenant

As we have seen, the first reference in the scriptures to God as *Pantocrator/El Shaddai*, occurs in chapter 17 of Genesis. When God appears to Abram, who is prostrate on the ground, He establishes a covenant with him. He promises to be present as the All Powerful Sustainer with Abraham through all generations as numerous as the sands of the seashore.

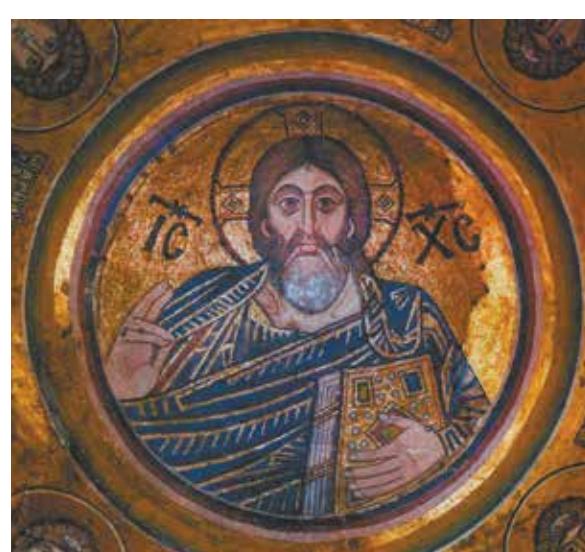
In the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, in the first Prayer of the Faithful, the priest, on behalf of the faithful, prays in the same posture as Abraham but, in this instance, during the celebration of the Second Covenant with Christ. He prays: "We thank You, O Lord God of Powers (*Pantocrator*, All-Powerful), for having made us worthy to stand at this time before Your holy altar and to prostrate ourselves before Your mercy for our sins and for the people's failings."

This liturgical quotation, cited from the Letter to the Hebrews, chapter 9, references the Jewish high priest prostrate in prayer in the Temple on Yom Kippur, imploring *El Shaddai* for the forgiveness of sins. The prophetic words of Emperor Justinian link the two covenants in the context of the newly constructed Hagia Sophia.

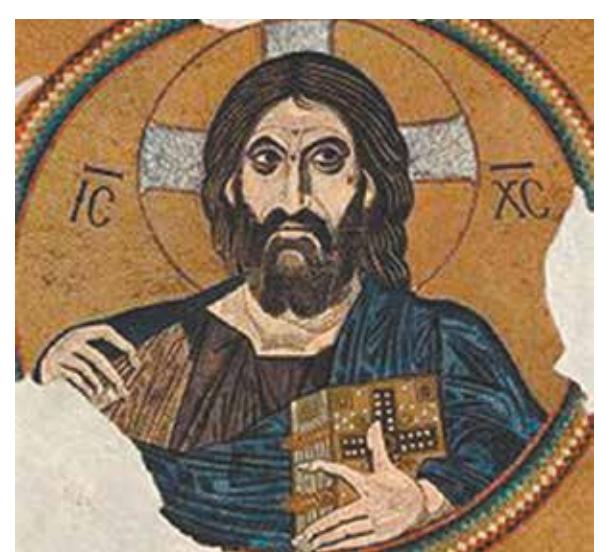
There is an extremely important connection between the location and theological meaning



Hagia Sophia, Constantinople, central dome with Islamic inscription on central medallion



Hagia Sophia, Kiev, 11th century central dome



Daphni Monastery, 11th century central dome mosaic

Basilica with its Jewish heritage and the Temple in Jerusalem.

Originally constructed in the fourth century, the original church was destroyed by an earthquake, and subsequently a riot. Rebuilt in the sixth century, it again fell victim to several other collapses through the centuries. The Hagia Sophia which still survives in this day and age is more or less in the ninth century architectural form. It served and still serves as the inspiration, springboard, and prototype for all Byzantine architecture in church construction worldwide, and even its liturgical practices are still followed in the Byzantine monasteries and church communities worldwide.

icon developed into simply a bust figure of our Lord, Who holds a closed gospel book in His left hand while blessing with His right hand with the anagram of His holy name.

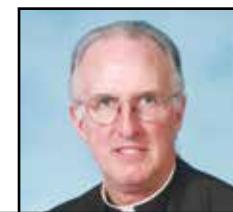
One of the earliest surviving depictions of this Pantocrator in bust is found in the newly baptized capital of Rus', Kiev, in the tenth-century central dome figure of the Pantocrator in Hagia Sophia. As soon as Kiev was converted and the Cathedral built there, called Hagia Sophia (10th century), the central dome was arrayed with a Christ Pantocrator icon. So too, in Daphni monastery, just outside Athens, in the central dome, an icon of Christ Pantocrator is found. Both Byzantine churches are duplicates of the prototypical

between icon and *typolog*, between architecture and image. The priest on behalf of the faithful prostrates on the sanctuary below the central dome before the living God, imitating our father of faith Abraham, worshipping the living God as *El Shaddai*, All-Powerful, the Sustainer through all things, Christ the Messiah, Who is depicted in the central dome as the Pantocrator.

This implicit meaning of the Pantocrator has never been overtly stated to my knowledge by any theologian, but it is preached through a visual manner in such a highly elaborate and sophisticated manner, and replicated throughout the Byzantine world through the centuries. **ECL**

CATECHETICAL REFLECTIONS

Father Robert F. Slesinski, Ph.D.



MAN BEFORE GOD

Moments of Selfhood: The Three Dimensions of Subjectivity—Installment 5/6



In focusing on the *absolute* centrality of the notion of selfhood with its *essential* moments expressive of human subjectivity, it should not be forgotten that the human person is not just "subjectivity," but a *composite* of body and soul, the very *incarnational* foundation of any would-be *natural* understanding of *human* being in ultimate accord with Christian revelation. A return to this fundamental truth will receive its critical reaffirmation in short order.

But, again, in any individual person coming to terms with his or her personhood, the intrinsic *subjective* moment of ultimately what being

a person really means comes to the fore. But anchoring ourselves in our primary *beinghood* before its flowering in subjectivity, does serve to "humble" ourselves—to put us in the *humus*, the "earthy" soil from which all living creatures owe their origins ("Then, God said, 'Let the earth bring forth all kinds of living creatures...'" (Gen 1:24).

Nonetheless, notwithstanding our "humble-soil" origins we, as human beings, are called to soar—as Saint Augustine so incisively noted (as already quoted) in his *City of God* (XXII, 24): "we observe how the irrational animals generally have their faces turned toward the ground; but man's posture is erect, facing towards the sky to admonish him to fix his thought on heavenly things."

Facing upwards toward the Godhead the human person truly is *ennobled*—but this only after his or her *empowerment* to become the people we are meant to be (male or female, whether of the "higher" classes or those, more predominant of course, of the "lower" classes, including even the "untouchables"). But how did the Godhead *empower* human beinghood? Made according to

the image and likeness of God (see Gen 1:26) from the soil no less, human persons truly do have spiritual centers that, however palely, however imperceptibly, do bear the impress of the Three-Personed God, the Most Holy Trinity:

The human person in his or her personal groping evidences:

- 1) *self-presence* in *cognitional* activity (the mind), human knowing being reflective of the Father;
- 2) *self-determination* in *volitional* expression (the will), reflective of the Son; and
- 3) *self-donation* in the *affective* sphere (the heart), evocative of the Holy Spirit.

Divine Father, Obedient Son, and Beloved of Both, ever-introduce us, ever-draw us into this Mystery which is Yours, evidently well-beyond the commonplaces of mankind. But, alas, in our moments of self-reflection, how do we evaluate our *failures* in fulfilling the Lord's dynamic empowering *expectations* of us? **ECL**



SCHOOL OF PRAYER

Father G. Scott Boghossian

DISCIPLINED PRAYER

Have you set aside some time every day for prayer? If you only pray when you feel like it, you won't pray enough. If you don't set aside time to pray every day, you will get busy with other things and not pray at all.

The consequences of only praying when we feel like it, or only praying when we think we have time, are disastrous. Without a firm commitment to daily prayer for some specific amount of time every day, we will slowly but steadily fall away from God. We will grow more discontent, frustrated, and ill at ease with our circumstances. Without a disciplined time of daily prayer, we will become more and more worldly, more secular and godless in our thinking, and our conscience will begin to grow lax. Without daily prayer, the small daily infractions that once caused us to feel compunction and ask for forgiveness will not make any impression on us, and we will go from bad to worse. Temptations that in the past were easy to overcome will become stronger and stronger, until we succumb to mortal sin, and cut ourselves off from God, heaven, and salvation. Without taking time out every day to pray, we will lose our spiritual discernment and fall prey to the deceptions of the Enemy. We cannot afford to take a day off from prayer.

Make a plan for prayer. Decide how long you want to spend in prayer daily. If you are just beginning to be disciplined about your prayer life, perhaps fifteen minutes or half an hour is sufficient, as long as you can stick with it. Ideally, all of us should be spending at least one hour dai-

ly in personal prayer. When Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, He turned to Peter and said, "So, could you not watch with Me one hour?" Jesus looks at us and asks, "Couldn't you spend an hour with Me today?" If we are spending hours on the internet and hours watching television, then we certainly can spend an hour a day in personal prayer.

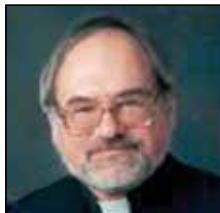
Plan out what you will do during that one hour that you set aside to pray. Talk to God in your own words, bringing before Him the areas of your life where you need His help. Pray for your family and your friends. You can pray prayers from the prayer book, or use your prayer rope or prayer beads to practice *monilogistic* prayer, or repeatedly pray the Our Father and the Hail Mary. Adore God, ask for His forgiveness, thank Him for His gifts and blessings, and petition Him for spiritual and temporal needs. Pray from the Divine Office. Practice the presence of God. Slowly and meditatively read from the Gospels or the Epistles, or pray the Psalms. Fill your hour with different forms of prayer, and you will not grow weary or bored.

You can do this. There are already various activities in our lives that we do in a disciplined manner. Most people bathe every day and brush their teeth every day. Every day, without fail, people are able to take their prescribed medications. There are various disciplines that we have all built into our lives, that by now have become habits. If we don't do these things, we feel uncomfortable. We must build the discipline of daily prayer into

our lives in a similar manner, so that if we begin to miss it, we feel uncomfortable and troubled.

At times, our commitment to daily prayer may feel burdensome. If so, we need to remind ourselves of what a privilege it is to have an audience with God. That the Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, desires a close friendship with us, listens to our prayers, and promises to answer us, is a gift that we can never appreciate enough. Our heavenly family, the Mother of God, the angels, and saints, are anxious to assist us by their powerful intercession. By living a life of disciplined daily personal prayer, we will grow in grace, gain the power to overcome temptation, and develop spiritual discernment. Make a decision to embrace the discipline of daily prayer today. **ECL**





THE BYZANTINE LITURGY

By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD

THE NEED FOR DIALOGUE (1)

Dialogue between churches and religions today is desirable. It is, moreover, welcome and constructive. Dialogue, then, is the corollary to talking to God, it is talking to your neighbor. Dialogue, however, never comes easily. Dialogue means confronting someone who is different, who believes differently than we do. It means standing on an edge. It means straining our own credibility. It might mean - but, I stress, it does not necessarily mean - clash or conversion. As human beings, we want to follow the easier road. We are right - the other is wrong. End of story. The rhetoric of anathema is easier than the language of dialogue. For that reason, defending dialogue is dangerous - not only for us as individuals but for us as a community. It means how are we as individuals and as a community going to deal with the Other - the one who is different.

There is a simple general principle - God has created the world and all who live in it. He has created human beings - male and female - in His own image and likeness. Since God is infinite, He loves each and every human being He has created with an infinite divine love. The Christian gospel tells us that we are going to be judged on whether we treated each and every human being as an image of God. This is the simple general principle.

When we turn to Scripture, however, we sometimes find that relationships with the Other is sometimes harsh and violent. The Scriptures are recognized by the Church as the Word of God. They therefore demand our respect and assent. In the beginnings of the Old Testament we find an image of a warrior-God, Who would not be much for "dialogue." "When the Lord, your God, brings you into the land which you are about to enter to possess, and removes many nations before you ... and when the Lord, your God, gives them over to you and you defeat them,

you shall put them under the ban. Make no covenant with them and do not be gracious to them. (Deuteronomy 7:1-2)" Likewise, in the New Testament, particularly the later epistles, those who deviate from the Gospel are soundly condemned. The Epistle of Jude denounces "some intruders, who long ago were designated for this condemnation, godless persons, who pervert the grace of our God into licentiousness and who deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. (Jude 4)" However, Jude also takes a road of "semi-dialogue:" Yet the archangel Michael, when he argued with the devil in a dispute over the body of Moses, did not venture to pronounce a reviling judgment upon him but said, "May the Lord rebuke you! (Jude 9)"

The language of anathema continued in Christian disputes. It was particularly strong in the debates after the Council of Chalcedon. In a letter of Saint Gregory of Narek, I came across a condemnation of heresies in Armenia in the tenth century, "For they are packs of dogs and bands of thieves, troops of wolves and arrays of devils; tribes of brigands and masses of weevils, hordes of savages and legions of crucifiers, congregations of evil ones and men of blood, swarms of poisonous snakes and herds of wild beasts, enemies of mankind, societies of wizards and heretics, the scorn not only of churchmen, but of heathen as well." Such rhetoric continues to the present day, and I have recently read condemnations of Orthodoxy by fundamental Protestants that are unseemly to quote here. There are also groups of traditional Orthodox and traditional Catholics who consider the other side as heretics and are not sparing in their mutual anathemas. The language of mutual condemnation of the Other has been definitely found in the story of the Church.

On the other hand, there is another tradition. In the Gospels, Jesus calls us definitely to love for the Other, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for He makes His sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust. (Matthew 5:43-45)" It is Jesus who calls us to unity, as a part of our deification, "I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word, so that they may all be one, as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. (John 17:20-21)," and Saint Paul who preaches, "one body and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, Who is over all and through all and in all. (Ephesians 4:4-6)" One might point out that this unity is in one true belief, and the Others are excluded, but it also points out that we are not to condemn the Other, but to bring the Other into unity, hopefully through dialogue and not through violence. We cannot simply "rationalize" Scripture, but we must observe that the purpose of Scripture and tradition is to strengthen our faith, to make us more committed to the truth, to have a zeal for the Gospel. At the same time, we must also say that "tradition" is good, but "traditionalism" is deadly; that "zeal" is good - and scripture and tradition are about zeal - but zealotry is about hate. Today, when the damage that can be done by hatred has become so great, people of faith in all churches and religions are discovering that dialogue rather than mutual condemnations are a better path to dealing with the other. In the next article, I want to deal with ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue in our Church today. **ECL**

2017 PILGRIMAGE FOR PEACE TRANSFIGURED BY PEACE

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Sunday, August 6, 2017, 10AM—6PM

10AM Matins
11:30AM Holy Anointing for Healing
1PM Divine Liturgy
3:30-4:30PM Children's Activities
4-4:30PM Spiritual Talk: "Transfigured by Peace"
5PM Vespers

For more information, or to register for any of our programs, please contact holydormition@gmail.com or call Father Jerome, OFM, at 570-788-1212 ext 402.





SPIRITUAL REFLECTIONS

Father Lewis Rabayda

HUMILITY IN RELATION TO OTHERS

Our human nature, tainted by the fall of Adam and Eve, directs our thoughts and actions towards self. Now, many of these thoughts of self can be directed towards self-preservation and our earthly success, which is not all-together bad if they are for our basic needs, but can too easily become our main focus and shift into frivolous excess.

Many Church Fathers agree that the first and greatest sin was the Pride of Lucifer. Lucifer was the greatest angel God made, but he was not content with his role in the heavenly realm; he was not content with what he was given; and, in his pride, he wanted to be equal to or greater than God. By this action, he rejected the role given to him, and anger and hate welled up within him as he was grasping for things that were not proper to his state in life (or eternity for that matter). Lucifer's pride led him to be unsatisfied with what he had, and to unjustly desire the power of God, so that he could revel in his own abilities without being reliant on God's power or His laws. Lucifer wanted to be his own master and be subject to no one.

Our experience, is not unlike that of the father of lies, of the fallen Lucifer, the Devil. We often see things we want to have that are outside of our reach or are not proper for our particular state in life. We often desire to be like others and wish we had their physical beauty, their personality, their spouse, their property, their money, or their economic and political power. But chances are, these things which have been given to others, are not proper for us, and may not be beneficial to our souls. We often want things contrary to God's law and contrary to what will actually make us happy. When we think ourselves to be more important than those around us, we place ourselves above them and fail to see that we are all children of God. It is not proper for one child to tell the other children, or the Father, what his or her place will be in relation to all. This placement is reserved for the Father alone, and it is through great humility and obedience that the children follow the commands of their Father.



However, when we do see our brothers and sisters as children of God and not just as people we can use to our own advantage, to abuse and covet their goods, or people we can climb over, then we see each-other as God sees us. We see the beauty in the other, we see the flaws in the other, and more importantly, we will see the beauty and flaws within ourselves. It is this self-realization that can humble us and help us to treat our brothers and sisters as children of God. When we shed this pride of self-importance, this desire to take what our neighbor has, and grow in the practice of humbling ourselves for the benefit of the other, then we will truly be called children of God.

ECL

SEASONAL REFLECTIONS

Father Ronald Hatton



END OF YEAR CELEBRATIONS

T.S. Eliot ends his poem, "The Hollow Men," with: "This is the way the world ends, not with a bang, but a whimper." At the height of summer, our liturgical year draws to its close, yet it does not end with a whimper, but a bang! And, by extension, the redemption of the world by the power of God is seen in two great feasts of our Church, The Transfiguration of Our Lord and The Feast of the Dormition and Assumption of the Theotokos. In the first, we see our Lord "revealing as much of [His] glory to [His] disciples as they could behold" (Troparion for the Transfiguration), revealing His divinity to Peter, James and John. In the second, we see the fulfillment of Christ's promise to us, that "...he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life" (John 5:24).

The Transfiguration is a *theophany*—a manifestation of God—that shows us the divinity of Christ. "...His face shone like the sun, and His garments became white as light" (Matthew 17:2). It is also a theophany in that, as with His baptism by John the Forerunner, "...a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my beloved Son, with Whom I am well pleased; listen to Him'" (v. 5). This took place just before His entry into Jerusalem, "That when they would see [Him] crucified, they would understand that [He] suffered willingly" (Kontakion for the Feast). There are many hymns that we sing at Vespers and Matins for the Feast, but I will pass on to you one of these gems:

*Showing the change that mortals will undergo, O Lord,
when they enter Your glory at Your second*

*and awesome coming,
You were transfigured on Mount Tabor.
Elijah and Moses conversed with You;
and seeing Your glory, the three disciples
Whom You had chosen
were struck with Your splendor, O Lord.
As You covered them with Your brightness,
confirming the mystery of Your incarnation;
also send Your light upon our souls.*
—Sessional Hymn I for Matins of the Transfiguration

In this feast, we are assured that Jesus is fully Man and fully God, and worship Him as such. It brings to life all that we confess in the Nicene Creed, not only in the Truth of the Unitarian and Trinitarian nature of God, but also the fruits of our union with Him in this world and the one to come.

True, you won't find any mention in Holy Scripture of the Dormition of the Theotokos and her Assumption into heaven, but it is firmly ingrained in the Holy Tradition of the Church. The feast has been acknowledged since at least the 5th century, with formal celebrations beginning around the 7th century. Writings about her death and assumption can be found as early as the 1st century, so it has always been a part of the Tradition. So important is this feast that it is anticipated in the Eastern Churches with a two-week period of fasting, and is a holy day of obligation. In the universal Catholic Church, on November 1, 1950, Pope Pius XII proclaimed this as dogma in the Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus*, stating: "By the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of

the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and by our own authority, we pronounce, declare, and define it to be a divinely revealed dogma: that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory."

The hymns for this feast are replete with the teachings of the Church, as they speak to the fact that God the Word took His flesh from the holy Theotokos, and that, as a result, her flesh was not to suffer from the corruption of death. "You have gained victory over nature by giving birth to God, O pure Virgin; yet, like your Son and Creator, you have followed the laws of nature while being above it. Therefore, through your death, you have risen to eternal life with your Son." "Just as He preserved your virginity in childbirth, He saved your body from suffering corruption in the tomb" (Odes 1 and 6, Matins of the Dormition). But we should not overlook this fact as well, that as Christ "is the first-born of the dead" (cf. Col. 1:18), and that He raised His Mother after her death, we can also see in her the first-fruits of the resurrection of *all the dead* on the last day. Again, we see the fulfillment of God's promises to us (John 5:24, I Thess. 4:13-18).

The Church gives the world two great proclamations during this season: Christ is True God and True Man, was born in the flesh from the Virgin Mary for our salvation, and that, through His death, resurrection and ascension, we are freed from the power of death, and will be raised on the Last Day, "...and so we shall always be with the Lord" (I Thess. 4:17). ECL



SEMINARIAN REFLECTIONS

Seminarian Timothy Farris

I WANT TO GO HOME

When overworked and underpaid are not suitable words for a summer assignment the only thing that could possibly be missing is just being at home with friends and family and feeling at ease. I have to jest about my summer, it is a mix of being a band on tour and being a couch hopping wanderer. A week home from seminary was short lived to racing up and down I-95 from Baltimore to Parkwood and back again, changing beds 17 times (melodramatic but true). It sounds grueling but the hospitality and company along the way has been a wonderful insight into the brotherhood of the presbyterate. During my assignment:

—I witnessed the devotion of giving from decades of soon-to-be-shredded donation reports. People I never met, some who have seen their eternal reward, writing their weekly \$5 checks to support their church. They were the reason why I had a church to be stationed as well as provide a rectory with a spare bed. I never thought I would see so many checks for small amounts but (I can't emphasize more) these were the donations that built and kept our churches, people giving what they could when they could, and every dime meant something.

—I learned about parish, finance, and risk management and family counseling at Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary in Philadelphia. I'm by no means an expert now, but it will definitely come in handy.

—I learned the Russian alphabet

and maybe a little Slavonic from our Bishop Kurt. I'm still a little hazy but I will try to remember that the letter "P" makes an "R" sound, and maybe I'll be able to respond to Father Salnicky with the correct Slavonic phrases at *mirovanije*.

—I helped out at the chancery library and hope my efforts continue to grow our eparchial resources.

—I learned about what it means to be a mission Church: we aren't a large crowd but we are devout.

—I met with the sick and homebound and witnessed Anointing of the Sick.

—I used a weed whacker and hacked and whacked the forest till it fell at my feet, and then got to pray with 300 awesome people and help with the ordination of nine faithful men.

I have had a wonderful experience. I still have three weeks left but still, I'm tired and I want to go home. Maybe it sounds "whiny," but it is so true. But, like I said, I have found consolation with whom I have met along the way and knowing that God is still with me in all my errand running. God shows us He is still at work with us from the beginning.

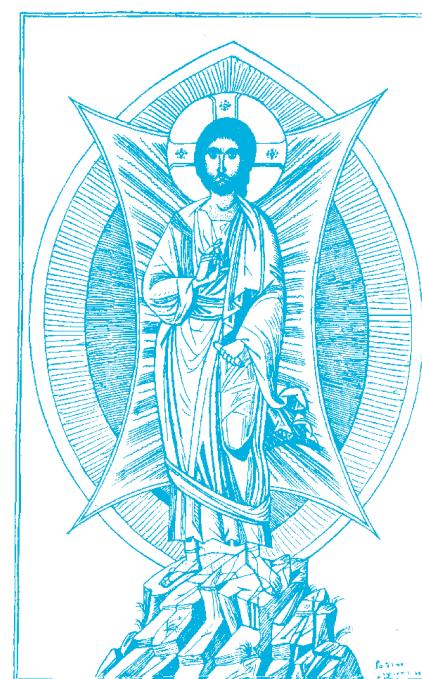
In Gen 3, Adam and Eve partake of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge and are banished so they cannot partake of the Tree of Life in a state of sinfulness. A cherubim is stationed east of the garden to ensure Adam and Eve cannot get back to the Tree of Life. Adam and Eve begin humanity's fall from God's grace.

God commands that we will toil for food and cursed is the ground because of their sin, but Genesis chapter 4 opens, "With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man." referring to Eve's giving birth to Cain. Banished and toiling sound

God with a full belly back in Egypt! But God appears as a cloud, mindful of their complaining, promising meat by day and bread by night. They still haven't envisioned the land that has been made a home for them by God. Now I'm not exactly walking through the desert but I can certainly feel the desire to go back where it is comfortable. Home is not where I have been placed to grow in my vocation or on the path to heaven. My path will bring me back home occasionally, but I should be more comfortable than I am currently calling heaven my home and that the end of my path is home in heaven. All of the dirty work and travel and the people I have met have been placed on my path to help me envision what home will be like in heaven.

In Matthew 17, Peter witnesses the Transfiguration of Christ and he says, "it is good to be here, let us pitch some tents so you can stay awhile." Jesus, knowing the Father's will and the heavenly kingdom, proceeds knowingly to His crucifixion.

It can be tempting to wish that your old friends were still around, your family was like it was in your childhood years, or even that the good ol' times were still rolling, but just like to the Israelites we have to keep praying that God guide and keep us with the vision of our promised land. For as comfortable as our earthly home is, it cannot compare to our heavenly home. I want to go home, but there is still some dirty work left to be done this summer. See you at Altar Server Camp! **ECL**



pretty tough but, immediately, it turns to joy and praise that God is still with them.

And God is also with the Israelites in the desert. In Exodus 16, after having escaped Pharaoh at the crossing of the Red Sea, the Israelites begin complaining that they did not have food. "If only we had died at the LORD's hand in the land of Egypt, as we sat by our kettles of meat and ate our fill of bread! But you have led us into this wilderness to make this whole assembly die of famine!" Mind you they just got out of Egypt and despite being freed from slavery they request to die at the hands of

UPCOMING EPARCHIAL AND PARISH EVENTS

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AUGUST

- 5-9 Altar Server Camp
at Carpathian Village, Cresco, PA
- 6 Pilgrimage For Peace
at Holy Dormition Franciscan Friary, Sybertsville, PA
- 12-13 Holy Dormition Pilgrimage
Sister Servants of Mary Immaculate, Sloatsburg, New York
- 15 Holy Dormition of the Theotokos
*Holy Day of Obligation * Chancery closed*
- 29 Beheading of the Holy Forerunner and Baptist of the Lord, John
*Simple Holy Day*Traditional Day of Fast*

SEPTEMBER

- 2-3 83rd Pilgrimage in Honor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help
at Mount Saint Macrina, Uniontown, PA

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| 4 | Labor Day
<i>Chancery closed * Happy Labor Day!</i> |
| 8 | Nativity of the Virgin Theotokos
<i>Solemn Holy Day</i> |
| 10 | Wedding Jubilarians Celebration for New Jersey and New York/New England Syncellates
<i>3 PM Hierarchical Divine Liturgy with Bishop Kurt, Saint Mary Parish, Hillsborough, NJ</i> |
| 14 | Exaltation of the Holy Cross
<i>Solemn Holy Day * Traditional Day of Fast * Chancery closed</i> |
| 25-28 | Eparchial Priests' Retreat
<i>San Alfonso Retreat Center, Long Branch, NJ</i> |