



EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

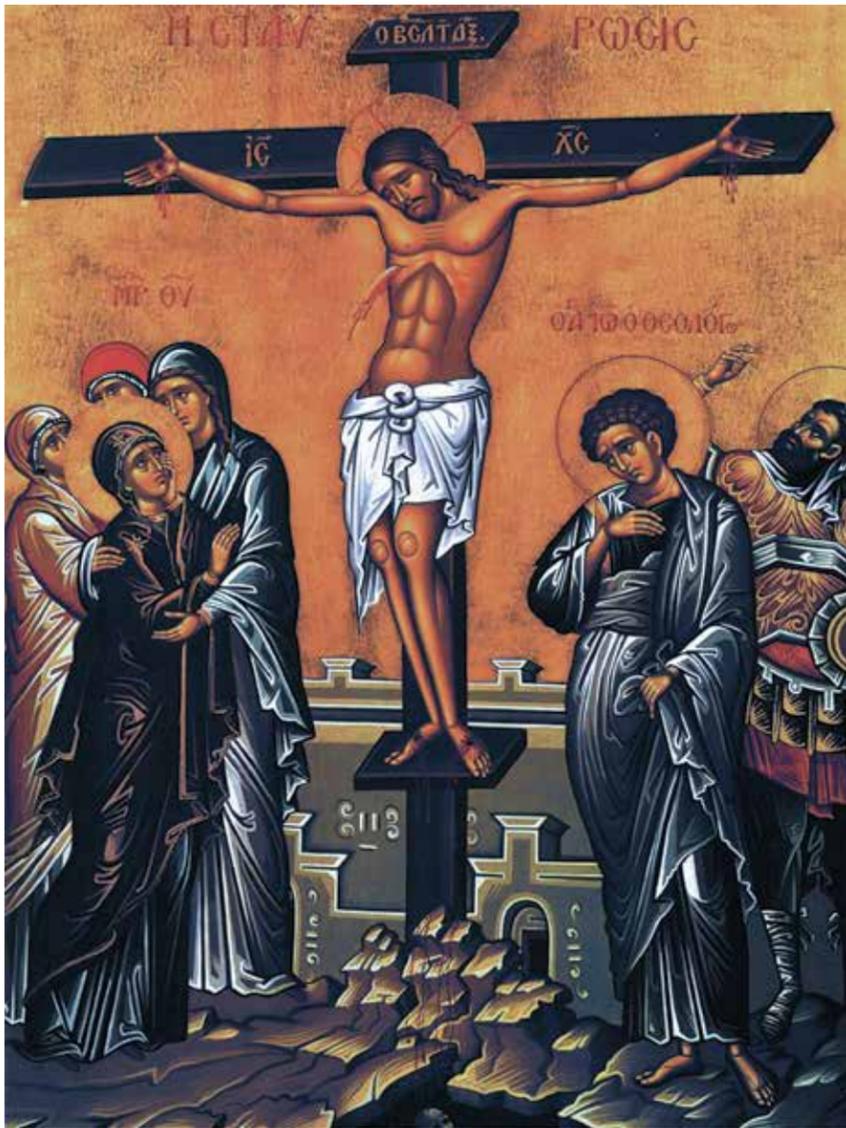
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LENTEN REFLECTIONS: HAVING SUFFERED THE PASSION FOR US

By Father Joseph Bertha, Ph.D.



Icon of the Crucifixion of Our Lord

The icon of the Crucifixion of Our Lord depicts the supreme majesty and dignity of the Son of God as He dies for the forgiveness of sins. The icon converts our Lord in complete control, that He wills to die on the cross for the love of sinners. This act of supreme sacrifice by Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, is usually portrayed in the Passion/Suffering cycles depicted in the icons of Holy and Great Week. Alternately, an icon of the crucifixion may be in the form of a crucifix.

Our Lord is depicted crucified on a cross with three horizontal bars. The uppermost bar shows the accusation written against Him: “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews,” abbreviated as INRI in Latin, also written in Hebrew in Greek; sometimes, it is inscribed in Church Slavonic.

On some crucifixion icons, in the area just above the first bar, Christ is identified as the “King of Glory,” a title which refers to Psalm 24 (subtitled: The Lord’s solemn entry into Zion) version 7:10: “rise up you ancient portals so that the King of Glory may enter. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord, a might warrior, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up, O gates, your lintels; reach up you ancient portals, that the King of Glory may come in! Who is this King of Glory? The Lord of Hosts: He is the King of Glory.” These words were sung when the Ark of the Covenant, representing the presence of God, was carried to Zion or into the Temple. From the way it is phrased in the psalm, it is probably that the verses were composed for liturgical use to be sung by alternating choirs.

Old Testament liturgical reference is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, who battles death, and enters into heaven with His Father, Who is sometimes depicted at the very top of the cross, with two angels ministering to Him.

The second bar depicts the arms of Jesus Christ fastened to the cross in the *orans* (prayer) position with arms extended. Our Lord adopts the gesture that the deliverer, Moses, made when he went on praying the same manner until the Israelites had won their battle against the Amalekites (Exodus 17:8-13). The Jews considered this to be an archetype of man in prayer: Moses was a pre-figuration of Christ crucified for His suffering people. Christians, when praying this manner with outstretched hands, give a physical imitation of Christ on the cross.

The third bar is called the *suppedaneum* and is where our Lord’s feet were attached to the cross. This beam is either straight, which indicates the foot bar of the cross, or bent, pointing upwards on Our Lord’s right side and downward on His left. Our Lord is portrayed deceased on the cross, His body weight shifted this third bar into the position and indicates that the thief crucified on the right side asked for forgiveness and entered paradise, and the thief to the left was condemned to punishment.

Behind the cross, the city wall of Jerusalem can be seen indicating that Christ was crucified outside the city (Hebrews 13:12). The crucifixion took place on Golgotha, Calvary, “Skull Place,” the supposed burial place of Adam, first man and sinner who is redeemed by the Blood of Christ. Frequently, a skull is seen at the foot of the cross, and represents the salvation of Adam and, therefore, all repentant sinners. The cross on Golgotha is considered to be the center of the world. Saint Cyril of Jerusalem (386 AD) wrote in his Baptismal Catechesis, “God on the cross stretched out His hands to embrace the ends of the earth; therefore, this hill of Golgotha is the hub of the world.”

In the earliest icons of the crucifixion dating from the sixth century up to the eleventh century, Christ is portrayed still alive with eyes open on the Cross. He is fully clothed with the sleeveless *colobium*, a richly decorated tunic, which stresses His kingly dignity as He stands on the *suppedaneum* in this great act of love for mankind.

From the eleventh century onwards, there is a dramatic change in crucifixion

icons. This is caused by the response of the Church against heretics, such as the Monophysites, who repudiated the human nature of Christ and also His passion and death. Iconographers demonstrated His incarnation by depicting our Lord’s physical death on the cross.

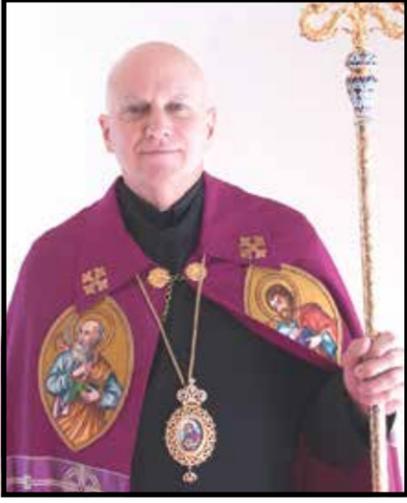
In these icons, Christ is depicted stripped of His garments and wears a loin cloth or *perizoma*, and on His head, a crown of thorns. In Saint John’s Gospel, Christ’s garments are divided into four pieces, mystically representing the dissemination of the Gospel into the four corners of the earth.

Saint Paul writes in his Letter to the Ephesians (3:17ff), “in the light of the Cross of Christ, you may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge.”

The eyes of the Lord are closed in death and His head is inclined slightly to the Virgin Mary, who stands to His side. No death agony is portrayed: Our Lord is peaceful in death, and the position of His arms and torso indicate that He could have willingly left the cross, but He died on the cross because it was the will of the Father.

Furthermore, Our Lord is shown, after the lance thrust, with blood and water gushing forth, according to the messianic prophecy of Zechariah (12:10), “and they shall look upon Him Whom they have pierced.” The Fathers of the Church identify His Precious Blood with the forgiveness of sins, and the water with baptism.

In the abdomen of Our Lord, a cross is created in the caved-in chest and across His stomach, and sometimes enters His navel, demonstrating His infinite compassion for mankind, wrenching deep down into His viscera. Compassion, *splachnitsomai* in Greek, means to experience compassion in the viscera, the inwards, even the womb, or the heart, the seat of feelings. Interestingly, this word occurs in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and refers to the Lord experiencing compassion/sympathy for the crowds of people; our Lord is able to discern and appeal to individuals even in large groups. Probably the most enthralling use of the word is found in Luke 15:20, when the father of the prodigal son is filled with compassion at the return of his son. Our Lord expresses His deepest love for all sinners on the cross.



I LIFT UP MY EYES...

Pastoral Reflections of Bishop Kurt



PERFECT LOVE CASTS OUT FEAR

“Come to me all you who labor and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” Jesus gives us this welcoming invitation in the eleventh chapter of the Gospel of Saint Matthew. Remember, Gospel means “Good News,” and it doesn’t get much better than this invitation! Can you think of better news than this – Jesus has invited you to Himself, and offered to give you rest from your labors and burdens? If there is anything about us that is mystifying to God, it must be that He offers to take away our burdens, and we so often refuse.

This has been a year of fear. When the pandemic first began to close things down, I noticed an increase in anonymous letters. You don’t have to be a Doctor of Psychology to know that anyone who writes an anonymous letter is deeply afraid. It’s usually impossible to take a letter seriously if it is anonymous. I mean, it is impossible to take the content seriously. It is still possible to pray for the author who is afraid and feels helpless. Then, there was another spike in letters before the election from people who were afraid. Of course, some fear is rational. It is rational to respect the new coronavirus. At the Synod on the Family, I was glad to get to know Philip Tartaglia, the Archbishop of Glasgow. He was an energetic and happy man with a lively sense of humor. He tested positive for COVID around Christmas, so he quarantined in his house. He died in his home, and there was a small funeral last week. The Bishop of Tyre in Lebanon just died of COVID. Only five people were allowed at his funeral in Lebanon. So, some fear is rational.

Rational fear tells us to wear a seat belt, to avoid getting drunk or high, to practice good hygiene, to avoid debt, to be careful what we say, and so on. Rational fear protects us, and God desires that we protect ourselves. But there is also a great deal of irrational fear in people. There is more irrational fear in some people than in others; it depends on our personalities. Irrational fear is one of the heavy burdens that Jesus offers to take from us. “Learn of me,” He says, “I am gentle and humble of heart.” Indeed, do you know anyone who is truly humble? I’m not talking about someone who has a low opinion of himself or herself. That is also irrational. But we all know someone who seems free of unhealthy pride, someone who always sees the good in others, someone who never has to be the center of attention, someone who knows things

but doesn’t have to be right all the time – in other words, someone who is genuinely humble. Don’t you think to yourself, “I wish I could be like that”? People like that seem so much happier! Jesus calls Himself, “gentle.” It takes a lot of self-confidence, and a lack of fear, to be gentle. Too much pride, and too much irrational fear, will both destroy our gentleness. Those anonymous letters I talked about earlier... they weren’t gentle! Those letters were written by people who are so proud they believe they are right about everything, and at the same time are too afraid to sign their names.

of things hoped for, the “elenko” of things not seen. Elenko is a word that can be translated clearly as “proof.” Hypostasis is literally substance, that is, “what stands beneath,” but it means so many things in Greek you can spend a long time reading about it on the internet.

To understand the definition of faith, it’s important to read that very technical verse in context. When we read it in Church, we usually begin with Chapter 11 verse 1, but the passage really stretches back before Chapter 11. The second half of Chapter 10 is a discourse

new way to the heavenly sanctuary was opened because the Son of God took on human flesh, but also the Church is the Body of Christ, according to Saint Paul, so the new way to the heavenly sanctuary is through the Church. He goes on to talk about our confidence, our assurance of faith, saying our hearts are cleansed of an evil conscience by sprinkling and our bodies by washing. Sprinkling in the Old Testament refers to sprinkling with blood from a sacrifice. So, sprinkling our hearts from an evil conscience refers to receiving the blood of Christ, and washing our bodies refers to Baptism. We have the



Painting of the Patriarch Abraham with Melchisedech from the Chancery Archives

It’s popular to say that the opposite of fear is faith. I knew a great spiritual teacher who always told people, at every point in your life, every thought, every decision, you are either in faith or in fear. When Jesus says, “Come to me,” He is offering us faith and freedom from irrational fear. [He isn’t offering us freedom from rational fear. If you drive fast without a seatbelt, that isn’t faith – that is attempted homicide.]

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, there is a definition of faith in Chapter 11, “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen,” as it says in one translation. This verse is so important that it is interesting to see what other translators say. Another one says, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not.” Some things are consistent across many translations, namely the “hope” and the “things not seen,” but the other parts vary. If you take a look at the Greek, it says, faith is the “hypos-

on perseverance, what you might call practical faith, which culminates in the famous definition of faith. The passage begins, “Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have the confidence to enter the Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way He opened for us through the curtain (that is, His flesh), and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.” Jesus says, “Come to me,” and this passage gives us a roadmap. We have the confidence to enter into the temple of the Lord, because He shed His own blood in sacrifice, and we share in that blood at the Divine Liturgy. He says that there is a new way to enter that Holy Place “through the curtain.” The Epistle is referring to the Old Testament temple in which a curtain cut off the Holy of Holies from everyone except the high priest. The Epistle says the new way through the curtain is the flesh of Jesus. We can understand this to mean two things (both true) that the

confidence to enter the Holy Place and we have the assurance of faith, and a clean conscience, because we were washed in Baptism and we receive the Blood of Jesus. This passage also says, “so do not throw away your confidence; it has great reward,” and later, “but we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith that saves the soul.” You might say, it’s a very high-level pep talk.

After defining faith, “the underlying reality of things hoped for, the proof of things not seen,” the Epistle gives us long list of men and women in the Old Testament who were saved by trustful obedience to God, including Abel, Noah, Moses, Abraham, Sarah, and many prophets. Our Father in the Faith is Abraham. “By faith, Abraham, when called, obeyed by going out to place which he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.”

In a sense, Creation began again with the birth of Abraham, according to tradition. In the first 2,000 years of scrip-



Icon of Christ, the Good Shepherd

tural time, Adam fell, Abel was murdered, and idolatry took over the world. But by faith, Abraham was privileged to participate in the new creation, not as a passive observer, for he had many trials to obtain the promises. The first command and first test was this, "Go Abram, for yourself, from your land, from your kin, and from the house of your father to the land I will show you." Abram was asked to give up three things, his country, his social connections, and his immediate family. According to the Jewish scholars, Abraham was tested with ten tests. His departure was his first test, although he gave three things of great value.

The Jewish teachers agree that Abraham received ten great trials or tests. They don't agree on what those ten are. One of the great commentators is Salomon de Troyes, a medieval French rabbi from Troyes, France 1040-1105. He usually referred to by his nickname "Rashi" which is a contraction of Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki. According to Rashi, the ten trials of Abraham are these: 1) Abraham hid underground for 13 years because King Nimrod was trying to kill him, 2) King Nimrod threw Abraham in a furnace, 3) Abraham was commanded to leave his family and his home, 4) he was forced to leave the new promised land by famine (despite God's promise

of prosperity), 5) Sarah was kidnapped by Pharaoh, 6) the kings capture Lot and Abraham must make war, 7) God reveals to Abraham that his offspring will suffer under four monarchies, 8) by revelation he must circumcise himself in his advanced age and also his son, 9) he was commanded to drive away Hagar and his first son Ishmael, and 10) he was commanded to sacrifice Isaac. Notice that Rashi includes three trials at the beginning that we never heard of in the Book of Genesis. Evidently, they come from Jewish scriptures that are not in our Bible. Those are all pretty severe trials, aren't they? For most of us, any one of those trials would set us up for the rest of our lives to brag about our suffering, but Abraham endured all ten, and passed them as tests.

Another list of ten trials comes from the commentator Moses ben Maimon or Moses Maimonides. (Ben Maimon means "son of Maimon" in Hebrew, and Maimonides means the same thing in Greek). He was born in Cordoba, Spain, which was solidly in the Muslim part of Spain in 1135 (or 1138) and died in Egypt in 1204. His nickname is Rambam which is a contraction of Rabbi Moses ben Maimon. Maimonides and his Muslim contemporary Averroes, also from Cordoba, played a key role in reawakening western Europe to the ancient heritage of the great Greek and Latin philosophers. Maimonides is most famous for a book called *Guide for the Perplexed*. It is an introduction to God, faith, and philosophy for doubters. It is still in print today. I actually gave one to a Jewish friend who was an agnostic. He thanked me and promised to keep it on his bedstand. (I can't tell you whether he is no longer perplexed.) Maimonides is also known for the "Oath of Maimonides," which is like the Hippocratic Oath for pharmacists. There is the "rule of Maimonides" which says that students learn better in small classes, and forty should be absolute maximum for class size. He formulated the thirteen principles which many accept as a sort of Creed for the Jewish faith. You might find it interesting that the last two of the principles are these, "I believe with perfect faith

in the coming of the Messiah, and even though he may delay, I wait every day for his coming. I believe with perfect faith that there will be a re-enlivening of the dead at the time when it shall please the Creator, blessed be His name, and He shall be exalted forever and unto ages of ages." Moses Maimonides was quite the Renaissance man, before the Renaissance, wasn't he!

Maimonides was indeed a great physician as well as a rabbi, scripture scholar, and philosopher. After arriving in Egypt, he became the physician to the Sultan himself, and is honored, even today, with an Egyptian postage stamp. Like Abraham, he suffered tragedy in his life and passed many tests. His mother died in childbirth and he was driven from his place of birth by a fanatical religious revolutionary group. Although scholarship tells us that he did not actually write the Oath of Maimonides, it is a beautiful prayer for a physician, based here on a translation in the *Singapore Medical Journal*: "The eternal providence has appointed me to watch over the life and health of Your creatures. May the love of my art motivate me at all times. May neither greed nor stinginess, nor thirst for glory, or for a great reputation engage my mind. For the enemies of truth and philanthropy could deceive me and make me forgetful of my lofty aim for doing good to Your children. May I never see in the patient anything but a fellow creature in pain. Grant me the strength, time, and opportunity always to correct what I have acquired, always to extend its ambit. For knowledge is immense, and the spirit of man can extend limitlessly to enrich itself daily with new requirements. Today, man can discover his errors of yesterday and tomorrow, he can obtain new light on what he thinks himself sure of today. Oh God, You have appointed me to watch over the life and death of Your creatures. Here I am ready for my vocation and now I turn to my calling."

According to Maimonides (also called Rambam), the ten trials of Abraham were, 1) Abraham's exile from his homeland, people, and family, 2) the

famine in Canaan after God promised that he would be a great nation there, 3) the lechery in Egypt that led to Sarah's abduction, 4) the war with the four kings, 5) his discouragement with the barrenness of Sarah and his marriage to Hagar, 6) circumcision, 7) Abimelech's kidnapping of Sarah, 8) driving away Hagar after she had given birth, 9) driving away Ishmael his first son, and 10) the binding of Isaac on the altar. Notice that all ten of the trials according to this list are in our Bible, unlike the previous list. It's not surprising that his list is entirely from the Bible since he was, according to his 13 principles, something of a fundamentalist, especially with regard to the Torah, the first five books.

When Jesus says, "Come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," how pleasant and sweet is His voice. When we see the labor and hardship of all our spiritual ancestors, starting with Father Abraham himself, how privileged we are to have the Christian Faith given to us. How many people in the past worked and suffered by trust in God, to pass on to us this great treasure. But the Epistle to the Hebrews says about all these heroes of faith, "without us they should not be made perfect, for God having provided something better for us." When Abraham was told that he would be the father of great nation, and that his descendants (though he was childless in old age) would be more numerous than the stars in the heavens and more numerous than the sands on the seashore, even Father Abraham could not imagine that his descendant would be the Son of God. And so, let us keep our eyes "fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before Him, He endured the cross, despising shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." This has been a year of fear for the world, but not for us! We keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, on the joy set before us. We despise the shame of this world. We cast our burdens onto the one who carried the cross up the mountain of Calvary, by trusting him with faith, by answering his invitation, and by imitating Him – meek and humble of heart.

+Kurt Burnett

DIRECTIVES FOR THE GREAT FAST

From the Office of the Bishop



FASTING REGULATIONS

- +All who receive Communion in the Eparchy of Passaic are required to abstain from meat on Wednesdays and Fridays of the Great Fast.
- +All adults who receive Communion in the Eparchy of Passaic are required to abstain from meat, eggs, and milk products on the first day of Lent, Monday, February 15, and on Great and Holy Friday, April 2.
- +These are the minimum requirements; however, our Tradition is to abstain from meat after Meatfare Sunday and from dairy products after Cheesefare Sunday.

Dispensation

- +Pastors and Administrators may, for a just cause, grant to the individual faithful and to individual families, dispensations or commutations of the fasting rules into other pious practices.

LITURGICAL DIRECTIVES

Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

- +All Pastors and Administrators are encouraged to celebrate the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts on Wednesdays and Fridays of the Great Fast.
- +A liturgical service at which Holy Communion is distributed may be celebrated on the other weekdays of the Great Fast.

We ask you to pray for peace throughout the world, and for the victims of war. Please pray for those suffering from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and other diseases, as well as the health care professionals, family members, and others who are caring for them. Please remember also in your prayers all those in the military who are serving our country throughout the world.



PEOPLE YOU KNOW AROUND THE EPARCHY

IN McADOO...

Fire Department Tanker Blessed

Father Gregory Hosler, chaplain of the McAdoo Fire Co., Inc., of McAdoo, PA, blessed their new tanker after the Sunday Divine Liturgy. The members felt this was important for the vehicle before it is placed in service. Many members of the company are members of Saint Michael Byzantine Catholic Church. Father Gregory has been chaplain of the company since arriving as pastor of Saint Michael Parish in McAdoo several years ago.



Father Gregory Hosler chants the prayer of blessing.



Father Gregory Hosler with members of the McAdoo Fire Company

IN RAHWAY...

Rahway River Blessing Recalls God's Creation

By David Brighthouse

On Sunday, January 10, the parishioners of Saint Thomas the Apostle Byzantine Catholic Church in Rahway participated in their annual river blessing. Following the Sunday morning liturgy, almost all of those in attendance took part in a "safe-distance procession" down Saint Georges Avenue to the nearby Robinson branch of the Rahway River.



Right Reverend James G. Hayer tosses a frozen cross of blessed water into the river.

Once there, Saint Thomas's pastor, Father James Hayer, offered the prayers of blessing for the sanctification of water, followed by the tossing of three crosses made of ice into the river. "As those present observed the ice crosses floating serenely down the river," Father Jim remarked, "they were reminded that all of creation belongs to and is beloved by God. This is especially meaningful during this time of global pandemic."

Saint Thomas Church is served by Archpriest James Hayer with the ministry of Deacon Charles Laskowski and Deacon Thomas Shubeck.



The blessed cross enters the river to bless it.



CARPATHO-RUSYN SOCIETY

MANIFESTING CARPATHO-RUSYN CULTURE AND HISTORY

"Who are the Rusyns?" is a DVD presented by John Righetti, President emeritus of C-RS. It was released in 2019 for the 25th Anniversary of the Carpatho-Rusyn Society. This professional presentation clarifies the confusion and complicated

history of the Rusyns and how they almost became extinct. Not only will it be watched more than once, it is great to share with family and friends. The DVD can be ordered by making a check payable to: Carpatho-Rusyn Society for \$25, which includes postage and handling. Please mail with name of recipient(s) to Bonnie Burke, 1101 Tanner Crossing Lane, Indian Land, SC 29707. Orders will be processed immediately upon receipt. The information can also be found on www.c-rs.org at the bottom of the homepage. Visit Carpatho-Rusyn Society YouTube for our most recent educational videos.

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IN RAHWAY...

Winter Clothing Drive Helps Keep Community Warm

By David Brighthouse

During this past Christmas season, Saint Thomas the Apostle Byzantine Catholic Church in Rahway enlisted the help of its Eastern Christian Formation (ECF) teachers and students to organize a winter clothing drive for those in need during the cold winter months. Colleen Horniacek and Caroline Shubeck are the co-directors of Saint Thomas's ECF program.

Calling the clothing drive the "Kids Keep Kids Warm" campaign, parishioners collected hundreds of hats, socks, gloves, mittens, and scarves, along with dozens of winter coats. During a month-long collection period, church members and volunteers dropped off donations, filling bag after bag of brand-new items. Some, like Saint Thomas's cantor, Patricia Dietz, even crocheted their own beautiful homemade scarves, adding a loving, personal touch to the already immensely generous project.

Co-director Horniacek was touched by the compassion and charity. "The response from the church and community was unsparing and truly overwhelming," she said.

Another indispensable volunteer, who offered her time at every stage of the effort, longtime parishioner Sandy Yelenovsky said, "I am humbled by and grateful for the parish response to our winter clothing drive."

The donations were eventually given to employees of the Rahway Public Schools district, who distributed items to their students and families in their four elementary schools, one middle school, and high school. In the end, over 50 Rahway families were assisted by Saint Thomas's contributions.

Saint Thomas Church is served by Archpriest James Hayer with the ministry of Deacon Charles Laskowski and Deacon Thomas Shubeck.



Deacon Thomas Shubeck, Right Reverend James G. Hayer, and Deacon Charles Laskowski stand with some of the collected clothing.

IN SMITHTOWN...

Blessing of Long Island Sound

Father Vladyslav Budash, Administrator, Church of the Resurrection
Photos courtesy of Gregory A. Shemitz, Three Village Photo

On January 6, Christians of the Eastern Tradition (Byzantine Rite) celebrate one of the greatest holidays of the liturgical year – the Theophany. This celebration recreates the memory of the baptism of Jesus Christ by John the Baptist in the Jordan River and the subsequent revelation of God as the Holy Trinity. Through the Service on this Holy day, the Eastern Christian Tradition not only conveys the memory of the event of antiquity, but it spiritually makes those present participants in the same biblical events through the reading of the Holy Scriptures, prayers, and liturgical songs. The celebration liturgically raises those gathered over space and time and transfers them to the shores of the Jordan at the time of Jesus' baptism. The participants of the Divine Liturgy spiritually become witnesses of God's manifestation:

"... the Spirit descending on him (Christ) like a dove. Then a voice came from the heavens: You are my beloved Son. On you my favor rest." (Mark 1.10-11)

It is a historical fact that the celebration of the Theophany in the Christian East began at the end of the second century. During the celebration, the candidates for conversion to Christianity, the so-called catechumens, after preparation received baptism and became full members of the church community. Each individual baptism was perceived as a spiritual birth, as the beginning of the restoration of union with God, according to the words of Christ himself: "... no one can enter into God's kingdom without being begotten of water and Spirit." (John 3. 5)

However, it is not known exactly when the tradition of the Great Blessing of Water developed. Every baptism of candidates – catechumens was first preceded by



Father Vladyslav Budash chants the prayers of blessing.

blessing of water that enriched the spiritual experience of the Theophany. Immersion in the water of baptism was experienced as entering with Christ into the waters of the Jordan. Saint John Chrysostom, a native of Antioch in Syria and the Patriarch of Constantinople in the late 4th century leaves evidence that the service of blessing of water took place in churches at midnight of the Theophany. Gradually, this act of blessing the water became an integral part of the celebration and involved not only the blessing of water in temples but was also often held by Christian communities on the shores of rivers, lakes and seas. Thus, the reservoirs near the Eastern Christian temples were liturgically transformed spiritually through the prayers of the gathered into the same Jordan into which Christ entered.

This year, on January 10, on the Sunday after the Theophany, with the permission of local authorities, the parish family of the Church of the Resurrection in Smithtown, NY, gathered on King's Park Bluff to perform the Service of Great Blessing of Water for Long Island Sound. It was not just a great opportunity during quarantine restrictions to meet each other and pray together. Nor was it simply adhering to antiquity and good tradition. But above all, this public prayer was an appeal to God, during a pandemic, to come and be present among us. The Long Island Sound is the beauty and wealth of our region. Therefore, Christians of the Eastern Tradition (Byzantine Rite) on this day prayed:

"That these waters may be sanctified by the power, operation, and descent of the Holy Spirit, let us pray to the Lord."

Traditionally, the Service of Great Blessing of Water ends with the priest dipping the cross into the water three times during the prayer of those present. However, this year the priest and deacon left in the waters of the Sound three ice crosses made of holy water. Visible signs of God's invisible blessing. They seem to be a visualization of the words of the Service's prayer:

"Our King and Lover of Mankind, be present now through the descent of your holy Spirit."



Father Vladyslav Budash blesses the faithful with Holy Water

BYZANTINE CATHOLIC OUTREACH, THE VILLAGES, FLORIDA

On a 'Mission' to Find a 'Home for Jesus'



As an outreach, we are a 'new child' in the Eparchial Family of Passaic. And just like a young child, we had to crawl before we walked; sometimes we smiled, sometimes we cried. We have looked for 'family' members, and we rejoiced when we found them, or they found us. We needed a home. We had a temporary place for one year but a problem of what to do when the year was completed. Then due to the Covid-19 virus and the stringent protocols for use of churches in March 2020, we no longer had access to the chapel for Divine Liturgy. What to do?

a voice announced, "Saint Alban's, Father Greg, how can I help you?" With some trepidation and fear of rejection, I introduced myself as representing the Byzantine Catholic Community in the area, and, said, "quite simply, Father, we are looking for a home for Jesus." Without hesitation, Father Greg responded, "You've come to the right place!" What? My emotions went wild – shock, joy, disbelief, gratitude, acceptance and more!!! Father relayed that they had an eight-year journey to find "a home for Jesus," sometimes having Mass in a field and four years in a



Father Oleksiy Nebesnyk distributes the Body and Blood of Christ.

Through much prayer, this issue was presented to our Resurrected Savior, to the Holy Theotokos and Blessed Martyr Bishop Theodore Romzha. One day, a member called asking if we ever thought of contacting 'that lovely white church' near the American Legion. There are 240 houses of worship of every creed and denomination in The Villages, but why this "white church?" We didn't know anyone there or anything about it. But the answer was about to unfold!

Two months later, with prayer and meditation on the journey of the Mother of God from Nazareth to Bethlehem, passing over the hilly, bumpy terrain only to arrive in Bethlehem to find 'no home for Jesus,' an immediate prayer was, "Mary, you had a difficult journey, you know how difficult our journey is, will you please help us find 'a home for Jesus?'" For a day and a half, a 'voice' kept encouraging the call. Finally, pondering a favorite icon and imploring the Holy Spirit for enlightenment and the right words, the church phone number was dialed. When answered,

funeral home. Their sacred vessels and vestments were in the trunk of a car. When the church building was erected four years ago, they vowed to share it with someone looking for a 'home for Jesus.' Father Greg continued, "you are the first to call, so WELCOME!"

A meeting was scheduled at the church for the next day, September 9, 2020, where we received a profound Christian welcome and embrace from the priest, committee members and their archbishop (via Zoom). Their kindness, accommodations, and offers to help were beyond words and expectations. We left the meeting astonished, amazed, and filled with gratitude. Father Oleksiy Nebesnyk, our priest, summed it up, "There are no words!" And so, with the blessing of Bishop Kurt, we moved forward and into this new home with Divine Liturgies beginning in November 2020.

We were told, when you are here, it is the BYZANTINE CATHOLIC CHURCH, and that it does become for every Divine Liturgy. With many

helping hands, the church is sanitized; oriental carpets are laid in the aisle and altar area; icons are set-up for the icon screen; the altar is prepared; the tetrapod is covered; incense is ignited and candles are lit; cantors gather; and the greeter, with a smile, welcomes those coming in the door. And then we, prayerfully and with gratitude in our hearts, sing the beautiful Divine Liturgy with one voice.

Our outreach's very first Divine Liturgy was on Pascha, April 2019, with 50+ in attendance. On Theophany, 2020, we were blessed with the presence of Bishop Kurt who celebrated Divine Liturgy, Father Oleksiy blessed the water, with many in attendance, followed with a dinner at a country club in The Villages. Sunday, January 10, 2021, twenty-three adults and 5 children participated in the Divine Liturgy at 25 per cent of the capacity due to COVID restrictions. We look forward to the days we can open the doors wide welcoming our returning and new members. Information in the *Daily Sun*, The Villages daily newspaper with a circulation of 200,000+, always brings new faces. We welcome all seekers wishing to unite themselves with God and hope to share the Good News and the Byzantine Church liturgical and faith traditions with peoples of many nationalities and backgrounds.

We are happy to invite you into 'our' church through the pictures we have included – the interior of the Church set for Divine Liturgy, the picture of the "Holy gifts for holy people," our children's procession for St. Nicholas Day (a budding ECF program), the church building and our sign and the presentation of the Icon of The Beloved Disciple in appreciation to Father Greg.

Moving to The Villages, we retirees have left our families and our churches. As lovely as the bright sun and blue skies are, the flowers blooming all year 'round, warm temperatures, no snow and all sorts of activities, there is a hole in our hearts without our beloved Byzantine Catholic Church. The majority of the Mission members, from parishes

in the states of New Jersey, New York, Eastern and Western Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, Michigan and Virginia, agree that this is important, our church is inherent to our lives! We love praying together and enjoying good food and fellowship. We have become friends and now a 'parish' family.

We recognize that 'with God all things are possible and are grateful to God, and we praise, bless, thank, and pray to God, One in The Holy Trinity, for the all the blessings bestowed upon us and for the kind and faith-filled people He has placed in the path of our journey.

We thank Fr. Robert Evancho, Syncellus of the Southeastern States, for his support and Father Oleksiy Nebesnyk, administrator and "our" priest who, very beautifully leads us in prayer and so joyfully engages with us.

If you reside in north central Florida, in The Villages or surrounding area, if you are visiting or have relatives here with whom you can share this information, please do so. We are a praying church – a caring family.

We are so happy to say we are the BYZANTINE CATHOLIC MISSION CHURCH IN THE VILLAGES, FL., seeking to pray and build up His church all for the greater Glory of God. Christ is Among Us – He is and always will be!

Contacts: Father Oleksiy Nebesnyk, Saint Anne Byzantine Catholic Church, New Port Richey, FL, 34653. Phone: 727-849-1190 or place your questions or comments on the Facebook page: *Byzantine Catholic Mission The Villages FL*.

Local Contact: Dr. Barbara Yastishock-Lutz, call or text: 352-530-9631;

email: drbylutz@comcast.net

Submitted for Publication: January 2021, by Dr. Barbara Yastishock Lutz

BYZANTINE CATHOLIC OUTREACH THE VILLAGES, FL

Address: 625 W. Lady Lake Blvd.
Lady Lake, FL 32159 (at St. Alban's)
Intersection of CR466
and Rolling Acres Rd., near the
American Legion



Schedule: (note due to Covid Virus, Divine Liturgy every two weeks)

February: Sundays, 2:00 P.M., Feb. 7, Feb. 14,
Pre-sanctified: Wed Feb. 17, 12:00 P.M.

March: Sundays 2:00 P.M., Mar. 7, Mar. 28 (Palm Sun.)
Pre-sanctified: Wed. Mar. 17, 12:00 P.M.

April: 2, 1:30 P.M. Good Friday Vespers, Procession
3: 3:00 P.M. Saturday: Resurrection Procession, Matins, Divine Liturgy,
Blessing of Food

In-Person and LIVE at Facebook:
Byzantine Catholic Mission The Villages FL
Local Contact: call or text: 352-530-9631



FREE COURSE ON “THE MYSTERY OF ICONS” HOSTED BY THE ECF OFFICE OF THE BYZANTINE CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF PASSAIC

Mystery of Icons: Introduction into the Theology and Spirituality of the Icon in the Byzantine Tradition
(February 22 - March 6, 3:00 - 4:45 PM EST)

A short, but intensive course on the history, theology and spirituality of icons. We will trace the development of Eastern Christian iconographic tradition through its main stages, look at its most remarkable phenomena, and try to understand theological and spiritual appeal of icons through the ages.

The course consists of 10 lectures (which you can attend live or view recorded on Youtube at your convenience).

Course description

This course will offer you a comprehensive introduction into one of the most remarkable phenomena of the Eastern Christian tradition, iconography. Icons are an important part of every Byzantine liturgy, spirituality and theology. Hence, in this course we will approach iconography from several mutually complementary angles. We will:

- briefly survey the history of the development of the Byzantine iconographic tradition;
- ponder theological and spiritual significance of icons;
- examine main types of icons of Christ, Mother of God, Holy Trinity and every major liturgical feasts.

Naturally, the course will be predominantly component, as all lectures are based on PowerPoint presentations with numerous icons, frescoes, mosaics

and architectural monuments of every Byzantine and Ukrainian Church. Also the students will be invited to do some readings of Biblical, patristic and liturgical texts, as well as small portions of modern scholarly literature (optional).

Course duration: 10 meetings of 1 – 1,5 hour each.

Course duration

2 weeks (February 22 - March 6, 3:00 - 4:45 PM EST), 5 online Zoom-meetings (2 hours each covering two lectures/topics), available also for later viewing on YouTube. Schedule of meetings (small changes may apply):

February 22 - Lectures 1 & 2

February 24 - Lectures 3 & 4

February 27 - Lectures 5 & 6

March 3 - Lectures 7 & 8

March 6 - Lectures 9 & 10

Those who wish to obtain academic credits for this course should contact the instructor in order to discuss formal requirements and arrange for some additional course work (required reading, written assignments, and final paper). The maximum of 2 academic credits can be received for this course from the Ukrainian Catholic University (recognized and accepted at most of the US universities and colleges).

Instructor

Taras Tymo is a theology professor at the Ukrainian Catholic University (Lviv, Ukraine) specializing in Eastern Christian theology, Church Fathers and iconography. He received his theological training from Ukrainian Catholic University (1999), Catholic University of Leuven (Belgium, 2001) and University of Notre Dame (USA, 2006). Since his student years he is interested in the theology of the icon, and since 2006 is involved with the School of Ukrainian Iconography at the Ukrainian Catholic University. He has taught various courses on the theology, history and spirituality of icons in Ukraine and internationally since 2010.

To learn more about this free course hosted by the ECF Office of Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic and how to join it either live or watch its recordings please visit:

https://sites.google.com/view/mysteryoficons-coursesite/home?fbclid=IwAR36zRYuBhrxnykpgxOquTCkCV9QaZLYOI5r9pqb_tfRvOxHQIW9EU-WaqLw

Please share this information with anybody who might be interested to join this course!

When traveling to the Mid-Atlantic, please visit our churches

Maryland— Patronage of the Mother of God

1265 Linden Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21227
Phone 410-247-4936
Web www.patronagechurch.org
Sunday Divine Liturgy 9:15 am

Patronage at Abingdon meeting at: Stone Chapel at Saint Francis de Sales Church

1450 Abingdon Road
Abingdon, MD 21009
Sunday Divine Liturgy 5:30 pm

Patronage at Hagerstown meeting at: Saint Ann Catholic Church

1525 Oak Hill Avenue
Hagerstown, MD 21742
Saturday Vigil Liturgy 6:45 pm 2 per month
Call Baltimore for schedule

Saint Gregory of Nyssa

12420 Old Gunpowder Road Spur
Beltsville, MD 20705
Phone 301-953-9323
Web www.stgregoryofnyssa.net
Sunday Divine Liturgies
Church Slavonic 8:00 am
Sunday Matins 9:30 am
English Liturgy 10:30 am

Epiphany Mission

9301 Warfield Road
Gaithersburg, MD
Web www.eolmission.org
Sunday Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am

Virginia— Epiphany of our Lord

3410 Woodburn Road
Annandale, VA 22003
Phone: 703-573-3986
Web www.eolbcc.org
Sunday Divine Liturgies 8:00 am & 10:30 am

Ascension of our Lord

114 Palace Lane
Williamsburg, VA 23185
Phone 757-585-2878 (rectory)
Web www.ascensionva.org
Sunday Divine Liturgy 11:00 am

Our Lady of Perpetual Help

216 Parliament Drive
Virginia Beach, VA 23462
Phone 757-456-0809
Web www.olphvb.org
Sunday Divine Liturgy 8:00 am

North Carolina— Saints Cyril and Methodius

2510 Piney Plains Road
Cary, NC 27518

Phone 919-239-4877
Web www.sscyrilmethodius.org
Sunday Divine Liturgy 10:00 am

District of Columbia— Byzantine Ruthenian Chapel Basilica of the National Shrine

400 Michigan Avenue, NE
Washington, DC 20017
Phone 202-526-8300
Web www.nationalshrine.org
No regularly scheduled Sunday Liturgy.

To reserve a date and time, priests must call the Liturgy Office and submit a current letter from their eparchy's Safe Environment Office.

+BISHOP GERALD (DINO) ENTERS INTO HIS ETERNAL REWARD

By Father Ronald Barusefski, JCL

When +Bishop Gerald (Dino) fell asleep in the Lord this past November, an incredible number of memories swept through my mind and heart. He was my pastor during my formative years in the seminary, my priestly brother and later, an eparchial leader as the protosyncellus (vicar general) of our Eparchy of Passaic, and finally, a bishop and shepherd of an eparchy in a very different part of our country. In all of these roles that I knew him, there was always that calm demeanor, a pondering smile that was the closest thing for him being outwardly upset when times were challenging, and an incredible inner peace that never seemed threatened by any outward circumstance. I have always wished for such a disposition for myself, but I have never come close.

I first met +Bishop Gerald when he became the pastor of my home parish of Holy Ghost Church Byzantine Catholic Church in Jessup, PA, in 1979. I was a junior in high school and altar server for a number of years already. At first, I was not sure what to make of the new pastor. His predecessor, the late Father Paul Tigyer, was much more outgoing and demonstrative in his language and approach. Father Dino seemed so quiet but pleasant enough, at first; however, his different demeanor took some getting used to for me. This was perhaps one of the first lessons he ever taught me during this discernment period of

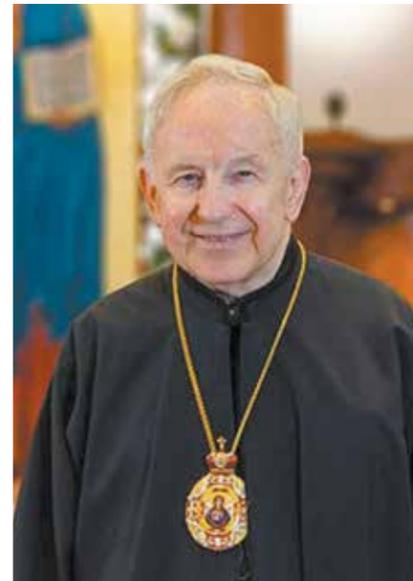
my vocation – that priests can have their own individual personalities and gifts, even though they share in the common work of the priesthood for Christ and His Church. Later, when I would face the occasional testing along the way in my journey to the priesthood, I came to appreciate what a calm, steady presence he was in my life. Through his thoughtful guidance and gentle pastoral support, those tests ended up being much more manageable.

As pastor at Holy Ghost Church, then-Father Gerry faced some monumental challenges. The church interior, while still beautiful, had become darkened and drab through the years. As part of the solemn rededication of the church which took place in 1987, the beautiful artwork throughout the church was cleaned and repainted which gave the interior a new and vibrant look. When the Sisters of Saint Basil were forced to withdraw from Holy Ghost School in 1985, Father Gerry worked hard with lay teachers to keep the parish school going until a more permanent and even revolutionary solution was devised. Working with the Roman Catholic Diocese of Scranton, Father Gerry helped oversee the combining of Holy Ghost School with two local Roman Catholic Schools to form LaSalle Academy in 1991. Not only did such a plan provide for continuing Catholic education for area grade schoolers that continues to

this day, it also introduced the beauty and spirituality of the Byzantine-Ruthenian Tradition to generations of Catholic children and families through the celebration of the Divine Liturgy for the school children, as well as other events and classes. While he was a pastor with vision, Father Gerry was most importantly a kind and prayerful priest who was always attentive to the needs of the parishioners. He was known especially for his clear and reflective homilies that brought the faith into the lives of the people. He was also always available and happy to serve the community at large, and in particular, the volunteer fire companies.

After seventeen years of pastoral service in Jessup, Father Gerry was called by the late Bishop Andrew (Pataki), then the new bishop of Passaic, to become the protosyncellus (vicar general) in 1996. This necessitated his move to Saint George Byzantine Catholic Church in Linden, NJ, in order to be closer to the chancery. As the “second-in-command” in the eparchy, Father Gerry’s calm and organized style of leadership was invaluable as the eparchy transitioned into a new administration. On many occasions, he was the ear that was bent when pastors were facing their own difficulties and concerns and, in turn, he was their voice when such matters needed to be brought to the bishop. As I grew in my priesthood, I further came to understand and appreciate the many complicated and sometimes daunting matters that someone in his position had to face on a daily basis. At Saint George Church, he once again turned his attention to enhancing the church interior with the addition of an icon screen. The parishioners there also benefited from his gentle, amiable care.

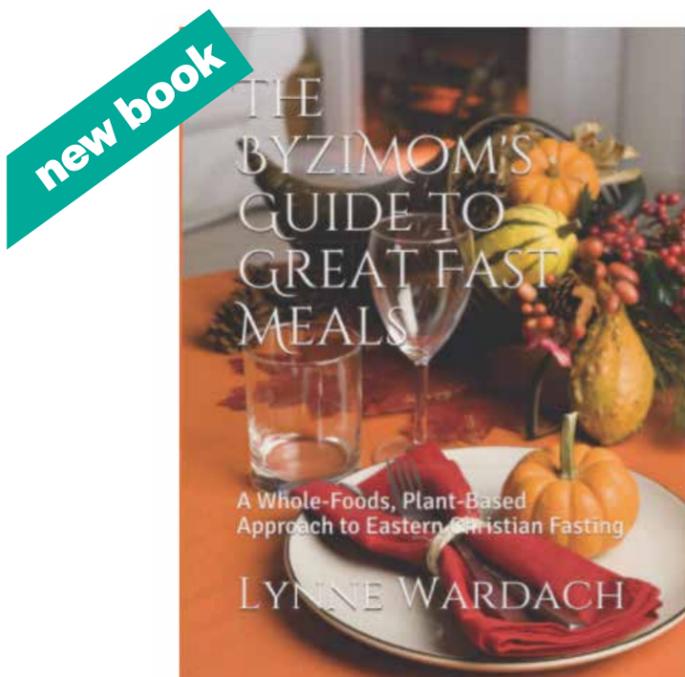
When I found out that Father Gerry was named the new bishop of the then-Eparchy of Van Nuys (now the Eparchy of Phoenix) in 2007, I must admit that I was initially surprised. While genuinely happy for him and for the eparchy, I was a bit reserved in my opinion. After all, Bishop-elect Gerald was a priest for all of his life in the Northeast, which is a very traditional area for the older part of the Byzantine-Ruthenian Catholic Church in the United States. Now, he was going to lead the newer and more expansive part of that Church in the western part of the country that has much more readily opened itself to more diverse peoples and cultures. I may have wondered what type of leader he may be under such circumstances, but I never doubted him as a leader. Bishop Gerald spent over a decade



opening his heart and expanding his vision to joyfully and effectively serve the clergy, religious, and faithful of this missionary territory. He led with a firm but kind hand that was always extended, especially to those in need.

Unfortunately, the passage of time and our serving in different geographic areas limited our times of actually getting together in recent years. When the Eastern Catholic Bishops of the United States come to Rome last year for their *ad limina* visit with Pope Francis, they usually stay at the Pontifical North American College. As a faculty member there, I was so looking forward to spending time with Bishop Gerald, who by then was the retired bishop of Phoenix, but still very active as the Protosyncellus. When I spoke to him on the phone, he expressed his regret over not being able to attend but quickly and excitedly explained the reason – he was a part of a group from the Eparchy of Phoenix who was going represent the eparchy and the Byzantine Ruthenian Church in an effort of education and evangelization at the annual Los Angeles Religious Education Congress, a pastoral opportunity he could not pass up. While I was sorry to have missed him, I admired and respected his generous and dedicated sense of pastoral responsibility for his eparchial Church – and for the entire Ruthenian Metropolitan Church here in the United States.

+Bishop Gerald, I know I speak for many others when I say thank you for always giving your very joyful best for Christ and His Church and for touching our lives in your quiet and gentle way. May we continue to promote the Gospel with such an example. *In blessed repose, O Lord grant eternal rest to your servant +Bishop Gerald, and remember him forever! Eternal Memory! Vičnaja jemu pamjat'!*



The ByziMom's Guide to Great Fast Meals

A Whole-Food, Plant-Based Approach to Eastern Christian Fasting

Have you ever wished for a little support as you attempt to keep the Eastern Christian fast? Healthy and delicious ideas and family-approved recipes for every meal of the day!

Breakfasts: Smoothies, oil-free granola, pancakes, puddings, casseroles fit for potlucks, and coffee hours too!

Kid-friendly Lunches: Lynne's family has listed their favorites, including Macaroni and Cheese, lenten style, without dairy, but not without taste! Even the homeschool co-op kids couldn't tell the difference!

Dinner Entrees: Over 50 different delicious recipes and adaptations for your some of your favorite dishes like Lentil Loaf, Enchiladas, Curries, Holupki, Sauerbraten, Stuffed Shells, and more!

Even baked goods, for that special occasion!: A few simple substitutions will allow you to transform your favorite recipes into ones for the fast!

Search for it on Amazon.com

NEW BYZANTINE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY FORMING IN GREATER CHARLOTTE, NC, AREA
Divine Liturgies at the Byzantine Catholic Mission of Fort Mill, SC for the month of December will be broadcast online. Please contact Ron Somich by email at ron.somich@gmail.com for the link and dial in information. <https://carolinabyzantine.com/>

February: 6, 13, 20, 27

+FATHER ANTHONY SKURLA, OFM, FALLS ASLEEP IN THE LORD

Father Anthony Skurla, O.F.M., fell asleep in the Lord after a short illness on December 28, 2020. A friar of Holy Dormition Byzantine Catholic Friary in Sybertsville, PA, for more than 72 years, he was well known for his ministry at the friary and his service to many Byzantine churches.

Father Anthony was born to Andrew and Mary (Uchal) Skurla in Syracuse, NY, on May 27, 1928. His early education, both elementary and secondary, was in the public schools of Chisholm, MN. He was prepared for the priesthood at Saint Basil College, Stamford, and Saint Mary Seminary, Norwalk, both in CT.

After making his solemn profession on September 7, 1952, he was ordained to the priesthood on June 14, 1954, by Bishop Constantine (Bohachevsky) at Immaculate Conception Ukrainian

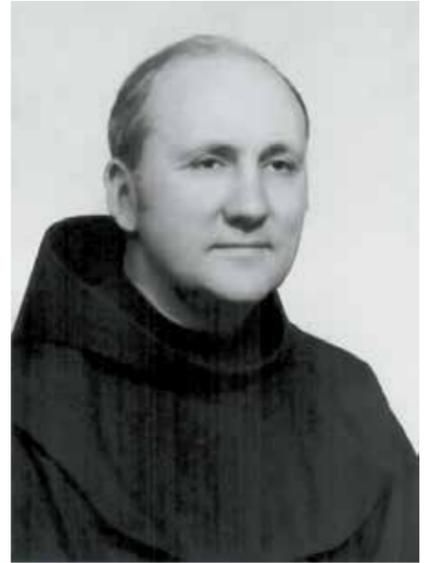
Catholic Cathedral in Philadelphia, PA.

At the friary, Father Anthony held the following offices and appointments: Master of Novices, Custodial Counselor, Local Superior, Provincial Counselor, and Provincial Custos. From 2011 to 2017, he served as chaplain to the Byzantine Carmelite Nuns of Sugarloaf, PA, and upon retirement in 2017, he resided at Mount Macrina Manor Nursing Home in Uniontown, PA.

A kind and gentle priest, Father Anthony was blessed with a most pleasant disposition marked by his constant smile, an out-going personality, and a pleasing sense of humor. Preceded in death by his brothers George and John, he is survived by his nephew Archbishop William (Skurla), Metropolitan Archbishop of Pittsburgh, and many nieces and nephews and their families.

A brief visitation and Panachida Service were held Saturday, January 2, 2020, at Mount Macrina Monastery Chapel, with all coronavirus restrictions applying. Archbishop William was the celebrant for the service with Father Andrew J. Deskevich and Father Jerome Botsko as concelebrants. Fathers Ronald P. Larko and Will Rupp, and Deacons Raymond Zadzilko and Dennis Prestash were in attendance. Archbishop William's remarks noted that Father Anthony was a Franciscan force by his life and ministry to many Byzantine Churches and to religious communities of both men and women throughout the United States. He was also very well-known and liked by a great number of people. Interment followed in Mount Macrina Cemetery.

In blessed repose, grant O Lord eternal rest to your departed servant, the Priest Anthony, and remember him forever!



+SISTER PIUS YAVOR, OSBM, PASSES INTO ETERNAL LIFE



antine Catholic Church in Perth Amboy, NJ, on September 24, 1951, and made her Final Profession of Vows on August 15, 1957, in the presence of the late Bishop Nicholas (Elko).

For several of her years in active ministry, Sister Pius was involved in teaching and catechesis. Of those years, from 1979 through 1983, she was teacher and principal in Saint Michael School in her hometown of Perth Amboy. While there, she was ahead of her time in initiating computer classes after school for those interested. Evangelization then became her focus, and with great enthusiasm, she answered the request of Father John Zeyack of Saint Thomas Church in Rahway, NJ, to serve in this parish ministry.

What became Sister Pius's best-loved ministry followed in 1988 when she was hired to serve in campus ministry at Seton Hall University in South Orange, NJ. It was her joy to be available to the students there, and her engaging personality lent itself to this work. Additionally, Sister Pius served as an instructor in the Adult Enrichment Program of the Passaic Eparchy and as a member of the Passaic Diocesan Catechetical Board.

Even though no longer engaged in active ministry for the community, Sister Pius was often on the phone with those who sought her comfort and counsel. It was heartening to her to be a healing and praying presence for those who called upon her.

Sister Pius was preceded in death by her parents, her brother George (Gerry) and her sisters, Marie and Anna (Mallik). A day after her passing, her sister Margaret followed Sister Pius into eternity. In addition to the members of her community, she is survived by her niece, Venus Majeski.

The Funeral Divine Liturgy was celebrated at 10:00 AM on Monday, December 28, 2020, in Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church in Perth Amboy, NJ. Interment followed in Saint Nicholas Cemetery, Perth Amboy.

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

After struggling with multiple health issues for a number of years, Sister Pius (Irene) Yavor fell asleep in the Lord on Monday, December 14, 2020. She fell seriously ill with the coronavirus. With permission, Sister Pius had been living apart from community. She was staying with her family, and it was from her home in Perth Amboy, NJ, that the Lord called her to Himself.

Sister Pius was born in Perth Amboy, NJ, the daughter of the late George and Anna (Andrejo) Yavor. She entered the community from Saint Nicholas Byz-



Soar As On Eagle's Wings

**Though youths grow weary and tired,
 And vigorous young men stumble badly,
 Yet those who wait for the LORD
 Will gain new strength;
 They will mount up with wings like eagles,
 They will run and not get tired,
 They will walk and not become weary.**

ISAIAH 40

**BYZAN-TEEN YOUTH RALLY
 JULY 1ST - 4TH 2021
 MOUNT ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY
 16300 Old Emmitsburg Road | Emmitsburg, MD 21727**

**Keynote Address by Superbowl Champion Matt Birk
 Closing Hierarchical Liturgy at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Basilica**

Note: Those teens who were 18 last year and planned to attend the cancelled 2020 San Diego Rally will be allowed to attend the Rally in 2021. Guidelines will be provided for these attendees in a future email.



2020 Bishop's Appeal

www.eparchyofpassaic.com

Pledge Now Through December 31, 2020
 Contributions Accepted Through June 2021

BYZANTINE CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF PASSAIC
2020 BISHOP'S ANNUAL APPEAL

Please pledge on line at eparchyofpassaic.com
 or mail check payable to the Eparchy of Passaic
 in the envelope provided.

Payment schedules are available on line by
 EFT or Credit Card

***In this difficult year, please pledge only if you are able.
 Please take care of yourself,
 your family and your parish first.***

- \$5,000.00 \$2,500.00 \$1,000.00 \$500.00
- \$250.00 Other \$ _____

New Address or Correction

Name: _____
 Street: _____
 City, State, Zip: _____
 Parish: _____

The 2020 Bishop's Appeal will run from October 1, 2020
 through December 31, 2020. Contributions will be accepted
 through the fiscal year ending June 2021.

When traveling to the South, please visit our churches

All Saints

10291 Bayshore Road
North Fort Myers, FL
33917
1-239-599-4023

Saint Anne

7120 Massachusetts Ave.
New Port Richey, FL 34653
1-727-849-1190

Epiphany of Our Lord

2030 Old Alabama Road
Roswell, GA 30076
1-770-993-0973

Saint Basil the Great

1475 N.E. 199th Street
Miami, FL 33179-5162
1-305-651-0991

Holy Dormition

17 Bucksin Lane
Ormond Beach, FL 32174
1-386-677-8704

Saints Cyril and Methodius

1002 Bahama Avenue
Fort Pierce, FL 34982
1-772-595-1021

Our Lady of the Sign

7311 Lyons Road
Coconut Creek, FL 33073
1-954-429-0056



Saint Nicholas of Myra

5135 Sand Lake Road
Orlando, FL 32819
1-407-351-0133

Saint Therese

4265 13th Avenue North
Saint Petersburg, FL 33713
1-727-323-4022

Byzantine Catholic Outreach:

The Villages, FL

Address: 625 W. Lady Lake Blvd.
Lady Lake, FL 32159 (at St. Alban's)
1-352-530-9631

ONLINE CHURCH SINGING CLASSES

OFFERED BY THE

METROPOLITAN CANTOR INSTITUTE

The Metropolitan Cantor Institute offers an online, 2-year program in church singing for both new and experienced cantors. Tuition is \$75 for each eight-week class, which includes feedback to help you improve your singing and cantorial skills. Initial classes on liturgy and church singing are free. For details: <https://mci.archpitt.org/classes> or call Deacon Jeffrey Mierzejewski at (412) 735-1676. Classes are offered at no charge to qualified students from any parish with no current cantor.



PRIESTLY REFLECTIONS

Father Paul Varchola West

BEING IN “THE ZONE”

We recently watched the new Disney movie, *Soul*, as a family. It's a charming little story about destiny, fate, and one's purpose in the world being driven by the “spark” in one's soul – that “one thing” that ignites the soul, that completes the person, one's “reason” for living. I have no intention of spoiling the movie, but, as with any good story, there is a twist in the logic established at the beginning of the movie and the protagonist has a change of soul, shall we say.

This movie got me thinking about a moment, not too long ago, when I experienced – for better or worse – a similar shift in thinking.

This past February (2020), while I was in my last year of seminary, just before COVID-19 hit hard, a music colleague of mine invited me to a music festival he was curating through the University of Pittsburgh. I was very excited that the evening concerts were being held at *The Warhol*, a mere seven minutes from where we lived in Pittsburgh. I had to attend! Not only was it nice to hear great music and to see old friends, but it was also a real treat to gain some much needed clarity in regard to the clouded perception of my soul.

On the last night of the festival, the *Del Sol String Quartet* performed “String Quartet No. 10” by Ben Johnston – a legendary composer whom I had the privilege to know and to work with professionally. Johnston had just passed away in July of 2019, and this was the first live performance of his music that I had attended since his death so, needless to say, I was in a rather introspective mood.

As the first pitches began to emanate from the instruments, and their vibrations began to adorn the air with tangible, perceptible beauty, I quickly witnessed the musicians enter what the movie *Soul* refers to as “the zone” – that magic place where a person goes when they are completely absorbed in an activity that speaks to them. I watched in awe at how such complex and beautiful harmonies seemed to effortlessly flow from the very person of the musicians; how relaxed they were; how natural they looked; how at peace their minds seemed; how connected their intellect was to their soul. I then began to think how never once have I ever personally experienced performing music to be that way. I wondered why I never “hit the zone,” so to speak.

Then, I thought to myself, is there any activity that makes me feel the way I perceived the performers? Then it hit me like a ton of bricks! I realized that it is being up at the altar during a liturgical service that brings me “into the zone.” It is the one activity during which I feel totally natural, totally at ease, completely consumed such that I do not even have to think about what is happening – I simply move almost as if a force beyond human comprehension is moving me and I am simply permitting it. Once I realized that, I thought right in that moment “God, why is that? Why couldn't it have been music? Why liturgy? It seems so odd, doesn't it?” As I sighed in my soul, I continued to enjoy the music, pondering the events of my life—past, present, and future—in an attempt to rationalize something that simply cannot be rationalized.

After a week or two of dealing with the whole “the grass is always greener” cliché, I was praying in our attic in Pittsburgh and came to the following conclusion. It does not matter what we are “good at” or what “comes natural” to us; what matters is transcendence.

We often think of being in “the zone” or a “runner's high” as being an escape

from reality, something to remove us from the world, even if momentarily. Well, this “escape,” for lack of a better term, does not mean that God has to be absent. In fact, God should most certainly be a part of it! It is reported that while composing the Hallelujah Chorus of *Messiah*, Handel saw heaven before him as he feverishly put the quill to the page. This type of transcendence comes not simply from art, but from any activity which causes us to be brought beyond ourselves. The trick is though, we must be open to having the Lord accompany us on our journey into “the zone.”

Next time you engage in that personal “spark” deep within yourself, prayerfully bring God along with you. Don't use it as an escape into solitude, but rather, as a time to transcend this life while keeping the company of God.

Perhaps this is why I never hit “the zone” while performing music. Perhaps I forgot to invite God to the performance. **ECL**



LIFE, LOVE, AND THE HUMAN PERSON

By Ann M. Koshute, MTS

CULTIVATING AUTHENTIC VIRTUE (SIGNALING)

We can all agree that the year just passed is one for the history books – and that 2021 is already upping the ante on strangeness and chaos. The global pandemic is still gripping us, changing our way of life, and perhaps shaking our faith. Political violence and division leave us unsettled and tempt us to choosing sides over choosing charity and good will towards others. It seems anything and everything is viewed through a political lens, from wearing masks to expressing our thoughts and opinions, and even trying to do what we believe is good and right. As a result, a new form of insult has been created to “call out” those who take a stand on an issue through either symbolic or concrete action. One who is accused of “virtue signaling” is thought not to have a sincere desire to right some wrong or contribute to solving problems but concerned with symbolic gestures that will make him/her look noble and virtuous. Spend even just a few minutes browsing social media or watching cable news, and this phrase is bound to be launched to expose the true intent of the “snowflake” doing the signaling. It’s a weapon used on all sides, and none of it has anything to do with *actual* virtues.

My purpose here is not to choose or promote a political side. Rather, it is to examine and reclaim the word *virtue*, put it into its proper context and invite us to think about how we can personally cultivate and re-introduce virtue into public life and discourse. As children we likely learned about the virtues from religious instruction. Faith, hope and charity (love) are called *theological virtues* because we are unable to acquire them through hard work or summon them through the sheer force of our will. These virtues are supernatural gifts given to us by God in a generous offering of Himself. We need these gifts to help us live up to who God created us to be; to “grow into” His image and likeness and shape us for our destiny with Him in eternity. In addition to these God-given virtues are the *human virtues* (prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude), those that we acquire by learning from our parents, pastors, and religious education. With God’s help and through the grace of the Holy Mysteries to fortify us, we nurture these virtues within us, and they shape our thoughts and actions toward what is good. The theological and human virtues, coupled with the gifts and the fruits of the Holy Spirit (you can find these in Isaiah 11:2-3 and Galatians 5:22-23, respectively) help to form us into authentically human persons who are made for union with God. They also form us into disciples who are called to bring the Good News of God’s love and salvation to those who don’t know Him, and to remind other Christians of who He is and how they are to be His witnesses in the world.

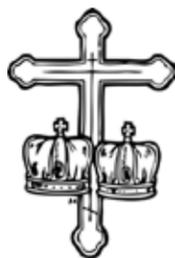
The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines virtue as “an habitual and firm disposition to do the good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best of himself. The virtuous person tends toward the good with all his sensory and spiritual powers; he pursues the good and chooses it in concrete actions.” (1803) In other words, a virtue is an orientation toward doing the good which bears itself out in our daily life through what we say and do. To put it even more simply, to be virtuous *is to love*. This is the highest calling of the Christian, and it is woven into our very being by God. He has made us to love and be loved! Saint Gregory of Sinai affirms this understanding when he tells us, “The origin and the source of virtues is will or desire directed towards that which is good, just as God is the cause and the source of all good.” Whether supernaturally given to us by God or learned and cultivated into habits that conform us to Him, virtue is essential to deepening our relationship with God and leading us to eternity with Him. Saint Gregory goes on to say that “... Christ [is] ... the origin and basis of all virtues, in Whom we stand and by Whom we perform every good action.” If we live for Christ,

hold Him in our hearts, make Him the solid foundation upon which we build our lives, we will seek what is good and act like true Christians.

Living a truly virtuous life conforms us to Christ and cultivating virtue within ourselves is absolutely necessary to fulfill our obligation to love others as we are loved by God (cf. John 15:12). But it should not be a burdensome obligation, like a mandatory work meeting we grudgingly attend, or complying with social conventions in order to appear “proper.” Learning the meaning of virtue, discovering how the virtues form us as persons, and inviting the Holy Spirit to pour His gifts and fruits into our hearts makes us *free*. “He who has established virtues in himself and is entirely possessed by them, no longer remembers the law, or the commandments, or punishments, but says and does what the excellent disposition established in him suggests.” (Abba Evagrius the Monk) To be truly virtuous – to surrender ourselves to being transformed by God’s grace, to yield to the Holy Spirit’s promptings toward acting with love and in truth in every aspect of our life – is to become less and less concerned about “the law.” Rather,

the practice of virtue changes us from the inside out, so that we want to do nothing more than love God, and our neighbors as ourselves.

While the term “virtue signaling” is politically fraught with certain assumptions about people and their motivations, we Christians need not (should not!) fall into such traps. The “signals” we send – our actions, both symbolic and concrete – should have meaning and be signs of true virtue. Through our reception of the Holy Mysteries, we are graciously given the virtues of faith (the ability to believe), hope (the desire for heaven) and love (to will the good of another). As we continue to grow as Christians, disciples, and witnesses to Christ in the world, we must cultivate “holy habits,” embodying the human virtues and the gifts and fruits of the Spirit. The “World” may be most concerned with appearances and symbolic gestures. We Christians, however, are meant to go deeper than what’s on the surface, truly “putting on Christ” and following His example. If every Christian actually *lived* the virtues, we’d send one powerful signal to the world. **ECL**



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PRESENTERS

Deacon Thomas Shubeck PhD and his wife Caroline are navigating the pandemic with a young adult daughter and a teen-aged son. Deacon Tom serves at St Thomas the Apostle parish in Rahway and at Seton Hall University. Much of his more than 30 years as a licensed psychologist has been spent providing therapy services to married couples and families.



Ann Koshute MTS, earned a Master’s degree at the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family in Washington DC. She teaches theology at St Joseph’s College of Maine and co-founded Springs in the Desert, an infertility support ministry. She and her husband Keith have been married for 9 years.



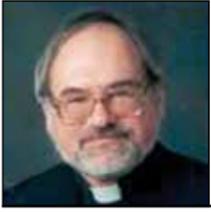
Michael and Lisann Castagno were married in 1994 and have three daughters. They have been involved in marriage preparation and youth ministry in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia for many years, speaking especially about the beauty of God’s design for marriage, by proclaiming the good news of Natural Family Planning.



Fr. Jack Custer has delighted in preparing couples for marriage over four decades of priesthood. He holds degrees in Scripture and Theology and currently serves as Rector of St Michael’s Cathedral.

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THE BYZANTINE LITURGY

By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD

THE ANAPHORA: THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS

The Divine Liturgy is our fulfillment of our Lord's commandment at the Last Supper: "Then [Jesus] took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me." (Luke 22:19) The center of the memory is the prayer we call the Anaphora, which may be translated the "Prayer of Offering." When the priest prays over the bread and wine which become in essence the Body and Blood of Christ, he says, "Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you for the remission of sins." Here we remember that the gift our Lord has given of himself is for us – that our sins may be forgiven. He then repeats for the chalice, "Drink of this all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins." Then when the priest communicates the faithful in the Body and Blood of Christ, he repeats the same idea, "The servant of God partakes of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and for life everlasting. Amen." That this is so important a part of our remembrance is seen again in the epiclesis, when the priest invokes the Father to send the Holy Spirit upon our offerings, "That for those who partake of them they may bring about ... the remission of sins."

It is a part of the Church teaching that the Eucharist is the source of the forgiveness of sins. This is often forgotten, because we think we have to make ourselves worthy to receive the Eucharist, either by confession of sins and absolution or by other forms of sorrow for sin. This has led, now mostly in the past, to the requirement to receive the sacramental mystery of penance before every Communion. The Church does require for the discipline of the community that serious sins, called "mortal," which means deadly must be confessed, but the reality is that we, as created human beings, cannot "make ourselves worthy" to receive the most precious Body and Blood of our Lord. The rite of penance, which is usually called Confession, from the its most evident feature, and which is necessary is, indeed, a supporting sacramental mystery designed to restore to full communion a person barred from it by reason of grave sin. It makes no sense outside of the Eucharist.

The Eucharist, received in good faith, which means the confession of serious sin, is the source of all forgiveness, because it is our union with Christ, who came into the world for the forgiveness of sin. This is the traditional teaching of both the Eastern Churches and the Roman Catholic Church. Even the Council of Trent witnessed, "...appealed by this oblation [the Mass], the Lord, granting the grace and gift of penitence, pardons crimes and even great sins... if contrite

and penitent we approach God with a sincere heart and a right faith." Communion, as the reception of the body and blood of Christ, which was broken and shed for the forgiveness of sin, cannot but wipe away all our sins, if we receive this gift of the Spirit worthily and with the right intention. The noted Roman Catholic theologian J-M. Tillard explained: "In the most realistic sense of the term, the Eucharist is the sacrament of forgiveness, because it is the sacramental presence and communication of the act which remits sins: as the remembrance of the expiation of the cross, it applies that expiation to those who celebrate the memorial by putting them in touch, through the bread and the cup of the meal, with the 'once and for all' of the paschal event itself, and calls down on the whole world the infinite mercy of God, the Father of Jesus. Within the Church, it is properly speaking the location of redemption" (*The Bread and the Cup of Reconciliation*, 47).

Our Lord came to be with us not simply to be present but to conquer sin. Therefore, when we celebrate the Divine Liturgy, our Lord is present among us not in a passive way, but to destroy the power of sin. When the celebrant of the Liturgy proclaims that the bread and wine that we offer is in truth the Body and Blood of Christ, he tells us also that the Eucharist we are about to receive is "broken for you," "poured out for you and for many," and that they are saving, "for the forgiveness of sins." All forgiveness and reconciliation flow from the eucharistic sacrifice. The mystery of reconciliation (called usually, "confession") depends on the Eucharist. In the case of grave sin, it is a condition for the reception of communion, but its grace flows from the Eucharist. The very reason for baptism and penance is to give us access to communion in Christ.

In the book of Genesis, in the story of Adam and Eve, we see that sin is the refusal to accept God's loving plan for our salvation, which is the gift of life. Saint Paul explains, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23) That is why the Eucharist is both the gift of the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life. The two realities are one. Jesus, therefore, has taught us that the Eucharist is life, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world." (John 6:51) In the Divine Liturgy, God takes the initiative to give us the gifts of forgiveness and life, it is up to us to accept these gifts freely and with love for God, and with love for those created in His image. That is how we overcome the power of sin, and it can be done only if we embrace the power and strength of God with us. **ECL**

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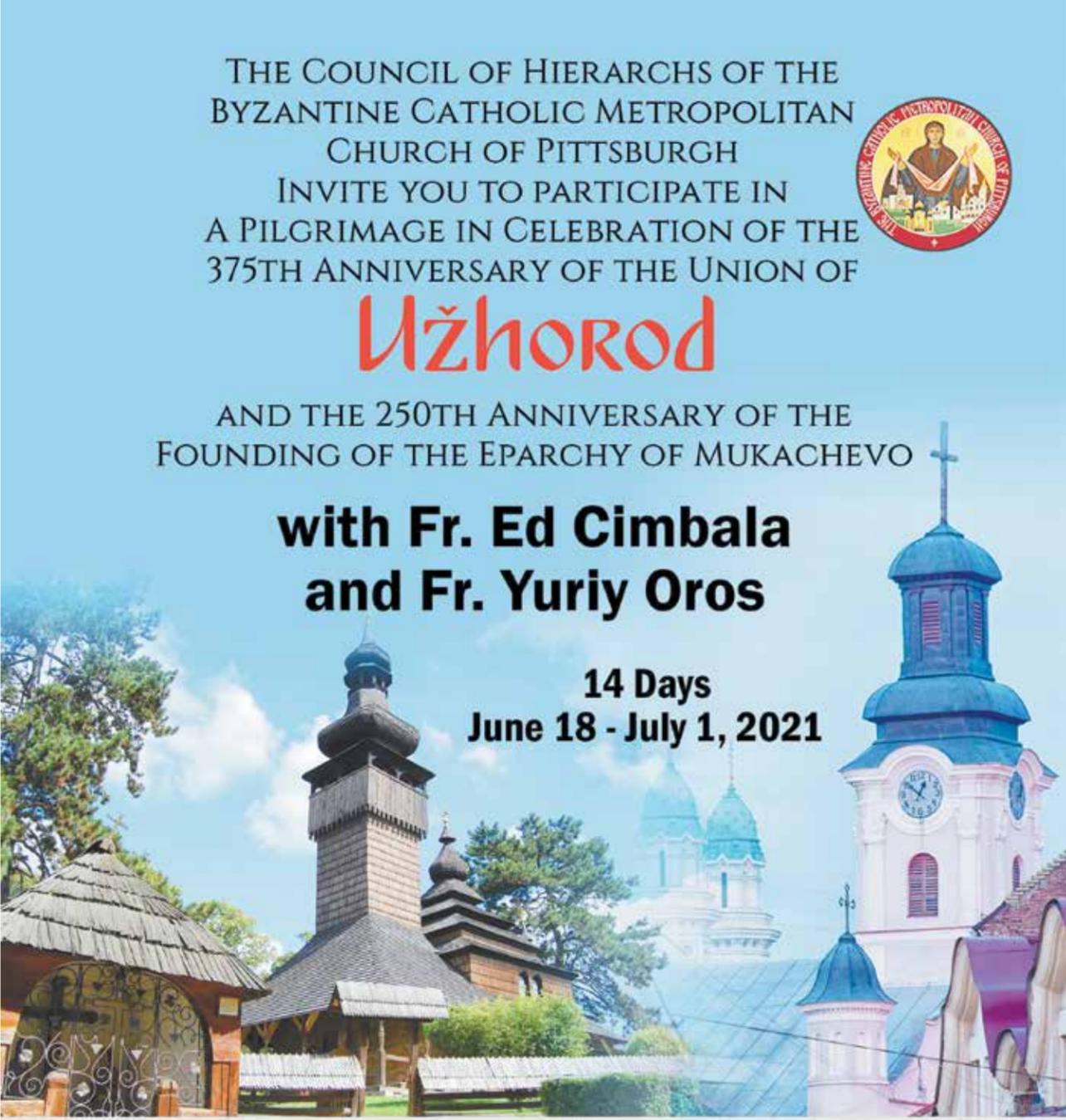
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SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

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

THE FIRSTBORN SON

Jesus Christ is, from all eternity, the Only-begotten Son of the Father (John 1:14; Hebrews 1:6); therefore, God's "firstborn" Son (Hebrews 1:16). Saint Luke makes it a point to say that Jesus is also a firstborn son in His human nature (Luke 2:7). This is one way of affirming the virginity of Mary before and during His birth, and it in no way implies that other sons and daughters were born to her later. Saint Luke also reports that Mary and Joseph performed the ritual laid down in the Old Testament regarding firstborn sons. As an infant of 40 days, Jesus was brought to the Temple and a sacrifice was offered for Him (Luke 2:22-35). In Hebrew, this rite is called *pidyon ha-ben*, the "redemption" of the son.

The first reading for Vespers of the feast of the Encounter in the Temple (February 2: Exodus 12:51-13:3, 10-12, 14-16, 22-29) summarizes the Old Testament law: all firstborn males of man and beast are sacred to the Lord and should be sacrificed to Him. The actual sacrifice of children to idols was quite common in the world of the Old Testament (Leviticus 18:21; 20:2-5; Psalm 106:37; 2 Kings 3:27; 17:17; Jeremiah 32:35; Ezekiel 16:20-21, etc.) but God

Himself put an end to that practice for His people by commanding Abraham to substitute a ram for Isaac, the beloved son he was about to sacrifice to the Lord on Mount Moriah (Genesis 22).

The symbolic sacrifice of firstborn sons takes on a new meaning at the Exodus, when the tenth and final plague struck the firstborn males of both man and beast among the Egyptians, but spared the Israelites, whose houses were marked by the blood of the Paschal lamb (Exodus 13; Numbers 8). As long as the Temple stood, an animal would be sacrificed in place of the firstborn son; since the fall of the Temple, Jews substitute a monetary gift to charity instead.

Of course, both Isaac and the Passover Lamb point to Christ. What God spared Abraham from doing He did not spare Himself (Romans 8:32): He permitted the actual sacrifice of His "beloved Son" (Genesis 22:1.16; Matthew 3:17) for our salvation. And the blood of Christ actually accomplished what the blood of the Passover Lamb only symbolized: redemption "from death to life and from earth to heaven" as

Saint John Damascene's Paschal Canon proclaims.

Throughout the Old Testament, the firstborn son was recognized as privileged, entitled to a double portion of his father's inheritance (Deuteronomy 12:31; 21:15-17; Genesis 43:33). Nevertheless, the Old Testament also recounts how God permitted the privileges of the firstborn to pass to another son: Jacob over Esau (Genesis 27 and 27), how He exalted Joseph over his brothers (Genesis 37 and 45), and how He chose David, the youngest of his family, as king (1 Samuel 16:1-13). From Jacob descended the founders of the twelve tribes of Israel; David established Israel as a powerful nation; Joseph became the savior of his entire family and, by extension, of the whole people of Israel.

How does this overturning of the firstborn privilege apply to Christ and the people whom the Epistle to the Hebrews (12:23) calls "the Church of the Firstborn"? Quite simply, it means that Jesus Christ, the Firstborn and Only Son of God, has freely chosen to share His greatest privilege with us: the inheritance of the Kingdom of Heaven.

He has become, as St Paul says, "the first of many brothers" (Romans 8:29).

Through Moses, the Lord says: "Israel is my firstborn son" (Exodus 4:22). Through the preaching of the Gospel, Gentiles come to share in the privileges of Israel: "the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the Law, the worship and the promises, of whom are the patriarchs and from whom, according to the flesh Christ came" (Romans 9:4-5). Elsewhere, Paul celebrates this wonderful mystery whereby Gentiles have been grafted "like a wild olive shoot" (Romans 11:17 and 24) onto the promises God first made to Israel (Ephesians 2:11-18). Saint Peter says the same to Gentile Christians: "Once you were 'no people,' but now you are the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy (1 Peter 2:10, quoting Hosea 1:9-10 and 2:23).

How does all this affect relations between Christians and Jews? Speaking at the Great Synagogue in Rome in 1986, St John Paul II said: "You are our beloved brothers; in a certain sense you are our older brothers." **ECL**

SCHOOL OF PRAYER

Father G. Scott Boghossian



THE PENITENTIAL SPIRIT

During the Great Fast, we embrace the spirit of repentance. "Grant me the grace to be aware of my sins," we pray again and again in the Prayer of Saint Ephrem. Many of the saints went beyond the forty days and made their spiritual home in tears of repentance. They spent their whole lives in compunction, sorrow, and penance.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, although He never sinned, embraced penance on our behalf. When we look at Him suffering and dying on the cross, we understand that He was doing penance for us. He offered His Passion and Death as an expiation, a reparation, and an atonement for all the sins ever committed. Jean Jacques Olier, the founder of the Sulpicians, describes Jesus Christ as "the Great Penitent" and writes that the spirit of penance was the "driving force of His whole life."

Our Lady, in imitation of Christ and as His most perfect disciple, also offered her sorrows as a penance for the salvation of the world. Although sinless, she lived a life of compunction and reparation for sin. If Jesus and our Blessed Mother live the spirit of penance, then we must do so as well.

"The common cause of all failures in perfection is the lack of abiding sorrow for sin... all holiness has lost its principle of growth if it is separated from abiding sorrow for sin, for the principle of growth is not love only, but forgiven love," says Father Faber. Let us pray for this abiding sorrow for sin that will guarantee our spiritual progress.

The Catholic Christian who falls into mortal sin and loses their baptismal innocence and justification (the state of sanctifying grace) is completely restored to God's friendship through the sacrament of confession when they receive absolution. Nevertheless, the sorrowful spirit of penance should remain and thus intensify their love for God.

Saint Paul the Apostle committed His most serious sins before His conversion when He as a pharisee persecuted Christ in His Church. He was radically converted on the road to Damascus. Yet years after his conversion, he writes, "This saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the worst" (1 Tim. 1:15). Although fully forgiven and entirely reconciled, Saint Paul maintained a heart full of compunction for past sins.

Oratorian Jean Baptiste Massillon (d. 1742) preached a sermon entitled, "The Fewness of the Saved." He states that there are only two kinds of people in heaven, the innocent, and the penitent. And then he asks, "Which one are you?" Certainly, we are not innocent. Therefore, let us embrace penance, contrition, and compunction for our lousy past if we want to get to heaven.

How long should we do penance? "Once we have understood what sin is, what an infinite offense it gives to God, we are obliged to do penance all through life, since a whole lifetime is but too short to make reparation for an infinite offense. Hence, we must never cease to do penance," says Father Adolphe Tanqueray.

When trials and difficulties came into the lives of the saints, they would see those trials and hardships as an opportunity to do penance for their sins. God our Father gently chastises His children for their sins by sending trials and sufferings (Heb. 12:6-11). Jesus Christ says, "those whom I love, I rebuke and chastise. Be zealous, therefore, and do penance" (Rev. 3:19).

Do you have some big sins from the past? Why not patiently accept the trials and crosses of everyday life as your heaven-sent penance to expiate those sins? Are you sick? It's a penance. Does someone speak sharply to you and correct you without a good reason? Accept it as a penance. Do you experience some disrespect or injustice on the job? It's a penance!

Frequently making acts of contrition can increase your penitential spirit. Use a formal prayer or make up your own. One of the best prayers of contrition is Psalm 51, King David's psalm of repentance. Print it out and pray it daily, or even better, memorize it. "The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Ps. 51:17).

Let us go to God in prayer and ask Him to fill us with a spirit of penance and sorrow for sin, not just for the Great Fast, but for every day of our life.

"That we may spend the rest of our life in peace and repentance, let us beseech the Lord." **ECL**

SEASONAL REFLECTIONS

Father Ronald Hatton



OUR ENTRY INTO THE GREAT FAST

The liturgical year moves quickly, but it does not just drop us, cold-turkey, from one season to the next. One great example of this is our pre-Lenten Sundays and the beginning of The Great Fast. This year, in the middle of January, we celebrate the Sunday of Zacchaeus. One thing you will notice, though, is that the only thing that distinguishes this particular Sunday is the Gospel reading: there are no special troparia, kontakia, and so on. Even the Lenten Triodion, the book we use during the Lenten season for Matins and Vespers, do not even have an entry for the Sunday of Zacchaeus. We are simply “put on notice” that things are beginning to change.

We shift gears the very next Sunday, though, with the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee. Other than the Gospel reading, the only other thing we notice during the Divine Liturgy is that we sing the Kontakion for the Publican and Pharisee rather than the Resurrectional Kontakion of the week. More importantly, the weekdays following this Sunday are all fast-free (one of the four Fridays that are fast-free during the liturgical year). This is to remind us that our fasting is not a matter of pride, as it was for the Pharisee, but of humbling ourselves and disciplining the body.

The Sunday of the Prodigal Son gets a little more intense, as the Epistle reading now also relates to the coming season of the Fast. Together with the

Kontakion for this day, we feel the time drawing closer.

With Meat-fare Sunday, things start really getting serious. We traditionally abstain from eating meat or meat products from now until Pascha. Although many do not follow this discipline, we cannot escape the fact that we are called for stricter control over our bodies, especially in disciplining the stomach.

Finally, we come to Cheese-fare Sunday, the day before we begin the Great Fast in earnest. Not only is there a special kontakion for the day, but the prokeimenon is one of the most solemn that we can sing, and is a reminder that the Fast and our promises to God are not to be taken lightly: “Make vows to the Lord your God and fulfill them!” (Isaiah 19: 21b). From the Saturday night Vespers, through Matins and Vespers for this day, we are reminded both of our fallenness (this Sunday is the Commemoration of the Expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden) and of God’s great forgiveness. And so, on this evening, we enter into the season of the Great Fast by gathering together to pray what we referred to as “Cheese-fare Vespers,” singing the Stichera of Repentance. In many parishes, there is normally a ritual of mutual forgiveness between all the members of the parish, both clergy and laity, to cleanse ourselves of any lingering resentment or lack of forgiveness in our lives before we enter this holy season. For if we do

not forgive one another fully and totally, how can we expect forgiveness from God? The text for this ritual is taken from the Office of Compline.

Thus prepared, we now enter into Clean Week, with strict fast and abstinence on Monday. Traditions of services during this week may vary from parish to parish, but usually include Great Compline, and Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts. In the Typicon for our Metropolitan Province, it is prescribed that the Presanctified Liturgy is celebrated on Wednesdays and Fridays of the Fast. Since the Divine Liturgy is a celebration of the Resurrection, we do not celebrate it during the weekdays, but our bishops may prescribe other services where Holy Communion can be distributed.

Last, but certainly not least, we enter fully into the season of fasting. Depending on medical conditions or other mitigating circumstances, the Typicon prescribes fasting from meat on all Wednesdays and Fridays. Some people are in a position to fast completely from all meat and dairy, eating only vegetables; some have no meat until Pascha. It may be that they cannot fast from food at all, and have been assigned an alternative discipline to fasting from

food. The main point is that it is a time of subjecting the body to the mastery of the spirit, thus reminding us that we must subject ourselves to God. Whatever the case, we must keep in mind the admonition that the holy Apostle Paul gives in his letter to the Romans: “One person believes that one may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. The one who eats must not despise the one who abstains, and the one who abstains must not pass judgment on the one who eats; for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on someone else’s servant? Before his own master he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand. ...whoever eats, eats for the Lord, since he gives thanks to God; while whoever abstains, abstains for the Lord and gives thanks to God. ...Why then do you judge your brother? Or you, why do you look down on your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God” (Romans 14: 2-10). May our time of the Great Fast be profitable, and may we attain our salvation through our humility to our Lord. **ECL**

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 Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church—Perth Amboy, NJ
 Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church—Hillsborough, NJ
 Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church—Dunellen, NJ
 Saints Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church—Somerset, NJ
 Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church—Jersey City, NJ
 Saint John Byzantine Catholic Church—Bayonne, NJ
 Nativity of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church—East Brunswick, NJ
 Saint Thomas the Apostle Byzantine Catholic Church—Rahway, NJ
 Saint Elias Byzantine Catholic Church—Carteret, NJ
 Saint George Byzantine Catholic Church—Linden, NJ
 Saint George Byzantine Catholic Church—Newark, NJ

NEW YORK

Saint Andrew Byzantine Catholic Church—Westbury, NY
 Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church—White Plains, NY
 Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church—New York, NY
 Holy Spirit Byzantine Catholic Church—Binghamton, NY
 Resurrection Byzantine Catholic Church—Smithtown, NY

PENNSYLVANIA

Saint Michael Byzantine Church—Mont Clare, PA
 Saint Mary Byzantine Church—Wilkes-Barre, PA
 Saint Mary Pokrova—Kingston, PA

Saint John Byzantine Church—Wilkes-Barre, PA
 Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic—Mahanoy City, PA
 Saint John Byzantine Church—Wilkes-Barre, PA
 Saint John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church—Lansford, PA
 Saints Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church—Bethlehem, PA
 Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church—Old Forge, PA
 Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church—Taylor, PA
 Saints Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church—Minersville, PA
 Saint Michael Byzantine Catholic Church—Dunmore, PA
 Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church—Hazleton, PA
 Saint John Byzantine Catholic Church—Hazleton, PA
 Holy Dormition Friary—Sybertsville, PA
 Holy Ghost Byzantine Catholic Church—Jessup, PA
 Our Lady of Perpetual Help Byzantine Catholic Church—Levittown, PA
 Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church—Scranton, PA
 Saint Ann Byzantine Catholic Church—Harrisburg, PA

GEORGIA

Epiphany of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church—Roswell, GA

VIRGINIA

Ascension of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church—Williamsburg, VA
 Our Lady of Perpetual Help Byzantine Catholic Church—Virginia Beach, VA
 Epiphany of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church—Annandale, VA

FLORIDA

Holy Dormition Byzantine Catholic Church—Ormond Beach, FL
 Saint Nicholas of Myra Byzantine Catholic Church—Orlando FL
 Saint Anne Byzantine Catholic Church—New Port Richey, FL
 Saint Cyril and Methodius Byzantine Catholic Church—Fort Pierce, FL
 Our Lady of the Sign Byzantine Catholic Church—Coconut Creek, FL

NORTH CAROLINA

Saints Cyril & Methodius Byzantine Catholic Church—Cary, NC
 The Outreach Community of Greater Charlotte

SOUTH CAROLINA

Charlotte, NC, Byzantine Catholic Mission at Fort Mill, SC

MARYLAND

Patronage of the Mother of God Byzantine Catholic Church—Arbutus, MD
 Saint Gregory of Nyssa Byzantine Catholic Church—Beltsville, MD

Monthly Byzanteen Gatherings

- January 17th: Sunday of Zaccheaus (Sunday's @ 6pm)
- February 21st: Sunday of Orthodoxy
- March 21st: St. Mary of Egypt
- April 18th: Sunday of the Myrrhbearers
- May 16th: Power of the Holy Spirit
- June 13th: Saints of all Time and for all Time
- July 1st - 4th: Byzanteen Rally

Byzanteen Rally

Last day of Early Registration: May 1st - \$325
 Last day of Registration: June 16th - \$350

Mount St. Mary's

"Soaring on Eagles Wings"

For Monthly Meetings: FrDeaconTom@gmail.com

Eastern Catholic Life

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UPCOMING EPARCHIAL AND PARISH EVENTS

FEBRUARY, 2021

- 2 Holy Encounter of Our Lord
Solemn Holy Day
- 6 First All Souls' Saturday
- 7 Sunday of Meatfare
- 14 Sunday of Cheesefare
- 15 First Day of the Great Fast * President's Day
No meat or dairy Civic holiday* chancery closed*
- 21 First Sunday of the Great Fast
Sunday of Orthodoxy
- 27 Second All Souls' Saturday
- 28 Second Sunday of the Great Fast
Sunday of Saint Gregory Palamas

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:

Father David J. Baratelli, Ed.S., M.Div.
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