

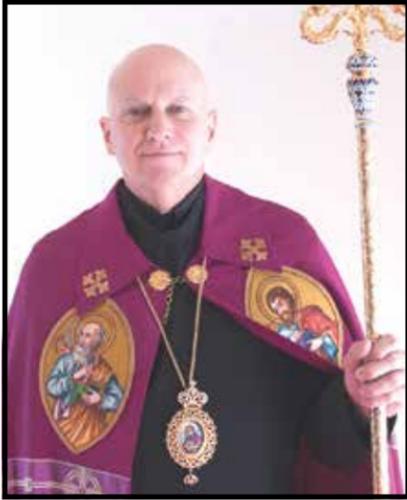


EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

Official Publication of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic

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OCTOBER 2021



I LIFT UP MY EYES...

Pastoral Reflections of Bishop Kurt



EXALTING THE HOLY CROSS IN SLOVAKIA

and Metropolitan Wiliam (Skurla) encouraged me to go, if possible, so that at least one bishop from our American family would be present for this historic event. As it turned out, I was the only American bishop at these events.

About two months ago, I received a letter in the mail from Archbishop Jan Babjak of Prešov, Slovakia, inviting me to a very special event. Francis, the Pope of Rome, would be celebrating the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom in Prešov, the Metropolitan See of our Church in Slovakia, for the great feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross on September 14. Only once before in history did a pope do something similar. Saint John Paul II had also celebrated a Liturgy according to our traditions in Slovakia. At this point in history, it's very difficult for a pope to do something that Saint John Paul didn't already do. I think if a pope goes to the moon to celebrate the Holy Eucharist, he will find a plaque there saying when Saint John Paul did the same. Nevertheless, it was hugely exciting. International

In Europe we are still called Greek Catholic, and there are two great families of Greek Catholics in Europe. The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church is one great family, and the descendants of the Carpatho-Rus from the former Austro-Hungarian Empire are the other great family, spread throughout Transcarpathia, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and former Yugoslavia. And so, this great Eucharist was attended by all of our bishops from Transcarpathia, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Croatia, and many priests as well. It was also attended by Sviataslav Shevchuk, the head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, by all of the Latin Rite Bishops of Slovakia and from other countries, and by some Roman Cardinals including the Secretary of State and the Prefect of the Oriental Congregation. Truly, the Universal Church came together in a great mystical Synaxis, together with the Pope of Rome, to celebrate the great feast of the Exaltation of the Cross of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.



The Church of Saint Stephen in Baden where Mozart wrote Ave Verum Corpus as a gift for the choir master

travel has become so difficult, that I didn't expect to go, nor was I sure it was the best thing to do for my own eparchy. Until about a month ago, it was impossible to visit Canada, and when I finally was able to visit my churches there at the end of August, it was not an easy trip. A couple of months ago, I attempted to visit Slovakia for a funeral and after days of preparation and expense, I was not allowed to board the plane. So, I consulted on the subject,

Right up until the last day, things looked doubtful. I received an email from Slovakia saying that the health authorities did not approve my visit. Although I didn't expect to go, I sent another copy of my vaccine card in reply to the email, and at that last minute I received an email saying I was approved to travel. So, on Sunday, after Divine Liturgy in Harrisburg, I drove home and caught a ride to the airport. Of course, my bags were all packed the day before. I bought a cool little passport holder that has my passport and a clear window for my vaccination card. It seemed to make the border officials happy. The soldier in Vienna never even spoke to me, he just jerked his head to tell me to go ahead. I had all other documents ready including a COVID test, but no one looked at them. I got a couple hours of sleep on the flight and next thing I knew it was Monday morning in Vienna where Father Juraj Terek picked me up so I wouldn't sit at the airport for four hours. The last time I saw him, his children were much smaller and now his oldest are a young woman and a young man.



Pope Francis processing at the Divine Liturgy in Prešov for the Exaltation of the Holy Cross

Father Juraj had a task, so his oldest son gave me a walking tour of the town of Baden. Baden was a famous town by Vienna where the emperors spent summers. Baden means "baths" and is named for the hot springs. Baden is famous to music lovers for two reasons. First, when Mozart was visiting towards the end of his life, he wrote a communion hymn for his friend who was the

masterpiece that some people have said Mozart would be famous if it were the only thing he ever wrote. It is a hymn to the True Presence in the Eucharist and the title means "Hail True Body."

The second reason that Baden is famous to musicians is that Beethoven often stayed at a house here. It is easy to find because it is on "Beethoven Street" and the house has "Beethoven House" written on the outside. It was closed because of the virus, but I learned that he wrote his Ninth Symphony at that house! I found that very exciting, too.



Mozart's manuscript of Ave Verum Corpus, the first of four pages mounted on the church wall

choir master at the lovely parish of Saint Stephen. An original manuscript of Mozart's hymn is under glass on the wall of the church. It was the second



The Beethoven Haus where Beethoven often spent time outside of Vienna. He wrote his Ninth Symphony in this location.

time for me to see the manuscript, but it was still a great excitement for me. The hymn, *Ave Verum Corpus*, is such a

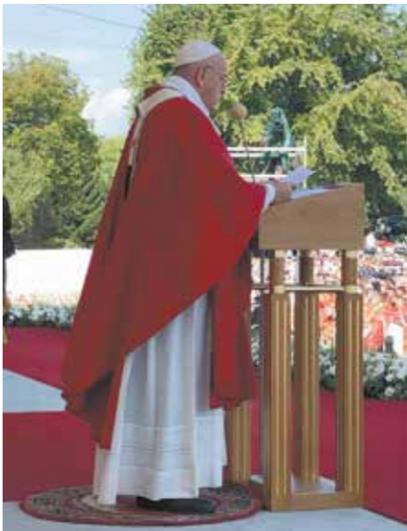
Returning to the airport, I flew to Košice that afternoon. At the airport, a policeman asked me if I had registered with the police, and fortunately, I had. He checked to see my document, and after that, I was home free. There was no one to meet me, but a taxi to Prešov was less than a taxi home in New Jersey, so I didn't mind. It turned out that whoever was supposed to pick me up forgot, so I received many apologies. However, everyone was so busy and exhausted from preparing for the Pope's visit, it was completely understandable. I really can't imagine the amount of planning and work to prepare, even worse during the pandemic with all kinds of health rules that change every few days. In addition, the Vatican would not confirm his visit until two months before the visit. He recently had major surgery, so many thought he might cancel. I think Pope Francis really loves people. He seems so uncomfortable, or even in pain, but when he starts talking to someone, he smiles and lights up! *continued on page 2*

One of the fun things about driving in Slovakia now is that there are billboards everywhere welcoming the Pope with a



A "pest monument." Throughout Austria, these monuments to the Virgin Mary celebrate deliverance from the plague, called "pest" in German.

big picture of him with a smile. There are also billboards with pirohi! Where else would you see that? Unfortunately, I didn't get a picture of the billboards to show you.



Pope Francis preaching on the Cross. We can see no one as an enemy when we see others as someone for whom Christ died.

Despite the excitement, I think many people here did not understand the historical significance of the Pope of Rome coming to Slovakia and celebrating the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom. Almost 13 centuries ago, two brothers came to Greater Moravia at the request of the Prince to teach the people the Good News of Jesus Christ in their own language. We know them as Saints Cyril and Methodius, although Cyril was named Constantine at the time. The Prince wanted his pagan people to have the light of the revealed truth, but without making them subject to the German missionaries who were a little pushy. The brothers immediately set about translating the Bible and all of our prayers into the language of the people, what we call *Old Slavonic*. Be-

cause the Slavic languages had never been written down, the brothers (who were brilliant linguists) invented an alphabet. They understood that every language has its own sounds, and so an alphabet from one language will never fit another language very well. The German missionaries took offense at their work and announced that it is impossible to pray to the true God, except in Hebrew, Latin, or Greek. So, after enough harassment, the brothers set out for Rome to get the blessing of the Pope on their mission. The Pope received them with great joy. (I am shortening the story quite a bit.) He not only blessed their work and was happy that they were making it available to the people in their own language (twelve centuries before Vatican II), but he ordered our Liturgies to be celebrated in the Slav tongue in the major churches of Rome itself. If you visit Rome, there is large marble plaque in the baptistery of Saint Mary Major commemorating this event. They completed their translation work in a monastery in Rome, where you can see a plaque showing which building they worked in. Constantine became ill, took monastic vows along with the name Cyril, and died in Rome. The Slavic alphabet is named *Cyrillic* after him. The Pope ordained Methodius a bishop and sent him back as Archbishop with authority over the whole area. The last years of his life were very difficult because of the opposition of the Germans to the work, especially to his use of the Slavic language. However, Methodius did also translate a handbook of Roman laws from Constantinople. This handbook is still considered the first foundation of law in eastern Europe. (Of course, there were laws before, but they were not written down.)

There are at least 28 nations whose flag contains a Christian symbol. The flag of Slovakia contains a cross with two bars, which is generally recognized as the symbol of an archbishop. The cross with two bars is likely a national symbol because Saint Methodius was made an archbishop by the Pope in Rome when he was sent back to Greater Moravia.

So, when the Pope of Rome visits Slovakia and celebrates the Divine Liturgy using the books of Cyril and Methodius, it is an historic event with roots going back to the 800's and even to the second Pope of Rome, Saint Clement. One could even see it as a recapitulation.

These events are much, much longer in person than you experience on television. We had to be up and ready very early and on a bus to the outdoor Litur-



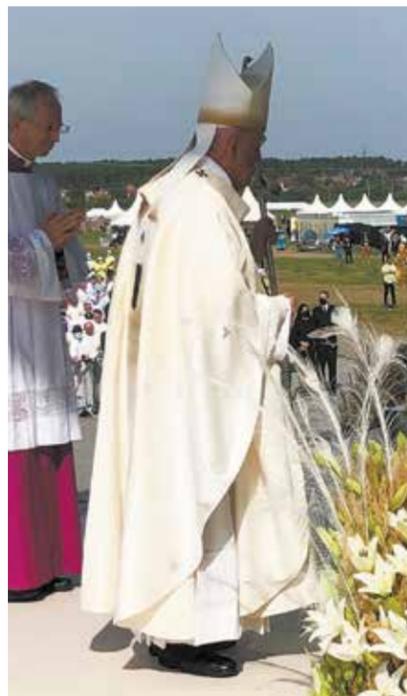
Slovak government official kneeling on the ground after receiving communion in Prešov

gy hours ahead of time. We were vested and ready with over two hours before the beginning of the Divine Liturgy. Except for the most important bishops, all the clergy were in place well in advance. Then we sang the Akathist hymn together and waited some more. There was a great deal of commotion when the motorcade arrived, and Pope Francis rode around through the crowd so



Seated on the right, the President of Slovakia waiting for Mass to begin with Pope Francis in Sestín

everyone could see him up close. During this time, the choir was singing vigorously and simultaneously a man was leading cheers and otherwise yelling into a microphone. Then the motorcade disappeared behind the altar area and after a long time, the procession appeared from around the side with Pope Francis walking last. He seemed to plan every step very carefully. I don't



Pope Francis presented a golden rose to the Mother of Sorrows, a Pietà statue in Sestín

know if he was in pain or was worried about falling—probably both. He presided for most of the Divine Liturgy from his cathedra behind the altar, but he gave the great blessings and also the conclusion of the Eucharistic Prayer, so

I think you could say he was the main celebrant. At the altar were Archbishop Jan (Babjak) and the other Byzantine Catholic bishops of Slovakia, while the rest of us were on either side of the altar, including important cardinals and the head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. What a great witness to the universality of the Catholic Faith both in time and in space! I think there were 40,000 lay people. It was a small crowd for such an event in this area, but the strict registration and vaccine requirements limited the participation. The Divine Liturgy was mostly in Slovak with some Church Slavonic, and the Pope's parts were in Italian.

The Pope preached a powerful sermon about the Cross, of course. Saint Paul says, "May I never glory in anything except the cross of Jesus Christ." Pope Francis told us that when we are joined to the Cross, we can have no enemies. Everyone we see is a beloved child of God for whom Jesus died on the Cross. I asked that our priests read his sermon in our churches the following Sunday. We could see it was difficult for him to walk to the podium and read.

One of the most beautiful parts of the ceremony was the Communion of the faithful. A veritable army of solemn assistants came up the main aisle in a double column. One carried two cups and a lot of spoons. Other carried a huge yellow parasol, not yet opened. One by one the priests walked over with their chalices and were escorted to their assigned area by two attendants. At the assigned place, the parasol was opened, so there was a sea of yellow umbrellas in the crowd showing where the Body and Blood of Jesus was being given to the people. I might add that there were priests hearing confessions before the Divine Liturgy since many people here will absolutely not receive Communion without confession first. Bishop Nil himself went to confession to a priest just before each celebration. The clergy and people performed an astounding work distributing Communion to tens of thousands of faithful safely, tranquilly, and with great dignity and reverence. I was so proud to be part of this Church!

At the end of the Divine Liturgy, the great icon of the Theotokos, Our Lady of Kokločovo, was brought to the front. The Holy Father blessed two new crowns for the icon, and then spent some time praying before the icon. The Pope and the Slovak bishops processed



Communion distribution in Prešov. You can see a yellow parasol wherever the priest is giving the Body and Blood of Jesus to the faithful.



Archbishop Babjak seated with pilots in our military transport plane that carried us back from Bratislava to Kosice

out, and we were free to leave. Strangely enough, it was such a busy week, I can't remember what we did for lunch afterwards, but I'm sure they fed us heartily.

Although the Holy Father had already spent a week in Hungary for many events at the Eucharistic Congress, after Divine Liturgy, while we rested, he traveled to Košice to meet with the enormous, poor Gypsy community. The Gypsies call themselves "Roma," by the way. In Hungary and Slovakia, our Greek Catholic clergy have a very beautiful ministry to the Gypsies and many of them are part of our church. In seminary, Monsignor George Durisin told us that our church has a special relationship with them, and in my first parish in California, there was a community that showed up every Christmas Day after services for Baptisms. I baptized them without question based on what Monsignor Durisin told us.

I didn't know about any other events except our Divine Liturgy, but that afternoon, Archbishop Babjak insisted that I catch a ride to Bratislava for the Pope's Mass the next day. It was a long and beautiful drive through the Tatra Mountains, though I slept for a lot of the ride. It was just as well. The driver, an Italian deacon, drove 180 kph whenever possible, which is 112 mph. The next morning, we were on buses again bright and early to go to Sastin Straze, the great national shrine of Slovakia dedicated to Our Lady of Sorrows. Today the service was a Mass in the Latin Rite, so the Pope was indisputably the main celebrant. Perhaps it was easier the day before when he stayed on his Cathedra most of the service. I wouldn't say it was shorter because numerous hymns were added such as the *Stabat Mater*. The organizers told me that the Cathedra, or chair, had to be built to very exacting specification for his health problems. It was a certain height, so he was half standing and half sitting and had a special cushion in the back so that he didn't sit back too far. The stairs were also very precise. They were told that each step had to be exactly 15 centimeters. But then, perhaps because of his surgery, the Vatican said each step had to be exactly 10 centimeters. That's only four inches. So, everything had to be rebuilt at the last minute. The carpenter was happy, though, because he considered it such an honor for the occasion.

Once again, we had to be in place extremely early. This time there was tight

security even for the bishops, just like at an airport. We had to walk through the metal detector and empty our pockets. A young man searched all my vestments and took my mitre out to inspect it. After we were fully dressed, we realized it was still over two hours before the Mass started. This time, the leaders of Slovakia were all present for the Mass, and the seat of honor in the front was empty until the Pope's motorcade was arriving. Then security escorted the lovely President of Slovakia to her seat. She had to visit with many people seeking an audience and appeared pleasant and gracious through all that. She sat or stood with great composure throughout the long Mass. Many of the politicians knelt on the ground after they received communion.

For this Mass, there was an ornate statue of Our Lady of Sorrows in front of the altar area. This time, the Pope blessed a golden rose which was a gift for the grieving Theotokos and her Divine Son. We were so close that I was able to take a good picture of the Holy Father for you, though his head was a little in the shade. I only packed red vestments for September 14. Everyone wore white or blue vestments the next day. Archbishop Babjak does not miss any details, so he sent a priest with white vestments for me, but I still had my dark purple mitre from the day before, so it's easy to spot me on television. The Holy Father prayed reverently before the statue for a while and then processed out. This time, a bus took us to a Pauline monastery for lunch.

I had to stay close to Archbishop Babjak because, this time, we were flying back to Prešov on a military plane. We arrived at the Bratislava airport and went to the special entrance, not the one for the general public. That doesn't mean we didn't have security though! We had to walk through the metal detector and have all our baggage searched and x-rayed. Then, we got into cars to drive out to the plane, but they changed their minds and we got out of the cars and walked out to the plane. It was a gray military transport plane with propellers, not jets. We entered through a ramp at the back. They handed out bottles of water and ear plugs. It was a fun adventure to end the day. After we were airborne, people walked up front to look out the front windshield. The military people were so happy to have Archbishop Babjak on board that they sent him to the cockpit for the landing and he got to ride in the center jump seat.

My plan for Thursday, besides overeating of course, was to get a COVID test, which is required for re-entry into the United States, even if you are vaccinated. It turned out the center was closed, so I had to move the test to Friday. Thursday evening, we celebrated a reverent Divine Liturgy in the very beautiful Cathedral of Prešov, where the bodies of Blessed Peter Paul Gojdich and Blessed Basil Hopko are underneath. At the Divine Liturgy, I prayed for Father George Bujnak who was in his final days on earth. The service was in Slovak, but they let me sing a few prayers in Church Slavonic. I was pretty rusty, but I only made one really big mistake.



The military transport plane, an Alena C27J Spartan, one of two owned by the Slovak Air Force

On Thursday, we also drove out to the village church of Lutina, a popular pilgrimage destination for our Church in east Slovakia. It contains the relics of several modern saints and floor to ceiling mosaics by Father Rupnik. While Father Rupnik was working on the mosaic of Blessed John Paul, the second miracle was approved, and he changed it to Saint John Paul in anticipation of the canonization. Archbishop Babjak wanted to visit Lutina to give thanks for the successful and safe completion of the visit of the Holy Father to the

Normally, the students take turns cooking for each other, and discussions follow late into the night. That day was the birthday of Father Juraj's wife, Kathy, so it was a birthday party for her. We had great fettuccine with a little spinach and salmon. It was fascinating to hear well-reasoned observations from young people from all over the world. The Institute was founded in Vienna by the Cardinal Archbishop at the request of Saint John Paul as a meeting place for East and West in the center of Europe.

The next morning, Father Juraj drove me to the Vienna airport for my flight home. After starting into security and emptying my pockets, I realized that I still had the rather sophisticated key to my room. I think it was very expensive. I was able to call Father Juraj and it turned out he hadn't left the parking lot yet. He came hurrying back. I was able to hand the key over the wall and was free to head for my plane.



The shrine at Lutina, Slovakia. Among other attractions is a beautiful rosary walk with an artificial brook in the middle and numerous miraculous icons.

Eucharistic Congress in Hungary and followed by his visit to Slovakia—the Divine Liturgy in Prešov, the meeting with the Roma or Gypsies in Košice, and the Mass at the National Shrine in Sastin.

My last day in Slovakia, some priests took me to the hospital for my COVID test so I could re-enter the United States, and then to Košice to catch my plane to Vienna. I had to stay the night in Vienna, so the International Theological Institute kindly gave me a room, and we celebrated the Divine Liturgy that evening for the community, celebrating with Father Juraj Terek and a Ukrainian priest who is the Vicar for all Eastern Catholics in the Archdiocese of Vienna. After the Divine Liturgy, we had a banquet prepared by Irina, the wife of the Ukrainian priest.

I will always remember my trip to Slovakia of 2021: the beautiful Eucharist celebrated in red vestments for the Cross with the successor to Peter, celebrated in the language of the people as the Pope of Rome had encouraged 13 centuries earlier; the spirited singing; and the reverent and moving distribution of Holy Communion to the vast crowd. I will remember the warm hospitality of everyone and their gracious welcome even though they were far too busy. May God bless the Slovak Republic abundantly, and all of her children around the world.

+ Kurt Brunette

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PEOPLE YOU KNOW AROUND THE EPARCHY

IN HILLSBOROUGH...

Knights and Dames of Malta Pray at Saint Mary's

On Tuesday evening, September 7, Knights and Dames of the Order of Malta from around New Jersey joined the parish family of Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church in Hillsborough, NJ, for the celebration of Vespers and Divine Liturgy for the Feast of the Nativity of the Virgin Theotokos (September 8). The members of the Order of Malta also celebrate the feast of their patroness, Our Lady of Palermo, on September 8. Pictured are Knights and Ladies of the Order of Malta, along with (from left to right in the first row) Deacon Nicholas Sotack of Saint Mary Parish, Father James Badeaux, pastor of Saint Mary Parish, and Father David Skoblaw, a Knight Grand Cross of the Order of Malta, and administrator of Our Lady of Mount Virgin Roman Catholic Church in Middlesex, NJ. After the liturgical services, a social event was held for the Knights and Dames of Malta in the parish fellowship hall. The entire event was coordinated by Saint Mary parishioner, Michael Bates, a Knight of Magistral Grace in the Order of Malta.



Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church in Hillsborough, NJ, began the new year of Eastern Christian Formation (ECF) classes for the children of the parish on Sunday, September 12. The children in the parish ECF program, along with their teachers and parents, were asked to attend the 8:30 AM Divine Liturgy that Sunday to receive a special blessing at the end of the Divine Liturgy from Father

James Badeaux, the pastor of the parish. Pictured are some of the children of the ECF program with parents, teachers, and the ECF Coordinator, Julie Klikus (on the right, wearing a white mask), while Father Jim blesses the children and teachers with holy water. Deacon Nick Sotack, parish deacon, is standing next to the icon of Christ in the icon screen.

IN RAHWAY...

Annual Pet Blessing



Saint Thomas the Apostle Byzantine Catholic Church in Rahway, NJ, recently hosted the annual blessing of pets, drawing four-legged, furry friends from throughout the parish and around the neighborhood. Pets and their owners gathered in their cars in the church parking lot on Saturday morning, September 18, as Archpriest James Hayer, Pastor, welcomed everyone and broadcast the Pet Blessing Prayer via FM radio transmission. At the end of the prayer, everyone signaled "Amen" by honking their horns and flashing their headlights! What a beautiful noise and sight it was!



Following the prayer, each pet was blessed individually, and their owners received a Certificate of Blessing as well as a keepsake gift – a keychain bearing the image of Saint Mamas, Patron of Pet Blessing, and a prayer for the safety of pets.

May God, through the prayers of Saint Mamas, keep our pets safe and healthy and allow them to serve the needs for which they were created!

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

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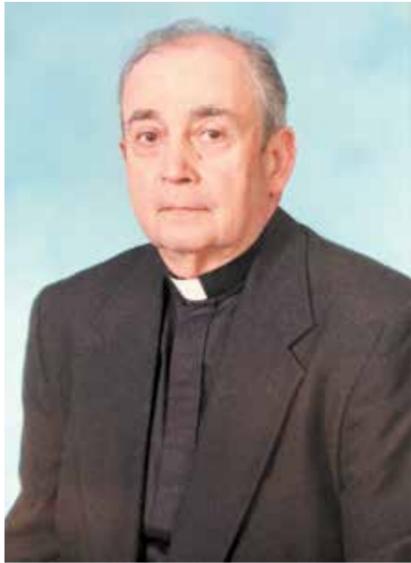
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IN BLESSED REPOSE: +FATHER GEORGE BUJNAK



Father George Bujnak, a retired priest of the Eparchy of Passaic, and a resident of Amity Village, Hazleton, PA, fell asleep in the Lord on September 16, 2021, at Lehigh Valley Hospital, Hazleton, following a brief illness. Prior to his retirement, he was Pastor of Saint Michael Byzantine Catholic Church in McAdoo, PA.

Father George was born in Coaldale, PA, on March 6, 1935, to Andrew Bujnak and Mary Trudich. Following graduation from Lehigh High School, he entered the Byzantine Catholic Seminary of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Pittsburgh, PA, to pursue studies for the priesthood. He graduated from Duquesne University in 1961 with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Philosophy.

After graduation, he continued his theological studies at Saints Cyril and Methodius Byzantine Catholic Seminary. He received the Order of Reader on February 2, 1963, at Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church, Pittsburgh, PA, by Bishop +Nicholas (Elko); the Order of Sub-Deacon on December 29, 1963,

at the Cathedral of Saint Michael the Archangel, Passaic, NJ, by then-Bishop Stephen (Kocisko); the Order of Deacon on August 30, 1964, at Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church, Trenton, NJ, by then-Bishop Stephen (Kocisko). He was ordained to the Priesthood of Jesus Christ on March 21, 1965, at the Cathedral of Saint Michael the Archangel in Passaic, NJ, also by then-Bishop Stephen (Kocisko).

After ordination in 1965, Father George was appointed as Assistant Pastor at Saint John Byzantine Catholic Church, Hazleton, PA. In 1969, he was appointed Pastor of Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church, Saint Clair, PA and Administrator of Saint Mary, Brockton, PA. During the course of his priestly ministry, he served the parish communities of Saint Michael Byzantine Catholic Church, Pittston, PA, and Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church, Nesquehoning, PA. He was also on the National Federation of Christian Life Communities, Hazleton District. In 2001, he was appointed Pastor of Saint Michael Byzantine Catholic Church, McAdoo, PA, where he remained until moving to his current residence of Amity Village in Hazleton in 2016.

The Funeral of a Priest Parts 1 and 2 were celebrated at Saint Michael Byzantine Catholic Church, McAdoo, on September 23, 2021. A Hierarchical Divine Liturgy with Panachida and Pouring of Oil was celebrated by Bishop Kurt on September 24, 2021, followed by Interment at the Saint John the Baptist Cemetery in Summit Hill, PA.

“Well done, my good and faithful servant ... Come, share your master’s joy!” (Mt 23)

May his memory be eternal!

+FATHER MYRON BADNEROSKY FALLS ASLEEP IN THE LORD

Father Myron M. Badnerosky, formerly of Levittown, PA, passed away peacefully on July 5, 2021, at Tidewell Hospice in Lakewood Ranch, FL. Father Myron received the Sacramental Mysteries of the Church the day before he died.

Father Myron was born in McKeesport, PA, the son of the late Michael Andrew and Anna (Molnar) Badnerosky. He is survived by his cousins: Nadine Hecceg, Trevor Hecceg, and Tanya Martynik of Endicott, NY, plus the Dowling and Klimow families.

Father Myron graduated from McKeesport Public School System in 1948. He entered the seminary and attended Lisle Benedictine University in Lisle, IL, until the opening of Saints Cyril and Methodius Byzantine Catholic Seminary in 1950, graduating from Duquesne University with honors



in 1952. He continued his studies at Saints Cyril and Methodius Seminary until 1956.

Father Myron was ordained to the priesthood on Pentecost Sunday, May 20, 1956. After a few years in other parishes, Bishop +Nicholas (Elko) sent Father Myron to Our Lady of Perpetual Help Byzantine Church, Levittown,

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PA, in 1959, where he remained until his retirement in 2018. This past May was his 65th Anniversary as a Byzantine Catholic priest! Father Myron served his parish well and designed the current Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, which is still regarded as a premiere landmark in Bucks County.

After his retirement, he moved to Florida, where the relaxed lifestyle suited him. He dearly loved his new friends and neighbors. He bonded with the men due to his love of antique cars; the ladies loved to talk with Father Myron because he was such a “good listener”

and his sense of humor kept one and all on their toes. His love for his little boy in a furry suit, “S’ami” was legendary.

Calling hours were held at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Byzantine Catholic Church, Levittown, PA, on Saturday, August 21, 2021, followed by a Memorial Divine Liturgy. Interment was at Sunset Memorial Park, Huntingdon Valley, PA.

Eternal Memory!

Vicnaja jemu pamjat’!



SAINT MARY PARISH IN TRENTON CELEBRATES ITS 130TH ANNIVERSARY

by Roger Embley, Retired Trustee

We can all agree that this anniversary came to pass only by the will of our Lord God to whom we are most reverently grateful, and through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Theotokos, our Patroness! It is fitting that we reflect on all our family members, clergy and religious who were responsible for the creation of this parish through their selfless and dedicated actions. In earlier years, the parish membership exceeded over one thousand families and filled a school enrollment of hundreds of children, mostly residing in the immediate neighborhood of the Church. Despite family maturation and normal dissemination, this parish continues to thrive, albeit smaller in number, but with enduring spirit and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ!

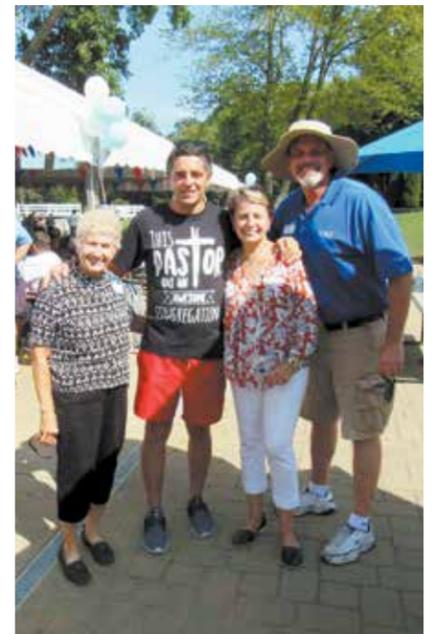
Let us pause and also reflect on the anticipation and planning of this historic celebratory event whereby our ances-

archical Divine Liturgy. Father Yuriy Oros, Parochial Administrator, with the Trustees, members of the Finance Committee, Picnic Committee, Choral Director, office staff, and other volunteers, began meeting to strategize and plan for this most important parish happening. Knowing that creating and successfully organizing an event would be worthy of this anniversary would require additional funding, parishioners began by generating funds through the sale of stuffed cabbage trays and the baking of beautifully-decorated *medovniki*, also in honor of the feast day. Additionally, letters were sent to the Church's vendors announcing the anniversary and offering them the opportunity to participate through their financial support, which proved to be beneficial. It is particularly noteworthy to gratefully acknowledge the extreme generosity of Abby Rose Monument Co. for the substantial marble monu-

The eventful day came upon us, August 15, 2021, and Our gracious Lord provided a beautiful sun-filled blue sky under which we could accomplish our thanksgiving and celebration of Saint Mary Church and Parish family. With the church's twin bell towers ringing, the procession of clergy and altar servers with Bishop Kurt began to enter the magnificent edifice while enveloped in professional choral singing directed by Cantor Andrew Skitko. As the procession made its way through the crowd and approached the looming, tiered, white and gold iconostasis decorated floral arrangements spread along its base, there was a sense of awesome spiritual majesty. Additionally, there on the vested marble altar was displayed a magnificent golden ornately domed Tabernacle with candelabra and processional cross with *ripidia* standing behind. The clergy entered the Holy Place to begin the spiritual celebration of the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy led by Bishop Kurt with Father Yuriy Oros, Administrator, Father John Zeyack and Father Edward Cimbala, parish vocations, Father Gregory Noga, previous Pastor, Father Paul West of OLPH, Levittown, PA, and Father David George of Saint Basil Romanian Greek Catholic Church, Trenton, concelebrating.

To further the celebration of this historic anniversary, all the pastors who served Saint Mary Parish throughout the years were memorialize with their names inscribed on a magnificent stone monument, specially dedicated and blessed by Bishop Kurt. Also present on the memorial are the names of all the vocations from the parish, whether they be priests or sisters. The monument stands prominently next to the Church for all to view and to read the appropriate quote of the Apostle John 15:16: "You did not choose Me but I chose you," continuing with "in appreciation of all of our Pastors who served the Assumption of the Virgin Mary (Saint Mary) Parish". This being the currently used name since the church's restoration and renovation project in traditional Byzantine theme a decade or more ago. It was derived through the literal translation on the church's cornerstone.

Since there was also a need for sufficient parking for our parishioners, the vacant convent next to the church was demolished. Again, with thoughtful remembrance, usable bricks from the convent were sponsored by the parishioners, with names of their families and family members inscribed on them. The bricks would then be arranged to form an ancestral memorial walkway from the parking area to the church.



Now, after having offered our prayers for the souls of our departed ancestral founders and faithful, and those prayers of genuine Thanksgiving for all of God's abundant blessings and those of our Bishop Kurt, the second phase of our celebration unfolded. An outdoor picnic was held and the Lord blessed the parishioners with superb weather. Held on the sixty-scenic-acre grounds of Liberty Lake near Bordentown, NJ with pavilions, benches, pools, paddle boats, game areas, and the full array of typical picnic food available for the duration, a great time was to be had by the more than 250 attending. Joining our parishioners were also those of OLPH Church of Levittown, PA, and of Saint Nicholas Parish of Roebling, NJ. It was a great opportunity for Bishop Kurt to mingle and greet all in this informal setting. It also proved to be a great opportunity for a parish family of over twenty-five members to seize upon this occasion to bring about a gloriously successful family reunion! While Father Yuriy, his family, parishioners, and



tors, in 1891, gave birth to our parish and subsequently the construction of our cathedral-style church, where we had the opportunity and to offer our spiritual thanksgiving through a Hier-

archical stone donation with installation and the GCU for its continuing financial support.

special guests were either strolling the grounds, eating, or enjoying a refreshing swim, live music was provided by the Continental Gypsies Band. It certainly appears that a great afternoon was had by all with some expressing that it should become an annual event!

With the day waning, this 130th Anniversary Celebration, with all of its activities, was truly remarkable and one to be remembered and cherished forever! Father Yuriy and the parish family of

Saint Mary Parish would like to praise and thank all those who dedicated their time and effort in participating in any or all of the aspects commemorating this joyful historic event with the prayerful blessings of our Lord God Almighty.



LIFE, LOVE, AND THE HUMAN PERSON

By Ann M. Koshute, MTS

DISTURBING THE PEACE

There is so much chaos around us, and it goes beyond pandemics and politics. I'm talking about the spiritual and emotional turmoil that touches everyone's lives to one degree or another. Worry, anxiety, and depression are one manifestation of the upset in our world, a "disturbing of the peace" that certainly has its spiritual elements (everything does). We still have a way to go to break apart the stigma that remains around such emotional and psychological difficulties, which can be addressed through therapy, the care of a physician and, along with professional help, changes to our diet. Our bodies and spirits surely are "wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14), and while it can be complicated, the beautiful dynamic of body and soul, created by God in His image to form a unique and whole person, is truly a marvel.

The kind of upset I've mostly been thinking about lately is related to the martyrdom of John the Baptist. Ever since we commemorated this feast in August the circumstances around this event keep popping into my mind. Many of us remember the story from childhood religious education classes, or from watching movies like *The Bible*, or *Jesus of Nazareth*. John is the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth, and cousin to Jesus. He is the Baptizer, which is important, but this role serves one goal: to announce the coming of the Messiah and preach repentance. John is a prophet, which means he surely described, warned, and alerted the people

to future events. But most importantly, a prophet tells the truth. Often these are "hard truths," ones that people don't like to hear because it shakes them out of their malaise, calls them to action, and (perhaps most difficult to take) calls out their sinfulness, and calls them away from it. This is most certainly the case for John, who tells the Good News of salvation and the Kingdom, but not apart from a serious conversion of heart.

Whether you remember from childhood, your own reading of Scripture, or from the movies, most of us know that John's boldness in preaching conversion from sin did not go unnoticed by King Herod – or his wife, who also happened to be his brother Philip's wife. In a story pre-dating reality TV, Herod took his brother's wife from him and made Herodias a not-quite-legitimate queen. John preached within earshot of the conniving royals and called out their adultery and love of power. This message was not received with anything close to an open heart, and John was soon arrested for his unflinching truth-telling, which threatened Herodias' hold on power, and Herod's conscience. We know the rest of the story, which ends in the beheading of John the Baptist through Herodias' manipulation of her daughter and the King.

The details around John's beheading are familiar to most of us, but it is the King's reaction to the Baptizer's preaching, and his upset at having to carry out

the execution, that I hadn't given much thought to before now. The Gospels make clear that Herod was both repelled by and attracted to John's preaching. While this position seems contradictory on its face, we can all reflect on moments in which we professed our love for God, participated enthusiastically in the Divine Liturgy – and yet struggled with a particular sin, perhaps to the point of rationalizing our "giving in" as something not all that serious, or which the Church "ought to change" Her mind on. If we are honest with ourselves, we will acknowledge that, like Herod, the summons to allow God to convert our hearts is both what we desire, and what frightens us most.

Perhaps it is because of the turmoil our country and the world have been thrown into the last year and a half that I've been reflecting more intentionally on how the Gospel should "disturb our peace," in two significant ways. First, in pricking our consciences to recognize when we have done wrong, when we're going down a wrong or destructive path, and when we're not paying enough attention to what the Lord is calling us to in how we live and how we relate to Him and others. Second, hearing the Gospel should "disturb" or disrupt our complacency and cause us to actively live our faith (through a consistent prayer life, reception of the Holy Mysteries, and charitable acts), and to witness our belief in God to believers and non-believers alike. When Herod heard John's preaching, he knew in his

heart that the prophet was speaking truth, and perhaps he sparked within the King some desire to repent and live differently. The "peace" within Herod was being disturbed in a way that is spiritually healthy – not in a way that "Catholic guilt" is often painted as a caricature, where one can never escape the mark of one's iniquity. Herod was attracted to the freedom that comes from submitting oneself to God, not as a slave but as a child who is loved by his Father. Unfortunately for the king, he allowed his "peace" to be disturbed not by the promptings of the Spirit, but by his vanity (thinking of his status and satisfying his ego), and by the manipulation of Herodias.

Peace is not merely a symbol on a tied shirt, the relic of a past decade. Nor is it a placid state where one seems unbothered and unencumbered, like the Buddha meditating under a tree. For Byzantine Catholic Christians, we who were created as icons of the Trine God, and who have been given the gift of personal encounters with Him through the Holy Mysteries, peace is not a state of mind or a utopian ideal. For us, peace is a sign of the presence of Christ in us, and our task in this earthly life is to strive to remain in His peace. If once in a while our peace is "disturbed," let's pay attention to it. It could be the devil trying to make us fear God and pull away from Him. But it also could be God's word shaking us out of our self-centeredness and calling us to repent and return to Him. **ECL**



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On a Monday at the beginning of September, I headed off to the church to do my normal “sprucing up” from the weekend. Upon my arrival, I was greeted by a half dozen buzzards nosing around the building. This is not so much out of the norm because, if an animal dies in the woods behind the church, the buzzards are usually around for a day or two. This time, however, they were in the front of the property, which was unusual. As I got closer to the doors of the church, I saw it: the deer upon which a multitude of God’s creatures, both great and small, were feasting. “Oh great,” I thought as I heaved a sigh and walked over to inspect the carcass.

At first, I assumed it was a buck and someone had poached it to cut off the antlers. Upon further investigation, I discovered it was a doe who was simply kind enough to expire on the grass right in front of the church as opposed to anywhere else on the 10+ acre property. I will spare you the details and simply say that the sight was exactly how one would imagine it. The smell of death and decay hung in the air as I thought, “Well, this isn’t good for business!” So, I called the municipal animal control.

Three days later they returned my call informing me that I called the wrong animal control office and that I had to call “the other animal control office.” So, I called the “other office” and they told me they wouldn’t pick it up because it was on the property, not the side of the road, and I had to call the PA Game Commission. When I called the Game Commission, they told me that they couldn’t pick it up because our church is on a state road, and I would have to call PennDOT. By now, it was Friday and I was losing patience as the carcass is decomposing more each day. Finally, I got a hold of PennDOT, and they informed me that it will be “a few days” before they would be there to pick it up because they “only have one deer guy for the entire county.”

Two weeks passed and the deer or, rather, what was left of it, was still there.

What was once a majestic creature was now bones scattered all across the grass, dry and bleached white by the sun. Fittingly, on the Feast of the Exaltation of

the Cross, I decided that enough was enough. My son and I headed over and collected all the bones and disposed of them properly, all the while discussing deer anatomy while sweating in the blaring sun of mid-afternoon prior to evening Liturgy. As we combed the property for all we could find, I couldn’t help but think of Ezekiel and the prophecy of dry bones. So, I went home, opened the Bible, read through Ezekiel 37, and meditated on the experience I just had with my son.

The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley; it was full of bones. And he led me round among them; and behold, there were very many upon the valley; and lo, they were very dry. And he said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” And I answered, “O Lord GOD, thou knowest.” Again he said to me,

“Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD.”

So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold, a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to its bone. And as I looked, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, “Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.” So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great host. (vv. 1-10)

PRIESTLY REFLECTIONS

Father Paul Varchola West



“SON OF MAN, CAN THESE BONES LIVE?”

I recalled picking up one of the leg bones, joints still attached and moving in the air as I held them, thinking how much work I have ahead of me at the parish—I have so much more that needs to be cleaned up—and here I am cleaning up a dead deer. Then I thought of the current state of affairs of our society, the Church, and the world, and became very despondent based on the fact that so much work needs to be done, there is so much in need of cleaning. How can it all get done?

Then he said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are clean cut off.’ Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you home into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken, and I have done it, says the LORD.” (Ezk. 37:11-14)

When we feel dried up, cut off, and at a loss for hope, we need to turn no further than the Cross to realize that, no matter how much of a seemingly losing battle may be being fought, the Cross is the only sign of victory that we need. Just as the bronze seraph in the wilderness (Num. 21:6-9), the Son of Man was raised upon the Wood of the Cross that we may look upon it and live (John 3:14-15). More so, the Son of Man was also raised from the dead, not for His own sake, but that we might be raised up with Him (John 3:16-17). Just as my son and I gathered together those scattered, dried bones, Christ too, will gather all of us—the scattered, the dried up, the lost—that we all be made whole again. While our bones may seem dry, listless and at the mercy of the decay of this world, we must never forget that the Lord will open our graves, raise us up, put His Spirit within us, and place us in the land of the Everlasting Kingdom. Until that day, we must be patient, watchful, and prayerful as we tend to the scattered bones in this age so that, in the age to come, we may rejoice when the Lord will “wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away,” and all things will be made new (Rev. 21:4-5). **ECL**

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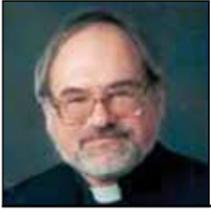


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THE BYZANTINE LITURGY

By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD

THE ANAPHORA: UNITY

In the Gospel of Saint John, at the Last Supper, our Lord taught the disciples that the foundation of his message was to bring the human race into unity: "I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as You, Father, are in me and I in You, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that You sent me." (John 17:20-21) We have been created in the image of God, and God is one in a unity so powerful and complete that we may say, "God is love." (1 John 4:16) Jesus told us that "If you love me, you will keep my commandments," (John 14:15) and his commandment is found in the Gospel of Saint Matthew, "be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matthew 5:48) This perfection consists in being in unity with one another in love, as again Saint John explains, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another. No one has ever seen God. Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us, and His love is brought to perfection in us." (1 John 4:11-12) It is clear from what God has revealed that this is more than just tolerance of one another, more than just a compromise of ideologies, more than rugged individualism that avoids conflicts, but it is being in God's image, of living in that one human nature that was created to be God-like, sharers "in the divine nature." (2 Peter 1:4)

In many ways in his gospel message, Jesus taught us how we were to be united. Our union with one another is established on God's life within us, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:37-39) This union in love admitted of no exceptions, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you." (Matthew 5:43-44) Certainly, economic or political ideologies, which attempt to divide us into classes or clans or tribes, cannot take precedence over the commandment of love, as Saint Paul pointed out, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28) The same basic unity of all humanity was also taught by our Lord. This is the reason for the parable of the Good Samaritan. When the "scholar of the law" asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbor, (Luke 10:29)," Jesus replied with the story of the man who was the victim of robbers. He was not helped by the ones you would expect, the priest or Levite, but instead by a foreigner and heretic, a hated Samaritan, (Luke 10:29-37) revealing that we are one human race when we help, love and support one another despite race or tribe.

In the celebration of the Liturgy, we are certainly called to form one community united in God. Our Lord said this was necessary for the sacrifice, "if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift." (Matthew 5:23-24) Saint John Chrysostom said this was the reason for the Kiss of Peace in the Liturgy. Just after the priest brings the gifts of bread and wine to the Holy Table, the deacon says to the people, "Let us love one another." Saint John observes that "precisely while the very gift is lying there, when the sacrifice is already beginning, He sends you at that precise time to be reconciled to your brother. Neither after removing nor before presenting the gift, but precisely while it lies before you, you are to run to your brother." (The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 16.9) Though it may not be common today to actually exchange the kiss of peace physically, this is what the Liturgy is about. At the beginning of the Litur-

gy, the deacon asks us to pray, "for the stability of the holy Churches of God, and for the union of all." This is rightly a petition for all Christians in the universal Church, but it may also apply to the people present in the praying community, that we may be united in heart and soul. The recitation of the Creed is immediately joined to the kiss of peace, not for judgment or condemnation of others, but that we may worship in the unity of one basic faith.

We may now see this in the anaphora. Our eucharistic prayer ends with a doxology, our glorification of God, who has done wondrous works for our salvation, especially through his cross and resurrection, and in this doxology, we express our unity: "And grant that with one voice and one heart we may glorify and praise Your most honored and magnificent name." We then seal this prayer with our solemn assent by singing "Amen," the Hebrew word for "would that it be so." This has been the essential mark of the Christian community from the beginning. The words

of this doxology are taken from the description of the oneness of the community manifested by the earliest followers of Christ. The Acts of the Apostles describes this: "The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common. With great power, the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great favor was accorded them all." (Acts 4:32-33) When we celebrate the Liturgy, we bear witness to the resurrection. Christians, therefore, were a community of love and care for one another: "There was no needy person among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds of the sale, and put them at the feet of the apostles, and they were distributed to each according to need." (Acts 1:34-35) We must have the faith today that praying the Anaphora can bring us together to be of "one voice and one heart" in our Lord. **ECL**



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SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

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

ZION SHALL BE CALLED 'MOTHER'

The year was 626. The savage Avars had been at the gates of Constantinople for several months while the Emperor and the bulk of the army was waging war on Persian territory. Christian culture itself seemed threatened by the chaos of pagan error.

In this moment of crisis, Patriarch Sergius rallied the people with a procession around the city, invoking God's protection and the intercession of the Mother of God. They carried the city's most sacred relics, including the True Cross and the veil of the Theotokos. When the barbarian forces boldly attempted a simultaneous attack by land and by sea, the miracle Constantinople's faithful had prayed for was granted. A great storm suddenly churned up tidal waves, smashing the enemy fleet against the shore and provoking a full Persian retreat.

In gratitude, Patriarch Sergius gathered the entire population of the city in the Marian shrine at Blachernae to pay tribute to Mary as the author of the city's victory. This site, on the inlet of the Bosphorus Sea known as the Golden Horn, was the very place where the enemy fleet had gone down. They chanted the Akathist Hymn to the The-

otokos and a new kontakion, composed by Sergius for this occasion: "Hymns of victory to a conquering General, your city ascribes to you, O Theotokos, in thanksgiving for deliverance from dangers. But since you have unassailable power, set us free from every peril so that we may cry out to you: Rejoice unbridled Bride!" We still sing that kontakion on both Akathist Saturday and the Annunciation. The event itself was the first of the three miraculous interventions credited to the Mother of God to save the city of Constantinople, which we celebrate as the feast of the Protection (*Pokrova*) on October 1.

In 1989, at a time when there wasn't much good to be said about the city of Passaic, my venerable predecessor, Father Marcel Szabo, commissioned an icon of "Our Lady of Passaic," which was carried through the streets and remains enshrined in our cathedral. Countless prayers and candles later, Passaic looks a whole lot better than it did in 1989!

You might well ask, though, why the Virgin Mary should be identified with any city as its protectress? Many academics argue it is simply a continuation of pagan Greek practice. In fact, we can

trace the roots of Mary's Protection right back to the Old Testament. Especially in the prophecies of Isaiah, Zion or Jerusalem is described as "mother" of God's people (see, for example, Isaiah 49:14-23, 66:7-14). These promises of restoration and renewal all come at a dark time: when Jerusalem was besieged by the Assyrians (701) and finally destroyed by the Babylonians (587). One of them (Isaiah 60:4) inspired a stanza in the Paschal Canon of Saint John Damascene (Ode 8): "Lift up your eyes, O Zion, and behold: See your children coming to you from the east, west, north and south...."

Perhaps the most striking promise of all is found in the Psalms. The Hebrew text of Psalm 87 is complicated, and translations vary widely. The Greek version (the *Septuagint*, translated by Jews for Jews some 300 years before Christ and therefore hardly open to the charge of "tampering" by Christians) reads: "A man will say 'Mother Zion' and a man was born in her, for the Most High Himself founded it. The Lord shall describe it in a written account of the peoples and of the rulers, of those who were born in her. How glad are all who have their dwelling in you" (Psalm 87 [LXX 86]:5-7). Three details de-

serve attention here. 1: Zion is called 'Mother.' 2: One "man" born in her is singled out (our Lord Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin). 3: Zion is also identified as the mother of peoples (plural) from a variety of nations (the Church).

Mary's transition from solely Mother of Jesus to Mother of the Church is made clear under the Cross, when Jesus said to His beloved disciple: "Behold your Mother" (John 19:26-27). Just as the entire Old Testament tradition of sacrifices culminate in Jesus' perfect sacrifice on the Cross, so all the promises made about Zion coalesce around Mary as mother of the Church, the New Jerusalem. We see the Theotokos in both roles (Mother of Jesus/Mother of the Church) in Saint John's vision in Revelation 12, and in the glorious conclusion of that vision in the heavenly Church, the "New Jerusalem" of Revelation 21.

In light of all this, we might even recognize the *Pokrova* icon, which shows the Theotokos stretching her mantle over the assembled Church, foreshadowed in yet another prophecy where Isaiah envisions Zion and those who dwell in her "covered" and "sheltered" (Isaiah 4:5-6). **ECL**

SCHOOL OF PRAYER

Father G. Scott Boghossian



FLEE FROM THE MIDST OF BABYLON

Avoid the Near Occasions of Sin

"While still living in the palace, Abba Arsenius prayed to God in these words: 'Lord, lead me in the way of salvation.' And a voice came saying to him: 'Arsenius, flee from men, and you will be saved.' Having withdrawn to the solitary life, he made the same prayer again, and he heard a voice saying to him, 'Arsenius, flee, be silent, pray always, for these are the source of sinlessness.'"

While we cannot flee the world entirely, we should try to separate ourselves as much as we can from worldly temptations. "Come out from them, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean" (2 Cor. 6:17). A verse from the Psalms stands out as particularly descriptive of our time: "Do thou, O LORD, protect us, guard us ever from this generation. On every side the wicked prowls, as vileness is exalted among the sons of men" (Ps. 12:7-8).

"Occasions of sin are external circumstances - whether of things or persons - which either because of their special nature or because of the frailty com-

mon to humanity or peculiar to some individual, incite or entice one to sin" (*The Catholic Encyclopedia*).

Our Lord says, "if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched" (Mk. 9:43-48). This does not mean that we should mutilate ourselves physically, but that we should be willing to go to any length to avoid the people, places, and things that will lead us into sin.

In the Old Testament, we read, "flee from sin as from a snake; for if you approach sin, it will bite you" (Sir. 21:2). "Whoever loves danger will perish by it" (Sir. 3:26). "Can a man carry fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned? Or can one walk upon hot coals and his feet not be scorched?" (Pr. 6:27, 28). Potiphar's wife "grabbed Joseph by his cloak and said, 'Sleep with me!' But leaving his cloak in her hand, he escaped and ran outside" (Gen. 39:12).

The Israelites did not separate from the pagan nations that surrounded them and fell into terrible sins. In Psalm 106, we read, "They did not destroy the peoples, as the LORD commanded them, but they mingled with the nations and learned to do as they did. They served their idols, which became a snare to them. They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons they poured out innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan; and the land was polluted with blood. Thus, they became unclean by their acts, and played the harlot in their doings" (Ps. 106:34-39). Sounds familiar.

Saint Augustine says that "he who is unwilling to fly from danger, wishes to perish in it" and "in the occasion of falling into sin, take flight, if you desire to gain the victory." "When we expose ourselves to danger, God abandons us in it," says Saint Thomas Aquinas. Saint Alphonsus Liguori reports that "being once compelled by exorcisms to tell the sermon which displeased him most, the devil confessed that it was the sermon on avoiding the occasions of sin." Saint

Philip Neri said that in the war against the vice of impurity, cowards gain the victory, that is, those who fly from the occasions of sin. It doesn't matter how much prayer and penance you may do; if you don't flee from the near occasion of sin, you will fall.

For many people, the television, the computer, the internet, and the "smartphone" have become near occasions of sin. But freedom from the slavery of sin is possible if we separate ourselves from dangerous things. Do we really need the internet, a movie streaming service, and all sorts of social media in our pocket or purse, so easily accessible? Do our children and teens really need that? If it is a problem, then get rid of it. (Consider getting a "dumb phone.") Whatever we do, let us make every effort to avoid the near occasion of sin.

"Flee from the midst of Babylon; let everyone save his soul! Be not cut off in her punishment, for this is the time of the LORD's vengeance." - Jeremiah 51:6 **ECL**

SEASONAL REFLECTIONS

Father Ronald Hatton



SEEKING THE PROTECTION OF THE THEOTOKOS

With all the attention in the Catholic Church surrounding the Marian Apparition of Fatima, the Eastern Christian feast of the Protection or Patronage of the Theotokos, which we celebrate on the first of October, tends to get lost, even in the Byzantine Church. The day celebrates the appearance of the Theotokos at the Church of Panagia (All-holy One) of Blachernae, in modern-day Istanbul, and was a place of pilgrimage in Constantinople during the time of the Roman Empire. The apparition of the Theotokos which is commemorated this month took place in the tenth century. Tradition says that, during a time of siege of Constantinople, Saint Andrew of Constantinople, with his disciple Saint Epiphanius, and a group of people, saw the Theotokos, St. John the Baptist, and several other saints and angels during a vigil in the Church of Blachernae, nearby the city gates. The Blachernae Palace church was where several of her relics were kept. The relics were her robe, veil, and part of her belt that had been transferred from Palestine during the fifth century.

In her apparition, the Theotokos approached the center of the church, knelt down and remained in prayer for a long time. Her face was drowned in tears. Then she took her veil off and spread it over the people as a sign of protection. During the time, the people in the city were threatened by a barbarian invasion. After the appearance of the Theotokos, the danger was averted, and the city was spared from bloodshed and suffering. Because Saint Andrew was

a Slav, the celebration of this appearance is more fervently celebrated in the Slavic Churches than in the Greek Churches with a 12th century Russian chronicle describing the establishment of this day as a feast day in the Russian Church.

Many of our parishes are dedicated to the feast of the Protection of the Theotokos. Our Festal Menaion (the book containing the texts used for Vespers and Matins of our feast days) provides for a Great Vespers with Litija as well as a Matins for the feast, though, unfortunately, we seldom see these celebrated in our parishes. Associated with these services are very beautiful hymns to our Blessed Mother, which we should not allow to fall out of use in our worship.

“Heaven and earth are sanctified. The Church is radiant, and all the people are rejoicing. Behold, the Theotokos, together with the angelic hosts, the Forerunner, and the Theologian [the Holy Apostle and Evangelist John], with the prophets and the apostles has invisibly entered. She prays to Christ in behalf of all Christians that He may have mercy on our city and all people who glorify the feast of her Protection.”

“All the leaders of the heavenly armies form a spiritual choir of and rejoice with all of us when they see the Lady and Queen of All praised by the faithful. The spirits of the just also rejoice as they witness the vision of the Queen praying with outstretched arms. She asks for peace in the world, power and strength for our Church, and salvation

of our souls.” –At Psalm 140 for the Vespers of the Feast.

During this month, whether in the Roman or Byzantine Catholic Church, we should especially devote our prayer to asking our Blessed Mother for her protection, as we face the uncertainties of life, the attacks of demons, illness, or external crisis in our daily lives. She intercedes always for us, as a good mother should, but we should never take that intercession for granted, but offer praises to her and venerate her as the Theotokos and the Saint of Perfect Submission to the will of God. I will offer here a couple more hymns which we can use as special prayer during this month:

“Let us assemble today, O faithful, and praise the immaculate Queen of all,

the most-pure Virgin, the Mother of Christ our God; for she always mercifully extends her hands to her Son. In amazement, Andrew saw her in a cloud, protecting the faithful with her mantle. Let us fervently sing to her: Rejoice, O protection, defense, and salvation of our souls.” –Litija for the Vespers

“O most holy Lady, Virgin Theotokos, extend you holy mantle over us; guide and protect our rulers and all your people from every evil. As the holy Andrew saw you in a vision while praying, so today, O holy Lady, show us your loving protection.” –Hymn of Light at the Matins of the Feast

As we sing in our Divine Liturgy, “Through the prayers of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us!” **ECL**

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.

INFERTILITY MINISTRY COMPETING AS CATHOLIC INNOVATORS

Springs in the Desert is a Catholic community formed to accompany those carrying the cross of infertility and loss, to discover how God is transforming this desert path into fruitfulness. Now, this apostolate is competing in Our Sunday Visitor Institute's OSV Challenge 2021 for Catholic innovators. Founded by Kimberly Henkel, PhD, and Ann Koshute, MTS (parishioner of Saint Ann Byzantine Catholic Church in Harrisburg, PA) Springs in the Desert offers resources, support and accompaniment for women and couples experiencing the isolation and unique suffering of infertility. They entered the OSV Challenge as a way to benefit from the business mentoring offered, as well as the prize money awarded to semi-finalists and winners of the Challenge. Six hundred-fifty ministries applied to the Challenge, and one hundred-eighty two made it to the second round. Now Springs in the Desert joins just twenty-four other ministries to move on to the semifinal round. “We are humbled and honored to be among

such innovative and beautiful ministries, all working to serve others and build up the Kingdom,” said Ann Koshute. “As semi-finalists we will receive \$10,000 to fortify our programs and provide even more resources and support to women and couples.” The Springs in the Desert Team will also enter a six-week accelerator program where they will receive mentoring to hone their business model, and spiritual formation. If they reach the finals they will be among eleven other ministries to pitch their programs at a showcase in Houston, TX, this September. Finalists will compete for one of three grand prizes of \$100,000 and a year of coaching. We pray for their success in the Challenge and that God will bless their ministry! Springs in the Desert is served by their Spiritual Father, Father Paul Varchola West, Administrator of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Byzantine Catholic Church, Levittown, PA. Find out more at www.springsinthedesert.org



CARPATHO-RUSYN SOCIETY

MANIFESTING CARPATHO-RUSYN CULTURE AND HISTORY

The mission of the Carpatho-Rusyn Society is to preserve and perpetuate the distinct culture, history, language, and heritage of the Carpatho-Rusyn people.

The Society offers many educational programs online at Carpatho-Rusyn Society You Tube. Also offered are genealogy presentations on Zoom and expert help in finding your roots. Our new addition is our Heritage Store, where you will find educational materials, maps, flags and accessories. We will constantly be adding more items.

Visit our website at www.c-rs.org and click on “Get Involved” to become a member.

For more information contact: Bonnie Burke, Southeast Coordinator at bb@c-rs.org or call 440 729-2045.

EPARCHIAL PARISHES LIVE-STREAM THE DIVINE SERVICES
 Below are just a few examples from our eparchy

Below is a list of many of the Parishes of the Eparchy of Passaic which are Live streaming Divine Liturgy on Saturday, Sunday, and Holy Days. You may access the links to their streaming sites (Facebook, Youtube, etc.) on our website: www.eparchyofpassaic.com.

CONNECTICUT

Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church—Danbury, CT
 Saint John the Baptist—Trumbull, CT

NEW JERSEY

Cathedral of Saint Michael the Archangel—Passaic, NJ
 Assumption of the Virgin Mary (Saint Mary)—Trenton, NJ
 Our Lady of Perpetual Help—Toms River, NJ
 Our Lady of Perpetual Help—Toms River, NJ—Radio
 Saint Michael Byzantine Catholic Church—Perth Amboy, NJ
 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 Catholic Church—Mont Clare, PA
 Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church—Wilkes-Barre, PA
 Saint Mary Pokrova Byzantine Catholic Church—Kingston, PA

Saint John Byzantine Church—Wilkes-Barre Twp., 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

BYZANTINE CATHOLIC SEMINARY TO HOST “COME AND SEE” RETREAT OF DISCOVERY



The Byzantine Catholic Seminary of Saints Cyril and Methodius is pleased to host the “Come and See” Weekend of Discovery from Friday, November 5 to Sunday, November 7, 2021.

Invited to this retreat are men, ages 18 to 35, single or married, who may be considering a vocation to the priesthood in the Byzantine Catholic Church. The atmosphere will be prayerful, positive, and fraternal.

A past retreatant noted about his experience that the weekend was helpful for his “seeing both the difficulties and joys of seminary and ordained life.” It was also noted that “watching the seminarians look out for one another and serve parish communities was a great witness to the gospel.”

“Come and See” is a retreat weekend that takes place at the Byzantine Catholic Seminary in Pittsburgh, PA. The retreat includes sharing liturgical services and meals with the seminary community and an introduction to the seminary formation program. It will also include a tour of the seminary, gatherings with the seminarians, and witness talks.

There is no tuition for this “Come and See” Retreat of Discovery. The retreat, meals, and lodging are free. The application deadline is October 13, 2021. For more information and to apply, please see the seminary’s website www.bcs.edu. Only those who are fully COVID vaccinated will be permitted to register this year.

The Byzantine Catholic Seminary is a community of mentors, teachers, and students living and working in an ecumenical environment of Christian unity, integrity, and missionary spirit.

Founded in 1950, the Byzantine Catholic Seminary is a free-standing, English-speaking theological seminary,

welcoming all those seeking the knowledge possessed by the Eastern ecclesial traditions.

The seminary is authorized to grant graduate degrees by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and accredited by the Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools. The Seminary operates as a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization incorporated in Pennsylvania and is governed by a Board of Directors under the leadership of the Metropolitan Archbishop of Pittsburgh.

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UPCOMING EPARCHIAL AND PARISH EVENTS

OCTOBER, 2021

- 1 Holy Protection of the Theotokos
*Solemn Holy Day * Chancery closed*
- 11 Columbus Day
*Civic holiday * Chancery closed*

NOVEMBER, 2021

- 8 Holy Archangel Michael and All Holy Bodiless Powers of Heaven
Solemn Holy Day
- 21 Entrance of The Theotokos into the Temple
Solemn Holy Day
- 25-26 Thanksgiving Holiday
*Civic holiday * Chancery closed*

THE BYZANTINE CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF PASSAIC
 subscribes to the

Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People

adopted by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The Eparchy, within all its parishes, institutions and programs, is committed to assuring a safe environment in ministry for its children and young people that conforms to Charter requirements. For further information regarding the Eparchial Safe Environment Program please contact:

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 Victim's Assistance Coordinator • 516.623.6456