



# EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

Official Publication of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic

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NOVEMBER 2021



Mosaic Icon of Our Lady of the Sign, or Znamenie

Remember when we heard “two weeks to flatten the curve”? That was a year and a half ago. Who imagined that we would still be talking about lockdowns and closed borders? Last year I mentioned the woman joking who wanted to start the next year on September 1, as we do on our liturgical calendar. September 1 is called the Indiction. I only learned recently that the Indiction goes all the way back to the Emperor Augustus before the birth of Christ. It seems that the Roman Emperor issued a decree ordering taxes to support the troops throughout the Empire. The decree or “Indiction” was reissued every fifteen years. The troops served fifteen-year terms, which is why the decree was reissued every fifteen years. So, our liturgical year begins on the date of the emperor’s tax decree over two thousand years ago. I guess it’s a reminder that some things never change.

You have so many treasures in your Eparchy of great spiritual and artistic worth. The past few years I enjoyed sharing some of our most complex icons. This year is a simple icon with deep meaning. This icon connects us with our recent past as well as our ancient Byzantine glory. The icon was a gift to our Church from the late Father Charlie Yastishock. He purchased it from a workshop in Ravenna, Italy, the

same studio where he commissioned the mosaic on his tombstone. Ravenna is famous for some of the greatest mosaics of the Byzantine Empire, including mosaics of Jesus Christ, of the Emperor Justinian and his colorful and redoubtable wife, Theodora, and many others. Also in Ravenna is the Basilica of the great soldier martyr, Vitaly—a popular name in the Slavic east. The remarkable thing about a mosaic is this—it might look brand new after two thousand years or more. This artist gave us permission to use the mosaic because her business has all but stopped for two years now. I’m



Ornately carved pillars from the great Cathedral Basilica of Monreale. Mosaic pillars are visible in the background.



## 2021 BISHOP’S APPEAL BEGINS

happy we can give her recognition in exchange for using her art.

The icon this year is called Our Lady of the Sign, or *Znamenie* in Church Slavonic. The image of the Mother of God standing up with her arms raised is almost the oldest icon in the world. If you visit the catacombs in Rome, you can see the most ancient Christian art that we know of, and in the Catacombs of Saint Agnes, there is an image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd and an image of Mary praying in this position, that are almost as old as the Christian faith. We think that the ancient Christians prayed like this, standing with their arms raised. In the icon of the Sign, Mary is praying, standing with her arms raised, but then, the child Jesus, is superimposed on her inside a circle. The icon is called “the sign” referring to the prophesy of Isaiah, “Then Isaiah said, ‘Hear now, O house of David! Is it not enough that you try the patience of men? Will you also try the patience

use small glass tiles with colored backs, or tiles of colored glass, or even with gold leaf or silver on the back. The little tiles are called *tessera* which is a Greek word meaning “four,” because they often have four sides. Practically, artists use whatever shape of tile is appropriate, not just squares.

A few years ago, I traveled to the island of Sicily for the first time for the consecration of the new bishop of Piana. Piana is a Greek Catholic (or Byzantine Catholic) city, where people of our rite moved in the 1400’s from what is now Albania. They still speak Albanian there, and their liturgy is still in Greek. At the services, the deacon sang all the services in Greek from memory. The new bishop, Bishop George Gallaro, became the bishop of Sicily and all the islands of Italy for Greek Rite Catholics. One thing that is unique about his office is that he is also the bishop for the Latin Rite Catholics around his city. Pope John XXIII, now Saint John,



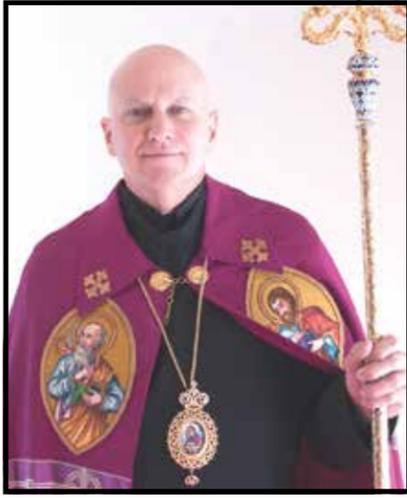
The great apse mosaic Pantocrator from the great Basilica in Cefalù

of God? So, the Lord Himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin will conceive a child. She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel—which means God is with us.” The Greeks also call this icon “More Spacious than the Heavens,” or “Platytera” in Greek for short. Mary is called “More Spacious than the Heavens” because Heaven is not big enough to hold the Most High God, but the womb of the Virgin held Jesus Christ who is truly God and truly Man.

Mosaics were first made from colored rocks or pebbles. Later, they began to

said that since Greek Rite Catholics are under the Latin Rite bishop in other places, it was only fair that the Latin Rite Catholics should be under the Greek Rite bishop there. As in many other churches, they were losing their young people. The young people prefer to go to the Latin Rite services because they are in Italian, and they can’t understand the services in our Church in a foreign language. (Sound familiar?) So, Bishop George tried to introduce modern Italian into their services and the conservatives were up in arms. I guess some things are the same every-

*continued on page 2*



# I LIFT UP MY EYES...

*Pastoral Reflections of Bishop Kurt*



## 2021 BISHOP'S APPEAL

*...continued from page 1*

where, aren't they? Bishop Gallaro is now Archbishop Gallaro. Pope Francis appointed him the Secretary of the Oriental Congregation in Rome. That makes him the second-in-command in the Oriental Congregation, which assists the Holy Father to care for all the Eastern Catholic churches in the world.



*Enticing dishes in Piana degli Albanese*

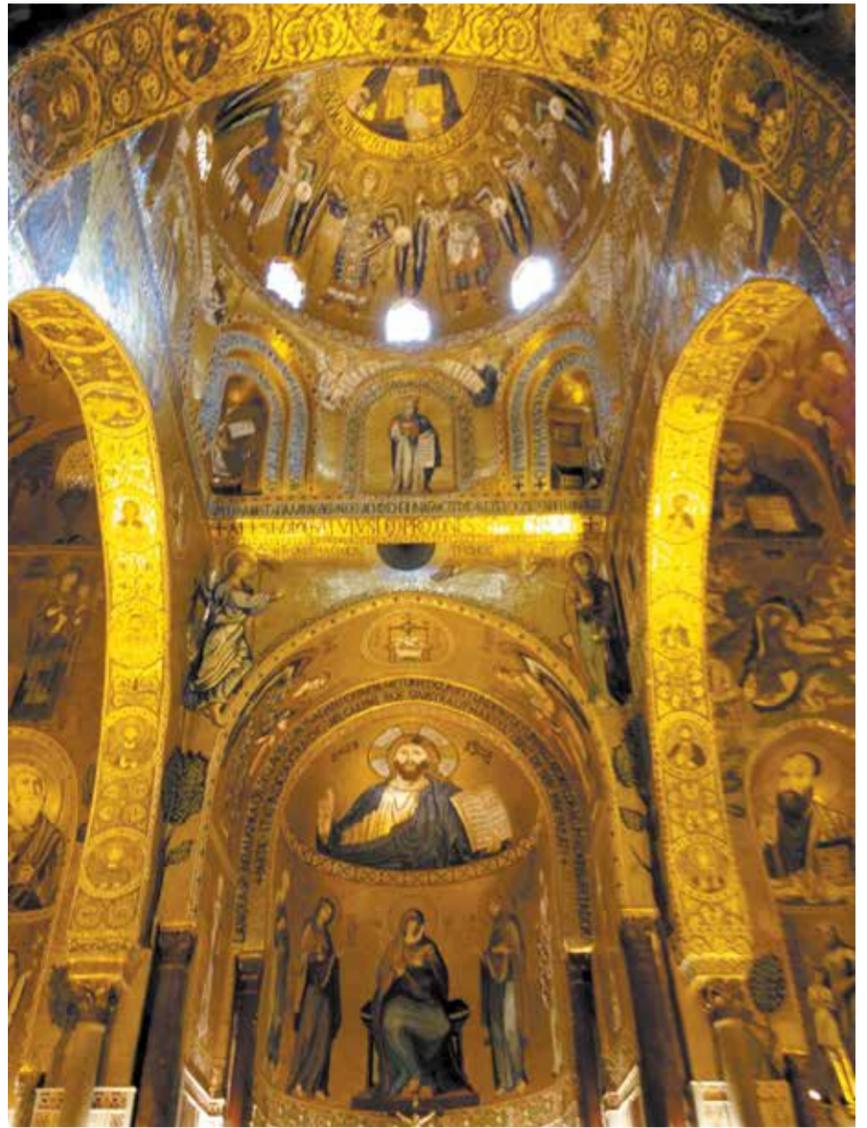
When the Pope asked him to serve in this new office last year, Bishop George protested, "But Holy Father, I am already 72. I will be at retirement age in only three years." The Pope replied, "Well look at me. I'm 83 years old.

Look at my job." So Bishop George became Archbishop George.

Archbishop George is still the Apostolic Administrator of Sicily and all the Islands of Italy for Greek Rite Catholics. As part of his patrimony when he became bishop of Piana, he acquired a donkey named Lucia. He rides her once a year on Palm Sunday wearing an extra-long purple cloak that covers her backside. Lucia is very modest.

One of the delights of my trip to Sicily was the opportunity to see some of the greatest mosaics in the world. There are many locations with ancient mosaics, but two very famous ones in Sicily are Cefalù and Monreale from the Norman occupation. By the way, the Norman occupation of Sicily was very unpopular with the Sicilians. They were driven out of Sicily in a great uprising that is commemorated in Verdi's opera, *Sicilian Vespers*. I'll let you read about that for yourself. It is blood curdling. The king first lived in Cefalù and built a magnificent basilica with one of the most famous mosaics in the world of Jesus Christ the Pantocrator in the apse.

The kings then moved to Palermo, and so the mosaics in the Cefalù basilica came to a halt with only the front of the church completed. Then, near Palermo, a new basilica was built at Monreale, and this giant church is completely filled with mosaics. It is one of the wonders of the world! Imagine 70,000 square feet of mosaics! For about three



*Sublime ethereal mosaics in the apse and dome of Santa Maria dell'Amiraglio in Palermo, the co-cathedral of Piana degli Albanese*

quarters of a millennium, Monreale was the largest mosaic area in the world, but Americans have to be number one

the astounding artwork there to the glory of God.



*Ceiling mosaics in the Cathedral Basilica of Saint Louis*



*Seraphim with biblical scenes--dome mosaic in the Cathedral Basilica of Saint Louis*

in everything, so in the twentieth century, the Cathedral of Saint Louis in St. Louis, Missouri, surpassed Monreale with 83,000 square feet of mosaic. If you never get to travel to Italy, be sure to travel to St. Louis sometime to see

Archbishop George has two cathedrals as the shepherd of Piana, one in Piana and one in Palermo. When he was consecrated, the Vespers were in Palermo, and the Divine Liturgy was in Piana. Unlike the Verdi opera, no one was

killed during Bishop George's consecration that I know of. The Cathedral in Palermo is very interesting because it seems to be put together from spare parts from several different eras. It moves from Byzantine to Arabic to Baroque with no apologies, and it's not very big. It is named Church of Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio, which means Saint Mary of the Admiral. King Roger II was an admiral as well as a king. After the massacre of 1282 celebrated in the Verdi opera, the nobility of Sicily gathered in this church for a meeting to choose a new king and offered the crown to Peter III who was at the time already King of Aragon, King of Valencia, and Count of Barcelona. Perhaps they figured that if he were already busy and lived a long way away, he wouldn't bother them.

The year has been a difficult year for all of us, and also for the Eparchy. I am

astonished at the generosity and dedication of people who made sure that we still have a church in the future. Thank you! Our clergy shortage has gotten worse. God blessed us with a new priest last year—and your generosity paid for his education. On the other hand, immigration has stopped for almost two years. Attrition and death have taken their due. One of our priests is now administering six parishes. (That's right, six.) The priest shortage will get much worse in the next few months no matter what I do. None of our clergy went without salaries or other necessities in the past two years, because of your generosity. I ask once again, take care of your own needs and or your own parish first. If you have extra and would like to help me with my work for the Eparchy, and for the weaker parishes, please consider a gift to the Bishop Appeal this year. God will not be outdone in gen-

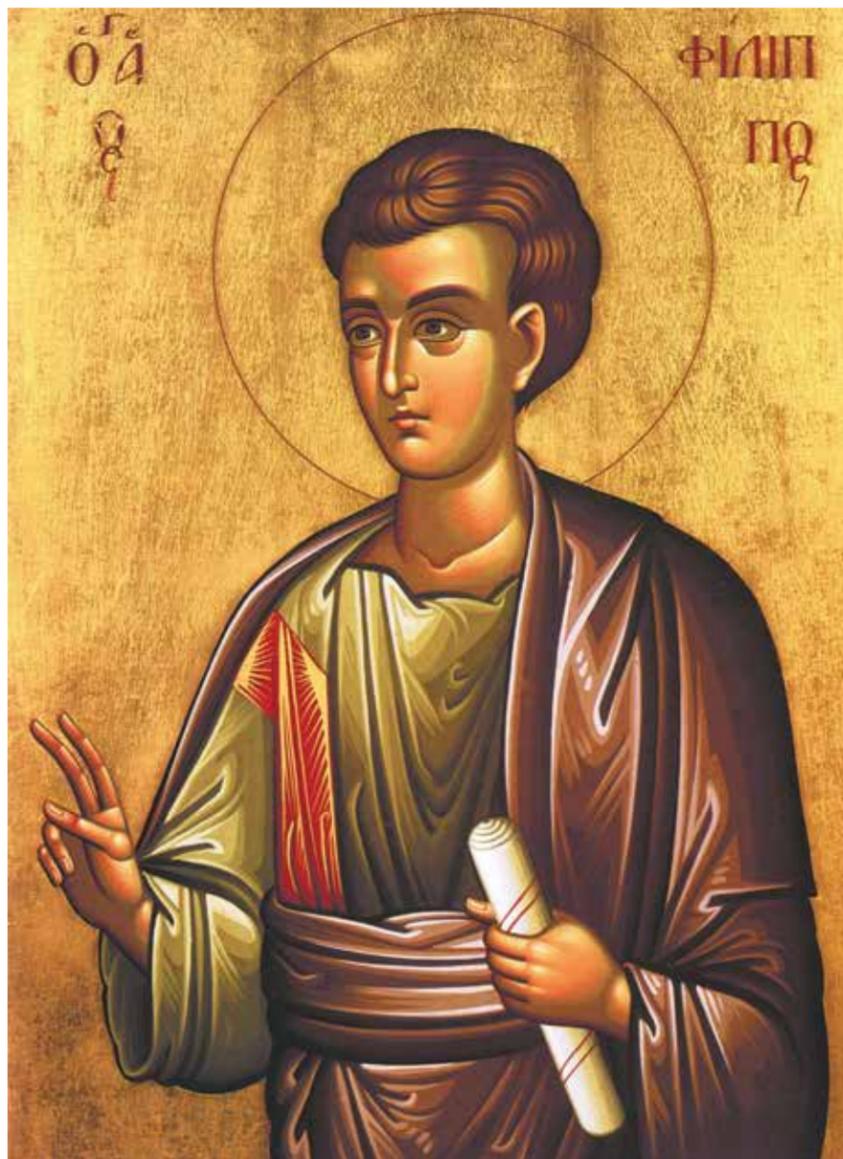


*Dome and arch mosaics in the Cathedral Basilica of Saint Louis*

erosity. However, money won't fix our clergy shortage. It is much more important that we pray. May God grant

that young men give their lives to him as priests.

+Kurt Bunette



## Icon of the Apostle Phillip

The Phillip's Fast in preparation for celebrating the Nativity of Our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ begins on Monday, November 15

From the Typicon: "During this fast it was the custom to observe a strict abstinence on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday and a lesser abstinence (mitigation for wine and oil) on Tuesday and Thursday. The fast is observed more strictly from December 10 (in some traditions) or from December 20 (in other traditions), with daily strict abstinence, and a mitigated abstinence (wine and oil) on Saturday and Sunday. The Ruthenian Metropolia has identified this period as a penitential season. This fast may be observed voluntarily, partially, or in its entirety."



November 13, 2021, marks the 76th anniversary of the ordination of Bishop Michael (Dudick) to the priesthood by Bishop Basil Takach. Seventy-five can be diamond or platinum, but 76 years recalls a Halley's comet event! Certainly, the memory of Bishop Michael is star-studded for the community of Holy Annunciation Monastery:

He was a man of FAITH: of Catholic Faith; of Greek-Catholic Faith; of Carpatho-Rusyn roots, so precious to him – his very identity. He was a man, a priest, a bishop, energized by these defining aspects of his life. These were his strengths.

The present writer is one of then two young Sisters who met Bishop Michael on September 20, 1974, when he came to commit himself to the founding of the Sugarloaf Carmelite Monastery, because Father Walter Ciszek had recommended us and the foundation to Bishop Michael.



If a friendly attitude was Bishop Michael's way with everyone, it was because he always did his "homework." Bishop was astute but covered all bases with a light touch. We experienced this. He gave (without creating the office of "vicar for religious," and without the "title") the duty of a vicar for religious to Father Anthony Skurla, OFM, and the then Father (later Archbishop) Basil Schott, OFM. Bishop Michael

was Bishop; they were "religious" men – Franciscan friars who spoke our "religious" language and understood our "religious sub-culture." A certain "good order" of relationship was created which was for us Carmelites an ideal situation of decades-long duration.

Bishop Michael was always optimistic; optimism negates anxiety and generates peace. His enterprises were apostolic; that is, they were faith- and church-related. He spoke easily of prayer and God's will as a taken-for-granted reality. He recognized a difficulty, but circumvented it with kindness.

Real differences were referred to experts (lawyers) with confidence in God's help to resolve snags. He himself seemed never de-railed.

Peace and security were his gifts to our community – the climate of our early years.

Bishop Michael's last public ceremony as Bishop of Passaic was the profession of three Sisters on February 2, 1996, after which he resigned from eparchial duties to reside in Brookhill, PA, and became our chaplain. Shortly thereafter he moved into our guest house, in quarters built just for him. This would be a time of deeper friendship, and for us a time of beautiful edification.

Perhaps the greatest blessing of Bishop's retirement and residence at the monastery, was enabling a friendship of almost a decade between our Carmelite Provincial and Bishop Michael.

His health waned bit-by-bit, but at first, he was still quite energetic. If the lacuna of retirement was real, so was his response. He was no longer the person of importance that he had been. We must work our way to heaven through tribulation: "I am no longer an important man."

"Happiness is a choice. We must choose to be happy – I can see the sky and the flowers. God wants me to be happy."

## 76TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ORDINATION OF +BISHOP MICHAEL (DUDICK)

by Mother Marija

### "Proceed"

When miniature donkey, Jeremino, arrived at the monastery the Sisters gathered to welcome him. Joy faded and perplexity increased: Jeremino would not leave the trailer. Pushing, pulling, cajoling, treats were ineffectual – miniature, but a true donkey! Bishop Michael came from his house (having surveyed the situation from his window). Our greeting: "Bishop help us – give Jeremino a blessing." Very solemnly Bishop raised his hand and in a solemn voice issued a command: "Proceed." And proceed he did. Without further ado, Jeremino walked down the ramp – and into his stable stall.

### "We should do this more often!"

After any special celebration or feast day dinner, Bishop Michael's comment was always: "We should do this more often!"

### Joey

Bishop Michael loved our miniature horses, and one day, gelding, Joey, came near the bishop who was sitting by the fence. Bishop Michael reached out and grabbed both of Joey's ears, scratching them vigorously. Joey stood still and let Bishop Michael continue. But this was once and only! To this day, however, Joey has never let anyone else scratch his ears like Bishop Michael did that day. (In passing we might add, Joey is exceptional. He had a great friendship with a German shepherd and at this time, 2021, is guide to a blind stallion).

### "Eat or die"

It is no exaggeration to say that Divine Liturgy was the center and pillar of Bishop Michael's life. In his later years, eating became a daily ordeal, but we found a way to convince him and to win the battle. "Bishop, you must eat to have strength to celebrate Divine Liturgy." What followed was really hilarious – but we did not laugh! The plate was under attack! Stabbing his fork into the food he chanted, "Eat or die. Eat or die."

### Bugs

Bishop Michael used to joke that the specks of nutmeg in his eggnog were bugs. Towards the end of his life, as his memory failed, he forgot this was only a joke, and began to seriously believe there were bugs in the eggnog. A wealthy and cultured woman was visiting and eating with the bishop. He leaned over to her, pointing to the eggnog, and said seriously, "Don't drink that! It has bugs in it." Pat was equal to the challenge – (she knew and loved Bishop from by-gone years) and responded, "That's ok; it's just extra protein."

### Number One and Number Two

As years accumulated and Bishop Michael's memory diminished, we were given new names! He forgot people's names and they were devised with ingenuity and quite logical, that is, once we figured them out! Mother Marija and Mother Marie Helen became "Number One and Number Two." Other sisters were identified as "The Tall One," "The Short One," "The Strong One," and the sister who sang descant was named "High Pitch." The confessor he called "The Teacher." One day, Bishop Michael saw Mother Marija and Mother Marie Helen leaving the monastery. Hours later, he refused to accompany Sister who took him to Vespers because (he explained): "We can't have Vespers because Number One and Number Two are not home!" Sister explained, "You know there is a back driveway. Number One and Two are home."

### "Sold"

Bishop Michael was the best customer in the monastery gift shop. He loved to buy the angel Christmas tree ornaments, especially the blond ones! One afternoon, on his way to Vespers, he saw a lovely Father Frost statue in the gift shop, dressed all in silver and white. He told sister that he wanted it, but agreed to leave it in the gift shop, since



it was the centerpiece of the Christmas arrangement. The sister put a sign “Sold” by Father Frost, so that no one else would take it. When he came back from Vespers, Bishop Michael saw the sign and thought someone else had bought it! Sister reassured him that the

sign was only to save it for him, but the bishop wasn’t going to take any chances. He took Father Frost home with him right away.

*“No killing on Sunday”*

Bishop Michael used to use his cane to

kill bugs that crawled within his reach. One Sunday, a spider approached him. Sister remarked: “Do you see that spider?” “It’s Sunday. I’ll let him live. No killing on Sunday.”

## MOUNT SAINT MACRINA HOUSE OF PRAYER ONLINE ZOOM PROGRAM FOR FALL 2021

Call: 724-438-7149 or Email: [hpmsm@verizon.net](mailto:hpmsm@verizon.net) to register  
Please provide your email address and phone number to receive your zoom link

### ADVENT BIBLE STUDY

Nov. 11, 18, Dec. 2, 9  
“An Introductory Study of the Prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah”  
With Sister Melita Marie Penchalk, OSBM  
10AM—12NOON EST  
Offering: \$25  
Registration Due: Nov. 8  
Available on Zoom

### Christmas Afternoon of Reflection

Dec. 12  
With Father Stephen Wahal  
1PM—2:30PM EST  
Offering: \$20  
Registration Due: Dec. 7  
Available on Zoom



*Theoria Chamber Choir  
Christmas Concert  
Saturday, December 18th  
4:00 PM  
Professional chamber quartet will  
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St. Mary's Byzantine Catholic Church  
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1265 Linden Avenue  
Baltimore, MD 21227  
Phone 410-247-4936  
Web [www.patronagechurch.org](http://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](http://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  
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Web [www.eolmission.org](http://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](http://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](http://www.ascensionva.org)  
Sunday Divine Liturgy 11:00 AM

### **Our Lady of Perpetual Help**

216 Parliament Drive  
Virginia Beach, VA 23462  
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Web [www.olphvb.org](http://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](http://www.sscyrilmethodius.org)  
Sunday Divine Liturgy 9 and 11 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](http://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.



# 2021 BISHOP'S APPEAL

Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic

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## LIFE, LOVE, AND THE HUMAN PERSON

By Ann M. Koshute, MTS

### PREPARE THE WAY

In the opening scene of the 1973 film, *Godspell*, the John the Baptist character is shown waiting at a fountain as young people from around the city come running joyfully toward the sound of his voice. The Baptist is singing a song that's very catchy but has only one line: *Prepare ye the way of the Lord*. Admittedly, *Godspell* has never been my cup of tea, especially when I saw the movie as a kid and wondered why Jesus and His followers all looked like hippies or clowns. But the opening scene and that constant refrain, so exuberantly proclaimed, has stayed with me, even popping into my head at random times. It hasn't yet risen to the level of being an *earworm*, but it's a song and message that certainly makes an impression. For those who haven't heard the term *earworm*, it refers to a phenomenon in which a particular song or melody sticks in our minds, most often at unexpected times, and sometimes coming from out of the blue. We've likely all had that experience of a song playing over and over in our minds, sometimes for hours or days. It seems to embed itself in our consciousness, and if it is persistent enough, we can become desperate to make it go away. A song from a forty-year-old musical that is very much of it's time is hardly your typical *earworm*; but maybe it should be.

In the middle of this month, we will commemorate the feast of Saint Philip, an Apostle who was called by the Lord,

and went on himself to call Nathaniel to meet Jesus and follow Him. With the celebration of this feast, our Church begins the season of preparation for the coming of Jesus as a baby in Bethlehem. (What we in the East call the Philip's Fast is known in the West as *Advent*, but the sense of waiting and anticipation is the same). Philip was a simple man, a fisherman like Peter and Andrew. He had no formal theological training; he wasn't a rabbi or a prophet. Saint John, in his gospel (1:43) tells us that Jesus "found" Philip and called him to follow. John goes on to say that Philip in turn "found Nathaniel" (1:45) and, in the simplest of ways, proclaimed the Gospel by telling him about Jesus. It must have been a powerful encounter between Philip and Jesus, to make a working-class man drop everything and become a follower of a charismatic, though not yet well-known, preacher. Even more extraordinary is that Philip felt compelled to find another man and tell him all about Jesus. Philip hardly even had time to get to know the Lord himself, much less absorb all that He had to teach. Yet something touched him so deeply and profoundly that Philip was compelled to share it; to share *Him*, with another. It was as if the call of Jesus had become an *earworm* that he couldn't escape, and that he knew he had to pass on. Like the Baptist in *Godspell* (without the silly costumes or sketchy theology), Philip took up the task of "preparing the way of the Lord"

when he reached out to Nathaniel and gave his witness. Philip, instructed only by his experience of personal encounter and invitation, prepared the way for Nathaniel to have his own transformative moment with Jesus.

Like the season of Great Lent, the Philip's Fast is a time of preparation, to strip away those things that distract us and perhaps lead us into occasions of sin. It is a time to prepare the way of the Lord in our minds, in our bodies and in our hearts. It is a reminder that we need help – we need *salvation* – and that we are unable to save ourselves. God the Father sent His only begotten Son to us as our Savior, teacher, shepherd, and intimate friend. The Father Himself "prepared the way" by establishing a Covenant with Israel, handing down Commandments to shape and protect us, disciplining when necessary and pouring out His mercy liberally. The Prophets "prepared the way" by witnessing to the reality of God and conveying His truth to the people. And Mary "prepared the way" by humbly giving her assent to the Father through His messenger, the Angel Gabriel, before conceiving the Son of God within her womb. Every one of these examples calls *us* to also "prepare the way of the Lord" within ourselves, and to prepare others to receive Him as well.

"Preparing the way of the Lord" is an ongoing process, something that we

must renew in ourselves on a regular basis. This season of anticipation for Christmas is a good time for us to take up that preparation anew, perhaps with greater intention. We may ask ourselves: What am I actually preparing *for*? Am I getting ready for a holy day that I celebrate the same way each year, and then forget about until the next time it rolls around? Do I want to welcome Jesus to make His home in my heart, and so that I can prepare the way for others to encounter His love for them?

During the Philip's Fast we'll likely hear a hymn with the refrain, "Come, O Jesus, our Savior, redeem and save us!" Like the Baptist's call in *Godspell*, this refrain might become an *earworm*, its plea embedding itself in our minds through repetition. Acknowledging Jesus as the Savior, admitting to our need for salvation, and calling on His name are necessary to our preparing the way to receive Him – not only on Christmas, but at each moment of our lives. No costumes or musical talent are necessary. Come as you are, and – like Philip – prepare *to be found* by the Lord. **ECL**

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## PRIESTLY REFLECTIONS

Father Paul Varchola West



### UNPACKING THE PAST

March 16, 2020: I will never forget this day! This was the day we received the email informing us that the seminary would be closing due to the growing COVID-19 epidemic that was destined to become the pandemic we are all too familiar with today. This email contained some rather disheartening news. Not only were my four years at seminary coming to a grinding halt, but we were also informed that all end-of-year festivities were canceled with no intent to be rescheduled. No end of year picnic. No graduation. No icon gifted by the Serra Club members. No closing remarks at the graduation luncheon. No closure of any kind. The worst part: the email also stated that we fourth year students had roughly 36 hours to clear the belongings from our rooms with the caveat that we would, under no circumstances, be permitted back into the building. Of all the sentimental things that simply melted as wax before a fire, this was by far the most concerning bit of news.

Given the fact that I fell into the classification of married seminarian, I was not permitted to live on campus because we had small children; however, the seminary still provided me with a room I could use as an office/respice space while on campus (which was all the time!). Needless to say, I had settled into my office rather nicely over four years. In order to keep some semblance of normalcy, I had to make it as homey as possible. The fact that I had 36 hours to clear out four years of work, books, furniture, pictures, icons, etc., was a seemingly insurmountable task.

Tensions were at an all time high at the seminary. I was fortunate enough to live right down the street so I had the shortest move of all the seminarians.

Some of the seminarians had to travel to the West Coast or other far-flung areas of the country in relation to Pittsburgh. As the world was swiftly shutting down, the students were booking plane flights; throwing things into cars; and calling any relatives they could to find an immediate place to stay. It was surreal! To pack I went.

I had intended to go through all my things at the end of the year lovingly; trash what needed to be trashed; organize all my books; and pack them neatly so that when I moved into the parish (wherever that would be) I could easily unpack. Well... the best laid plans of mice and men... and Paul Varchola West. With the clock ticking. I simply threw things indiscriminately into boxes as the world around me seemed to collapse. Twenty some odd boxes were moved into our living room on Tretow Street and there they sat until we moved out on July 31 of that year.

Fast forward to a couple of weeks ago...

There were still three boxes of photocopies of out-of-print texts, notes, pictures my kids had drawn, and the like. It had become very clear to me that I was avoiding unpacking and sorting those items, not out of laziness, but out of trepidation as to how much blood would pour out of that scab if I started to pick at it.

It was arduous and painful. I was so grumpy going through the mountains of papers. I came to the realization that I wasn't simply reverting to a child-like state because I didn't want to do my chores: I was experiencing pain. I was literally unpacking the loss I had encountered over a year ago. I wasn't cleaning; I was processing grief. When

I placed the last of my notes in the binder and closed the lid, I experienced such a feeling of peace that I cannot even describe it. I had finally achieved the closure I was so in need of without even being aware of it. I immediately felt as if I could now move ahead with my life and with my priestly ministry.

What a relief!

Often, when we avoid things like cleaning, organizing, getting rid of things, it is not because we are lazy. It is due to the fact that we know we will uncover things deep within the piles of papers, and deep within our beings, that will make us feel things that we know we do not want to feel; however, in order to move forward, we must look to the past. We must feel past hurts, experience past joys, reconcile the past so that our mind and our soul are free to take in the present. Living in the present is extremely powerful, as C.S. Lewis so enlightens us in his utterly astounding work, *The Screwtape Letters*:

[God] wants them [humanity] to attend chiefly to two things, to eternity itself, and to that point of time, which

they call the Present. For the Present is the point at which time touches eternity. Of the present moment, and of it only, humans have an experience analogous to the experience which [God] has of reality as a whole; in it alone freedom and actuality are offered them. He would therefore have them continually concerned either with eternity or with the Present—either meditating on their eternal union with, or separation from, Himself, or else obeying the present voice of conscience, bearing the present cross, receiving the present grace, giving thanks for the present pleasure.

Let us not dwell on the past, nor be overly concerned with the future. Let us live in the present moment that we may experience the joy of eternity that Almighty God so wishes for us to share with Him. **ECL**

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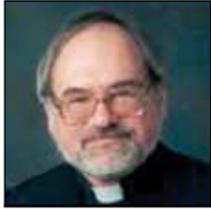


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# THE BYZANTINE LITURGY

By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD

## THE RITUAL GESTURES OF THE ANAPHORA

The Anaphora, from Greek meaning “offering,” is a prayer of blessing. It comes from the description of the Last Supper of our Lord, “While they were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, ‘Take and eat; this is My body’” (Matthew 26:26). Blessing is an act by which you designate something as holy and good, a gift to us from God. The words used were usually those of thanksgiving, as we see in the verse following the blessing of the bread, “Then [Jesus] took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘drink from it, all of you; this is My blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins’” (Matthew 26:27-28). The prayer that we call the Anaphora corresponds to the prayer of blessing or thanksgiving that Jesus said according to Jewish tradition. Jesus added to this prayer the revelation that by this blessing the bread and wine became his body and blood, which were just about to be sacrificed on the cross, and which would be raised in glory. That is why the word for “offering” was applied to this prayer. It is also called a prayer of consecration because the gifts we bring of bread and wine, the work of human hands, become the divine and life-giving body and blood of our Lord. The action of blessing was to say words over the object that was to be blessed. It originally did not have any actions connected with it. Yet because of the mystery that unfolds in this prayer, we have added gestures to the prayer.

The fundamental gesture of Christians is the sign of the cross, made with one’s right hand. The Divine Liturgy is the eternal reality of the sacrifice of Christ, now in an unbloody but real way, and the gesture of the cross is the physical way in which this is manifested. The cross is also made at the mention of the Trinity, for the deification of the people through the sacrifice of Christ is a work of the Trinity, as the sacrifice was offered by the death of Jesus and accepted by the Father and made life-giving by the action of the Holy Spirit. Each time we make the sign of the cross, therefore, we signify that we live by the mystery of the love accomplished on the cross. The cross may be made upon one’s body, from the forehead to the chest, and the priest does this before invoking the Holy Spirit. The priest makes the sign of the cross upon the faithful celebrating with him in the introduction to the Anaphora, facing them and blessing them with the Trinitarian words of Saint Paul: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.” (2 Corinthians 13:13) When he prays for the action of the Holy Spirit to make the gifts of bread and wine the Body and Blood of Christ, the priest makes the sign of the cross over the consecrated bread, then over the consecrated wine and then over both. The deacon also makes the sign of the cross over the bread on the diskos, the plate holding the loaf called the Lamb, because it is becoming the body of the Lamb of God, our Lord. He does this by signing the diskos with the asterisk, the metal star covering the diskos,

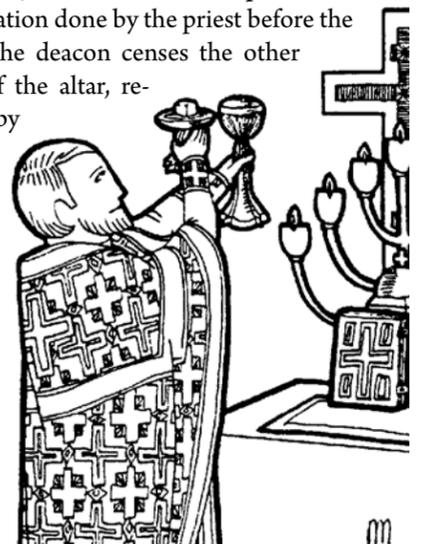
removing it together with the words, “Singing, shouting, crying aloud and saying the triumphal hymn,” the “Holy, holy, holy.” Therefore, in so many ways the sign of the cross is the way we express in gestures the reality of the sacrifice of the Divine Liturgy.

There are also other gestures. Just before the Anaphora begins, the priest invites us to pray by lifting up his hands towards the East (in churches that do not physically face the East, at least the liturgical East), the Holy Table on which the gifts about to be consecrated lie. We look towards the East during the celebration of the Liturgy because it is the tradition that this is the direction from which Our Lord will come in glory, as prophesied in the Gospel of Saint Matthew: “For just as lightning comes from the east and is seen as far as the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be.” (Matthew 24:27) Sometimes the gesture of pointing is used to indicate the gifts that become the presence of our Lord. The deacon, holding his vestment, the orarion, points to the gifts when the priest says the words of our Lord, “This is my Body,” and “This is my Blood,” and again when the priest blesses the gifts with the sign of the cross invoking the action of the Holy Spirit. The priest also points to the gifts of the Holy Table when he says the words of our Lord.

Bowing is a sign of reverence. We bow to Christ as to the King of kings, the Lord and Ruler of all. The priest bows just before beginning the Anaphora at the words, “Let us give thanks to the Lord,” then at each of the words of our Lord and finally after he completes the prayer of the invocation of the Holy Spirit. This is our humility in the presence of God, indicating that we submit to his will, as we pray in the “Our Father”: “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” In some places this respect has led to kneeling and bowing at the invocation of the Spirit, but this is not proper, for we are to stand in the presence of God in the Liturgy who is raising us to life in Resurrection.

Finally, we must mention the incensing of the gifts after the invocation. This is done as we pray for the departed, for those who have “fallen asleep” in the Lord. The first is the Theotokos, the Mother of God, then John the Baptist, the saint being remembered and all the categories of saints. Then we remember our other departed brothers and sisters. Incense originally covered the decomposition of the body after death, but it acquired a symbolic meaning – the smoke ascending represented our prayers rising to God in behalf of those we love. In this way, we re-create the scene of the Book of Revelation: “When he (the Lamb of God) took it (the scroll), the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each of the elders held a harp and gold bowls filled with incense, which are the prayers of the holy ones.” (Revelation 5:8) When a deacon is present, after the incensation done by the priest before the Holy Table, the deacon censes the other three sides of the altar, remembering by name those of the departed as desired by the people.

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## SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

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

### GIVING THANKS

What will you be giving thanks for when you sit down to your turkey dinner this month? Will someone say grace and mention food, family, and friends? It's good to recognize that "every good and perfect gift is from above, comes down from the Father of Lights" (James 1:17), but God's word invites us to recognize even greater reasons to be grateful. Saint Paul positively overflows with gratitude as he addresses the Christians of Ephesus: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). That's three "blessings" in one verse!

What particular blessings does Paul recognize? First, God *Chose us in Christ* "before the world began." God's plan to make us holy "in Christ" predates our creation and that of the world (1:4). God further prepared for us to be *adopted* into His own family as "sons" by grace, as Christ is Son by nature (1:5-6). Holiness, adoption and even *God's love* are gifts that come to us through *Jesus Christ*, the Beloved Son (Matthew 3:17; Colossians 1:13). Humanity's fallen state after the sin of Adam and Eve, however, required our *redemp-*

*tion* and the *forgiveness of sins*, which Christ accomplished through the sacrifice of His blood on the Cross. All this, Saint Paul writes, expresses "the riches of God's *grace* that He lavished on us" (1:7-8). Paul points next to the "*wisdom and understanding* God has granted us by making known to us the mystery of His will" (1:8-9). This too was accomplished through Jesus Christ and remains available for us to learn in the Scriptures and the teaching of the Church. Paul even gives thanks for the *conclusion* of God's plan which has not yet been realized: "to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ" (1:10).

There's more. Paul next gives thanks for his own *vocation* (1:11-12). Then gives thanks for these first Christians, a small *community* in a huge city on the western edge of what is now Turkey: "Ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, I have not stopped giving thanks for you" (1:15-16). He reminds them of the gifts they have already received: hearing the "*Gospel* of salvation," being included in Christ through *Baptism*, and being marked "with a seal, the promised *Holy Spirit*," whom Paul calls the "down pay-

ment" that guarantees our *inheritance* until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of His glory (1:13-14).

Paul is not yet through with thanksgiving. He recalls the central fact of our faith, *the death and resurrection of Christ* (1:19-21), and finally gives thanks for the *Church* which he and the new Christians of Ephesus are building up together, "with Christ as the head" (1:22). Such ebullient gratitude is not unique to this Epistle. You can read something very similar in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Colossians.

When we think about our reasons to be thankful, how likely are we to think of our creation in God's image for relationship with Him? How high on our list of blessings is the sacrificial death and life-giving Resurrection of Jesus Christ? Even on Pascha, how aware are we that this new life is God's gift to us?

How many of us would spontaneously think of the Bible as a gift to be grateful for? (How many of us, who have never really read much of Scripture, think of it with a little twinge of guilt?) Are wisdom and understanding of God's

will gifts we've ever asked for? Is the Gospel a source of good news to counterbalance all the bad news shouted all around us?

Do we think of our membership in the Church as a gift or is it just a fact of family history and maybe even a bit of a burden? Do we value the gifts that come from the Church: the living presence of Jesus Christ through the preaching of the Gospel and the ministry of the Sacraments? Do we cherish the other members of our parish as gifts or are they just people we happen to share some space with Sunday after Sunday?

The way we use words like "spiritual" or "in spirit" often comes close to implying "not real." Yet the spiritual gifts Saint Paul rejoices in are the only gifts we have ever received that will survive death and be ours forever. Saint Paul's joyful words of thanks invite us to use this Thanksgiving Day not just to thank God for our material comfort, but to thank Him for all the ways He shares His own life and love with us through His Church. **ECL**

## SCHOOL OF PRAYER

Father G. Scott Boghossian



### THE POWER OF SCRIPTURE

The Church of the first millennium centered itself on Scripture. Read the Church Fathers, and you will see that almost everything they wrote or preached focused on the biblical text. For Saint John Chrysostom, Saint Basil the Great, Saint Jerome, or Saint Augustine, the Bible was of primary importance in theology and practical Christian living.

The desert fathers and the entire monastic tradition of the universal Church were Scripture-oriented and Scripture-centered. Monastics memorized and meditated on the Psalms and large parts of the Old and New Testaments.

Liturgical texts as we possess them today, while not simply quotations from Scripture (although direct references are impressively common), use the imagery, the syntax, the stories of Scripture throughout. The action of the Church in the sacraments, sacramentals, and ritual acts all, more or less, originate in the Bible and cannot be understood without knowledge of the sacred text. Even para-liturgical services and pious devotions, such as the Akathist and the Rosary, etc., are deeply scriptural in origin.

Yet today, it is rare to find a practicing Catholic who has deeply immersed himself in the Bible in any way like the simple and uneducated believers of the first thousand years of Christianity (*Bible Reading in the Early Church*, Harnack). How many pastors, spiritual directors, confessors, and catechists "forcefully and specifically exhort all the Christian faithful... to learn the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ, by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures" (*Dei Verbum*, 25)?

Today, the Church is going through difficult times. There is much confusion. There is little devotion. There is no power. Let's return to the spirituality of the Church of the first millennium by becoming intensely biblical and Scripture-centered. If we do this, guided by the great fathers, doctors, saints, and historic Magisterium, we will experience the spiritual renewal we desperately need.

Saint Paul writes, "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Rm. 15:4). In the original language, the word

"encouragement" here is "paraklesis," which is an "inevitable allusion," says biblical scholar Luis Alonso Schökel, to the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit. The biblical Word brings the power of the Spirit.

Clement of Alexandria says, "the holy Scriptures... are the high roads of salvation" and "are truly holy and divinizing." An important emphasis in the Eastern Church is deification or theosis. We need the power of the Word of God to effect this miracle within us.

Yes, the sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist, are sanctifying and divinizing, but perhaps not as much as they could be, apart from the Holy Scriptures. "From the moment that a sacrament is celebrated in accordance with the intention of the Church, the power of Christ and his Spirit acts in and through it, independently of the personal holiness of the minister. Nevertheless, the fruits of the sacraments also depend on the disposition of the one who receives them" (CCC 1128). The fruitfulness of the sacraments depends to some extent, to a great extent, on our dispositions, i.e., the condition of our soul. If worldly values, carnal desires,

and godless media dominate our inner life, then it is no wonder that the Holy Eucharist is not effectively transforming us into Jesus Christ. If the Psalms, the Gospels, the writings of Fathers and the Saints fill our hearts, then the sacraments will work miracles in our souls! Personal immersion in the Scriptures will form dispositions that enable the Sacraments produce great fruit.

Saint John Chrysostom says, "we should imitate the sailors who arrive safely in port after a storm. Just lately freed from the tumult and roar of the waves, let us moor our souls in the reading of the Scriptures as in a quiet harbor. The Scriptures are a tranquil port, an impregnable wall, an unshakable tower, a glory which cannot be carried off, armor impregnable, unshakable cheer, constant delight, whatever good may be thought of, this you will find in the assembly of the divine Scriptures."

Our Lord says to us, "the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life" (Jn. 6:63), and this applies to not only His words in the gospels, but all of His Word, from Genesis to Revelation. May a great love for the Holy Scriptures grant us true spiritual life. **ECL**

# SEASONAL REFLECTIONS

Father Ronald Hatton



## TOUCHED BY AN ANGEL?



This month we celebrate the Feast of the holy Archangel Michael and all the Heavenly Hosts (November 8), the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple (November 21), as well as prepare ourselves to enter into the time of Saint Philip's Fast and the Advent season (beginning November 15).

Angels are an integral part of the Christian life. In the Eastern Churches, we acknowledge their role in our daily lives, and even identify ourselves mystically with them in our liturgical life. Our lives begin with the baptismal prayer which includes the line, "During (his-her) lifetime, give (him-her) the companionship of an angel of light to rescue (him-her) from every snare lying in (his-her) path, from the encounter of the evil one, from the noonday demon and every evil imagination" (The Rite of Christian Initiation). In our Morning Prayers there may be

this prayer, which I learned during my time in seminary: "O holy Angel of Christ! In homage I come to you, my holy guardian who, since my baptism, has been assigned to me to protect my body and soul. I beseech your powerful intercession. I have often offended you by my indolence and bad habits. You are without stain in your glory, and I have often driven you away by my sins. I pray and beseech you, most holy guardian, be merciful to me, your sinful and unworthy servant. Be my defender and aid me against my enemies. Through your intercession, make me worthy to be a partaker of the kingdom of God with all the saints forever. Amen." During our Divine Liturgy, we constantly identify ourselves with the angels, who celebrate the heavenly liturgy: "Around the throne, and on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with a face like a human face, and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and inside. Day and night without ceasing they sing, 'Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God the Almighty, who was and is and is to come.'" (Rev. 4:6-8). "Let us, who mystically represent the cherubim, and sing the thrice-holy hymn to the life-creating Trinity, now set aside all earthly cares, that we may receive the King of All, invisibly escorted by angelic hosts. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!" (The Cherubic Hymn).

We acknowledge that they are worshipping with us at the priest's prayer at the Entrance with the Gospel Book: "O Lord, our Master and God, Who established orders and armies of angels and archangels for the service of your glory in heaven, make this our entrance an entrance of holy angels, concelebrating with us and glorifying Your goodness..." We even have symbolism in the liturgical role of our deacons, from the flowing of their orarion reminiscent of angels' wings, to their moving from the Holy of Holies (the Altar) to the Holy Place (the Nave), being a symbol of angels moving between heaven and earth (cf. Gen. 28:12, John 1:51). So, angels are with us, every waking moment and while we sleep, while we worship and while we work or play. "Leaders of God's armies and ministers of divine glory, commanders of angels and guides of mortals, plead on our behalf for what we need and for great mercy, since you are the leaders of the heavenly host" (Kontakion for the Feast).

The Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple is an historical feast. According to Tradition, the Theotokos was taken – presented – by her parents Joachim and Anna into the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem as a young girl, where she lived and served as a Temple virgin until her betrothal to Saint Joseph. One of the earliest sources of this tradition is the non-canonical *Proto-evangelion of James*, also called the *Infancy Gospel of James*. Mary was solemnly received by the temple community, which was headed by the

priest Zachariah, the father of John the Baptist. She was led to the holy place to become herself the "holy of holies" of God, the living sanctuary and temple of the Divine child who was to be born in her. The Church also sees this feast as a feast which marks the end of the physical temple in Jerusalem as the dwelling place of God. Many hymns are offered for the Vespers and Matins of this feast, but I will offer only one for you here, which highlights the glory of the Theotokos replacing the glory of the Temple: "O faithful, let us leap for joy today, singing psalms and hymns of praise in honor of Mary, His Mother, the holy Tabernacle and Ark that contained the Word Whom nothing can contain. She is offered to God as a child in a marvelous way, and Zechariah the high priest receives her with great joy, for she is the dwelling place of the Most High" (Vespers, At Psalm 40). How fitting that we celebrate this feast in the midst of the Philippian Fast as a deeper preparation for the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord. **ECL**

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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

**Are you called to the Priesthood?**  
**Are you afraid of College Debt?**

Is God calling you to be priest? Are you worried about college debt? Why not study in Europe and avoid college debt? Would you like to study in Vienna in the heart of Europe at the International Theological Institute in your own English Language? You can receive a university degree approved by the Pope. Contact the Director of Vocations for the Eparchy of Passaic, the Very Reverend Michael Kerestes at Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church, 695 N Main Street, Wilkes-Barre, PA 18705, phone: 570-822-6028



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**UPCOMING EPARCHIAL AND PARISH EVENTS**

**NOVEMBER, 2021**

- 8 Holy Archangel Michael and All Holy Bodiless Powers of Heaven  
*Solemn Holy Day*
- 14 Feast of the Apostle Philip  
*Christmas Fast begins at sundown*
- 21 Entrance of The Theotokos into the Temple  
*Solemn Holy Day*
- 25-26 Thanksgiving Holiday  
*Civic holiday \* Chancery closed*

**DECEMBER, 2021**

- 6 Our Holy Father Nicholas the Wonderworker  
*Solemn Holy Day*
- 8 Maternity of the Holy Anna  
*Solemn Holy Day*

- 24-25 Christmas Holiday  
*Holy Day of Obligation\*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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