



EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

Official Publication of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic

VOL. LIX, NO. 1

JANUARY 2023

BORN AGAIN IN WATER AND THE SPIRIT

Pastoral Reflections of Bishop Kurt

Our faith is very, very old. Depending on when Abraham lived, it is possible that our covenant with God goes back 4,000 years. During the 2,000 years before Christ, there was a constant thrust towards the future. Not all religions are like that. A few years ago, I became fascinated with ancient Egyptian art which went hand in hand with Egyptian religion. For much of the time before Christ, Egypt was what we would call “a superpower” in worldly affairs, and sometimes the only superpower outside of the far East. For someone living today, one of the most remarkable features of ancient Egyptian religion was its stability, or we would say nowadays, its conservatism. Over a period of about two thousand years, it did not change, and neither did the art. Actually, there was one change that took place, perhaps it could even be called a revolution, when the religion of the ruling class also became the religion of the general population, largely because more people could afford the expenditures that went with funerals. Egyptians very much believed in the afterlife from the beginning, and the gods and rituals that carried them into the afterlife never changed. Their art was much like our own iconographic tradition, in that, there was a sort of code which, once learned, allows anyone to read the meaning of their paintings. Something as simple as an up-raised arm, always placed in the same position, contains a consistent meaning over millennia.

One of the most popular paintings, one you are likely to buy if you buy some reproductions today of ancient Egyptian art, portrays the individual judgment of the soul after death. The god is holding a scale, and the heart of the deceased is on one side while a feather is on the other side. If the heart weighs more than a feather, it’s bad news for the decedent. This particular detail of their religion, seemingly widely known at the time, shows up in our own scripture, in my opinion. Did you ever wonder why the God of the Hebrews “hardens” Pharaoh’s heart during the ten plagues? I think it was a clear reference to this belief about the heart among the Egyptians, and it shows that the God who called himself, “I am who am,” when He introduced himself to Moses has total power over the Pharaoh who, after all,

also claims to be divine. If the God of Moses has the power to make Pharaoh’s heart hard, then He is more powerful than Pharaoh.

As I said, one of the characteristics of our faith, even from the beginning, is its thrust towards the future. Our own covenant with God is inchoate in the

God makes a similar promise to King David when he promises that an heir from his own body would sit on his throne forever. King David, in his beautiful speech, “Who am I Lord, that you should do such things for me?,” never imagined that the heir of his body would actually be the Son of the transcendent God, the very God who took Abraham outside at night and told him to look at the stars in the sky and promised more descendants than stars. By the way, if you have never seen the night sky in the desert, then you still have a thrill in store for you. Anyone who sees the night sky in the desert on

of prophecy. As we just read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, even Joseph in Egypt prophesied that his descendants would return to the promised land, an event two hundred years in the future. “By faith, Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions about the interment of his bones.” (Hebrews 11:22)

For our great feast days, when we remember the great events of the life of Jesus, events of greater importance than anything recorded in history books, it is so pleasant and uplifting when we read so many of the prophecies and foreshadowings of our own redemption and our eternal life with God. Leading up to Christmas, we read so many prophecies about the Messiah, the Christ. We owe a great debt of gratitude to the musical geniuses in our era who wrote masterpieces highlighting these prophecies. Almost every city in the United States has multiple performances of Handel’s *Messiah* so that no one can escape the message of the scriptures at this time of year.

On our own calendar, for obscure historical reasons, the Baptism of the Lord is an even bigger feast, an event we call the *Theophany*, which means the “showing of God.” Before the Baptism, the Trinity was revealed to a chosen few. Mary, the Mother of God, was told, the Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you, so the birth of the Son of God involved the other two persons of the Trinity, according to the angel Gabriel. Mary must have remembered the exact words of the angel else we would not have them in the Gospel. So those words must have been one of the things that Saint Luke said, she pondered in her heart. Then at the Baptism, the Evangelists tell us that the Holy Spirit appeared in the form of a dove, and the Son coming out of the water was identified by none other than the Father himself. That is why we sing that the Trinity was revealed at this great event.

The prophecies and foreshadowings of this great event are manifold. At vespers the night before, we sing thirteen Old Testament readings, and there could be many more. One of the foreshadowings is the wells dug by the Patriarch Jacob. One of those wells was still in use in Samaria at the time of Jesus, and the overconfident woman at the well points that out to Jesus asking if He thinks He is greater than Jacob.

Continued on page 2

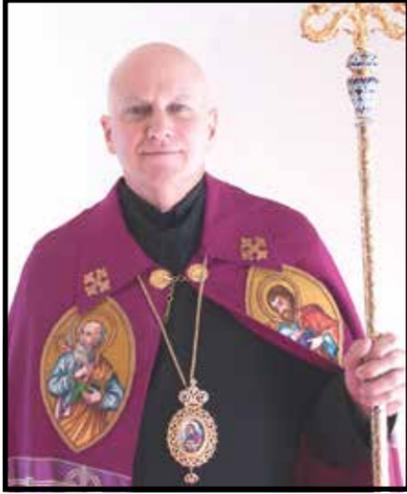


Icon of The Theophany of Our Lord

covenant with Abraham. God says to Abraham, I will make your descendants more numerous than the stars in the heavens and the sands on the seashore. God says this to a man who is already in his eighties, and God doesn’t send Abraham a son by his wife until he is already one hundred. That son, Isaac, only has two sons, Esau and Jacob, so it looks like God’s promise got off to a slow start. But God’s promise, like any promise, points to the future.

clear night without the lights of the city can understand, or rather, can feel why so much profound religion came from the deserts of Egypt and the Near East.

Our faith from its inception was always pointed towards the future, and not just our own future, but future history, the future of the world. The Egyptian religion, like most, looked to our own earthly death and afterlife, a few decades in the future. And one of the ways that our revelation was oriented towards the future was the importance



I LIFT UP MY EYES

Pastoral Reflections of Bishop Kurt



BORN AGAIN IN WATER AND THE SPIRIT

...continued from page 1

The greatest event that foreshadows the Baptism of the Jesus, and our own Baptism into eternal life, is the deliverance of the chosen people from slavery in Egypt through the waters of the Reed Sea, parted by Moses. As we sing, Israel walked as upon dry land. On one side of the sea was two hundred years of slavery, and on the other side was friendship with God and the accompanying freedom. A Cajun friend of mine used to tell me a joke about a boy from the swamps who went off to college to get higher learning. When he was home, he told his mother that Moses did not part the Red Sea, but it was only a shallow swamp. His mother replied, "Praise the Lord for his mighty works." The educated son would not give up. "Don't you understand?" he said, "It was only a few inches deep." His mother exclaimed, "Praise the Lord for His mighty power. He drowned six thousand Egyptians in only a few inches of water!" Wherever the miracle took place, the fact is it was through water, and slavery was behind them and freedom in God was in front of them.

dains as a muddy creek compared to the great rivers of the north.

Finally, perhaps two thousand years after Abraham and a thousand years after Moses, the Son of God is revealed to the expectant world coming up out of the waters of the River Jordan. Baptism in the Jordan had become a custom among certain Jews of the time as a sign of recommitment to their Covenant with God. We know that there were a number of sects that practiced this ritual, and we also know from the Gospels that many ordinary Jews came out to the Jordan River to hear John preach and to undergo this ritual cleansing. When I was visiting Russia in 1996, they took me to a spring of water near a monastery that was considered to be holy water by the Orthodox. There was a sort of bathhouse over the spring, and men and women took turns entering the bathhouse, undressing, and going down some stairs into the ice cold water. My friend and I joined the next men's group. The water was so cold that my vision was blurred when I pulled my head out! I considered it a sort of re-dedication to my own Baptism decades earlier. I think the people coming to Saint John in the desert must have been thinking something similar.

When Jesus entered into the River Jordan, there were two great miracles. The

ment, but actually to wash away all sin from the person who receives the sacrament. Before that, water had a remarkable power to wash away worldly filth. In fact, it is one of the most universal of all solvents and will wash away a granite mountain with enough time. After Jesus plunged himself into the river, water now has the power to wash away sin and give the grace of justification which opens the door to eternal life for a Christian.

When we bless holy water at the Feast of Theophany, after the many Old Testament readings, the priest performs several rituals with profound significance. For one, the priest blows on the water. Recall that at the very beginning the Bible and the very beginning of the creation of the Cosmos, the Spirit (the Breath) hovered over the deep. Again, at the Baptism of Our Lord, the Holy Spirit (the Divine Breath) appears over Jesus in the form of a dove. That is why the priest breathes on the water during the blessing. It is also why the priest breathes on an infant during the exorcism at Baptism, to replace the spirits driven out with the Holy Spirit. The most dramatic ritual, I think, is when then priest thrusts the three branched candlestick into the water, one branch at a time, extinguishing the three flames. Fire is a symbol of divinity, which is why Jesus wears a red tunic in

Faith as handed down from the Apostles. Saint Paul says that when we were plunged into the water, we died with Christ, and when we emerged from the water, we rose with Him from the dead. For this reason, the priest takes a hand cross and dips and lowers it three times into the water and lifts it back up again. In many of our eastern churches this ritual is taken a step farther. When the priest goes to bless the river or lake or even the sea at this Feast, the priest may throw a gold hand cross into the body of water and the boys from the area will swim in the water hoping to be the one who retrieves the cross. At this time of year, you can usually find a picture in the news media of a boy in Greece or eastern Europe triumphantly holding a cross out of the water with a grin on his face.

Our Faith is a faith that looks to the future, and always has. From the Covenant with Noah, in which God promised never again to destroy the world with water, and placed the rainbow as a symbol of life in the sky, through each of his unexpected and exhilarating revelations to the world, revelations of grace and mercy and endless compassion, our God is a God of the future, a God of new Life, a God who does not remember evil, but forgives even unto seventy times seven and commands us to do likewise. As Jesus said to the scholars of his own era, God is the God of the living, not the dead.

As we look back on the sweep of history and revelation in our ancient and living Faith, we are filled with awe for the past and hope for the future. Whatever seems wrong in the world today, seems small beside the four thousand years of salvation history. For ourselves, on the Feast of Theophany, we are filled with gratitude for God's great mercy and compassion for us. Like King David, we say humbly, "Who am I Lord, that you would do such things for me?" As we ponder God's mercy to forgive our lifetime of sins, we look on others with compassion and mercy. *The Cloud of Unknowing* ends with the following thought, "God with His compassionate eye looks on us and sees not what we were, nor what we are, but what we might be." And God asks us to look at others the same way.

+Kurt Burnett



There are many references to water and stories about water in the Old Testament, which is not surprising in a desert where water is scarce and valuable. During their forty years in the desert, God provided drinking water miraculously from a rock when Moses struck the rock with his walking stick. There are also stories of poisonous water miraculously made drinkable by the power of God. And in one of my favorite stories, Naaman the Syrian general is cleansed of leprosy by washing seven times in the Jordan river, a river he dis-

first was the revelation to the world of the Trinity, and that Jesus was himself the Son of God. The second miracle was this: Jesus did not have sin to be washed away. Jesus did not have need of repentance or "a change of heart." Even his cousin, Saint John, prophesying himself under the motion of the Holy Spirit said to Jesus, I should not be baptizing you! But when the Divine flesh of Jesus touched the water, it changed the nature of water itself. Water received the power to be used in Christian Baptism, not as a sign of a renewal of a commit-

some of our iconography, and to the fire thrust into the water is a symbol of Our Lord plunging his own body, true God and true Man, into the River Jordan.

There is another prefiguring of our Baptism that would not be at all decipherable were it not that Saint Paul himself explains it to us. When Jesus died and entered into the tomb, he then re-emerged alive into the world. Saint Paul tells us that when we were baptized, we did the same thing, though we cannot see it and must trust in the Catholic

BYZANTINE CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF PASSAIC 2022 BISHOP'S ANNUAL APPEAL

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

As challenges continue to affect us, please take care of yourself, your family and your parish first.

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

- full payment enclosed
- first payment enclosed, bill me for 4 additional payments

The 2022 Bishop's Appeal will run through the end of our fiscal year, June 2023. Contributions received prior to December 31, 2022, will count toward your 2022 tax year. Acknowledgement letter will be mailed prior to January 31, 2023.

_____ **New Address or Correction** _____
 Name: _____
 Street: _____
 City, State, Zip: _____



PEOPLE YOU KNOW AROUND THE EPARCHY

IN PASSAIC...

Saint Nicholas Festivities

Photo credit: Cheryl Duch

Saint Nicholas visited the children of Saint Michael Cathedral with gifts and a message of peace on Saturday, December 4, 2022. Parish men served up a hot breakfast and led the guests in singing carols. Paulette Rude and Mark Hrehovčik coordinated the event. Father Jack Custer is the rector of Saint Michael Cathedral.



IN ROSWELL...

Saint Nicholas Party

Epiphany of Our Lord celebrated their annual Saint Nicholas Celebration on Sunday, December 5. Many families and children were in attendance and all shared a wonderful pot-luck meal and desserts. Saint Nicholas greeted the children and gave them small gifts. Epiphany is served by Father Lewis Rabayda, Deacon James Smith, Deacon John Reed, and Reader Alex Adekambi.

IN SWOYERSVILLE...

Parish Hosts Blessing of Pets

In this photo from Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church, Swoyersville, PA, we are reminded of God's blessing of sunny, mild days — the kind experienced this past autumn in our northern states. We are also reminded of the happiness that pets can bring to our lives. A small group of parishioners gathered in front of the church following Sunday Liturgy, on October 9, 2022. Gathered with them were other "family members," their family pets. A short prayer service and blessing in honor of the feast day of Saint Francis of Assisi was given by Father Andrii Dumnych. All four-legged guests were attentive and mannerly, with one jubilant little participant jumping for joy in excitement. Parishioners present said "Amen" to the final prayer on behalf of the guests who politely chose to remain silent in appreciation. Both two legged and four legged "parishioners" look forward to more spirited blessings in 2023!



You are invited and welcome to join us for
DIVINE LITURGY (MASS) VIGIL
EVERY SATURDAY 11AM
 (Fulfils Sunday Obligation)
 Celebrated by Fr. Oleksiy Nebesnyk at
Christ Lutheran Church
15699 SE 80th Ave.
Summerfield, FL 34491
 For more information call 352-326-9831



CARPATHO-RUSYN SOCIETY
 MANIFESTING CARPATHO-RUSYN CULTURE AND HISTORY

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.

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

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.



Follow us for updates & live-stream
[facebook.com/ByzantineCatholicVillages](https://www.facebook.com/ByzantineCatholicVillages)

SYNOD ON SYNODALITY REPORT/SYNTHESIS FOR THE EPARCHY OF PASSAIC

Publication 2/3

Prepared by Joan (Cebrick) Grossman, PhD, RDN, Synod Coordinator

Below are the responses for questions 3-7, presented to all clergy and parishioners regarding the Synod process. These responses were compiled from the reports received, and synthesized into the following:

Correction: Holy Ghost, Jessup, PA, St. John the Baptist, Forest City, PA, St. Mary, Scranton and St. John, Scranton were participating parishes from the Susquehanna Syncellate, resulting in the total number of participating parishes to 43 or 50% of the Eparchy.

In our local church, who are those who “walk together”? Who are those who seem further apart?

People who participate in the parish life, walk together. Those who seem further apart, are those who do not attend the Divine Liturgy, and those who do not participate in church activities.

We must pay attention as to why are so many people are NOT attending Church. We should look at issues in society that are causing young people to leave the Church. It seems that the Church, in its current state is not reaching these people, it is not filling their spiritual needs.

Suggestion – Invite those with talents to contribute. For example, leadership is instrumental in the life of the church, the priest/administrator, could reach out to parishioners and use the human resources of the Church. Invite those to share their talents: accountants, carpenters, cooks, electricians, any such talents to help and support the Church. Personal invitations from a priest are incredibly meaningful and may create a profound sense of community, which could make all the difference in the life of the parish.

Reach the youth by suggesting the creation and management of a social media page for the parish, meet them at their level, seek them out.

How is God speaking to us through voices we sometimes ignore? How are they laity listened to, especially women and young people? What facilitates or inhibits listening?

The Byzantine Church is very hierarchical. It seems to elevate priests and bishops to a level that separates them from the laity. The Church body is no longer an uneducated, immigrant Church that relies on the “wisdom” of the clergy. We are so steeped in tradition, at times, there does not seem to be a place for the voices of the laity to heard. Such listening is facilitated by creating opportunities for listening to happen. The church leaders, i.e., the priest, administrator and deacon should be actively engaged with the parishioners, working side-by-side with the laity on parish events and projects.

The women of the Church are very valuable in a myriad of ways and should be given the opportunity to hold executive positions in Church governance at both the parish and Eparchial levels.

Some of what inhibits our listening is generational. The problem of people shutting down and not really listening to each other or understanding how each generation of our Church perceives change and feels included. This goes back to the basics of treating each other with dignity and respect and including everyone: disabled, divorced, unwed mothers, sexually confused, children from broken families, gay, those of little means, another race, tattoos, everyone should feel welcome and have a safe space in our Churches, after all this is Jesus’s message.

Sometimes words need not be said, as our reaction to differences are shown through our body language. Working together, accepting others’ differences, taking the time to truly “listen” to the needs of others, makes us stronger.

We ignore those who have left and have a responsibility to reach out to them.

The laity IS the Church, their voices should be heard and not shunned.

The youth are the future of the Church, reaching out to them in creative ways is the life blood needed in the Church today.

Suggestions: In the ECL, the laity should have their names listed with all photos, not just the clergy names, which sends a strong message that the laity are unimportant.

At dinners, the clergy should not be separated from the people at a “head” table on a raised platform, they should be seated among and with the people.

Designate youth to create and manage a social media page for the parish, as mentioned in Question 3.

Invite. Offer a “Welcome Picnic” or a similar fellowship gathering. This would serve as an opportunity to reach those who left, suggest to each parishioner, to bring a friend or family member.

A simple yet powerful educational opportunity, would be to provide informational leaflets about our Byzantine Rite, directed from the eparchial-level, within the vestibule of each parish, for everyone; guests and parishioners.

As mentioned in Question 2, create an educational space in the weekly bulletin and a dedicated paragraph in the ECL, “Did you know?” and offer an interesting fact about our rite, an easy way to teach, about our rich traditions.

How does the relationship with the local media work (not only Catholic media)? Who speaks on behalf of the Christian community, and how are they chosen?

The local media represents the Catholic Church, however, it is mostly the Roman Catholic Church, often associated with scandal and not much, if any, emphasis or understanding on the Eastern Catholic Churches, which is often confused with the Orthodox Church.

Media is a “missed” opportunity for the Church to enunciate clear public stances on current issues.

Suggestion: As a directive from the Eparchy, be more proactive in addressing issues and identify spoke persons/media contacts for the Eparchy, each syncellate and parish.

Have press-packets available so a consistent message is conveyed.

Use such media opportunities, whether it is television or the newspaper to identify distinct differences between the Roman Catholic Church and the Byzantine Rite, e.g., married priests. Social media can be used in a positive and powerful way, an opportunity for the parish youth to be involved as suggested in Questions 3 & 4.

How do prayer and liturgical celebrations inspire and guide our common life and mission in our community?

The Byzantine Church is rich in traditions and sometimes due to outdated/stubborn thought processes tied deeply to the past, in turn, the Church can become stagnant with forward thinking stalled.

We are blessed with deep and rich traditions, however, much of these traditions remain a mystery to many, since catechism ended, for most, in the sixth grade.

Prayer and liturgical celebrations are at the heart of what we do as a praying community of faith, we have a uniqueness to share.

Our prayer in the Eastern Church is chanted music, which plays a vital role in the prayerfulness of the community and the prayer experience can be wonderful, lifting hearts and minds into the realm of the divine. As generations change in parishes, there is a need for cantors.

Formal training for cantors is needed, directed from the eparchial level, as the cantor plays a vital role in the prayer life of the church.

When the Divine Liturgy is appropriately chanted it is truly divine, when hindered by a lack of proper cantoring, incorrect tones/hymns, etc., it can be a miserable experience and result in dwindling attendance.

The homily is THE opportunity to connect the Word of God to our current life and when done well, it is a message that can resonate well beyond the Church walls, a message to take into the world, where God’s work is done.

Suggestion: Educate via short messages, mentioned in Questions 2 & 4, “Did you know?”, weekly bulletin messages.

As our priests are few, so are our cantors. Seek out, invite and encourage those with musical talents, trained musicians to be an integral part of the Divine Liturgy, use the human resources available and make the liturgical celebrations a prayerful experience.

Create a cantor pool within each Syncellate, especially for new cantors, this would provide an opportunity to learn and grow and support one another to cover funerals, weddings, etc. This could also serve as a training opportunity for new cantors.

Homilies should be limited to 10 minutes, less is more.

What hinders the baptized from being active in mission? What areas of mission are we neglecting?

Missionary activities should be guided by the Eparchy, as it has a responsibility to communicate the goals and mission of the Church (Similar to Questions 2 & 4). One example, a directive to support the current war in Ukraine.

Beyond the local parish fundraising, opportunities to be "active in mission" are lacking. We are too insular and do not reach out to a cause or person, outside of helping the churches in Eastern Europe.

Suggestion: A need for comprehensive programs on the Eparchial level with appropriate training for lay persons, who could then coordinate mission activities.

Larger structures and support networks would also be required to coordinate community outreach and volunteering.

A smaller example, but meaningful and mission driven, at the parish-level would be to start a food drive and support a local food pantry, an effort to involve the parish youth and offer them an opportunity to witness greater community needs.

The third and final publication of the Synod on Synodality Report/Synthesis for the Eparchy of Passaic will be published in the February edition.

Note, if your parish participated in the Synod process, the parish-level report(s) should have been shared with the laity. Please see your priest, administrator, deacon or Synod facilitator for parish-level report(s).

Theosis In Action & the Eparchy of Passaic Present:

Poustinia

**An Evening of
Encounter and Hospitality
In the Light of the Byzantine East**

Featuring the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal

January 28, 2023

7:00 - 10:00 pm

Open to all young adults (18-35)

Evening to include

- Compline
- Confession
- Silent prayer/reflection
- Social & fellowship

*For more information, contact:
FatherTomByz@gmail.com or
facebook.com/theosisinaction*



**St. Mary's Byzantine Catholic Church
1900 Brooks Blvd, Hillsborough, NJ**



ANNUAL STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION FOR THE BYZANTINE CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF PASSAIC As of June 30, 2022

Operating Revenues:

Eparchial assessments	\$585,402
Eparchial Stewardship Appeal	412,028
Donations, bequests and other income	22,615
Ukrainian refugee relief	376,007
Sale of Churches	481,780
ECL Newspaper Revenues	48,588
Hospitalization assessments and reimbursements	1,057,443
Life insurance proceeds, net of funeral expenses	290,183
<hr/> Total operating revenues	<hr/> 3,274,046

Operating Expenses:

Property, casualty, Auto and Workmen's Compensation insurance	109,478
Hospitalization	1,127,750
Life insurance expense	68,861
Pension and retirement costs	585,296
Administrative salaries and payroll taxes	60,933
Clergy salaries	143,247
Clergy subsistence	101,913
Stewardship rebates to parishes	84,154
Stewardship expenses - postage, printing and office expenses	13,556
Diaconate program expenses	3,848
Eastern Catholic Life publication - postage, printing and office expenses	55,411
Office administration and supplies – general	19,627
Office postage and printing – general	9,667
Legal and immigration fees	316,961
Accounting fees	96,000
Safe environment audit fees	7,530
Celebrations, anniversary and gifts	5,905
Controller and consulting fees	76,233
Eparchial transportation and meeting expenses	78,729
Utilities and telephone	40,855
Maintenance and repairs - Chancery and Chapel	92,408
Assessments - NJ, US and Eastern Catholic Conferences	18,309
Continued education and wellbeing of priests	22,319
ECF Operating expenses - Eastern Christian Formation programs	22,758
Investment management fees	73,066
Carpathian Village and Shrine expenses, net of income	132,696
Aid to Eastern Europe – Ukraine	264,560
Assistance to parishes	570,992
Depreciation - buildings and equipment	40,806
<hr/> Total operating expenses	<hr/> 4,243,868

Net loss from operations

	(969,822)
Investment Income	
Interest and dividend income	382,848
Realized and unrealized gain on marketable securities	(1,912,878)
	<hr/> (1,530,030)

Net increase in assets as of end of year

\$ (2,499,852)

Earn your Master's Degree in Theology at the Byzantine Catholic Seminary's School of Theology

Degree options are offered both online and on campus.

Catholic • Ecumenical • Flexible
Affordable • Prestigious • Spiritually Enriching
Rooted in ancient Christianity

*To begin M.A.T. program
in upcoming summer
semester, application
deadline is April 20.*

www.bcs.edu

*Students have a choice of four
different M.A.T. focus areas:*

- Chaplaincy
- Dogmatics
- Liturgy
- Sacred Scripture

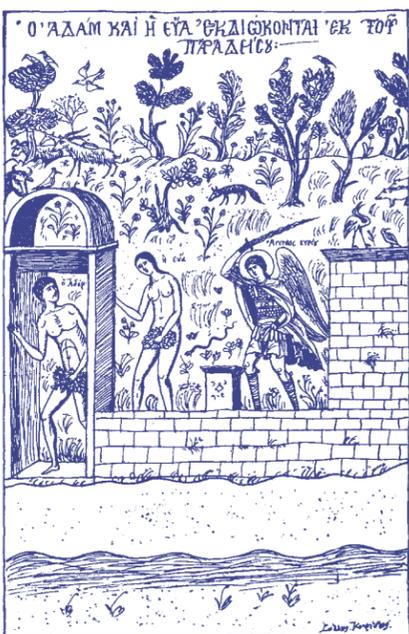


LIFE, LOVE, AND THE HUMAN PERSON

By Ann M. Koshute, MTS

BACK TO THE BEGINNING

When Pope Saint John Paul II presented his catechesis on human and divine love – popularly known as the *theology of the body* – it was as if he'd detonated a spiritual bomb. Rather than wreaking havoc and destruction, however, this bomb exploded in the hearts of men and women everywhere. Instead of destroying, this new way of understanding the human heart charts a course toward restoration. What humanity had in the Garden will never be recaptured as it was, but God didn't leave our first parents, or us, to eventual destruction through sin. He sent His only Son to restore in us the image of God that had been lost, and to prepare us for a new Eden, more beautiful and blissful than any earthly garden. John Paul II's catechesis unfolds that story, through Scrip-



ture, the Tradition of the Church, and the command of Christ to go “back to the beginning.” It is spiritually beneficial for us, too, to go with Christ “back to the beginning,” so that we can more fully appreciate why He chose to enter into our present and lead us toward eternity with Him.

We all know how the story played out in the Garden of Eden: boy is introduced to girl by God, girl becomes “bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh,” and snake slithers in to ruin it all. But rather than dwelling on the negative, let's follow John Paul II as he heeds Christ's call to go back to those original experiences we can only guess at understanding, because we experience only their opposites. Just for a moment, let's return to a time when Man and Woman weren't known by name, but by who they were: creatures made in the image and likeness of God; equal in dignity but complimentary in their difference; made for each other; made for love by the One Who is Supreme Love. Their story, which is our story, too, begins in Genesis chapters one and two. You should read it for yourself, because no matter how well you think you know Scripture, God will reveal something you never noticed before, and it could change your life.

Saint John Paul II identifies what he calls *original experiences*: *innocence, solitude, unity*, and others. When the man is created, he experiences *original solitude*, only, this being Paradise, it's not a negative emotion. This solitude is one that

informs him that he is different, special, unique in all creation. Rather than loneliness, this solitude reflects his understanding that his relationship to God is unlike any other in the world. The Man comes to know that he was made for relationship with God, and for communion with another. But who? The Man names the animals, is given dominion over Earth, but none are suitable partners for communion. This process of the Man being revealed to himself is not a sad one, but an adventure of discovery. When God “at last” brings the Woman to him, the Man knows instantly that his Solitude (which he continues to experience as the recognition of his place of prominence in Creation) has been forever enhanced by another whose own Solitude will join with his to form a new communion of persons. Woman is given to Man, and Man is a gift to Woman. The threat to this new covenant of love is on the horizon, but for now, Man and Woman live a new experience together: the peace of the interior gaze.

Our *origin story* in Genesis speaks of chaos, disorder, formlessness. Yet with a word from God, chaos becomes order; turmoil gives way to peace. The restlessness the Man feels as he searches for that “one” for whom he was made is calmed when he receives God's beautiful gift – the Woman. In John Paul II's interpretation of the Scriptures – read through the lens of the Tradition and with the eyes of a poet – Man and Woman see each other in truth. They see each other as God does – as God created them – with

a peace that reassures them that “this one at last” is one to whom they can give themselves, completely, without fear or shame or suspicion. This peace is unspoken but recognized by both.

We know what happens: the talking snake charms and deceives them, and their peace has been shattered. The Man becomes *Adam*, and names his wife *Eve*. For millennia, we will blame them for our sad lot. But would we have done anything differently? Would we have guarded the precious gift of God with our lives? Even now that we “know the story,” are we not vulnerable to the enticements of the devil, who remains as clever as he was in the Garden? For us, solitude becomes loneliness, innocence is shattered, and peace is elusive. But just as God didn't allow Adam and Eve to eat from the Tree of Life in their sinful state (lest they be held captive to sin forever), He doesn't leave us their either. God planted a new tree, in the shape of a Cross, and it's first fruit is Jesus Christ. Jesus, born of Mary, raised by Joseph, broke through the chaos wrought by Satan to reign in our hearts once again as the Prince of Peace. As we contemplate the great gift we received at Christmas and look forward to the season of fasting that prepares us for the fulfillment of salvation, let's acknowledge our own sinfulness, and guard against those opportunities the devil seizes upon to introduce chaos into our lives and our relationships. Let us stay close to Him so that His peace reigns in us. **ECL**

EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE
(USPS 165-600) (ISSN 0894-9786)

Official Publication of the
Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic
Subscription Rate: \$15.00 per year.

News and Photo Services:
Member of the Catholic Press Association of America.

Published monthly by the
Eastern Catholic Press Association
445 Lackawanna Avenue

Woodland Park, NJ 07424
Phone: 973-890-7777
Fax: 973-890-7175

Postage paid at Little Falls, NJ, and additional office at
Bellmawr, NJ.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:
Eastern Catholic Life
445 Lackawanna Avenue
Woodland Park, NJ 07424

Most Reverend Bishop Kurt Burnette
President and Publisher

Father James Badeaux, *Editor*
Father Ronald Hatton, *Associate Editor*
Father Lewis Rabayda, *Layout Editor*
Mrs. Maureen French, *Circulation Editor* (mfrench@eparchyofpassaic.com)

E-Mail us at:
ECL@eparchyofpassaic.com

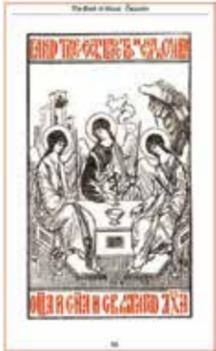
Eparchial Website:
www.EparchyofPassaic.com

EASTERN CHRISTIAN PUBLICATIONS ANNOUNCES

The Book of Hours (Časoslov)

This edition of *The Book of the Hours* (Časoslov in Slavonic and *Horologion* in Greek) is an authentic and complete translation of the typical (official) Church Slavonic edition issued in 1950 by the Holy See of Rome for the Ruthenian Churches. The contents, pagination and layout match the original and include:

The Midnight Service	Matins
The Hours	Vespers
Compline	The Canonicon
Troparia During the Year	The Menologion (Troparia of the Saints)



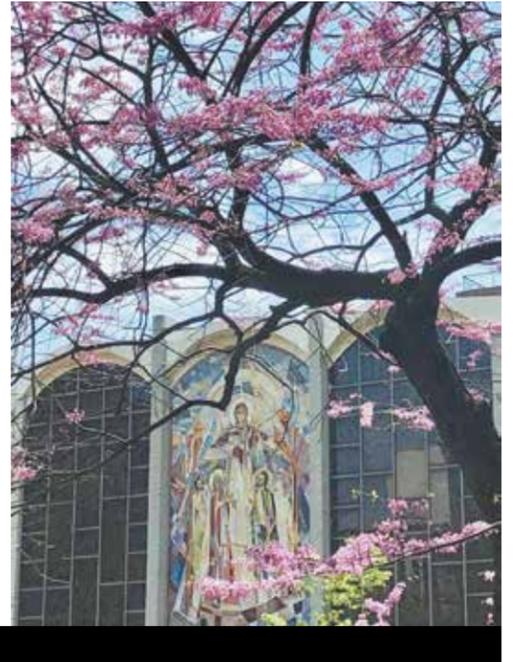
The book is printed in red and black on medium-weight opaque paper, with a black leatherette sewn binding and flexible covers. At 5"x7" and 2" thick, it also matches the original Slavonic edition with approximately 900 pages. The translation has been approved in concordance with the original by Bishop Kurt Burnette of Passaic. Special launch pricing is available at \$60/copy, or \$40/copy for orders of five or more, plus shipping and handling.

Please use the order form below and send with payment to:

Eastern Christian Publications
PO Box 146
Fairfax, VA 22038-0146

Or fax your order to 703-691-0513. You can order online at

[HTTP://ECPUBS.COM/PRODUCT/THE-BOOK-OF-HOURS/](http://ecpubs.com/product/the-book-of-hours/)

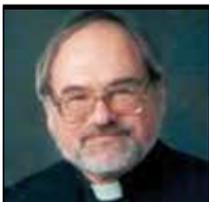


Visiting New York City? Come Worship With Us!

Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church
Father Edward G. Cimbala, D.Min.—Pastor

246 East 15th Street, Manhattan, New York
212-677-0516

Sunday Divine Liturgy
10:00 AM



THE BYZANTINE LITURGY

By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD

THE RITES OF INITIATION: ONLY ONE IS HOLY

In the New Testament, the first Letter of Saint Peter is a revelation about the meaning of baptism. When we are baptized, we have a new status in relation to God. The sacred writer says, “you are ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.’” (1 Peter 2:9) The fathers called baptism, “enlightenment,” because we have come out of the darkness of worldly ignorance into the “joyful light of the holy glory of the Father Immortal, the heavenly, holy, blessed One, Jesus Christ.” (Hymn of Vespers) We have become a people chosen by God, as Saint Peter immediately adds, “a people of his own,” for “once you were ‘no people,’ but now you are God’s people.” (1 Peter 2:10) Even more we are kings and priests, “a royal priesthood.” While God alone is holy, as we chant in the Liturgy, “One is holy, one is Lord, Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father,” by baptism, we become associated with the holiness of God. 2 Peter 1:4, records, “he has bestowed on us the precious and very great promises, so that through them you may come to share in the divine nature, after escaping from the corruption that is in the world because of evil desire.”

The French word for “holy” is “saint,” which we have taken over into English. We usually use this as a title for people of heroic virtue, canonized by the Church in order to give us models for life according to God’s law. Saint Paul frequently calls those who have been baptized “saints.” He begins his letter to

the Romans, “to all the beloved of God in Rome, called to be saints [holy]. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (1:7) He likewise calls the Corinthians, the Colossians, the Ephesians and the Philippians “saints” in his address to them. This is the vocation of the baptized, as Saint Paul teaches, “Immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be mentioned among you, as is fitting among holy ones, no obscenity or silly or suggestive talk, which is out of place, but instead, thanksgiving.” (Ephesians 5:3-4) Holiness, of course, is more than purity, it is integrity, the wholeness of life, “having it all together.” In its highest expression, it is love which comes from God.

When we are baptized, we make a commitment to holiness. We renounce the evil one, and all the works of pride and hatred that come from darkness. We accept Christ, who is the Light and the Life of all human existence. In our faith, we believe that God created us for goodness. The Book of Genesis affirms, “God looked at everything he



had made, and found it very good.” (1:31). There is, therefore, no essential reason that we cannot choose good, except that from the beginning, we chose disobedience to God’s will, and it remains always a problem for our human nature – the inability to choose what is right. By baptism, we freely make the choice for righteousness, but the ability to carry out this decision comes only from the strength of God’s grace. This helps to explain why we can baptize infants, for even though they do not have the maturity of soul to consciously choose what is right and avoid evil, they are still able to receive God’s grace given through water and oil, through the holy communion which is his body and blood.

In our Creed, we say, “I profess one baptism for the remission of sins.” We are liberated from the power of evil and are given the strength to do good. The mystery of baptism is a divine reality. We enter into the life of God, one in the Holy Trinity. It is not something that we ourselves can initiate, as Saint Nicholas Cabasilas observes, “It is not we ourselves who were moved towards God, nor did we ascend to him; but it was he who came and descended to us.” (The Life in Christ, I, § 6) This is Saint Paul’s basic teaching about baptism, in the epistle which is read in the rite of baptism, and at the Paschal Vigil, the day of baptism, “We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life.” (Romans 6:4) It is the transfor-

mation of our own lives, in all its individuality, and in all its uniqueness, by the death and life of Christ.

In every Liturgy, we sing, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts. Heaven and earth are filled with your glory.” Holiness is indeed an attribute of God. We have free will, and we can choose God, but we cannot attain holiness by our human strength alone, we need God acting in us. He has created us in our human nature, but he sanctifies us “to share in the divine nature. (2 Peter 1:4) This transformation is real, not just theoretical. By baptism in water and the Spirit, we can become a new person, and we can actually behave differently than just “natural human beings.” We can act as deified people, saints, as it were. An ancient letter, to Diognetus, describes Christians, “They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives.” (§ 5) Of course, we take no pride in this, for we are not “self-made,” but receive it as a gift from God. Again, Saint Nicholas Cabasilas explains, “Just as it is impossible to live this natural life without receiving the organs of Adam (that is, a natural physical body) and the human faculties necessary of this life, so likewise no one can attain that blessed world alive without being prepared by the life of Christ and being formed according to his image.” (The Life in Christ, II, § 9) We are holy only in Christ. **ECL**



SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

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

ETERNAL MEMORY AND THE BOOK OF LIFE

We Byzantine Catholics are not known for brevity in church. Like a great opera or a gourmet meal, our services do take some time. Our best-known prayer for the deceased, however, is also our shortest prayer, a mere two words: “Eternal Memory.”

Like just about every other phrase in our liturgical services, “eternal memory” comes directly from the Scriptures although it gets a little lost in translation. “The just man shall be remembered forever; evil news he will not fear” (Psalm 111: 6-7) is not part of the funeral services but is frequently sung as the communion verse for the commemoration of a male martyr. In Greek and Slavonic, the first three words are literally “unto eternal memory” (vo pamjat’ vicnuju).

Folks who don’t know better may instinctively say “memories” (with a nod perhaps to the famous Barbara Streisand song) but that’s not quite right. Our memories of our departed family and friends are for us to treasure and pass on. The good deeds a person has performed in this life may live on after him or her. The way they share their resources with others, during life and even after death, may continue to do good for others and keep their memories alive. At least for a while. How many of us can even name our great grandparents? What do you know about the people whose names are the windows or the donor plates at your parish?

But none of that is what the Church means when we pray “Eternal memory.” Again, the meaning comes directly from the Scriptures. When the Old Testament describes God intervening in the lives of His people to save them, we often see the expression “God remembered...” God remembered Noah (Genesis 8:1) and brought the



Flood to an end. God remembered His covenant with Abraham and began the Exodus (Genesis 2:24; 6:5). The Lord remembered Rachel and Hannah and granted them sons who grew to become important in the history of Israel (Genesis 30:22; 1 Samuel 1:19). The Psalms (25:7) teach us to pray to the Lord, “Remember me!”

The prayer “Eternal Memory” entrusts the departed soul to the care of God and asks that God’s plan of salvation be fully realized for him or her. The Lord who knows each of us from the moment of our conception (Isaiah 44:2; Jeremiah 1:15; Psalm 139:16) has created every one of us to share His life and love forever.

Of course, not every choice people make in their lifetime brings them closer to that heavenly goal. And so, the Church repeats its other brief prayer, “Lord, have mercy,” again and again for every departed soul. Our repentance is the key that opens us up to the grace and mercy God so desires to pour out on each of us.

We can take an example and draw courage from what happened on Good Friday. The convicted criminal crucified along with Jesus was promised, “Even today you will be with me in Paradise.” All the Good Thief had asked was, “Remember me when You come into Your kingdom” (Luke 23:42-43). This is what we ask for our beloved departed when we pray “Eternal memory.”

Whenever we pray “eternal memory” for the departed, we do it by name. That seems natural enough when remembering one person at a funeral or a fortieth day; it may seem to get a little out of hand on the five All Souls’ Saturdays, when the names run for pages. But it is important to recall those names and it is important to recall them as baptismal

names rather than whatever nicknames or shortened or “Americanized” versions people may have actually used. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, reassures us that He knows each of us by name and calls each of us to follow Him to the Kingdom of Heaven (John 10:14). He told the Apostles to “rejoice that your names are written in Heaven” (Luke 10:20; see also Philippians 4:3).

A specific “book” in which God records the names of the saved was first revealed in the Old Testament (Exodus 32:33; Psalm 69:28; Daniel 12:1); the prophet Malachi (3:16) actually calls it a “book of remembrance.” St. John’s vision of heavenly worship, the final judgment, and the fulfillment of God’s plan of salvation refers repeatedly to the names of the saved written in the Book of Life (Revelation 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:15; 21:27).

The genius of our Byzantine Tradition is to do more than simply read inspired truths like these as words in a book. We act on them and make them present realities in our Liturgy. On the five All Souls’ Saturdays, we do that specifically by the solemn reading of the names of the departed and by our prayer for their “eternal memory.” **ECL**



Epiphany of our Lord Byzantine Catholic Mission

We've Moved!

Serving suburban Washington, DC, northern Montgomery County and the city of Frederick, MD

Join us for Divine Liturgy:
please check website for days and times

Visit our website for schedule

Epiphany of our Lord Byzantine Catholic Mission
9301 Warfield Road
Gaithersburg, Maryland 20882

www.eolmission.org

Questions? Contact us at 703-573-3986

www.eolmission.org



PRIESTLY REFLECTIONS

Father Paul Varchola West

DON'T MISS OUT!

At the Vigil Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil on Christmas Eve, we are blessed to hear the following words from the Gospel of Saint Luke:

But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart. [2:19]

Simultaneously profound yet simple, just as the Incarnation itself, these words give much insight as to how we Christians living in the modern era need to approach not only the “holiday” of Christmas, but the entire season following the universally exalted day of December 25.

Increasingly, I have come to marvel at the pictures I see all over social media in which are featured piles of presents, each one larger than the last; pictures of full tables; large gatherings; full churches that are often far less attended the rest of the year; and the list goes on. And it is not just one picture per post, but sometimes dozens, with the activity being given the perhaps not so affectionate title of a *photo dump*. What this implies is that all these pictures are simply being thrown out for the world to see, oftentimes without even being looked at before posting. The pictures are simply thrown into a collage and posted; no

keeping of any to oneself; no pondering the beauty of the liturgical celebration; the generosity shown in gifts; or the familial love that is seemingly showcased in these images.

Further, the ubiquitous and incessant need to post all the images of how great the day is creates, without a shadow of a doubt, an increased amount of *FOMO* — *the Fear Of Missing Out!* This, in turn, creates a runaway “keeping up with the Jones” effect in which each individual must post just as many, or perhaps a couple more, even more exciting photos than the last. Then, before we know it, the day concludes, and we sit with bloated bellies bemoaning the fact that “Christmas is over” and “all that prep for one day... just look at this mess!” In our excitement for the day, and our dread of experiencing guilt-laden FOMO, we tend to forget that December 25 is the *start* of the Feast, not the end. As society moves on to Valentine’s Day, we stand with our heads spinning.

I shudder to think of what the birth of Christ and Mary’s response would have looked like if it occurred in the present age: *selfies* of Mary with the newborn Christ Child and pics with the shep-

herds giving Joseph *bro hugs*, replete with the captions: #nativity #yes, I did know #Glory to God in the highest #Emmanuel #perpetual virginity #savior in training.

While I say these things in jest, I also think we need to take this seriously. What we hear on the Vigil of the Nativity in Luke 2:19 is probably the thing we see the least of in our society today. We have become so engrossed with a fear of missing out on something that we are actually missing out on the whole “reason for the season”: access to Salvation and the fullness of time, to use the language of Saint Basil.

Instead of worrying about our FOMO, we need to PO - MO: Ponder More!

While all the events of the Nativity of Christ are occurring around Mary, as we hear, she is keeping all these things and pondering them in her heart. Let us, then, do the same. Rather than incessantly posting pictures of our day, let us keep those moments in our hearts, pondering the gift of generosity, the gift of full tables, the gift of family and loved ones, and most importantly the gift of salvation.

I write all this to remind us that the pondering of these wonders should not stop at 11:59:59 p.m. on December 25, but rather, **MUST** continue on throughout the *Winter Pascha*, encompassing Theophany and continuing till the close of the season on February 2nd with The Presentation of Christ in the Temple. Although December 25th has already come and gone, the festive season of rejoicing has not! Don’t miss out... **PONDER!** **ECL**



SCHOOL OF PRAYER

Father G. Scott Boghossian



PRAYER IS A FAMILIAR CONVERSATION WITH GOD

“Mental prayer is nothing else than an intimate friendship, a frequent heart to heart conversation with Him by whom we know ourselves to be loved,” says Saint Teresa of Avila.

According to the Carmelite spiritual tradition, there is nothing more critical in private prayer than talking to God in your own words. In his contemporary spiritual classic, *Conversation with Christ*, Thomas Rohrbach defines mental prayer or meditation as “a personal heart-to-heart conversation with Christ.” Rohrbach teaches that meditation or “mental prayer” is prayer “without aid of rosaries, prayer books or missals.”

Father Gabriel of Saint Mary Magdalen, O.C.D. (1893-1953), respected theologian and expert on Saint Teresa and Saint John of the Cross, writes:

“[Saint Teresa] insists: during prayer, do not spend the whole time reasoning, but when, after having spent some time in mental discourse, you are convinced that the Lord loves you, leave reasoning aside and, remaining quiet in the presence of the Lord, start up an affectionate conversation with Him. In

this, open your heart with all the desires that you have for Him and for yourself, for His glory and for your needs. This, for Saint Teresa, is the whole substance of mental prayer, and for that reason, it can well be said that, for the great saint, prayer is “a loving conversation with the Lord.”

According to Father Gabriel of Saint Mary Magdalen, in his booklet, *Little Catechism of the Life of Prayer*, the most important part of prayer, the essential aspect of true prayer, is this familiar, loving, extemporaneous conversation with God. All the other steps in formal discursive meditation are intended to bring us to simply speaking with Christ in a friendly conversation he calls “the colloquy.”

Accept for a moment the intriguing claim of Saint Teresa, Thomas Rohrbach, and Father Gabriel of Saint Mary Magdalen that intimate friendship and familiar conversation with God is what is essential. How often do we do this? Do our prayers consist only of beads (or prayer ropes), books, and memorized texts? Our beads, books, and memorized texts are good, necessary, and helpful. But if we never talk to God

in our own words, aren’t we missing something important? Aren’t we denying the essence of Christianity, that “Christ is Risen!”? Our God is the “living God” (Dt. 5:26), not a ticket punch, computer program, or magical energy field that can simply be manipulated with the correct code, formula, or spell.

Isn’t it true that if we limit ourselves to formal written prayers and memorized words, our hearts remain cold and hard toward God, we never develop any sense of God’s presence, and we can barely bring ourselves to endure the boredom and monotony of prayer? After attentively reciting our formal prayers of obligation, after considering the daily readings carefully, and after attending closely to the prayers and hymns of the Divine Liturgy and Divine Praises, let’s open our hearts and speak with love, devotion, sincerity, and simplicity to God in our own words, in a heart-to-heart, personal conversation.

In the Catholic Church today, we find all different spiritualities, some valid and some entirely foreign to the Christian tradition. Who hasn’t heard of the Enneagram, Yoga, Insight Meditation, or mantras? How can these things com-

pare to a close friendship and familiar conversations with Christ? Isn’t it silly to be blanking out the mind, twisting the body into absurd positions, endlessly repeating some phrase or aspiration, until our jaws are sore and our heads ache, when we might easily be talking to God, to Christ, to Our Lady, our guardian angel, or our patron saint? What could be better than speaking to Jesus in open, familiar, sincere words of our own?

Of course, there are times when we might draw a blank and not have anything to say to God in prayer. That’s the time to resort to our prayer books and beads and memorized prayers. Eventually, they will bring us back to the familiar conversation with God, which is truly the apex of all prayer.

The secret of the spiritual life, prayer, mystical contemplation, holy and virtuous living, and every other spiritual attainment is found in this heart-to-heart “loving conversation with the Lord.” Engage in it as much as you can.

Trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us (Ps. 62:8). **ECL**

SEASONAL REFLECTIONS

Father Ronald Hatton



OUR CELEBRATION IS NOT OVER!

As we enter into the new year, we reflect not only on the upheavals in our lives, but also on the blessings bestowed on us. Much may have changed with family and friends in the past year, but we also have our continued love for one another. If we have the true spirit of the Nativity and *God-with-us* in our hearts, we still have the joy in the knowledge that God has come to earth in the flesh and dwells among us. Unfortunately, for most of the world and our society, Christmas has ended, and the world has moved on to other things. But not so the Church. We have a definite timeline that continues, for the most part, for 40 days after the Feast of the Nativity, and this month contains very important feasts.

No sooner than we celebrate the Nativity of our Lord, while the rest of the world (those who follow the Gregorian Calendar) celebrates the coming of the new year, the Church celebrates the feast of the Circumcision of our Lord, eight days after His birth. Circumcision is an important ritual in Judaism, as it makes the male child a child of the Covenant between God and Abraham: "And God said to Abraham, 'As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a

sign of the covenant between me and you. He that is eight days old among you shall be circumcised; every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house, or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring.... So shall My covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant'" (Genesis 17:9-14). On the eighth day, the child was also formally named: "And at the end of eight days, when He was circumcised, He was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb" (Luke 2:21). We see this also with the birth of John the Baptist: "And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they would have named him Zechariah after his father, but his mother said, 'Not so; he shall be called John.' And they said to her, 'None of your kindred is called by this name.' And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he would have him called. And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, 'His name is John'" (Luke 1:59-63). Both these names have great significance for us, as "John" (Gr. Ioannes, from the Heb. Yochanan) means "YHWH is Gracious," and "Jesus" (Greek Iesous, Aramaic, Yeshu'a, from the Heb. Yehoshu'a; Anglicized as, "Joshua") means "YHWH is Salvation." So, just as Joshua in the books of Exodus and Joshua is identified with the successor to Moses who brought

the Israelites into the Promised Land, showing the fulfillment of God's promise and His grace to His people, so, too, our Joshua, Jesus, is the fulfillment of God's promise to be our Salvation.

January 1 is also the feast day of Saint Basil the Great (one of the Three Holy Hierarchs celebrated on January 30), Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia (in present-day Turkey), and is traditionally the author of our Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great, which we celebrate on this day as well as Sundays of the Great Fast and other major holy days.

In His love for the human race, the Savior condescended and willed to be wrapped in swaddling clothes. Eight days old according to His mother and eternal according to His Father, He did not look down upon the circumcision of the flesh. Therefore, O believers, let us cry out to Him: You are our God; have mercy on us! (Vespers for the Feast).

The great feast, of course, is the Theophany of our Lord on January 6. The origin of the Feast goes back to apostolic times, and it is mentioned in *The Apostolic Constitutions* (Book V:13). From the second century, we have the testimony of Saint Clement of Alexandria concerning the celebration of the Baptism of the Lord, and the night vigil before this feast. The name itself refers to a manifestation of God. In the

Western tradition, this day is devoted to the Visit of the Magi, and thus His manifestation to the Gentiles. In the East, it is devoted to Jesus' manifestation as the Son of God at His Baptism in the Jordan by John the Baptist and, further, the manifestation of the Holy Trinity (cf. Matthew 3: 13-17, Mark 1: 9-11, and Luke 3:21, 22). Thus, it is an important day for us both as an affirmation of the dogma of the Trinity and as the day when we traditionally celebrate the Great Sanctification of Water, in some parishes not only with the Blessing of Water in the parish on the eve of the Feast, but also with the blessing of a nearby body of water, usually a river, on the day of the feast.

The True Light has appeared to bestow enlightenment upon all. The all-pure Christ is baptized with us; He sanctifies the water and it becomes a cleansing for our souls. All that which appears outward and visible is earthly, and that which is understood by the mind is greater than the heavens. Salvation is bestowed through washing, and the Spirit is received through water. By descending into the water, we ascend to God. How wonderful are Your works, O Lord; glory be to You! (Matins for the Feast). **ECL**



Crowned in Love

A Byzantine Pre-Cana Program

Sponsored by the Syncellate for the State of New Jersey

Saturday, February 25, 2023, 9AM to 4PM, Via Zoom



You bring the gifts that Jesus Christ will transform to make your relationship a sacrament where He Himself is present. Discover how the "ordinary" ways you share your life as a couple and a family can participate in this mystery.

Couples planning to marry before spring 2023 are urged to attend. The cost is \$75.00 payable to St Michael's Cathedral Syncellate at time of registration.

Presenters



Father Thomas Shubeck, PhD and his wife Caroline are navigating the pandemic with a young adult daughter and a teen-aged son. After many years of diaconal ministry at St Thomas the Apostle parish in Rahway and at Seton Hall University Fr. Thomas will be ordained to the priesthood in December 2021. Much of his more than 30 years as a licensed psychologist has been spent providing therapy services to married couples and families.



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



Ann Koshute, MTS, earned a Master's degree at the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family in Washington DC. She teaches theology at St Joseph's College of Maine and co-founded Springs in the Desert, an infertility support ministry. She and her husband Keith have been married for 10 years.



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



Carpathian Village Saint Nicholas Shrine

802 Snow Hill Road, Cresco, PA 18326-7810
 Tel (570) 595-3265 - Cell (570) 650-3252
 Email: carpathianvillage@earthlink.net
 Father Michael J. Salnicko, Director

Carpathian Village is presently taking reservations for group retreats, ski weekends, family vacations, day of recollection weekends, parish or group picnics, and private retreats. To schedule your event or for more information call or email Fr Michael.

Events Scheduled as of October 1, 2022

2023 Eparchial Events

“Eparchial Teen Rally 2023”

Thursday, June 22, thru Sunday, June 25
 Camp Director Father Andrii Dumnych

“Altar Server Retreat Congress 2023”

Sunday July 16 thru Thursday July 20
 Camp Director Deacon Stephen Russo

“Annual Saint Nicholas Pilgrimage 2023”

Sunday, August 6
 Pilgrimage Co-Ordinator Father Michael Salnicko

“Family Weekend Retreat Camp 2023”

Friday, August 11 thru Sunday, August 13
 Camp Director/Retreat Master Father Andrii Dumnych

2023 Parish Events

“Teen Ski Retreat Weekend”

Friday, January 13 thru Monday, January 16
 Saint Ann’s ECF, Harrisburg, PA

“Teen Ski Retreat Weekend”

Friday, February 17 thru Monday, February 20
 Saint Ann’s ECF, Harrisburg PA

“Annual Great Fast Teen Retreat”

Friday March 17 thru Sunday March 19
 Saint Ann’s ECF, Harrisburg, PA

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

Is God calling you to be a 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



Eastern Catholic Life

Circulation Department
 445 Lackawanna Avenue
 Woodland Park, NJ 07424

Next Issue:
 February, 2023

Copy Deadline:
 January 20, 2023

The current issue of the ECL was printed at Evergreen Printing, Bellmawr, NJ, and was distributed from the U.S. Post Office via second class mailing in Bellmawr, NJ.

UPCOMING EPARCHIAL AND PARISH EVENTS

JANUARY, 2023

- 1 Circumcision of Our Lord
Sunday before Theophany
- 6 Holy Theophany of Our Lord
Holy Day of Obligation
- 8 Sunday after Theophany
- 22 Sunday of Zacchaeus
Pre-Lenten Sunday
- 29 Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee
Pre-Lenten Sunday
- 30 Three Holy Hierarchy
Simple Holy Day

FEBRUARY, 2023

- 2 Encounter of Our Lord with Simeon
Solemn Holy Day
- 5 Sunday of the Prodigal Son
Pre-Lenten Sunday
- 11 First All Souls' Saturday

- 12 Sunday of Meatfare
Sunday of the Last Judgment
- 19 Sunday of Cheese-fare
Sunday of Forgiveness
- 20 First Day of Great Lent
Strict fast and abstinence

THE BYZANTINE CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF PASSAIC
 subscribes to the

Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People

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

Father David J. Baratelli, Ed.S., M.Div.
 Safe Environment Program Coordinator • 732-280-2682

Dr. Maureen Daddona, Ph.D.
 Victim's Assistance Coordinator • 516-623-6456