

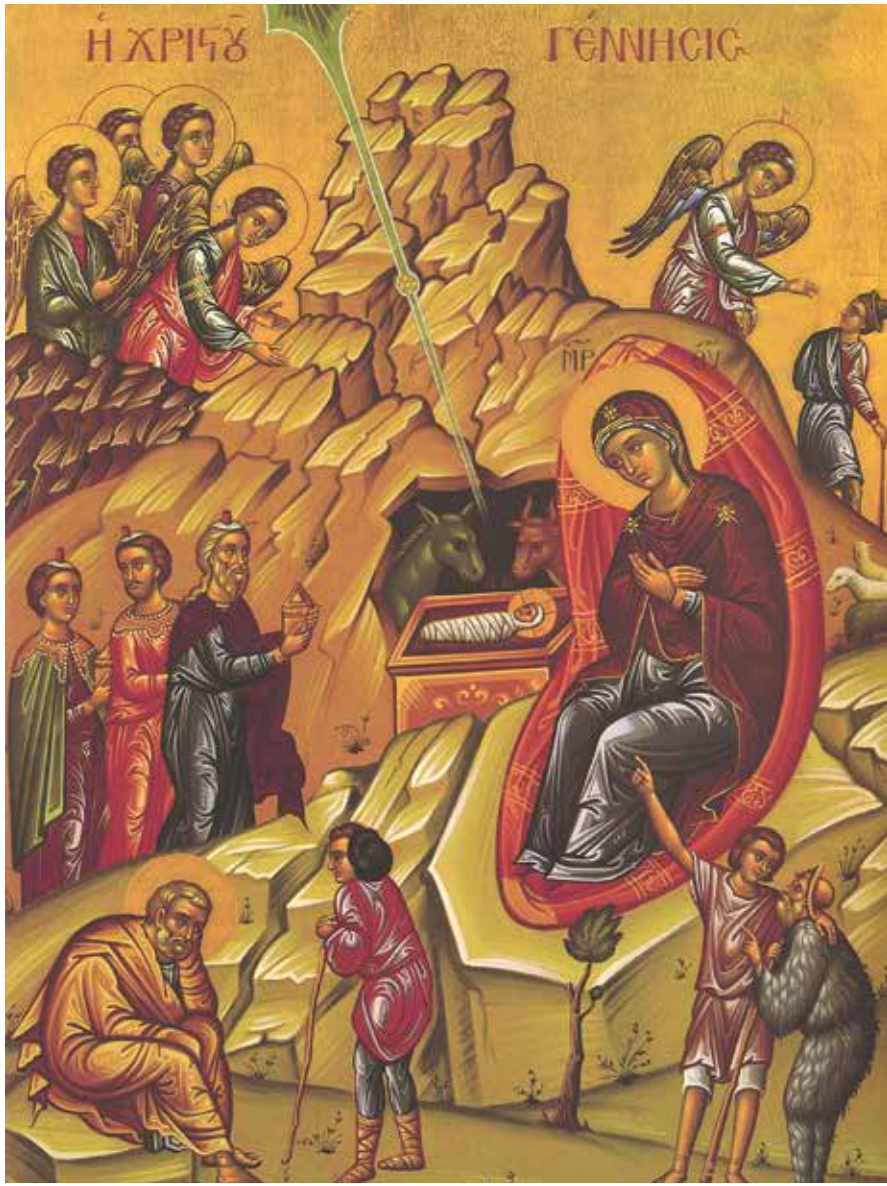


EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

Official Publication of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic

VOL. LIX, NO. 12

DECEMBER 2023



Christ is
Born!
Glorify Him!



Christos
Raždajetsja!
Slavite Jeho!



A MISSIONARY CHURCH

Metropolitan Assembly envisions a house for all people

Article and Photos by Gerald Wutkowski Junior, Saint Elias Byzantine Catholic Church, Carteret, NJ,

There were around 300 representatives from Byzantine Catholic communities from the United States and Canada gathered at Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church in Hillsborough from November 2-5, 2023, for the third Assembly of the Byzantine Catholic Metropolitan of Pittsburgh. The assembly, led by Metropolitan William, explored the theme, *Living Our Faith: Moving Forward, Appreciating Our Past*. The three-day event emphasized the mission of engaging the present Church in the United States and building relationships with ordinary people, echoing the spirit of Saints Cyril and Methodius, the missionaries to the Slavs.

The assembly began on Thursday with a gathering of deacons, priests, and bishops, where the clergy not only affirmed each other in their ministry, but also encouraged and challenged each other to explore new methods of evangelization and missionary work. Difficulties of

parish life and what that may look like in the future were discussed. Importantly, the clergy were met with understanding and gained a sense of hope in their missionary endeavors. This was a great time for the clergy to renew old friendships, share ideas, and learn from each other in their important work in the Lord's vineyard.

Once the clergy track was finished, more than 200 laity arrived, including approximately 90 young adults, aged 18-35, and added their incredibly important input to furthering the work of the Church and evangelization.

Returning to the mandate of Jesus Christ.

Speaking on the missionary foundations and origins of our Church in the Kingdom of Hungary through the evangelization of the ancestral disciples, Father Christopher Zuger, pastor emeritus of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Byzan-

tine Catholic Church in Albuquerque, NM, and author of *Looking to Tomorrow* explored the history and rocky foundation of the Byzantine Catholic Church in America. Returning to the mandate of the Gospel, Father Zuger shared that "the obligation to proclaim the Gospel to all nations is an obligation from Jesus Christ, not just the Vatican".

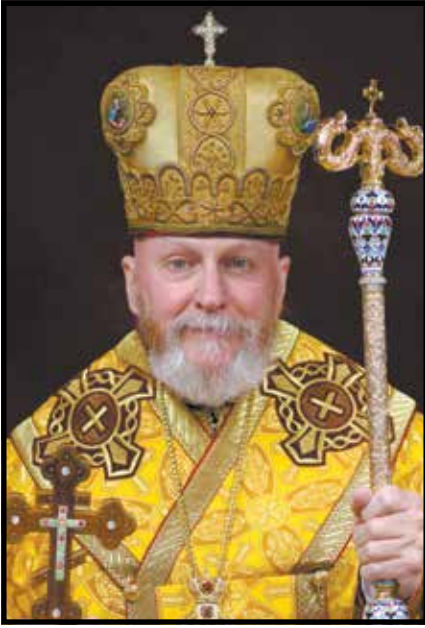
Building up a multi-ethnic and multi-language Byzantine Catholic Church for all people is not just a calling from the Spirit but a *wake-up call* to the realities of the Church in America. "We, as believing people, have an attractive Church, with traditional worship, small communities, solid eucharistic theology, and a solid, healthy Marian devotion ... is what people are looking for" Father Zuger continued.

Highlighting statistics from current research on the rise of the religiously nonaffiliated in the United States, Father



Zuger shared that although there is a rapid increase in nonbelievers in historically Christian and Catholic communities across the country, that does not mean we as a Church have nothing to offer. Sharing on his home community, Father Zuger noted, "In New Mexico, with a four-hundred-year Catholic History, forty-seven percent of New Mexicans have no church affiliation at all ... we have so much that we can offer."

...continued on page 4



I LIFT UP MY EYES

Pastoral Reflections of Bishop Kurt



THE VOICE OF MY BELOVED, BEHOLD! HE COMES!

ting the angels are singing to Mary and Joseph.

Horatius Bonar, a Scottish hymn writer of the nineteenth century, wrote a hymn with the title, *Vox dilecti*, but the lyrics don't match the *Song of Songs*:

I heard the voice of Jesus say, Come unto me and rest;

Lay down, thou weary one, lay down thy head upon my breast.

I came to Jesus as I was, weary, and worn, and sad,

I found in Him a resting place, and He has made me glad.

As lovely as these words are, it doesn't seem likely that the angels would sing a Scottish Protestant hymn in a painting by a Frenchman from Toulouse. It's more likely that they are singing from the scriptural *Song of Songs*.

What do we actually know about the courtship of Mary and Joseph? According to the Scriptures, it was no walk in the park. Saint Matthew tells us that when they were betrothed, Joseph learned that Mary was already expecting a child. He was planning to put her away quietly, so as not to expose her to the harsh laws of the time. It took the intervention of an angel to change the mind of Joseph, but once he learned that she was with child by the Holy Spirit, and that her Son would save His people from their sins, he took his responsibilities very seriously. He was told by the angel to give the boy His name, Jesus. In giving a name to the boy, Joseph took responsibility for Him. Joseph soon found himself traveling around under difficult circumstances to protect the Child and his mother, even fleeing the country just ahead of the murderous wrath of King Herod. In the painting by Didier-Pouget, the roses that Joseph is preserving for his betrothed come with thorns.

Looking around the world today, it seems like the turbulent times of the Birth of Jesus two thousand years ago. Great empires are at war, though the powerful never get hurt, only the poor and disadvantaged. At Christmastime, we take time out to remember that God intervened in our corrupt world two thousand years ago to send his Son as a defenseless baby and named Him the Prince of Peace. Even the powerful king was unable to thwart the plan of God. Despite the opposition of both secular and spiritual rulers, Jesus was able to preach His good news. "Don't be afraid!" "Peace be with you." "I am with you always." While the important people were asleep in the city in their warm beds, the Messiah was born in a stable on wintery night, and the shepherds on the hillside heard the heavenly choirs singing, "Glory to God in the highest! Peace on earth to men of good will." At this time of year, we take childlike delight in the wonders of the Gospel. When we set aside all earthly cares, we can join the simple shepherds in astonished wonder, in hearing the choirs of angels singing for the newborn king.

+Kurt Burnett

A few years ago, I took a continuing education class in law from a lawyer who specializes in art collectors. It was rather fun compared to most law classes. It seemed that the lawyer didn't have a lot of respect for his clients and looked at them as an eccentric menagerie. Most art collectors belong to a rather distinct cadre of wealthy people. The lawyer described one of his clients as follows: "He wouldn't allow a piece of real estate worth a few hundred thousand dollars to change hands without two lawyers and two accountants in the room. But then he will purchase a work of art worth millions based only on a phone call from a New York art dealer who phones him up saying, 'I found something you would like.'" That client was the personification of the adage, "He has more dollars than sense." As the lawyer opined, each collection is unique and means a great deal to the collector. It is a reflection of the ideas, ideals, tastes, and personality of the collector who is himself one of kind, as are we all. As attached as the owner is to his collection, you can be sure that when he dies his heirs will sell off the pieces separately at an auction to get the most money. (Unless the collector is so fabulously wealthy as to start an endowed museum, as some people did in the Gilded Age.) Overall, it was hard to decide whether the presentation was funny or sad. Our Lord's parable about the "rich fool" comes to mind. That parable is also sad for the rich man but a bit funny for the rest of us.

Not all art collections are broken up when the collector dies. If you become the Bishop of Passaic, you will find yourself the custodian of a very special art collection belonging to the Heritage Center. I am told that the icon collection is one of the best on the east coast. I was even told it is the second-best collection on the east coast. I am in no position to have an opinion on that, but every time I walk into our heritage museum, I see a new icon I never noticed before. Even the icons I know are always revealing new rich details. Icons are a lot like a foreign language—you have to have a teacher, and there are always new treasures opening up before your eyes.

In addition to the collection of new and antique icons, there is a vast collection of oil paintings from Transcarpathia. Professor Paul Magocsi gave a fascinating presentation on one of the most respected artists from that region, Adalbert (or Bela) Erdelyi. Many of these paintings were brought out of the Soviet Union

and purchased by our clergy and bishop at a time when their value was not recognized yet in the old country. The twentieth century was a time of great artistic flowering in Transcarpathia and some artists such as Erdelyi were well-known in Paris, which was the art capital of the world until the later twentieth century. When Transcarpathia was given to Stalin, things changed in many ways. The barbaric attacks on Erdelyi and others should convince anyone of the evil of Marxism.

For Christmas this year, I am sharing with you a painting in the collection from a completely different tradition. The painting is apparently of Mary and Joseph taking a walk, perhaps during their courtship period. The scene does not correspond to any known story, and certainly not to any story in the scriptures, but seems to be from the pious imagination of the artist. The artist is William Didier-Pouget and the painting graces one of the offices at our pastoral center. It was probably purchased at an art auction by Bishop Michael. Didier-Pouget was almost thirty years older than our own Erdelyi and was well established and commercially successful in France by the time Erdelyi went to

immensely popular. He might have been the Thomas Kinkade of his day. Not that long ago, there wasn't a mall in America that didn't have a Thomas Kinkade store, and his company claims that his paintings and high-quality reproductions are found in one out of every twenty American homes. In the case of Didier-Pouget, he did not sell mass produced reproductions, but he became immensely popular in the United States. In 1903, he had an exhibit in Newark, NJ, which was reviewed in the *New York Tribune*.

The painting in our Heritage Center collection depicts the Blessed Virgin taking a walk, followed by Saint Joseph. Four youthful angels are walking ahead of her on the path. One of them is incensing Mary, while the other three are holding a music manuscript and presumably are singing a hymn for her contemplation. Overhead, three angels are dropping roses on her path. Saint Joseph seems to be picking up the roses to take home. The landscape is a very classical one for oil paintings, not quite the same as the landscapes he sold commercially.

What is the music that the angels are singing on this occasion? One must take a close-up of the painting and then



name of painting goes here

Paris, and perhaps they knew each other. He was born in Toulouse, France, at the time of the American Civil War and lived until 1959, just short of 95 years old. His father was a newspaper editor who took his son on walks in the country pointing out the visual beauty of nature. When Didier-Pouget became a professional artist, his father's walks and talks must have been the foundation of his aesthetic because almost all of his paintings are lovely landscapes. If you look him up on the internet, you will see an endless stream of landscapes, but nothing like this painting. Although he is part of the genesis of impressionism, his landscapes are nevertheless realistic, but they all seem to be around dawn on a misty day creating a tranquil idyllic world, just a little fantastic. They were

turn it upside down to read. They seem to be singing *Vox dilecti mei*, which means "the voice of my beloved". This verse from the *Song of Songs* (or *Song of Solomon*) is a love poem found in your Bible after the Book of Psalms. "The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes leaping upon the mountains, bounding on the hills. My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Behold, he stands behind our wall. He is looking in through the window, peering through the lattice." Most people interpret this passage as love poem written by God to you, His beloved. These beautiful words were set to music by many great composers including Palestrina and Giovanni Paolo Cima. Since there is no musical notation included in the painting, it is impossible to know which set-

A Double Blessing!

On December 17, 2023, the Eparchy of Passaic will observe two milestone celebrations!

First, is the 60th Anniversary of the Canonical Establishment of the Eparchy of Passaic; and second is the 10th Anniversary of the Consecration of Bishop Kurt and his Installation as the 5th Bishop of Passaic!

The day will begin with gratitude and prayer through the celebration of a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy of Thanksgiving on Sunday, December 17th at 3PM at the Cathedral of St Michael the Archangel in Passaic, NJ, followed by a joyful dinner reception at 5PM at the nearby Venetian Banquet Facility in Garfield, NJ.

All the Faithful in the Eparchy of Passaic are invited to attend and join their voices in prayers of gratitude for our past and prayers of hope for our future – as well as to celebrate with our Chief Shepherd, Bishop Kurt on his 10th anniversary!

See the invitation below for additional information. Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory to Him Forever!

SISTER JOSETTA KRISS, OSBM, ENTERS INTO ETERNAL LIFE

Patently waiting for the Lord Jesus to call her home, Sister Josetta (Angela) Kriss quietly fell asleep in the Lord on Saturday morning, November 18, 2023, at Mount Macrina Manor. She awoke from her life's journey to be welcomed to her new home in the Kingdom. Her time at the Manor was marked by her gentle spirit and gracious manner to all who cared for her or came to visit.

Sister Josetta was born in Canonsburg, PA, the daughter of the late Charles and Susan (Hoady) Kriss. She entered the community from Saint Michael Byzantine Catholic Church in Canonsburg, PA, on September 15, 1956, and made her Final Profession of Vows on August 26, 1962.

From 1960 to 1995, Sister Josetta's years of ministry were devoted to educating children both as teacher and principal in the schools of the Archeparchy and of the Eparchies of Passaic and Parma. In 1994, she was elected to the Provincial Council, and in 1996, she was appointed as the Province Treasurer.

Upon completion of her term of office, Sister Josetta was reappointed as Province Treasurer, a position she held until her appointment as manager of

the Byzantine Seminary Press. Sister Josetta returned to the monastery in 2010, willingly helping at the gift shop or in the card shop ministry. Due to a decline in health, Sister Josetta spent several peaceful years at the Manor.

In her personal file, Sister Josetta noted that she simply wanted to be remembered as a Sister of Saint Basil. This simple wish encompasses all that Sister Josetta was and all she held dear. Among the gifts she possessed and used as a Sister of Saint Basil was her love of music. Sister cherished her heritage of liturgical music from her father, who was a cantor for many years. This became an important aspect of her teaching ministry. In several schools, Sister Josetta established a children's choir to sing at the Divine Liturgy and at other events. In the monastery, she also took her turn as cantor for the liturgical services.

At her Golden Jubilee celebration, Sister Josetta expressed feelings of being truly blessed for her years as a Sister of Saint Basil. She was quick to express her warmest gratitude and prayers for all those who had loved and supported her along the way.

In his homily, Metropolitan William alluded to the Gospel reading from Saint John in commenting on Sister Josetta's life. The concluding verse reads thus: "Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes in the one who sent me has eternal life and will not come to condemnation but has passed from death to life."

Sister lived by that Gospel injunction in her various ministries. She was for many a source of formation and guidance, and she taught them skills to get through life. Following her in any of her ministries, one could be sure that all would be in order. Her relationships with others and in the community reflected this same assurance. The Metropolitan concluded his homily by noting that with great dedication and without faltering, Sister entered into the kingdom of God one step at a time. All of us would do well to be challenged by her journey.

Sister Josetta was preceded in death by her parents; her sister, Carol; and an infant sister, Anna Helen. In addition to the members of her community, she is survived by her devoted sister, Margaret V. Popp; and cousins, Donna Szott, Robert Kriss, and Andrew Mastic.



Relatives and friends were received at the Monastery on Friday, November 24 from 3:30 PM to 7:00 PM. The Funeral Divine Liturgy was celebrated by Metropolitan William on Saturday, November 25 at 10:30 am. in the Monastery Chapel. Father Andrew Deskevich and Father Jerome Botsko were the concelebrating priests. Father Wesley Mash was in attendance.

Interment followed in the Dormition Section of Mount Macrina Cemetery.

May her memory be eternal!

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A MISSIONARY CHURCH

Metropolitan Assembly envisions a house for all people

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Challenging attendees to return to embracing the traditions of the Church, he noted the moment of renewal taking place in our backyard. “In the last thirty years, we have seen an explosion of interest in Eastern Christianity in the United States ... at the same time, we have had an explosion of material”, highlighting the unique opportunity to become a strong and healthy Church embracing its identity in tradition and Jesus Christ. Father Zugger concluded, “We face a very challenging future, we all know that ... but we do so, knowing that while we have no idea what the future holds ... we know who holds the future, in His hands.”

Becoming a people of mission

Appreciating the great past and vast expansion of the Metropolitan Church, Father Thomas Loya, Pastor of Annunciation Byzantine Catholic Church in Homer Glenn, IL, shared with the assembly that the Byzantine Church can grow, especially in moments of significant change and relocation of the faithful and parish communities. Claiming our bad self-image as a body of Christ to be the original sin of our communities, Father Loya challenged, “maybe smaller is better” as he reflected on the intimate and familial gatherings that the Byzantine Ruthenian Catholic Church offers to the Western world.

“Fruitfulness happened because of the richness of this Church,” Father Loya continued as he reflected on the experiences of watching God continue to open doors where he never desired one to be. Creating the blueprint for growth, Father Loya shared how authentic vision avoids the areas of maintaining and survival, which he claimed is where most of the Byzantine Catholic Church in America is currently operating. “The first one [vision] is frightful! Because you have to believe in yourself.” Father Loya pointed out how, in a case, to embrace mission from the ground level evangelization. “There is a need here that we will fulfill.”

Claiming the image of the crescent effect of the movement of the people of God, especially members from our Byzantine Church of the great Greek Catholic cities of yesteryear, there is a significant movement into the midsouth west of the United States, where no Byzantine Catholic Church currently exists. “There is a vibrancy ... all over this crescent”, Father Loya shared as he mentioned the Byzantine Outreach in Muscatine, Iowa, and its missionary appeal even if the Divine Liturgy is only celebrated once a month.

Father Loya questioned if we looked at the Metropolitan Church with a vision of mission. Examining the blueprint that is offered in our liturgy and way of life, “it gives us the sacramental worldview”. Father Loya continued while speaking on the growth in Homer Glenn, “we looked at our liturgy and our icons, we read what they say, ... we went outside and said ... we are going to make this

land the way God made it.” Creating an ecosystem of a liturgical life by stretching the belief into the world. “From the antimension ... into the neighborhood,” Father Loya exclaimed as he highlighted how the community changed from what the liturgy offered the world through beauty and reverence in everyday life.

‘The Nones have become the Ones’

Understanding the movement of spirituality and the lack of religious affiliation among millennials and Generation Z (Gen Z), Coordinator of the Assembly, Father Edward Cimbala, Pastor of Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church in New York City, presented a case study on why young people are coming to



know the Lord through the gifts of the Byzantine Catholic Church. “Being Byzantine Catholic is probably hidden inside of the people who come to our Church; they just never knew it until they arrived.” Father Cimbala shared as he highlighted that the two primary reasons why young people are coming to his Church in New York City are based on the spirituality and liturgical worship of the Byzantine Church as well as the intergenerational tight-knit community that is found in almost every Byzantine Ruthenian Church in America.

With about one-third of the participants at the assembly falling into the young adult category, many young adults claimed that they had finally found their home in the Church as they embraced the liturgical way of life and relationship with Jesus Christ through the radical hospitality found in Byzantine communities. Father Cimbala presented the case that young adults have come forth as the ‘New Photini’, becoming the new women at the well who go out to the world to share the message of Christ with those on the streets while being nourished by our senior members of our Church.

“Our young adults want more.” Father Cimbala noted that young adults and those searching for faith seek a complete liturgical cycle and traditional services. He continued, “More doesn’t mean a lot but a little bit at a time” in his challenge to embrace the fasting of the Church year that leads to the great feasting of celebration.

Embracing best practices, Father Cimbala highlighted how simple marketing of our liturgical way of life could enhance our ability to welcome more to the beauty of the gifts that the Ruthenian people have left this generation. “Young adults in this study have proven to be serious seekers of God and wish to have a personal relationship with Jesus and fellow believers”. In an age when many more young people are disaffiliating to the faith, Father Cimbala argued that a new resurgence and enthusiasm has been growing, noting “the nones have become the ones” and may become the missionary people to bring new life to the Byzantine Catholic Church in the United States.

The Value of Touch and Presence

Gifted by the presence of Bishop Nil (Lushchak, O.F.M.), Apostolic Administrator of the Eparchy of Mukachevo, the Mother Church of the Byzantine

embrated a *Panachida* for the repose of the souls of the fallen soldiers

In a shared witness of Eucharistic unity in the resurrection, after the reflection, Bishop Kurt Burnette invited Bishop Nil to stand next to him at the royal doors to pray a *Panachida*, the memorial service for the dead, for the souls of the recently departed soldiers and servants of the Lord’s life-giving message of hope in the ancestral home.

“The value of touch, how our presence with one another, our hugs, our prayers ... can change someone’s life.” Bishop Robert, only days away from his episcopal ordination and installation as the sixth bishop of the Eparchy of Parma, carried the same message of prayerful presence in his homily at the concluding Divine Liturgy for the assembly.

“If God comes to us in the flesh, in the person of Jesus Christ ... then God him-



Ruthenian Metropolitan Church of Pittsburgh, assembly attendees were also challenged to connect with their spiritual home in Transcarpathia, uniting to the suffering of the current aggression and war as he shared that many soldiers from the Carpathian region were killed earlier that evening through an aggressive attack. Pausing to pray for their souls, Bishop Nil reflected through a translator, Father Yuriy Oros, the importance of proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus Christ through our liturgies and complete cycle of prayer, no matter where we are. “We receive Jesus, who is all-powerful.” Bishop Nil continued, “no war, nor any other evil in this world is more powerful than Jesus.”

Moved by the deep focus on the liturgy throughout each assembly presentation, Bishop Nil shared that as he visited the Church in the United States, he heard over and over how the faithful expressed the incredible beauty of the liturgy. “It’s very important for us to live every liturgy deeply ... when we understand that we will understand what Eucharist is all about.”

After his talk at Vespers, Bishop Nil, Bishop Kurt, and Bishop Robert con-

self is One who can be touched, who can be seen, who can be heard, who can be smelled, who can be tasted.” Bishop Robert emphasized as he recounted the many times the assembly reflected on the incarnated God breathing life through the liturgy by way of the senses into everyday life.

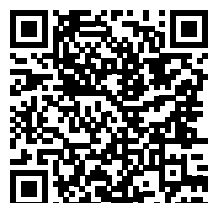
“Isn’t this what our Church is supposed to do for us? It is supposed to touch us in all ways that fulfill us as human beings?” Bishop Robert continued.

With the opportunity to give thanks to God for the assembly that did take place through the gifts of the bishops, clergy, and many faithful present, Bishop-Elect Pipta reiterated once more of the powerful witness of the incarnational beauty of the Byzantine Church “because it is through their presence, that God continues to touch us, to reach out his hands to us [where] we know we have healing and renewed life.”

At the conclusion of the 2023 Assembly, Metropolitan William announced that the next Metropolitan Assembly would occur in the Jubilee Year of 2025 in the Eparchy of Parma

VIEW THE ASSEMBLY PRESENTATIONS ON YOUTUBE

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLAVUi2N7KxM6qacrWxzQjk0UwYQgRYejn>





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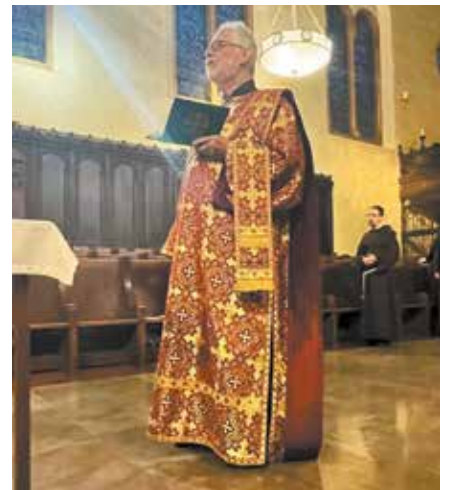
EPARCHIAL DEACONS GATHER FOR RETREAT

by Deacon John Reed, Epiphany of Our Lord, Roswell, Georgia

On the weekend of October 13-15, the deacons, subdeacons, and new candidates for the diaconate converged on Immaculate Conception Seminary in Huntington, NY, for the annual eparchial deacon's retreat. This is the 3rd year the deacons have held

The retreat master for the event was Fr Jerome Wolbert, OFM, a friar of the Franciscan Shrine of the Holy Land in Washington, DC. His talks were humorous, yet very spiritually-edifying, to the 21 in-person attendees as well as 3 attending via Zoom. To the delight

deacons. Layered amongst the schedule of conferences, the cadre came together to pray much of the Divine Office, the Office of Holy Oil, and the Divine Liturgy. Ample opportunity was given to spend time finding silence and stillness in one of the many beautiful chapels at the facility.



their retreat at this Long Island venue which once was the seminary for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rockville Center, NY. While still owned by the diocese, it now serves as a retreat and formation center for many groups.

of several of the deacons was the attendance of Father Deacon Joe Lavinio, a deacon of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Stamford. Deacon Joe, who serves a nearby UGCC parish, was a beloved classmate of the 2018 Class of



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PRIESTLY REFLECTIONS

Father Paul Varchola West

"WHEN THE FULLNESS OF TIME HAD COME..."

Well...it's that time of year again! You know...that time of year that Lucy van Pelt so eloquently characterizes in *A Charlie Brown Christmas*... "You know, Santa Claus, and 'Ho! Ho! Ho!' and mistletoe, and presents to *pretty girls*..." You know *that* time of year!

Yes, whether we fancy ourselves a Clark Griswold or a Ralphie Parker, a Scrooge or a Grinch, whether we like it or not, the Christmas season is upon us and in a few short days all the noise, of the preparation for Christmas Day will be drowned out by the clamor and shouts of joy for the *big day!* As I often muse, so many of us will reach that day, the pinnacle of the commercial Christmas season, and there will be the age-old complaints of "all that work for one day..."

Then, on December 26, in the most anticlimactic of ways, radio stations will go back to their regular programming. *Lifetime* and *Hallmark* will go back to showing non-Christmas themed movies; we will go back to our jobs; and trading our Christmas ties for our normal ones. To the world, it's almost as if Christmas had never happened at all! Thankfully, to

us Christians, we who are in the world, but not of the world [cf. John 17], the Christmas Season has *just begun!*

December 25 marks the completion of the 40-day season of preparation for the *Great Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord*. This overarching festal period then continues on to encompass *Theophany* [January 6] and the *Encounter of Our Lord with Simeon* [February 2]. This period, referred to by some as the *Winter Pascha*, is just that: a time of feasting in which we give thanks for the prelude of our salvation!

It is very fitting that this festal period begins with the [Vigil] *Liturgy of Saint Basil* in which we are privileged to hear the *Anaphora of Saint Basil*. In all its beauty and grandeur, this elaborate prayer has one line that is utterly profound and goes relatively unnoticed. In its recounting of salvation history [the *Anamnesis*], when the Incarnation is reached, the prayer states, "When the fullness of time had come, You spoke to us through Your own Son, the very One through Whom You created the ages."

What we commemorate on December 25 with awe, joy, wonder, and feasting, is not the end of the commercial Christmas season, or even necessarily the beginning of the liturgical season of Christmas. We are celebrating the literal fullness of time, the apex of salvation history, the coming of Christ in the flesh, our access to eternal life!

This subject matter is far too rich, and far too complex, to discuss here and now in such a short column; however, during the coming months, as we continue the journey from the commemoration of the fullness of time to the glorious Resurrection and redemption of humanity, I will discuss the various aspects of this concept, intertwining theology with the liturgical life of the Church as a means to

deepen our spirituality and enrich our understanding of how we can live the liturgical life of the Church in very practical, yet profound ways.

In the meantime, I encourage all of us to listen to, and meditate on, that one phrase, "When the fullness of time had come..." as a primer, of sorts. At the Liturgy of Saint Basil, notice those words, let them sink into your soul, and realize what all the preparation was for. We have not been simply preparing ourselves for Christmas. No, we have been preparing ourselves to receive the fullness of time and we continue to prepare ourselves not for his life, but for eternal life in the heavenly banquet.

I pray that the Nativity Season be fruitful for all and that we all take a moment to ponder in our hearts the utter beauty of the fullness of time! **ECL**



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LIFE, LOVE, AND THE HUMAN PERSON

By Ann M. Koshute, MTS

IN SOLEMN STILLNESS

The noise around us is inescapable. Whether we are young or old, priest, religious, or married, live alone or with others, there is no shortage of stimulation and distraction to either overwhelm or entice us. Social media and cable news keep us constantly “plugged in” to the minute-by-minute turns of our world. Our devices can easily become extensions of our bodies, and shape who we are spiritually and emotionally. Whether it is scrolling our feeds or texting instead of talking with or seeing friends and family in person; playing the television, radio, or podcasts at work or while doing household chores, it’s becoming increasingly hard to disconnect. We’ve become so accustomed to “background buzz” that silence might feel uncomfortable. What would happen if we turned off the phone, powered down the devices, and yielded our minds and bodies to *quiet and stillness*? Give it a try, right now. How long did you last?

We can’t go back to a time when instant access to news – or people – didn’t exist, but we can control whether we are slaves to constant communication and information, or able to exercise prudence, judgment, and self-mastery. The Church gives us this opportunity to tame our appetites and train ourselves in self-sacrifice during the penitential season of the Great Fast, as well as during the “littler” fasting times throughout the year. The Philip’s Fast, our time to

prepare for the Nativity of Christ, is one of those “little Lents” that invites us to pray a little more, give a little more of our time and resources for others, and sacrifice a little more for our spiritual good, and in service of those around us. Both Great Lent before Pascha, and the “little Lent” before the Nativity, are powerful opportunities for our ongoing conversion.

Because He is gratuitously loving and generous, God opens so many pathways for us to be conformed to His image and likeness: the Incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ, the wellspring of grace we can receive through the Holy Mysteries, and the loving guidance of the Church to ground us in the true Faith. These riches are not made available to us as a sort of “spiritual carrot”, motivating us to be *good Catholics*. Nor is God holding us bound with spiritual chains until we can pay off an eternal debt owed to Him. The truth is, God doesn’t *need* anything from us, and He doesn’t play games with us, either. As we chant in the Divine Liturgy, it is truly “proper and just” that we worship and glorify God, our Creator and the One who loves and sustains us. The gift of our lives and who we are is freely given by God, not to show His almighty power, or to create monuments to His greatness. It is right to worship Him, and to engage in spiritual and penitential practices, not because He needs affirmation from us, but as an act of thanksgiving and

a deepening of our relationship with Him. The less we conform ourselves to the world, the more we are conformed to God – and the more fully human we become.

During the Christmas season – including the 40 days of preparation leading up to the Nativity – it can be hard to disconnect from the busyness and noise to focus on the great mystery of the Incarnation of Christ, and the relationship that God has forged with us through it. We might try revisiting Scripture for inspiration in the days leading up to Christmas, as we seek a deeper closeness with the Lord. Like the shepherds, we might be attentive to how God is speaking to us even in the middle of our workday, or as we fuss about with holiday preparations. Can we spare ten minutes, five minutes, or even just a moment or two in our day to ask the Lord to be present with us? How might our work and our outlook on the day change if we stopped and took even a moment of intentional silence to hear the message the Lord is speaking to us?

Maybe we can identify with the Three Kings, wise and learned men, yet always curious and seeking. They knew the stars well, having studied them, and yet they were drawn to one Star above all the others, and fell silently to their knees once they found the place – and the One – where it led. We may have stacked up years of re-

ligious education and spiritual “book smarts”, but do we seek more than knowledge and the ability to impress (or judge) others with our understanding of the Faith? What might change in our relationship with God if, like the Wise Men, we continued seeking Him, submitted to being led by Him instead of our every impulse and desire, and longed to simply be in His presence?

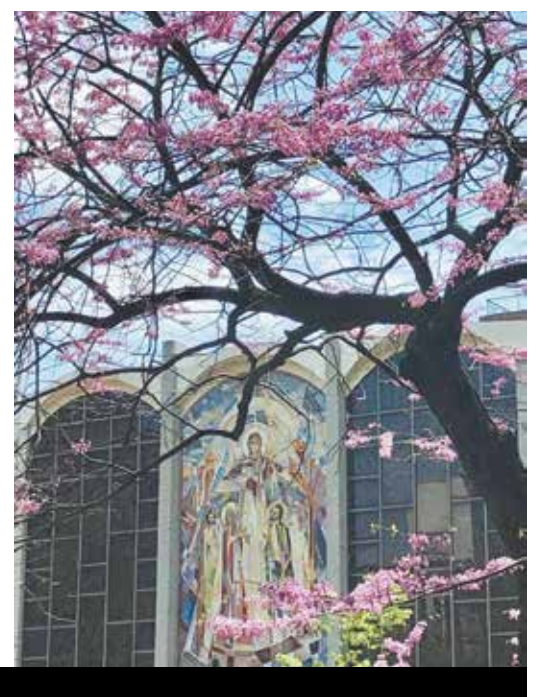
During this Christmas season, whether you’ve prayed and sacrificed a little more, or felt yourself drawn into the hustle, bustle, and distractions, know that God is patient, and He is always waiting for you. He is in the manger, becoming vulnerable so that you would not fear approaching Him. He is in the Chalice, waiting to be consumed so that you and He can be united. He is in the day-to-day, the mundane and routine, asking you to offer it to Him. God is in the solemn stillness, waiting for you to break from the noise and simply be with Him. **ECL**

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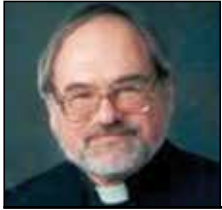


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THE BYZANTINE LITURGY

By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD

THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK

When Christians become sick, we turn to God for help. In the Psalms we see this hope in God, who gives us life in abundance (John 10:10): “The Lord will help him on his bed of pain, he will bring him back from sickness to health” (Psalm 40:4). We also turn to doctors and science for health, of course, because God has also given us the gift of knowledge and understanding of our body and its weaknesses, which are tools for maintaining health, but as we are mortal, our ultimate fate always rests in God. We respond to sickness in our liturgical worship by the Anointing of the Sick, one of the seven sacramental Mysteries of the Church. Our Lord himself directed anointing with oil as a part of the healing of the sick, “He summoned the Twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over unclean spirits They drove out many demons, and they anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them” (Mark 6:7.13). After the Resurrection, anointing became the way the Church encountered illness, as the Epistle of James witnesses: “Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the presbyters of the church, and they should pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up” (James 5:14-15). This was normal, for the believer was a follower of Christ, which means in Greek, “the anointed one”. Anointing with oil was a sign of divine power, as well as a way of soothing pain and promoting healing.

The passage from the Epistle of James indicates that the anointing should be done by the presbyters (priests) of the Church. The priests were the “elders” and leaders of the local community in prayer. Since Saint James wrote of presbyters in the plural, the tradition developed that anointing could only be done by a number of priests, the perfect number being seven. In the early Church this was practical, since usually in a city or town, there was only one church, and several presbyters would serve there. As the centuries passed, however, the structure changed, and a local church usually became several parishes with church buildings, and many were served by only one priest. To gather seven priests together became more and more difficult. The Western Church adapted to this new situation more quickly than the East, and the tradition of multiple priests doing an anointing never became the rule. The Eastern tradition tried harder to maintain the tradition, which remains the ideal, but it has become more and more acceptable to have only one or only two or three priests do the anointing of the sick. Except for more solemn occasions, or for communal anointings, one priest is normal. It is also the ideal that the anointing be done in church if the person is able to come, and the rite may be done separately or together with the Divine Liturgy. If a person is bed-ridden or unable to travel, then the anointing will be done in the person’s house or in the hospital.

Canon 738 of the Eastern Church law states: “The Christian faithful freely receive anointing of the sick whenever they are gravely ill”. The Eastern Church is more open to who may receive anointing than the West, which requires that the person “begins to be in danger due to sickness or old age” (Canon 1004). There is also the custom of a general anointing of the sick which is done on Holy Thursday or other appropriate occasions, such as a pilgrimage. We will speak more about this in a future article. In fact, it was the custom to anoint not only the sick person, but even others who were present, because the goal of the sacramental rite is to strengthen the faithful in their struggle against sicknesses with the grace of Jesus, the Messiah, the Anointed One, and so those involved in taking care of the sick were also anointed.

The oil that is used is olive oil that has been blessed by the priest. Olive oil is prescribed, except in cases of grave need where it may not be available, but then only vegetable oil may be used. In the Roman Church, the oil of the sick is blessed by the bishop on Holy Thursday, but in the Byzantine rite, the priest blesses the oil at each anointing. The rite of anointing is a time of intense prayer for the health of the sick person, for Saint James says, “the prayer of the faithful will save the sick man” (James 5:14). In the ritual, there is first a prayer for the blessing of the oil, “O Lord, through your mercy and compassion, you heal the afflictions of our souls and bodies ...”. This is followed by

a Liturgy of the Word: a Prokeimenon, Epistle, Alleluia, and Gospel. A litany of fervent prayer is said, ending with a second prayer of blessing. If there are multiple priests, then the Liturgy of the Word and the second prayer is different for each concelebrant and concludes with the anointing. The third prayer is said during the actual anointing, with the words, “By this anointing, heal your servant[s] (*Name/s*) of the bodily and spiritual ills which afflict (them, him, her) and restore life to (them, him, her) by the grace of your Christ.” A sacramental mystery is not simply a pure symbolic gesture, but it an action that has a logical meaning, and so it is always accompanied with words. The rite concludes with a prayer for the absolution of sins. The Anointing of the Sick is not only the healing of the body, but also of the soul, as we see in the formula for the anointing quoted above. During this prayer the priest holds an opened Gospel Book over the head of the recipient. This was introduced in the Middle Ages to combat the superstition of “finding auspices”. People would open the Scriptures to a random page and point their finger at a passage which was then thought to predict what would happen to them. The opened Gospel Book blocked this custom. **ECL**

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:

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The Hours	Vespers
Compline	The Canonicon
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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.

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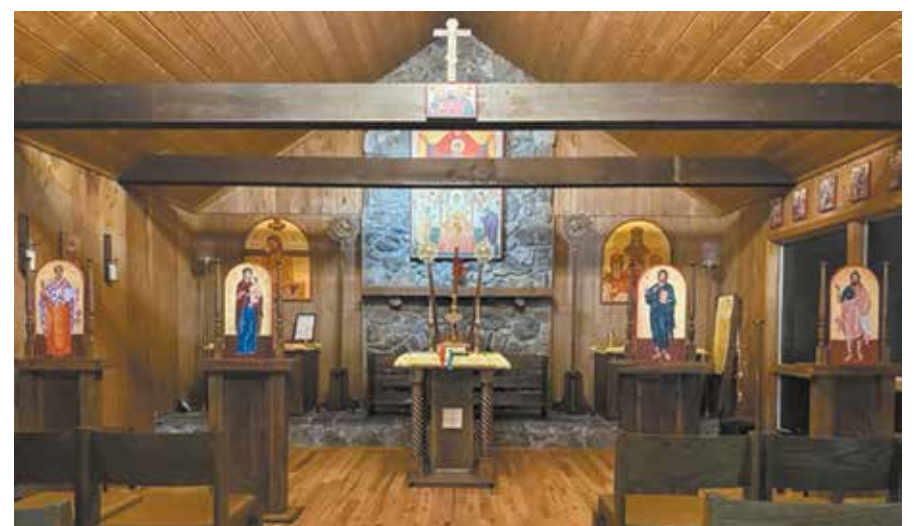
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SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

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

DOING FAITH

The Epistle (Hebrews 11:9-40) and Gospel (Matthew 1:1-25) for the Sunday before Christmas both take us on a rapid review of the whole Old Testament. Centuries of preparation for the coming of the Son of God as man seem to boil down to two things: the virtue of faith and long lists of mostly strange names. Saint Matthew (1:17) helps us make sense of all this by dividing the Old Testament into three periods: from Abraham to King David, from King David to the Babylonian captivity, and from the Babylonian captivity until the coming of the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ. Allow me to suggest that the first period focuses on building a family; the second period addresses prosperity; and the third period centers on hope.

The book of Genesis traces the growth of the chosen people from a single couple: Abraham and Sarah, through their son, Isaac; their grandson, Jacob; and finally, his twelve sons who father the twelve tribes of Israel. Their decisions that impact their salvation were made about questions like “where shall I live?”, “how will I earn a living?”, “whom will I marry?”, “will we have children?”, and “how can we keep peace in our family?” These people were not perfect: Abraham cheated on his wife;

Jacob cheated his brother; Jacob’s sons were a dysfunctional mess; and Joseph, the ultimate hero of the family story, began life as a very spoiled brat. All of the women mentioned in Jesus’ family tree were involved in something unusual, shameful, even sinful in their marital histories. But we also see in their lives a willingness to repent and begin again.

Through slavery in Egypt and forty years of wandering in the wilderness, the descendants of Jacob were slowly and with great difficulty brought together as a nation under the leadership of Moses. Even the decision to leave slavery in Egypt for an unknown destination tested the limits of the Hebrews’ (Exodus 16:3). The Law given to Moses on Mount Sinai established this group as the Lord’s chosen people and committed them to serve only the Lord as God through a particular way of worship and a particular way of life.

The second period, from King David to the Babylonian captivity, goes straight downhill. Implicitly rejecting the Lord’s kingship over His people, the Israelites demanded a human king like other nations. Predicting the inevitable consequences, the Lord granted them first Saul and then David as kings. Israel actually prospered under David, and

his son, Solomon, built the magnificent Temple. Israel’s borders and influence were briefly expanded until Solomon’s foolish and arrogant son, Rehoboam, provoked a rebellion that divided the nation into two separate kingdoms.

Prosperity brought corruption in government and in society. A few grew richer and began to gobble up the real estate of humble farming families, voiding the Lord’s provision that there would be no poor in Israel (Deuteronomy 15:4). Sophisticated city folk consumed luxury goods and flirted with the false gods of their neighbors that promised material prosperity and sensual pleasure. Questions of warfare, economics and politics offered Israel’s leaders a chance to express their faith. Mostly, they proved faithless. The average Israelite expressed his or her faith in fighting temptations to greed, social injustice, and the allure of idolatry. It was in this period that most of the prophets exercised their ministry of describing current events as God saw them and announcing the consequences for ignoring His will.

The ultimate consequence was the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians; the destruction of the Temple; the end of kings from David’s line; and the exile

of Jerusalem’s elite. In this final phase of the Old Testament, from the Babylonian Captivity to the coming of the Messiah, faith was lived out especially in hope. The Lord had promised that a descendant of David would reign forever (2 Samuel 7:17), and that a remnant would return and rebuild a reunited Israel centered on a rebuilt Temple. In this period, prophets announced that salvation would flow from Jerusalem to include all nations. The resurrection of the dead was also preached for the first time. Ruled first by the Persians, then by the Greeks, and finally by the Romans, the people came under intense pressure to give up the distinctively Jewish way of life that expressed their special relationship with the Lord. Some chose a martyr’s death rather than compromise their faith (2 Maccabees 6:18 – 7:42). Prophets pointed toward the future fulfillment of God’s plan and even described details of birth, ministry, passion, and resurrection of the Messiah, the Son of God.

The decisions we make about our families and careers, our time and our money, our politics, and social lives, and, especially about where to invest our hope for meaning and fulfillment in our lives, will prove us faithful or faithless. The choice is critical, as the Epistle to the Hebrews (11:39-40) reminds us: “God had a better plan, a plan that included us.” **ECL**

SCHOOL OF PRAYER

Father G. Scott Boghossian



PRAY, "LORD, HELP ME!"

One of the most straightforward and biblical prayers we can pray is, “Lord, help me!” (Mt. 15:25). Without God’s constant help, we are helpless and hopeless. Our Lord told us, “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing” (Jn. 15:5).

We need God’s help for everything we do. Even to pick up a piece of straw from the ground, we need God’s help. Theologians call this “divine concurrence”. For a person to move a finger, pick up the smallest stone, or think any thought without God’s assistance is impossible. God must “concur” and assist us in every action, thought, and decision.

From a spiritual perspective, God’s help is called “grace”. We can’t do anything pleasing to God or worthy of heavenly reward without the help of God’s grace (Eph. 2:8). This help comes to us only through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Without Jesus, we were helpless. “While we were yet helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly” (Rom. 5:6).

What better prayer can we continuously pray than “Lord, help me!” The

Canaanite Woman prayed, “Lord, help me!” (Mt. 15:25), and her daughter was instantly healed.

In the Psalms, King David prayed: “Make haste to help me, O LORD, my salvation!” (Ps. 38:22). “Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me! O LORD, make haste to help me!” (Ps. 40:13). “Be pleased, O God, to deliver me! O LORD, make haste to help me!” (Ps. 70:1). “O God, be not far from me; O my God, make haste to help me!” (Ps. 71:12). “Remember me, O LORD, when Thou showest favor to thy people; help me when Thou deliverest them” (Ps. 106:4). “Help me, O LORD my God! Save me according to Thy steadfast love!” (Ps. 109:26). “The LORD is on my side to help me; I shall look in triumph on those who hate me” (Ps. 118:7). “All Thy commandments are sure; they persecute me with falsehood; help me!” (Ps. 119:86). “Let Thy hand be ready to help me, for I have chosen thy precepts” (Ps. 119:173).

Through the Prophet Isaiah, God promises to help us. “Fear not, for I am with you, be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with My victorious right hand” (Is. 41:10). “For I, the

LORD your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, ‘Fear not, I will help you’” (Is. 41:13). “Fear not, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel! I will help you, says the LORD; your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel” (Is. 41:14). “Thus says the LORD who made you, who formed you from the womb and will help you” (Is. 44:2).

Today, we see Isaiah’s prophetic promises fulfilled in the Catholic Church. Through prayer and the sacraments, God helps us draw near to Him, live a holy life, and get to heaven.

Jesus helps us overcome temptation. “Because He Himself has suffered and been tempted, He is able to help those who are tempted” (Heb. 2:18).

Prayer is the primary way we receive help from above: “Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:16).

Since we don’t always know exactly what to pray, we can trust the Holy Spirit to help us pray: “The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit Himself

intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words” (Rom. 8:26).

In the Conferences of Saint John Cassian, Conference 10, Chapter 10), we are instructed by Abba Isaac to constantly call on God for help, using the verse: “O God, come to my assistance; O Lord, make haste to help me” (Ps. 69:2 DR).

Abba Isaac says: “For keeping up continual recollection of God this pious formula is to be ever set before you. “O God, come to my assistance; O Lord, make haste to help me”, for this verse has not unreasonably been picked out from the whole of Scripture for this purpose... This verse is an impregnable wall for all who are laboring under the attacks of demons, as well as an impenetrable coat of mail and a strong shield”.

If you like, shorten this verse to, “Lord, help me!” or “Jesus, help me!” Make this straightforward and biblical prayer, “Lord, help me!” your prayer “without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17), day and night, for there is never a time when we don’t need God’s help.

Pray, “Lord, help me!” **ECL**

SEASONAL REFLECTIONS

Father Ronald Hatton



DOING THE FAST

Our penitential seasons are very important times of preparations for major feasts. In addition to The Great Fast before Pascha, there is the 40-day period before the Nativity–Advent or Saint Philip’s Fast. We have as well the variable period between All Saints Sunday and the Feast of Saints. Peter and Paul, and the 14-day period before the Feast of the Dormition. These periods are times of Fasting, Prayer and Almsgiving and should be taken seriously by all the faithful.

Questions keep coming up on how to fast especially, but on all three of these disciplines, so I thought it might be a good idea if I would pass along some thoughts on how to keep these aspects of the penitential seasons.

Fasting: Traditionally, fasting is seen as abstinence from meat. During the Great Fast, it can include abstinence

from all meat and dairy products, including eggs, effectively reducing the one fasting to only eating vegetables. Nowadays, many people are vegetarians or even vegans, and so abstaining from meat is irrelevant. We realize that fasting from food is a way of placing the “will” of our bodies, and stomachs in particular, under the control of our mind, our will. We quickly find out that we are slaves to our appetites and how difficult it is to tell our stomachs “no.” The extension of this is that we are teaching ourselves how enslaved we are to sin, and our need to continually submit our sinful nature to the discipline of surrendering ourselves to Christ. Of course, it is silly to say, “I will fast from sin for this set time,” since we are to ALWAYS refrain from sin. But we know our bodies, our minds and our appetites well enough to know how we should fast during penitential seasons. We can limit ourselves to one meal a day on

certain days. Many of us, because of medical necessities, cannot limit the number of meals or even what food we eat, and it is foolish to submit ourselves to a fast that would harm us physically. But we can find other ways to abstain from the things that control us, whether it is the amount of time we watch television or other entertainment pursuits. Above all, we can *fast from ourselves*, our self-seeking, our self-satisfaction. “Jesus said to all, “Anyone who desires to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me.” (Luke 9:23). The holy Apostle Paul tells us, “Do nothing through rivalry or conceit, but in humility; consider others better than yourselves. Do not just look after your own selfish interests but each one of you should consider the interests of others.” (Phil. 2:3-4). With this in mind, fasting can mean putting others before yourself!

Prayer: During The Great Fast and Saint Philip’s Fast, we are offered other times at church to offer prayers and worship to God. This can be the Pre-sanctified Liturgy, Matins, Vespers, Akathists and Molebens. It also includes Holy Day Liturgies. These times of corporate prayer are important, as the Body of Christ as manifest in the parish joins voices in praising God and his saints, corporate penitence, and so on. But we should also bolster up our private prayer life during these seasons. Again, turning away from ourselves and toward others, a prayer discipline can be to offer daily prayers for someone with whom our fellowship has been broken—those we cannot bring ourselves to forgive or those we have wronged and find it so difficult to forgive. We can pray daily for shut-ins, all the sick and suffering of our parish.

Almsgiving: Almsgiving has traditionally been seen as giving money to someone or some organization in need of what we can give. This is a laudable practice and is encouraged. At the same time, I would offer another avenue: almsgiving can be a giving of *yourself*. With so many lonely and hurting people around us, we need to give ourselves to those in this kind of need. In this giving, just as with fasting, we put the needs of others before ourselves. It could be a friend, a co-worker, a family member—so many people who need people in their lives. At the same time, it is not something that we can do superficially: people know when we are sincere and when we are not. The only way we can truly give ourselves to others is to pray that the love of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit will take us over and give that love to those who need it.

All three of these require hard work. True fasting is not easy; the extra prayer means taking a larger portion of our time from things we want to do and give that time to God; almsgiving means giving money to others that we would prefer to give to ourselves. Even more so, giving of *ourselves* to others requires a level of commitment that makes many of us feel uncomfortable. It is difficult to love someone with whom we don’t get along but need us all the same. Odd to say, but in all three of these, the “pain” we feel is more apt to be uncomfortableness with putting our own needs aside, whether that be the desire for what we have “given up,” or the time we feel can be spent doing “better things,” or the willingness to open ourselves to the needs of others. But we don’t overcome our weaknesses by giving in to ourselves. We are spiritual athletes, not spiritual couch-potatoes. Just like other athletes only condition their bodies by the rigors of exercise, so too we only condition our spirituality and our walk with God by the rigors of *spiritual* exercise. **ECL**

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December 16th, 2023

7:00 - 10:00 pm


St. Mary Byzantine Catholic Church
1900 Brooks Blvd.
Hillsborough, NJ 08844

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



Featuring Br. Simeon, CFR



Registration:





Crowned in Love

A Byzantine Pre-Cana Program



Sponsored by the Syncellate for the State of New Jersey
 Saturday, February 10, 2024, 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 2025 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: After many years of diaconal ministry at St Thomas the Apostle parish in Rahway and at Seton Hall University Fr. Thomas was 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. He is the husband of Caroline and the father of Adriana and John.



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.

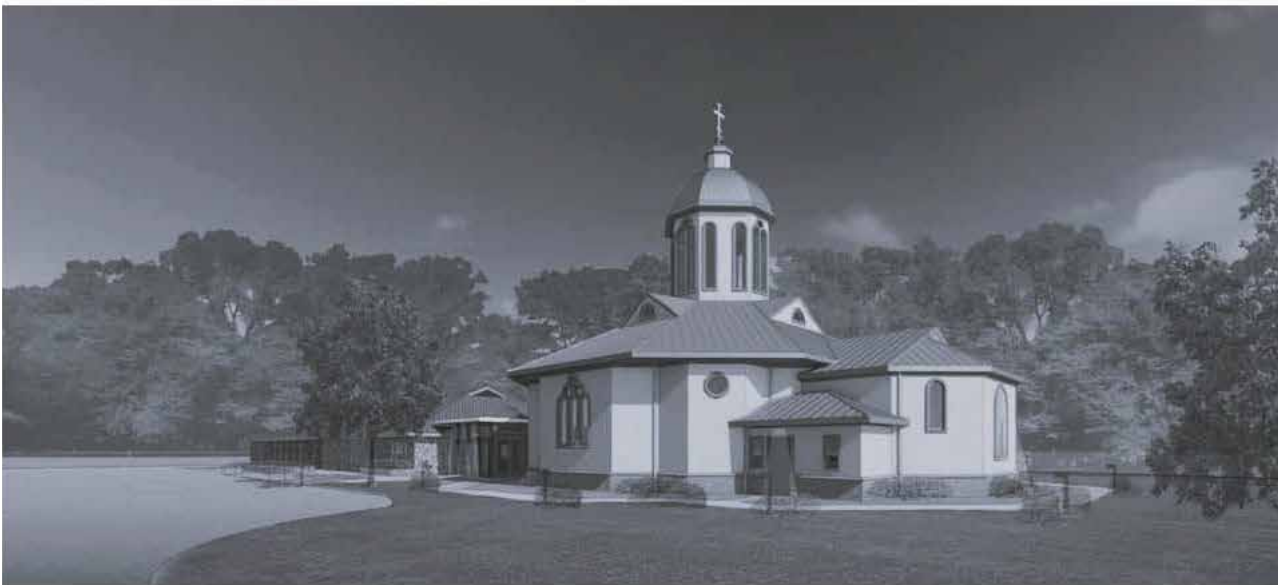


Ann Koshute, MTS, earned a Master’s degree at the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family in Washington DC. She teaches theology at St Joseph’s College of Maine and co-founded Springs in the Desert, an infertility support ministry. She and her husband Keith have been married for 10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

For more information, contact St. Michael’s Cathedral Office at 973-777-2553 or passaiccathedral@gmail.com



New Building arriving in 2023

Your Parish at The Jersey Shore

Our Lady of Perpetual Help 1937 Church Road
 Toms River, New Jersey
 Home of Eastern Catholic Radio 732-255-6272

Sunday Divine Liturgy at 9 a.m.
 OLPHTR.ORG

Visiting The Myrtle Beach Area This Fall?

Blessed Basil Hopko
 Byzantine Catholic Mission
 3059 SC Highway 90
 Conway, SC
 All Liturgies will start at 10 AM.
 Follow us on Facebook for any schedule changes.

UPCOMING EPARCHIAL AND PARISH EVENTS

Eastern Catholic Life

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DECEMBER, 2023

- 6 Our Holy Father Nicholas the Wonderworker
Solemn Holy Day
- 8 Maternity of the Holy Anna
Solemn Holy Day
- 17 Sunday of the Holy Forefathers
- 24 Sunday of the Holy Fathers
- 25 HOLY NATIVITY OF OUR LORD, GOD, AND SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST
Holy Day of Obligation
- 26 Synaxis of the Virgin Theotokos
Solemn Holy Day
- 26-29 Chancery closed
- 27 Holy Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen
Simple Holy Day
- 30 Saturday after Christmas
- 31 Sunday after Christmas

JANUARY, 2024

- 1 Circumcision of Our Lord * Our Holy Father Basil the Great
Solemn Holy Day, Chancery Closed
- 6 HOLY THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD, GOD, AND SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST
Holy Day of Obligation

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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