



# EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

Official Publication of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic

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## PRAYER DURING THE GREAT FAST

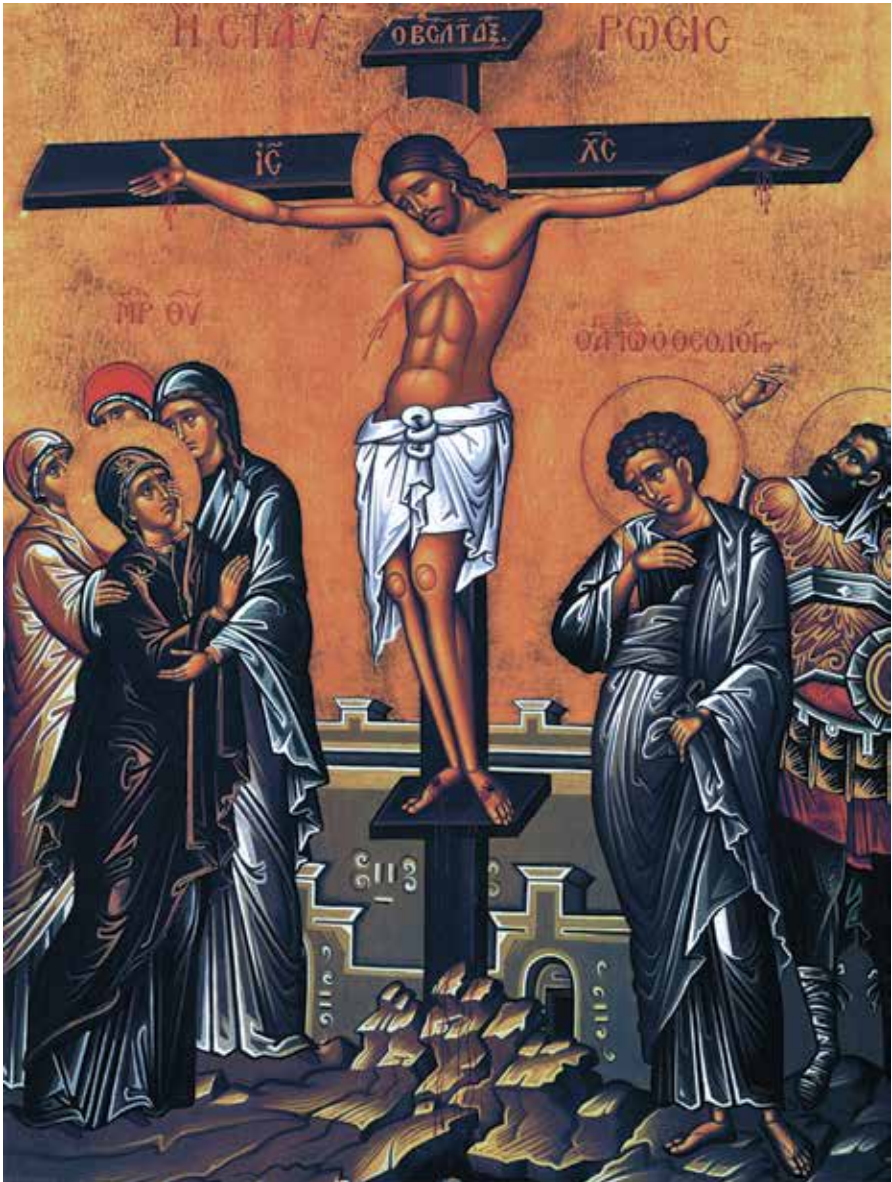
by +Monsignor John Sekellick, of blessed memory, reprinted from 2014

We know from the Gospels that our Lord often would take time to pray communing with His Father in a solitary place usually through the night and alone. The longest such time alone was immediately after His baptism as He spent forty days and nights in the desert and was tempted by the Devil, recorded by Saint Matthew (4:1-11), Saint Luke (4:1-12) and Saint Mark (1:12-13).

We do not know the content of His prayers except for the prayer recorded by Saint John in chapter 17 of his Gospel together with the text of the prayer He taught the disciples which we know as the “Our Father” and His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane “Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet, not as I will, but Your will be done.” (Luke: 22:42; Matthew 26:39; Mark 14:36).

Nonetheless, as a pious Jew, Jesus (and the disciples) would have known the prayers of the Psalms which undoubtedly were used by Him during those solitary hours alone. As He hung on the Cross, He cried out the opening verse of Psalm 21, “My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?” The Psalms, then, would have been among the chief prayers our Lord knew and used when He prayed. They would have been very familiar to Him from the worship services in the Temple and synagogues.

The Psalms have been called the “inspired hymnal of the Old Testament”. King David, both a poet and a musician, was the author of many of the Psalms,



Icon of the Crucifixion of Our Lord

although many were written perhaps over a span of some 500 years before his reign (1012-972 B.C.). There are 186 quotations in the Christian Scriptures (New Testament), and the Psalms are featured liberally in the Divine Liturgy

and liturgical services of the Church.

Understandably, the first Christians the majority of whom were Jewish converts would simply have continued to use prayers already familiar to them. Till

today, there is hardly a Church service which is not replete with psalms. We need think only of the *prokimena* which precede our Scripture readings at the Divine Liturgy, the *Alleluia* verses and Communion hymns that are single psalm verses.

Every detail of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of our Lord can be found in our compelling Services of Holy Week and Easter with verses taken from the Psalms. The whole Psalter is actually read during the Vespers and Matin services each week in twenty sections called *Kathismata*. It can be claimed that in our sacred Services, the Psalter is the most used book of holy Scripture.

Many monks learn the Psalter by heart. There is even a local custom in some monastic communities when one of their number is chosen and consecrated a bishop, he is required to know the Psalter from memory. Many among the clergy and laity are familiar with and know by heart some of the psalms especially those that are chanted frequently in church. Psalms 90 and 118 used in our funeral services are tender and comforting prayers.

As we begin the Great Fast and intensify our spiritual life, may we find in those ancient yet ever-new prayers those sentiments which will profit and fortify our souls with the grace of repentance in preparation for the great celebration of resurrection and redemption at Pascha.

## DIRECTIVES FOR THE GREAT FAST

From the Office of the Bishop



### FASTING REGULATIONS

†Our Tradition is to abstain from meat after Meatfare Sunday and from dairy products after Cheesefare Sunday until Easter. *The following are the minimum requirements:*

- †All who receive Communion in the Eparchy of Passaic are required to abstain from meat on Wednesdays and Fridays of the Great Fast.
- †All adults who receive Communion in the Eparchy of Passaic are required to abstain from meat, eggs, and milk products on the first day of Lent, Monday, February 12, and on Great and Holy Friday, March 29.

#### Dispensation

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

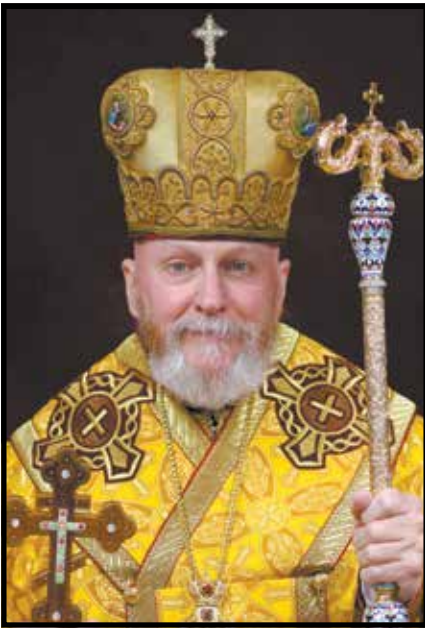
### LITURGICAL DIRECTIVES

The Divine Liturgy of Saint Gregory, the Pope of Rome, is also called the *Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts*.

- †All Pastors and Administrators are encouraged to celebrate the Divine Liturgy of Saint Gregory on Wednesdays and Fridays of the Great Fast.
- †On other weekdays during the Great Fast, Holy Communion may be distributed at other liturgical services.

Please pray for all the victims of war, refugees, and those in the military serving our country throughout the world.





# I LIFT UP MY EYES

*Pastoral Reflections of Bishop Kurt*



## THESE ARE A FEW OF MY FAVORITE THINGS

few years ago, one of them approached me and asked me at the evening social whether it would be alright for them to sing “fall songs”, i.e. “autumn songs”. Everyone in the room was speechless for the next hour or so as they sang one beautiful song after another, which they knew by memory.

In our church, we all sing because we don’t have musical instruments. In addition, all generations can sing together. Children love to sing. It is especially our tradition that everyone sings, not

It may be an obvious thing for me to say, but I love our Church. I pray that all of us do, but there are some things I would like to tell you about and, through this, I hope that you would see these things as well and come to appreciate them as much as I do.

First off, we sing everything, and everyone sings. One of the first things that attracted my family to our church in Houston was the singing. Singing is an important part of being human. Music has been an important part of the human race for thousands of years, that we know. It was probably important before then, but we don’t have records of it. We know that music was an important part of our religion from the beginning, both from the earliest Christian times, and before that among our spiritual partners, the Hebrews and Jews. The psalms are poems or prayers found in the Bible and are the foundation of our prayer life for several thousand years now in our revealed religion. The psalms appear in the Bible as poems, but the Greek word “psalm” means “song”, not “poem”, and the Greeks had no shortage of words for poems.

In addition, the psalms themselves often say, “Sing to the Lord” or “Sing a new song to the Lord”. The psalms have references to many musical instruments including harps, lutes, trumpets, and percussion instruments such as cymbals. We know that the early Christians inherited the prayer and song tradition of the Jews at the time, including a system of eight “tones”. That is why we still have eight tones in our Church to this day. We have a system of eight melodies that we change each week to keep the music interesting. Many of our prescribed melodies are surpassingly beautiful, one of our greatest treasures. It is unspeakably sad that this system of music is largely unused in our parishes in the United States, often because the parishes no longer celebrate Matins and Vespers where the changeable melodies appear most prominently. When these melodies change from week to week and with the seasons, we have fresh beautiful music that thrills us when our services are well celebrated. Much of it fell into disuse during the twentieth century as the parishes tried to accommodate themselves to the new experience of the new world, and often aped the more stripped down and banal liturgies of the other American churches. How sad! When we try to reintroduce the beautiful music, we are often met with opposi-

tion. About twenty years ago, the bishops introduced some books with much of our beautiful music, including eight different “Our Father” melodies. I know of one parish where the hardheaded cantor quit rather than learn the new melodies, even though they were very much old melodies.

One of the things I love in our Church is the different, and very beautiful, Christmas carols. By the time Christmas arrives, I am so sick of the Christmas carols that are blasted in all the stores for months. It wasn’t that long ago that Americans would not stand for a commercial singer to make money off of scared music. Even someone like Bing Crosby had to promise to give all the money to charity to record a sacred song. Nowadays, most of the songs make no reference to Christ, although I am glad they still celebrate Christmas.

Nevertheless, I think one of the most wonderful things in our Church is to have our Christmas songs with our own melodies that have not been ground out like a cigarette butt by the merchants. I’m sorry that so many of our parishes do not sing our own beautiful carols, but instead the sing the overdone popular western carols.

As I mentioned above, it is part of our humanity to sing. Here in the United States, singing was wiped out by the greedy commercial music industry. You can visit other countries where there are public gatherings, and all generations unite in singing and dancing. Young

and old sing the same songs together, and they are not boring songs at all. In the United States, the music merchants found in the 1950’s that they could get



very rich off of the disposable income of teenagers by producing constantly changing fads and by splitting them from their parents. I well remember my music professor at university in 1974 saying to my class, “Your generation doesn’t sing. That isn’t natural. It is part of your humanity to sing.” I have read that in America up until recently, you could walk down any street in the evening and hear musical instruments being performed and people singing in many houses. With electronic reproduction and mass broadcasting, that is a thing of the past. When the seminarians from Europe visited our priest retreat a

just the choir. If you visit our parishes in Eastern Europe, the singing will raise the roof. What a great blessing to be in a church where we are welcome to sing, and we are encouraged to sing. Saint Augustine said, “Who sings, prays twice”.

Secondly, another thing I love about our Church is the beautiful art. Here in the Eparchy of Passaic, as I travel from parish to parish, the beauty and variety of the art in our churches takes my breath away. There must have been a fad a hundred years ago to paint Art Nouveau angels in all the churches because so many of our churches have the same army of angels on the ceiling, an honor to the presence of God in His temple, and lifting up the minds of the faithful as they lift their eyes. In addition, the beautiful icon screens bespeak the sacredness of the altar area. In the western Church, the sacredness of the altar was removed starting the late 1960’s. Although the reformers pretended to make the liturgy more accessible and closer to the people, they really made the liturgy more priest-centered, thereby creating a barrier between the people and God. With the enormous emphasis on “the people”, it seems to me as though the people now worship each other instead of worshipping the transcendent God.

A pious traditionalist couple from Louisiana joined our Ruthenian parish in Houston because they felt alienated in their own tradition. After many years in our parish, the man told me once, “It’s strange: I participate much more in this Liturgy than I ever did in the Latin liturgy, and yet it seems more sacred and holy at the same time”.

Part of the sense of sacred is from the beautiful icon screen. We sense that there is something holy, something transcendent, on the other side of the screen. In the 1960’s, many of our lead-





ers removed the screen, aping the Latin Rite and the Protestants. Without understanding its purpose, they were embarrassed by our traditions and tried to fit in with the dominant culture.

People don't come to a Catholic Church of any tradition to be part of the club. They don't come expecting a human solution to their problems. People come to a Catholic Church because they sense the presence of the Son of God made flesh. They sense the presence of the God of Mount Sinai, the God who said, "Don't come near the mountain or you will die." They sense the presence of the God who led His people out of slavery in Egypt and into the Promised Land, the God who drowned the army of the most powerful king on Earth in the Reed Sea. The God who raised the empires of Assyria and Babylon and Alexander and Rome, and then destroyed those empires after they served His purpose. When people come into a Catholic Church, they are in the physical presence of the Word of God made Flesh, the Son of God who was contained in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, though the heavens cannot contain Him. They are in the presence of the Son of Man who walked on water, and cured the unclean with His words, and wielded power over the demons and all the powers of darkness, and who welcomed sinners and cured sinners both spiritually and physically though only God can forgive sin. They are in the presence of the Son of Man who travelled on foot and in poverty to teach us the truth, and who suffered in His Divine Flesh all of our sins and all the sins of all of history, and then conquered Death itself in His Resurrection.

People don't come into a Catholic Church just to see other people, but to meet God. The icon screen is a powerful symbol in both significance and physical reality that we there is a separation in this world from the Divine. The consecrated member of our community, the priest, goes through the Royal Doors to bring to the Most High God our petitions, our desires, our mistakes, and our ignorance. The priest brings bread and wine to the altar just as the most mysterious priest Melchizedek did for our father Abraham. Then, just as God Himself provided the sacrifice on Mount Moriah for Abraham to offer, so to, God provides the sacrifice on our altar of His most precious Son to take away our sins, and to fulfill our deepest desires. Then the consecrated member of our community comes back through the Royal Doors to feed us so that we can have eternal life, as Jesus promised in the Gospel of Saint John.

The third thing I love about our Church is the people. As I said, people don't come to a Catholic Church for a human answer to their problems. They come to a Catholic Church to bring their problems to the most high God. We Americans are endlessly creative in inventing new ways to socialize and form communities, often with a promise of revolutionary change. It used to be popular to go to places in California where you could sit in hot tubs and listen to the latest psychobabble, expecting to find happiness. In our churches, the community founded by Jesus two thousand

years ago, we can visit with other people who also look to God for the truth and who bring their problems to God. I love that all of our churches are small enough that we can all know each other. When I was young, moving around the United States, in every one of our churches that I attended, the priest knew who I was and knew my name. In one city, I went to daily Mass for seven years at the Latin Rite parishes and the priests never knew my name and never spoke to me. My great regret as a bishop is that I have too many people now to remember everyone's name. Some people, like Bishop Bilock, remembered the name of everyone he met, and all your relatives, too! Of course, small parishes have the same problems that families have. Nevertheless, I would rather be part of a family where everyone knows everyone else than part of an enormous mega-church where even the pastor doesn't know who I am. I participated in a funeral once for a woman who attended our church but also the large Latin Rite church and a few others, too. Her family was excited that the Latin Rite pastor did the funeral at the Latin Rite parish. He made it clear in the homily that he had no idea who she was. It was just another task in his life. Though he was a genuinely kind and holy priest, it was simply not possible to know the thousands of people at his parish.

Our Church is like a big family, not just in our small parishes, but across the United States. What more could you ask for in a Church—the best of the Divine and the human?!

Fourthly, Jesus said, "My Father is seeking those who will worship Him in Spirit and in Truth." Since Jesus said, "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life," it's possible to interpret that saying in more than one way. Among other things, to worship in Truth means that we worship the one true God, and that we know the truth about Him. It also means that we know the truth about ourselves: that we are made in His image and likeness, and so is our next-door neighbor. How can we know the truth? And how can we know whether we worship the Father in truth? Jesus promised that the gates of hell would not prevail against the Church that He founded on the rock of Saint Peter. In the first millennium, that Church studied and cogitated and debated to make certain that we are confessing the Truth as revealed by the Spirit in the Holy Scriptures and by Jesus in His teaching to His disciples. The Divine Liturgy that we pray every Sunday contains the great revealed truths of our Faith presented in a way that we can understand and that become part of us as we sing them each Sunday.

There aren't many changeable parts to our Sunday Divine Liturgy, but the ones that are there are to instruct us. The hymns, the tropar and kondak, are little lessons in poetry for our instruction. Each Sunday for eight weeks, we sing a different pair of hymns that teach us some aspect of revelation of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. From "the stone was sealed" to "angelic powers appeared at Your grave" and so on, these sixteen hymns teach the central doctrine of our Faith. It breaks my heart how often the



hymns are badly sung by a timid cantor and not sung at all by the people. Or sometimes they are rushed through by a cantor who wants to show off. The people don't even open their books or make any attempt to sing. If their children leave the Church later because they don't know the faith, who can blame them? But we can't blame the wise people who wrote our Divine Liturgy.

On those occasions when we celebrate the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great, almost the entire Christian Faith is prayed in the Eucharistic Prayer. Not only is it prayed in the form written by the great Saint Basil, but it is almost entirely taken straight from the Scriptures, the Holy Bible. There are people with a master's degree or even a doctorate in theology who do not know the Faith as well as someone in our Church who devoutly prays the Divine Liturgy on a regular basis.

Finally, another thing I love about our church is its universality. In the United States, there are so many Christian churches that are absolutely isolated and enclosed. As Pope Francis says, "Who am I to judge?" The people in those churches are made in the image and likeness of God, and are searching for contact with Him. I am certain that God hears their prayers as well as He hears mine. As often as not, they pray from the heart and some in our Church pray by rote. But if you try to talk about the Christian Faith with them, you realize how utterly parochial their view is. They have no concept that there is any Christian Faith outside of American history. Even when they are an educated church rather than a backwoods church that thinks Jesus spoke English, they don't have the blessings of being part of a Church that spans all cultures. Many years ago, a Presbyterian minister who helped educate me commented that Catholics have the universal Church to keep them sane, whereas a strictly American Church can go off in strange directions without the corrective influence of branches all over the world. That was in

the 1980's. Perhaps he could already see the paths that were taking his Church so far from its roots. In 2023, they have bifurcated into two churches, the mindless but well-intentioned evangelical mega-churches and the highly intellectual liberals who don't really believe in Jesus Christ anymore.

In our international Church, we have everything in the latest American progress, but also the deep faith of Eastern Europe purified in the demonic persecutions of atheistic Marxism. When our Faith is similarly persecuted in the United States—and it will be as sure as the sun rises—we will be strengthened by our sisters and brothers from Eastern Europe that we might not lose our souls in time of tribulation.

In the great mission that Jesus gave us (and a mission means "being sent"), He clearly said, "Go and teach all nations all that I have commanded you". Our great international Church that spanned the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and now spans the globe, is one part of that great mission that Our Lord committed to His followers two thousand years ago.

Well, I intended to list ten things I love about our Church, but five have taken up so much space, because I talk too much. Some things I didn't have space to mention. I love that we pray for the dead, and we know the dead can pray for us—the communion of Saints. I love Great Lent. I love that we have kept fasting—an integral part of our faith—which is lost in the West. I love Holy Week and Easter, and all the Sundays after Easter. There are so many things I love about our Church, that it would take a whole encyclopedia to write it all down.

+Kurt Burnett

Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic

Statement of Activities for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2023

Operating Revenues:

Eparchial assessments	\$ 615,382
Eparchial Stewardship Appeal	384,038
Donations, bequests and other income	128,227
Ukrainian Refugee Relief	67,463
ECL Newspaper Revenues	42,714
Hospitalization assessments and reimbursements	1,048,444
Life insurance proceeds, net of funeral expenses	118,283
<b>Total operating revenues</b>	<b>2,404,551</b>

Operating Expenses:

Property, casualty, Auto and Workmen's Compensation insurance	123,925
Hospitalization	1,058,485
Life insurance expense	63,346
Pension and retirement costs	36,593
Administrative salaries and payroll taxes	75,171
Clergy salaries	109,707
Clergy subsistence	25,800
Stewardship rebates to parishes	82,689
Stewardship expenses - postage, printing and office expenses	14,158
Diaconate program expenses	22,105
Eastern Catholic Life publication - postage, printing and office expenses	45,058
Office administration and supplies - general	15,154
Office postage and printing - general	13,900
Legal - Other	228,729
Legal - Immigration	239,693
Accounting fees	96,000
Safe environment audit fees	4,590
Celebrations, anniversary and gifts	13,823
Controller and consulting fees	77,748
Eparchial transportation and meeting expenses	112,566
Utilities and telephone	48,644
Maintenance and repairs - Chancery and Chapel	64,502
Assessments - NJ, US and Eastern Catholic Conferences	18,355
Continued education and well being of priests	30,599
ECF Operating expenses - Eastern Christian Formation programs	72,144
Investment management fees	58,227
Carpathian Village and Shrine expenses, net of income	157,878
Aid to Eastern Europe - Ukraine	130,701
Assistance to parishes	332,550
Depreciation - buildings and equipment	50,503
<b>Total operating expenses</b>	<b>3,423,343</b>
<b>Net loss from operations</b>	<b>(1,018,792)</b>

Investment income	
Interest and dividend income	344,891
Realized and unrealized loss on marketable securities	850,520
	1,195,411
<b>Net increase in assets as of end of year</b>	<b>\$ 176,619</b>



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](mailto:carpathianvillage@earthlink.net)  
Father Michael J. Salnicky, 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.*

\*Registration forms for the Congress and Rally can be found at <https://www.eparchyofpassaic.com> under Youth and Young Adult Ministries

2024 Eparchial Summer Camps

All Camps will be held at The Carpathian Village

July 14-18: Altar Server Congress—ages 6-17  
July 21-25 : Girls Camp—open to girls ages 6-17  
Aug 11-15: Pre-teen Co-ed Camp—boys and girls ages 6-12







2023 BISHOP’S APPEAL  
BYZANTINE CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF PASSAIC  
445 Lackawanna Avenue, Woodland Park, NJ 07424  
Donate online at [Eparchyofpassaic.com](http://Eparchyofpassaic.com)  
or by pledge card  
through June 1, 2024

BYZANTINE CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF PASSAIC  
2023 BISHOP’S ANNUAL APPEAL

Please pledge online at [eparchyofpassaic.com](http://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 2023 Bishop’s Appeal will run through the end of our fiscal year, June 2024.  
Contributions received prior to December 31, 2023, will count toward your  
2023 tax year. Acknowledgement letter will be mailed prior to January 31, 2024.

New Address or Correction

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Parish: \_\_\_\_\_





# PEOPLE YOU KNOW

## IN DUNMORE...

### Parish Sponsors 'Angel Tree' for Philip's Fast

Students in the Eastern Christian Formation program at Saint Michael Byzantine Catholic Church in Dunmore, PA, sponsored the “angel tree” this year at their parish. Students collected donations of gifts for the residents of the Gino Merli Veteran’s Center in Scranton, PA. Father Robert Lozinski, CSC, is the pastor of Saint Michael Parish.



## IN PITTSTON...

### Christmas Joy Extended at Saint Michael Church Concert in Pittston

Saint Michael the Archangel Byzantine Catholic Church, Pittston welcomed the community to an evening of music and hospitality on Tuesday, December 26th. The sounds of carols traditional to the Transcarpathian region of Slovakia and Ukraine were performed by the guest choir of Ss. Cyril and Methodius Ukrainian Catholic Church, Olyphant, directed by Patrick Marcinko, III. Those who had the pleasure of attending were blessed by the group’s gracious gift performance, an experience of Eastern European tradition and culture. Selections included an impressive rendition of *Silent Night*, including a talented soloist; the ever-popular and challenging *Carol of the Bells*; and a set of melodic violin solos given by one of the choir members. Father Andrii Dumnych, Parish Administrator Pan’i Oksana Dumnych, their son, Luke, and a few parishioners also presented a recital of their own on guitars, keyboards, and vocals. As visitors entered, they were greeted by the parish children who posed as a portrait of the Nativity.



Following the concert, everyone had an opportunity to mingle and continue celebrating Christmas fellowship in the church hall, enjoying Christmas cookies, snacks and refreshments. This special event was made possible through the generosity of all who performed and assisted in every way. Through the joy and charity expressed in our parishes may we build a source of everlasting hope; and a model for the peace, we pray will reign in our world in the new year!

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# AROUND THE EPARCHY



## IN ROSWELL...

### Parish Celebrates Annual Saint Nicholas Celebration

The parishioners of Epiphany of Our Lord in Roswell, GA, celebrated their annual Saint Nicholas Celebration on Sunday, December 3rd. Many were in attendance who ate very well, sang Christmas Carols, participated in crafts, and welcomed a visit from Saint Nicholas. Father Lewis Rabayda, Parochial Administrator, even offered a gingerbread replica of Epiphany Church. Deacons James Smith, John Reed, and Sub-deacon Alex Adekambi also serve the parish.



## IN SOUTH PHILLY...

### Parish Celebrates Annual Saint Nicholas Celebration

On November 19, Holy Ghost Byzantine Catholic Church in Philadelphia, PA, celebrated with the local community by hosting an event called *Fall into Flannel*. Well over 120 people came and stayed in the hall for several hours. We drew winners for over 85 prizes, and everyone walked away happy! It was great to get together and show our community pride and Eastern Christian ideal of hospitality and generosity. Father Andriy Kovach is administrator of Holy Ghost Parish.



## IN SAINT PETERSBURG...

### Saint Nicholas Celebration and Nativity Play

On Sunday, December 10, at Saint Therese Byzantine Catholic Church in Saint Petersburg, FL, the children processed into church to celebrate the feast of Saint Nicholas, followed by a play in the church hall. The children are pictured with Father Robert Evancho, pastor of Saint Therese Church, and Father Michael O'Brien, who assisted.



## IN SCRANTON...

### Parish Youth Welcome Saint Nicholas







# SAINT NICHOLAS PARISH, DANBURY, CT, CELEBRATES 100 YEARS

In November of 1923, a small group of immigrants from Eastern Europe who settled in the Danbury, Connecticut, area sought to establish a strong Greek Catholic community. By November of 1925 they had grown large enough to purchase an existing church. On Sunday, December 3, 2023, the descendants of those founders of Saint Nicholas, both spiritual and through familial ties, gathered together to celebrate 100 years. Just the fact that the parish has gone through many joys but also hardships in those 100 years, including a devastating fire in 2013 is a testimony of the ongoing strength of our community.

Bishop Kurt celebrated the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy with Father Ronald Hatton, current pastor, Father John Cigan, former pastor, Father Vladyslav Budash, and Father Gregory Lozinskyy as concelebrants, as well as Deacon Stephen Russo, long-standing parishioner and deacon of the parish. Former parishioners traveled to join with the parish in celebrating our anniversary.

Ann Devine and Carolyn O'Boyle set up a Heritage Room in the church annex, featuring the tabernacle, Gospel Book, and a remnant of the iconostasis which had survived the fire, as well as copious photos and a

timeline of our time as a parish family. A banquet was held across the street at The Amber Room Colonnade after the Divine Liturgy.

As we now head into our 101st year, we pray that the Lord keep us together, keep us strong, and help us to grow as we continue to be a shining light of the Byzantine Catholic Faith in the Greater Danbury area!







## SAINT ANN BYZANTINE CATHOLIC CHURCH SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Saint Ann Byzantine Catholic Church in Harrisburg, PA, celebrated its 60th anniversary on October 22, 2023. Father Taras and children of the parish welcomed Bishop Kurt before the 10 a.m. Divine Liturgy. The procession to the church, led by eighteen altar servers, included Bishop Kurt, Bishop of the Eparchy of Passaic, Bishop Ronald Gainer, Bishop *Emeritus* of the Diocese of Harrisburg; Father Taras Lovska, pastor; Father Leonard Martin, S. J., former pastor; Father Joseph Stahura; and Deacon Lucas Crawford. The Liturgy of Thanksgiving was celebrated by Bishop Kurt and concelebrated by Bishop Gainer and the priests and deacon.

At the end of the Divine Liturgy, Bishop Kurt announced that he brought a present for all of us. He gave each parishioner a medal, Our Lady of Perpetual Help or Our Lady of Guadalupe, as we walked up for Mirovanije. On his last trip to Rome, Bishop Kurt had these medals blessed by the Pope.

The anniversary luncheon was held in the parish center that was decorated with festive colors and fall flowers. Before the meal, Father Taras and Angela Sedun, cantor, welcomed over 200 parishioners and asked



them to remember the founders of the church by singing, *Vichnaja Pamjat'*. Angela encouraged the parishioners to take time to look at the pictures from the past and present and to visit the display of our cultural history. Michael Sherbon, a parishioner, organized the display that included pictures and a few original documents that announced the establishment of Saint Ann Byzantine Catholic Church in Harrisburg in 1963.

Michael DiMarco, ECF teacher and altar server, offered a *brief overview of how we got here...to 60 years*. After he listed milestones, he asked those who remembered to raise their hands—a way of recognizing the founders and their families and all parishioners throughout the years.

Parishioners were grateful to have the opportunity to talk with Bishop Kurt and Bishop Gainer after the luncheon. They also wished Father Taras a happy birthday. At the beginning of the luncheon, Angela announced that Father Taras celebrated his birthday that week, and a cake with candles was brought out as we sang, *Happy Birthday*.

Each person received a key chain with a cross that was donated by Saint Ann Knights of Columbus. Also, a pictorial directory was completed and distributed earlier in the year.

Father Taras and Saint Ann parishioners are grateful for our founding fathers, mothers, and families, for all past and present clergy, and for all parishioners who continue to make Saint Ann Church a vibrant community.





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**March 15 - 17, 2024**

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### FOR MORE INFORMATION



609-394-5004



[marekvisnovsky@yahoo.com](mailto:marekvisnovsky@yahoo.com)

**The deadline for registration is Sunday, March 10, 2024**

## REGISTRATION FORM

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**March 15-17, 2024**

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Attn: Fr. Marek Visnovsky

**The deadline for registration is Sunday, March 10, 2024**





# PRIESTLY REFLECTIONS

Father Paul Varchola West

## “PRECEPTS FOR SALVATION: BUT DO I HAVE TO???”

Living in this world, he [Christ] gave us precepts for salvation, turned us away from the deceit of idols, and brought us to know you, true God and Father. He purchased us for himself as a chosen people, a royal priesthood, and a holy nation, cleansing us with water and sanctifying us with the Holy Spirit. He surrendered himself as a ransom to Death by which we were held captive, sold into slavery under sin. Descending by the cross into Hades to fulfill all things in himself, he freed us from Death's despair, and rose on the third day, preparing the way for the resurrection of all flesh from the dead. Since Corruption could not keep the Author of Life in its clutches, he became the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep, the first-born of the dead, that in all things he might have preeminence over all.

—excerpt: Anamnesis; the Anaphora of Saint Basil

Shortly after those truly beautiful and blessed words “when the fullness of time had come”, we hear of just exactly what Jesus Christ did for us humans after His “becoming incarnate from the holy Virgin,” and having “emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, conforming himself to the lowliness of our body, that he might conform us to the image of his glory.” Among all those things listed above, He first and foremost gave us precepts for salvation. Very well, but what exactly does this mean?

Quite simply, it means that yes, whether we like it or not, Jesus Christ set forth regulations regarding how we are to conduct ourselves in this earthly life; how we are to behave in general; how we are to fast; and even regulations for liturgical worship. Living in this post-modern society steeped in the liberalism of



the Western European Enlightenment, it is very easy – often too easy – to dismiss many of these precepts for salvation as perhaps being “old hat” and outdated.

Whenever we hear Father talk about fasting, how often do we roll our eyes, thinking, “Oh Father, these are just man-made rules.” How often do we find that we hold ourselves to the bare minimum of fasting and abstinence regulations because, “Well, that’s all I am required to do”? Do we find ourselves only attending the “services that count”, e.g., Sunday Divine Liturgy and Days of Obligation and even then, maybe skipping one or two of those weekday obligation days because, “Well, I’m busy and God will understand”? How often do we put off confessing our sins, waiting for it “to count” at Christmas and Easter, and then only ever confess “the big sins?”

Christ accomplished everything He did not for Himself, but to “[prepare] the way for the resurrection of all flesh from the dead.” Everything we do at church—liturgical worship, fasting, sacrificial contributions, service projects, involvement in parish life and organizations—is all for one thing and one thing only: to prepare

ourselves for the General Resurrection, the fearful and glorious Second Coming, and eternal life in the Kingdom to Come. This is why we must follow the teachings of the Church, the liturgical cycles and fasts, the Commandments of Christ, and be in accord with the sacramental life of the Church. These precepts were not given to us as an inconvenience, to make us feel guilty, to control us, or to give us a checklist to follow. Rather, they were given to us for one reason, and one reason only: that we may be found fit to inherit Eternal Life in the bosom of God, our Father and Creator.

What we must do is undergo a complete change in perspective. So, how do I do that? It is quite simple. Start small. Living the liturgical life of the Church to its fullest takes time, patience, and practice. The only true way to learn this life is to live it. Speak with your parish priest or spiritual father/mother about ways you can achieve this. Working with a guide is paramount to accomplishing this goal. If you don't have a spiritual father? Ask your parish priest to help you find one.

This is a great time to examine ourselves and see what we need to change and where, as the Great Fast has already begun. Use this time to meditate on these words of Saint Basil; take inventory; see what you already know and, more importantly, what you may not know. Keep those questions in your heart and ponder them.

Taking inventory is the first step. The next step is practical application in the midst of the Great Fast, a time of repentance, prayer, and a renewed relationship with our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ. **ECL**



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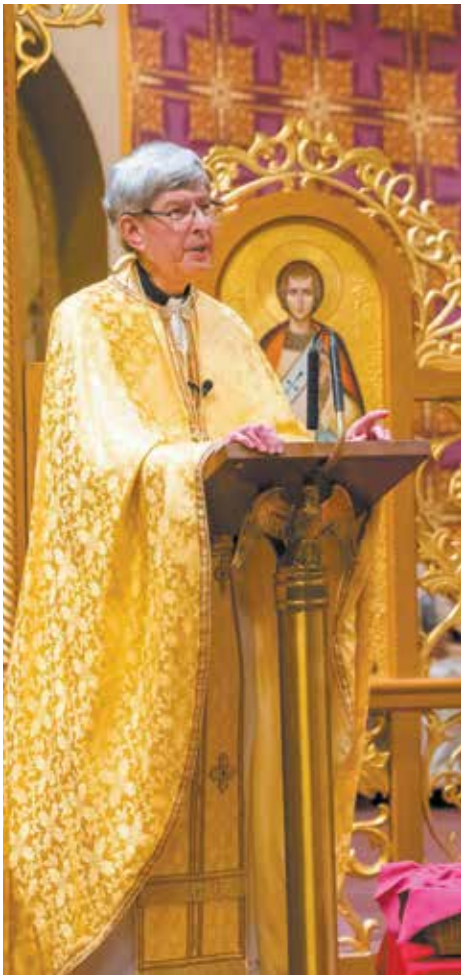
# 60th Anniversary of the Founding of the Eastern Catholic Church in North America & the 10th Anniversary of the Ordination of the First Eastern Catholic Bishop in North America



Bishop Robert (right) and Bishop Elias Lorenzo (left), Auxiliary Bishop of Newark



Deacon Charles Laskowski and Deacon William Szweczyk



Father John Basarab preaching after the Gospel



Bishops Kurt, Robert, and Elias, and Father John Basarab







# ding of the Eparchy of Passaic dination of Bishop Kurt Burnette



Deacon William chanting the Gospel assisted by Deacon Charles



Knights of Columbus approach the Holy Mysteries



Bishop Kurt encouraging the laity after the Divine Liturgy to spread the good news of God's mercy where the clergy cannot reach



Father Jack Custer communicating the Holy Mysteries



The choir, led by John Klapo (second from left), Cantor of Saint Michael Cathedral



Father Yuri Myhalko and family





Yound adult members of Theosis in Action: John Shubeck, David Donahoe, Adriana Smith and Richard Smith



Bishop Elias with Mother Marija, Hegumena, and nuns of Holy Annunciation Monastery



Musical group Ceremonious Strings



Sister Eliane Ilitski, SSMI in conversation



Steven Kowalski and Father James Hayer



Sister Kathy Hutsko, SSMI and Bishop Robert



Celebration Dinner at The Venetian, Garfield, NJ



Foreground: Jason French and Father David Baratelli  
Background: Father Francis Rella, Father Edward Higgins, and Father Iaroslav Korostil



Father Nicholas Daddona offers opening prayer



Father Yuri Oros with Bishop Elias



From the Heritage Center, Mandyas of three former bishops of Passaic



Sister Eliane Ilitski, SSMI, Sister Kathleen Hutsko, SSMI, Sister Michele Yakymovich, SSMI, and Mother Marija Shields, OCD.





Clergy at banquet table and the Mayor of Passaic



Master of Ceremonies, Father Jack Custer



The children of the priests present a gift to the Bishop



Bishop Robert offers the concluding prayer



Studying an antique gospel



Father Edward Higgins presenting a gift on behalf of the priests of the Eparchy



Deacon William Szewczyk speaking on behalf of the deacons



The Mayor of Passaic gives Father Jack an award for community service





# LIFE, LOVE, AND THE HUMAN PERSON

By Ann M. Koshute, MTS

## SAME VIRTUES—NEW YOU

*So faith, hope, love remain, these three;  
but the greatest of these is love.  
—1 Corinthians 13:13*

It never fails; as soon as the last champagne toast is made on New Year’s Eve, many of us make plans for how we’ll turn over a new leaf in the coming year. It may mean no more champagne (or other alcohol), starting an exercise regimen, pledging to read more books and less time scrolling our social media feeds. The list goes on – but how many of these resolutions last? For many of us, big dreams don’t necessarily translate to follow-through, leaving us discouraged enough to eventually abandon our resolutions and go back to “normal”. This sometimes means bad habits, some fairly harmless, but others whose cumulative effects over time can be detrimental to our physical, spiritual, and emotional health. But what if there was a way to gain better discipline in your life, mastery over your appetites, a better outlook on life, and healthier relationships? The good news: there is such a way! But it’s not a miracle drug or secret formula. No, the key to a happy, healthy – and holy – life is virtue.

New Year’s resolutions are all about habits – namely the bad ones, and how to break and replace them with good ones. To put it very simply, virtues are also habits, and they are meant to orient

us toward the good, to live up to God’s image and likeness in us, and to act in ways that correspond to who God has made us to be. Like the hours spent in the gym, time prepping healthy meals, or a commitment to reading an actual book (not Facebook), living virtuously requires commitment, practice, and a real desire to be changed. This is no small feat, and it takes effort, will likely entail some backsliding, and often runs counter to what we want at any given moment. Sounds a bit like the kind of discipline, failures, and successes we experience with our resolutions, but the practice of virtue is so much more. While there are similarities (study, dedication, engaging our will), the practice of virtue and its effects have the force of God’s grace, the support of the Church, and the help of the saints to make it “stick”. Turning over a new “spiritual leaf” takes all the things I just mentioned but will ultimately be unsuccessful without building and maintaining an intimate relationship with God, and understanding that we can’t change our ways or do anything good all on our own. Everything is a gift from God, and He wants to be our “partner” in this life so that we can belong to Him forever in the next.

The cardinal, or moral virtues, are prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance, and they are habits that orient or “dispose” us (as the Catechism states in

no. 1804) to the good. We need God’s help to incorporate these virtues into our lives and to effect change in us and how we relate to others; but it takes real work on our part to make the practice of these “habits” as natural as breathing. Just as we need to refrain from eating a whole bag of chips or must put on our sneakers and go outside for a walk, the moral virtues require our effort. To paraphrase Saint Robert Bellarmine, it’s all God, and it’s all us. God’s grace is available to help us on our way, but ultimately, we have to make the choice for the good; we have to decide to not only make a change in our lives but invite God in and allow Him to transform us.

There are three more virtues that are a necessary part of our spiritual life, and they are identified by Saint Paul in his epistle to the Corinthians. Faith, hope, and love are called “theological virtues” because, unlike the moral virtues, it’s not a matter of “practice makes perfect”. These virtues are gifted to us directly by God. We can’t acquire them by book knowledge or through sheer force of our will. Instead, we must rely on God’s generosity in gifting them, and assent to being shaped by them. By faith give our lives to a God whose reality is not found in scientific proof, but in an encounter with Him, and the lived experience of His presence. God gives us the gift (virtue) of faith, and we must nourish it through prayer, the Holy

Mysteries, and the feasts, fasts, and liturgy of the Church. Hope is not about directing all our energy toward wishing as hard as we can for a desired outcome. Rather, it is our surrender to the goodness of God and the desire for whatever will lead us to holiness so that we may one day enjoy life everlasting with Him. Finally, love is not a warm fuzzy feeling, but the ability to see another as God sees him/her and desiring the good for them. Saint Paul says love is “the greatest” of these virtues, not to downplay the others, but to emphasize that it is love which informs and animates our faith in God and fuels the hope that we will be with Him forever.

As we turn another page on the calendar, it’s okay to try to throw off bad habits and make plans to acquire new, healthy ones. Whatever our resolutions, and regardless of the outcome, we should all challenge ourselves to make some spiritual resolutions that will help us grow in intimacy with God, enhance our relationships, and enable us to become more virtuous. If we resolve to allow God to form our thoughts, our will, and our actions, the practice and nurturing of virtue will become more desirable for us. Who knows – growing in virtue might even help us actually follow through with some of those healthy New Year’s resolutions. **ECL**

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# KEEPING A HEALTHY SPIRITUAL METABOLISM

By Ann M. Koshute, MTS

It is inevitable that with every new year there is talk of “resolutions:” to eat better, get more sleep, exercise, and generally pay more attention to physical and mental health. The statistics on how that goes a week (or sometimes less) into the year are dismal, with many people throwing up their hands, saying, “Well, it’s the thought that counts!” A new year often signals a new start for us, but making changes in our lifestyle and how we care for ourselves is a year-round consideration.

Weight ranks high on almost everyone’s list, with millions of people trying diets, supplements, and exercising to exhaustion. A promising “technique” that is far from new but only re-discovered in the last several years is fasting. Research supports the benefits of fasting, whether compressing our eating time into a shortened “window” (known as intermittent fasting), or occasionally adding more prolonged fasting times, from twenty-four hours to three days. While more extreme fasting times, or doing a water-only fast, should be undertaken under a doctor’s supervision, adding a little deprivation here and there, coupled with eating “cleaner,” more nutritious foods, might do wonders for everyone. Studies show the benefits of fasting include healing from the effects of our cells’ toxic load, increased energy, a well-regulated metabolism, healthier skin, and of course, weight loss. It’s interesting to see so many jump on the fasting bandwagon, an ancient practice that the Church has utilized for millennia in imitation of Christ. Even more telling is how many read books or watch

social media influencers to find a fast to lose weight and get healthy – yet grumble and fuss when the Church asks us to simply abstain from meat, let alone actually fast. It’s not just “the thought that counts” when it comes to our spiritual well-being. Maintaining a healthy relationship with God and revving-up our “spiritual metabolism” is essential not only for this life, but for our hope to live our eternal life with Him.

The Great Fast can be thought of as our “spiritual new year,” an opportunity for new beginnings, and perhaps to push our bodies and spirits just enough to allow God to work within us in powerful ways. Fasting is what we think of immediately when considering the Lenten season, and for those not excused due to certain health issues, now might be a good opportunity to push ourselves a little further than we have in the past. That might look like more than just cutting out chocolate or lattes but trying to do the traditional fast (the one described next to the asterisk on your parish calendar) which is more restrictive in the foods allowed. Or it may mean limiting our meals to one on certain days, cutting out snacks, and committing to an “eating window” outside of which we may only drink water or coffee/tea. Pushing ourselves through fasting may show physical results, but the spiritual effects will be more dramatic than we think.

When building up a healthy “spiritual metabolism” it’s not enough to just fast or abstain out of obligation. Leaning into those hunger pangs with a bit of

contemplation helps heal the toxic load our spiritual cells ingest through sin, reorienting us toward Christ and the good of others. Coupling prayer with fasting leads to physical deprivation feeding the spiritual life. Add Confession to this mix, and now our spiritual metabolism is firing on all cylinders! The Holy Mysteries are encounters with the living God that change us, and the most immediate effects are often seen and felt within us through Confession. Imagine the “toxic load” of sin weighing you down, and the poisonous effects of being away from this Mystery for months, years, or decades. Regardless of how long it has been, consider making your return to Confession during the Fast. Do a deep and honest examination of conscience, telling the priest everything (or as much as you remember) without holding back. With a good Confession God’s grace flushes out all the toxic junk of sin from our “spiritual cells,” rejuvenating us and giving us the desire to love Him more, and to live in charity and joy.

Lastly, some “spiritual exercise” does the soul (and our spiritual metabolism) a lot of good, often working those “muscles” we have let atrophy over time – like holding our tongues instead of gossiping or doing good for another despite an inconvenience. If we’ve gone to Confession, this exercise can help us keep those renewed “spiritual cells” healthy and able to receive the “good food” that keeps them that way. Trying to go to the Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts weekly (or even a few times) during the Fast is an excellent spiritual exercise. If you are physically able, do some “Byzantine calisthenics,” also known as prostrations, to increase your heart rate up while expanding it to receive more of God’s love and mercy. If

that’s too physically challenging, try being intentional when making the Sign of the Cross, focusing on the words and the act of crossing yourself. Too often we cross ourselves quickly and half-heartedly, so be as intentional as possible when making the Sign. The effects of this “exercise” will be long-lasting because the muscle memory created will remind you that the Sign isn’t just a symbol; it is an affirmation of the truth of our salvation in Christ.

Whether you are young or old, a cradle Byzantine Catholic or a convert, healthy or homebound, there are ways to become spiritually fit by praying more, fasting as much as you’re able, and being charitable financially and in how you treat others. Confession is a spiritual “detox” for everyone, and the effects will show not only in your soul, but also in your relationships with God and others. Add to all the above a steady “diet” of the Eucharist – the greatest and most spiritually nutritious food of all – and you’ll be well on your way toward cultivating a healthy “spiritual metabolism” during the Fast, and beyond. **ECL**

## EASTERN CHRISTIAN PUBLICATIONS ANNOUNCES

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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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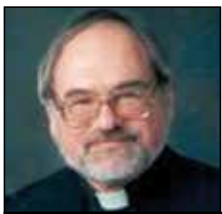
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# THE BYZANTINE LITURGY

By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD

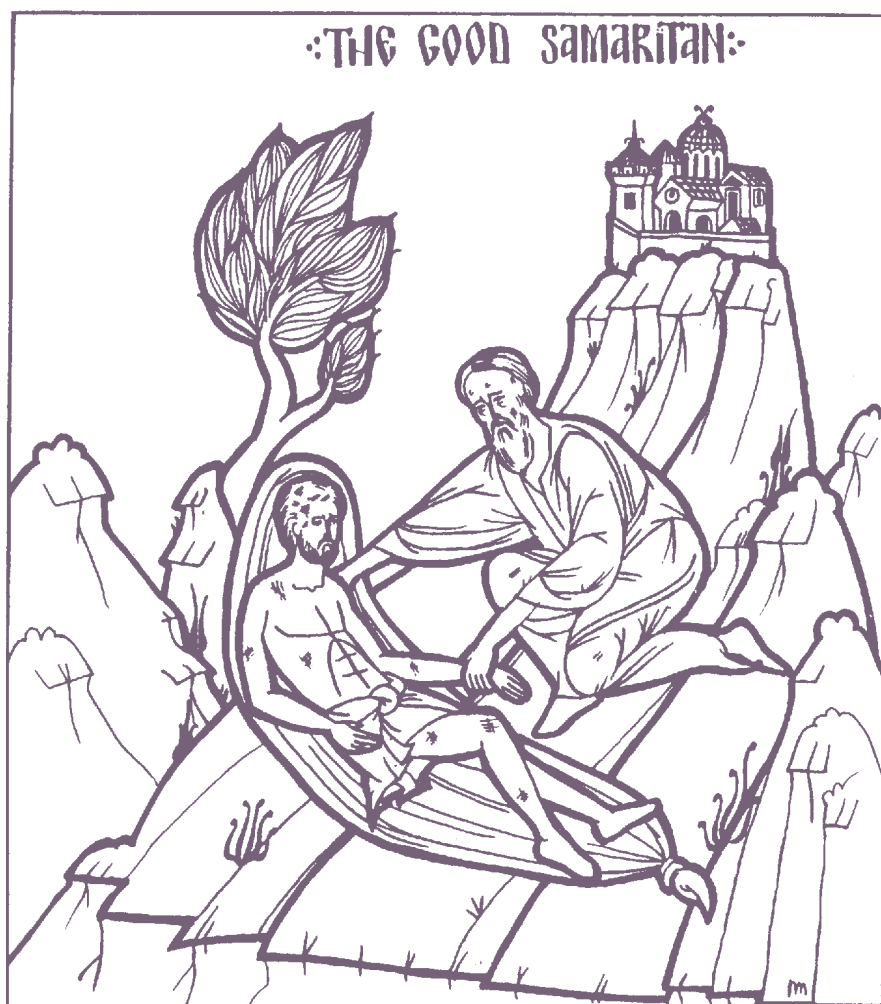
## THE THEOLOGY OF THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK

The office of prayer that is offered against human illness by the Church is called *Holy Oil for Anointing the Sick*. It is a true sacramental mystery, because a common substance, olive oil, a staple in the Mediterranean culture, is filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit. With divine power, then, it becomes a way to encounter our weakness and bring about the healing of both soul and body. It is not simply by the material that the mystery is accomplished, but also by our words, spoken in the Word of God, who creates, redeems, and deifies the faithful. The office itself is made up of petitions for healing, three prayers, two readings of Scripture, and one anointing.

in your justice save my soul from distress.” A litany follows, asking both for the sanctification of the oil and the visitation of the Holy Spirit upon the person who is ill. The litany concludes with the first prayer of blessing, which comes from the time of the ancient core of the mystery. By this prayer, the priest blesses the oil, making it the instrument of our identification with Christ, the Messiah, which means the Anointed One, to whom all power in heaven and earth has been given (Matthew 28:18). The prayer is very simple and direct. It is addressed to Lord, the loving Physician: “O Lord, through your mercy and compassion, you heal the afflictions of our souls and bodies.” We then implore

and a Gospel. The Epistle and the Gospel both proclaim the importance of the act of anointing in a Christian’s life. It is a reaffirmation of our baptism when we anointed into life in the Holy Trinity. The Epistle is from the Letter of the Holy Apostle James, who instructs the faithful, “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. If he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven” (James 5:14). The Gospel recounts the parable of the Good Samaritan, who sees a Jew beaten by robbers and lying the side of the road. From love, even for a foreigner, he cares for him and poured wine and oil over his wounds (Luke 10:34). Jesus tells us, “Go and do likewise” (Luke 10:37).

Rite addressed to the Father. There was a great reverence for this name – only the baptized could call God, “Father”, so that the Lord’s Prayer was taught only after baptism in the era when the catechumenate was at its height. God is the physician of soul and body; the Father sent the Son “to heal every infirmity and to deliver us from death.” The invocation is: “Heal your servant (name) of the spiritual and bodily ills which afflict him (her) and restore him (her) by the grace of your Christ.” This incarnate rite has the power to heal not only the body but also the soul. We see then that the power and grace of God can work through the materials of his creation, here the oil of anointing. Anointing is the manifestation of God’s infinite love: “My head you have anointed with oil; my cup is overflowing. Your mercy, O Lord, shall follow me all the days of my life” (Psalm 22).



The Office of Anointing is constructed on the morning prayer of the Church. It begins, therefore with Psalm 142, because it says, “In the morning let me know your love for I put my trust in you,” but then also asks for God’s action, “Let your good spirit guide me in ways that are level and smooth. For your name’s sake, Lord, save my life;

him, “O Master, sanctify this oil that it may be for those who are anointed with it healing and release from every passion, from defilement of flesh and spirit, and from every evil.”

Following this prayer, we celebrate a Liturgy of the Word, consisting of a prokeimenon, an Epistle, an Alleluia,

After the readings, there is a litany of Fervent Supplication, because we pray intensely for the person who is sick. This concludes with a second prayer of blessing. It is short and direct, and is a prayer of invocation (the Greek technical term, *epiclesis*) for the sanctification of the oil, imploring in its central petition, “Send down your Holy Spirit and sanctify this oil.” This part of the service – the office of readings and the second prayer – is repeated if there are more than one priest, and the texts are different for each priest. The alternate prayers are usually longer. In them, illness is in no way glorified or seen as a blessing. There is no theology of uniting ourselves to the suffering of Christ. Sickness is the enemy, it reminds us of our mortality, and our mortality reminds us of sin and the loss of grace. If there is any joining with Christ, it is in his glorious victory over sin. There is no preoccupation with death in these traditional prayers. Death is barely mentioned in the present rite of anointing. Our struggle is against sickness and infirmity of soul and body.

The third prayer is then said. The third prayer is the form for the actual physical anointing of the sick person. It is one of the few prayers in the Byzantine

The moral evil of sin cannot exist with the sacramental mysteries. The anointing with oil is the washing away of sin, when it is received in faith and love. This does not take away the obligation to submit mortal sins to the tribunal of confession. However, this obligation is removed if the person is unconscious and does not regain consciousness. The forgiveness of sins is shown by the final action of the anointing of the sick. The Gospel Book is imposed over the head of the sick person. It is a sign of obedience to the power of God’s words in the good news of his revelation. As the Gospel Book is imposed, the priest reads what is clearly a prayer for the absolution of sins. **ECL**

## ANOINTING OF THE SICK IN COMMUNITY

By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD

A final point about the sacramental mystery of holy oil is the general anointing of the faithful on Holy Thursday, as a preparation for Pascha. This causes some difficulties for the Western understanding of anointing, which sometimes insists that an actual illness must be present for anointing to

be given. In the Middle Ages, centuries ago, since the anointing was a penitential rite, and since people often delayed it until the moment of death, the anointing of the sick became known as “extreme unction,” the “last rites,” given at the point of death. The Councils of Florence and Trent restricted it to sick

people for whom the fear of death was present. Today, the Roman Catholic Church encourages the reception of anointing in all serious sicknesses, and not to wait until the point of death, but still may feel uneasy with the Byzantine practice of anointing everyone on Holy Thursday. It is, in fact, not a natural de-

velopment of the sacramental mystery, but may be an extension of the historical practice of anointing the whole household present for an anointing. Even the caregivers to those who were sick were anointed. We all struggle against sickness, if not physically, that at least spiritually. This development



was logical from the texts of the prayers themselves.

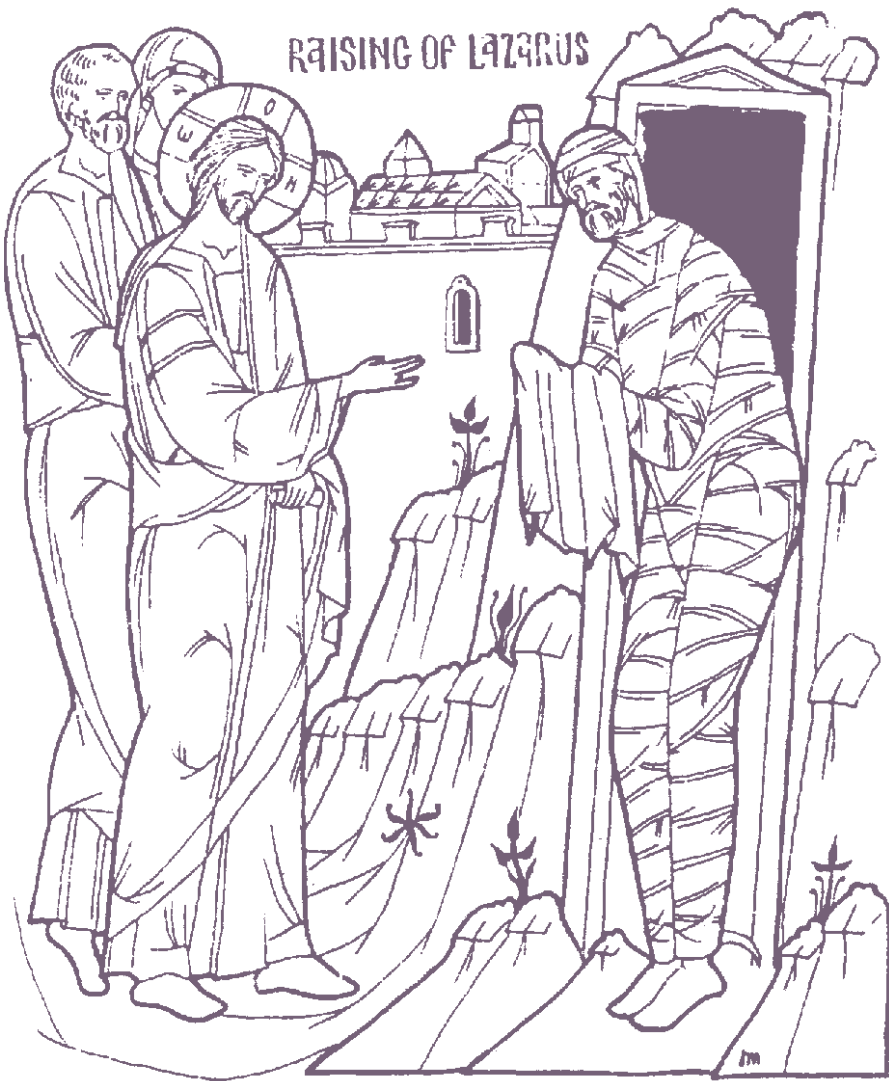
In 1118, in a Typicon of the monastery of nuns of Saint Mary Full of Grace (founded by the Empress Irene), an anointing for the whole community was prescribed for Lazarus Saturday. In different monasteries, this anointing was given on various days of Holy Week, but finally settled on Holy Thursday (the day the Oil of the Sick is blessed in the Roman Rite). It was most widespread in Greece, but spread also to other Byzantine countries. In Russia, the anointing was given with the full rite, but with the formula given above, “The blessing of our Lord and God and Savior...” Demetrius of Rostov, commenting on James 5:14, said that the sacred text could be extended to all the sicknesses of the soul.

The Western restriction of Anointing to the seriously sick led to some conflicts between East and West. In the 18th century, Pope Benedict XIV published an edition of Byzantine liturgical books which were quite faithful to their tradition. It was recommended to him the “the error of the Greeks” (anointing those not seriously ill) be amended in the text itself, but he did not do this, instead only putting a warning against anointing those who were not ill in the preface to the Euchologion. The Ruthenian Church dropped the practice of the Holy Thursday anointing since the time of the Synod of Zamoř (1720), though it has been restored recently in most places. The Melkites though, kept the practice of Holy Thursday anointing, but with the formula, “The servant of God (name) is anointed for the forgiveness of sins and for life everlasting”,

and in 1930 the Holy See permitted the use of this rite for Russian Catholics.

There were offices of anointing, very rare, that were exclusively for the forgiveness of sins. There are parallels in other rites: for example, the Church of the East (East Syrian) reconciles heretics with an anointing on the forehead, the Copts anoint apostates and adulterers with water mixed with oil. In the Byzantine Church, baptized apostates, as well as certain classes of heretics and schismatics, are received back with chrismation. The Roman Church numbers anointing among the sacraments of repentance, but does not mention the forgiveness of sins, which is so prominent in the Byzantine Church.

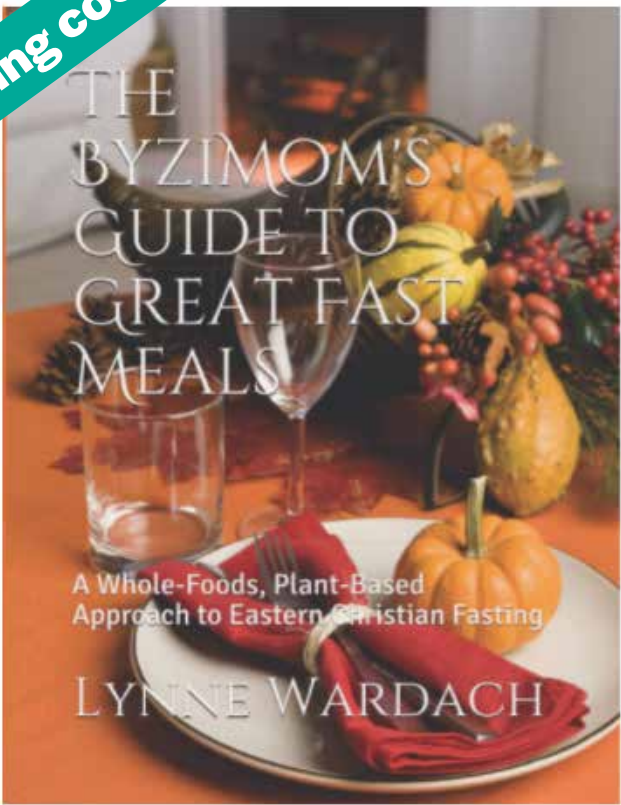
The sacramental mystery of anointing then, is for the forgiveness of sins. The provision for the sacrament of Penance was to protect the law of the Church that all mortal sins need to be confessed. Unfortunately, sometimes people do see anointing as a way to avoid this confession, but it does not dispense us from this obligation. We might come then to a simple conclusion. The Rite of Holy Oil for the Anointing of the Sick is sometimes given to the whole community, usually in Holy Week, but also on other occasions as a preparation for a feast or a pilgrimage. It is a sacramental mystery given to us by Christ for our battle against the weakness of the human body. Every sacramental mystery gives God’s grace, in the presence of which sin cannot remain, it is cast out. There is a connection with our souls, as Saint Paul points out in the Holy Thursday Epistle, “For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment



on himself. That is why many among you are ill and infirm, and a considerable number are dying. If we discerned ourselves, we would not be under judgment; but since we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world” (1 Corinthians 11:29-32). We are anointed on Holy Thursday (anticipated usually on Holy Wednesday) in order to struggle against this lack of discernment, of failing to see the image of God in our neighbor. We all are struggling for discernment. We

all, like the Publican, must admit our sinfulness. The reality is that this is in the mortality of our bodies also. All of us, young and old, strong, and weak, healthy, or infirm, have in our bodies at least the beginnings of our eventual mortality. That is why we can all accept anointing, not as a matter of course, but at least at those times when the Church opens to us an invitation to accept it. **ECL**

Fasting cook book



## The ByziMom's Guide to Great Fast Meals

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# SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

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

## LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

On the Sunday after Theophany, Saint Matthew (4:13-17) describes the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry as predicted by the prophet Isaiah (9:1-2): “Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: the people that sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the land and shadow of death a light has dawned.”

ner of the divided kingdom of Israel was the Assyrian Empire’s first point of attack in 733BC (2 Kings 15:29). They exiled Israelites and replaced them with their own people, who brought their pagan gods and goddesses with them. Gentiles quickly outnumbered Jews. The few faithful who remained struggled to keep the commandments of the Law; others were all too willing to ape pagan customs of their new neighbors

Capernaum, which St Matthew identifies as Jesus’ base of operations (Matthew 4:13; see also Mark 2:1 and John 2:12), was something of a boom town, situated beside the Sea of Galilee and main trade route. Like Jericho, another New Testament truck stop, it would have been a place where just about anything could have been had for the right price. Jewish literature does not speak kindly about Capernaum.

His Church. The selection from the Epistle to the Ephesians read on the Sunday after Theophany highlights the gifts He left behind in His Church to spread the light: apostles, prophets, preachers, pastors and teachers (Ephesians 4:11).

The Apostles’ eyewitness testimony is preserved in the Gospels and other New Testament writings; the practical life of the Churches they founded has been passed along in Holy Tradition; their authority has been transmitted in an unbroken chain of bishops. Jesus still speaks authentically and reliably in the Scriptures. Jesus is still truly present in the Liturgy and the sacraments. He remains accessible to us in the dialogue of prayer.

At the Divine Liturgy, after Holy Communion, we affirm that “we have seen the true Light”. In fact, enlightenment has been available to us since the moment of our Baptism, when the priest handed our godparents a lighted candle and said: “Receive this lighted candle and strive throughout your lifetime to shine with the light of faith and good deeds.” The kondak of the Theophany likewise invites us to recognize that “Your light, O Lord, has set its seal on us.”

Are there dark places where we might bring that light of faith and good deeds? Are there places where that Light not yet penetrated in our own lives? The strength to make the necessary changes to banish the darkness can only come from hearing and believing the good news that Jesus Christ remains as near as we will allow Him to come. **ECL**



Icon of the Meeting in the Temple with the Simeon & Anna

Why did Zebulun and Naphtali get such bad press? This northeastern cor-

ner and make a religion of power, prosperity and pleasure.

Yet it was precisely to these regions written off as corrupt and irretrievable, that Jesus first brought His message of good news: “The Kingdom of God is at hand” and, along with it, a challenge: “Repent!” (Matthew 4:17). This single Greek word (metanoieite) packs a lot of meaning: change your mind, change your priorities, change the way you see things and, ultimately, change your life.

Where might darkness or the shadow of death hang over our own lives? Worries about health or money or security? Relationships gone bad that can’t be fixed? Shame, guilt, bitter memories, tightly-held grudges? The things we just won’t talk about, much less attempt to change? There may be a closet or a room in your house where you shove all the stuff you don’t want to deal with. Eventually it spills over and begins to overwhelm the whole house. There may be a room like that in our hearts as well. These are precisely the places where we need to face the challenge to change, confident that God is not far away but as near as we will allow Him to be.

The Light isn’t a program or a process or a cure-all. Nearly 800 years before-hand, the prophet Isaiah had already announced that the Light would be a person: Jesus Christ: God with us. Two thousand years later, Jesus Christ, the True Light (John 1:5.9; 3:19; 8:12; 9:5; 12:46) remains reliably present in

## SHUTTING OURSELVES OUT OF THE BANQUET

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

Jesus’ Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) leaves us with a question: what becomes of the elder brother? Note that the loving father takes the initiative and reaches out twice. He runs to meet the prodigal son when he catches sight of him returning home. But when his elder son refuses to join the celebration to welcome his brother home, the father comes out again to plead with him. The parable ends without ever telling us whether the father succeeded in softening his elder son’s heart.

Why does the elder brother refuse to join in? He is offended by his father’s willingness to forgive his prodigal brother. But it becomes clear that he is also envious of the gifts the father gives him. (Although he doesn’t say it out loud, he may also be envious of everything that his brother dared to experience and got away with.) The elder brother’s bitter tone and harsh words make it clear that his obedience does not come from love but rather from fear or maybe just habit or lack of imagination.

We’ve seen people like the elder brother before. Remember the crowd that watched Jesus enter Zacchaeus’ house and remarked, “He has gone to stay in the house of a sinner” (Luke 19:7)? Those judgmental types would never experience that grace-filled dinner. Or how about the Pharisee who wasted his time in the Temple pretending to pray but actually feeding his pride at the expense of the Publican (Luke 18:10-14)? In both cases people who are objectively doing “the right thing” shut themselves out of a moment of grace

by their prideful attitudes. This much is certain: the elder brother could never share in that banquet without first asking forgiveness of his father for his outburst and granting forgiveness to his brother.

What Jesus dramatizes here in a parable, He also teaches more plainly: “There will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance” (Luke 15:7). The banquet Jesus is describing is the



heavenly wedding banquet (Revelation 21) and every Sunday Liturgy offers us a foretaste of it.

Older folks will remember a time when people only approached for Holy Communion after first preparing themselves by an examination of conscience and a sacramental Confession. In the swirl of confusion, misinformation, and general laxity that followed the Second Vatican Council, Communion lines got longer while Confession lines all but disappeared. Yet, Saint Paul already had to warn the first Christians in Corinth: “Whoever eat his bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body” (1 Corinthians 11:27-28).

Our prayer before Holy Communion mentions the words “sin” and “sinner” five times and concludes: “O Lord, forgive me, for I have sinned without number”. The connection between the forgiveness of sins and the Holy Eucharist couldn’t be clearer. The body and blood offered to us under forms of bread and wine are the body and blood Jesus sacrificed on the Cross “for the



Icon of the parable of the Prodigal Son

remission of sins” (Matthew 26:28). Christ died to save sinners (Romans 5:8; 1 Timothy 1:15) and we can only claim the new life that comes from His Cross and Resurrection if we are willing to admit that we are, in fact, sinners in need of a Savior.

The welcome banquet in Jesus’ parable only happens because the prodigal was moved to repent, because he actually made the journey home, admitted his sin, and asked his father’s forgiveness. His own stubborn pride guarantees that the elder brother will never set foot in the banquet hall without first forgiving and asking forgiveness. It is not by accident that the reception of Holy Communion from the earliest liturgies until today is always preceded by the Lord’s Prayer where we ask God’s forgiveness and promise to forgive each other (Matthew 6:12). No one can expect to partake of the Lord’s banquet without repentance, seeking forgiveness and offering forgiveness. This is true, not only for publicans and prodigals but even for those of us who insist we’re doing everything right. **ECL**

# SCHOOL OF PRAYER

Father G. Scott Boghossian



## THE WAY OF BROTHER LAWRENCE

“Pray without ceasing!” (1 Thess. 5:17). Throughout the two millennia of Christian spirituality, the Church has practiced this biblical injunction in various ways, but Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection (1614-1691) teaches us one of the best. No matter what we are doing or how busy we may be, we can always “Practice the Presence of God”, as described by Brother Lawrence.

The teachings of Brother Lawrence are found in the spiritual classic, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, compiled by Father Joseph de Beaufort.

Brother Lawrence was a French Carmelite lay brother who served in his monastery as a cook for over one hundred monks. Later, due to health reasons, he was assigned to the sandal shop, making and repairing shoes and sandals.

In the world, his name was Nicholas Herman. As a young man, he embraced military life and ended up fighting and being injured in the brutal Thirty Years War. At twenty-six, Nicholas entered the Discalced Carmelite Monastery in Paris.

His biographer, Father Joseph de Beaufort, writes:

“He had asked to be admitted to religious life, thinking he would be skinned alive for his awkwardness and imperfections and thereby would offer God his life and all its pleasures. But God had fooled him, for he experienced only satisfaction. This led him to tell God frequently: “You have tricked me”.

To practice the presence of God, according to Brother Lawrence, there is no strict method to be followed. Practicing God’s presence is thinking of God and talking to God all day long amid all that is happening around us. He did this in his busy life working in the monastery kitchen and sandal shop and considers it the best way for all of us.

Brother Lawrence sums up his method:

“The holiest, most ordinary, and most necessary practice of the spiritual life is that of the presence of God. It is to take delight in and become accustomed to His divine company, speaking humbly and conversing lovingly with Him all the time, at every moment, without rule or measure, especially in times of temptation, suffering, aridity, weariness, even infidelity and sin.”

He advises, “...stop your activities and even your vocal prayers, at least from time to time, to adore Him within, to

praise him, to ask His help, to offer Him your heart, and to thank Him”.

Brother Lawrence didn’t load himself down with countless vocal prayers and devotions. He prayed his obligatory vocal and liturgical prayers. Still, he found such consolation in his continual loving conversation with God that he abandoned any formal prayers that were not strictly obligatory.

Instead of multiplying devotions, “We can continue our loving exchange with Him, remaining in His holy presence sometimes by an act of adoration, praise, or desire, other times by acts of oblation, thanksgiving, or anything else that our minds can devise”.

We should set aside some time every day, ideally an hour or more, to pray. In rare cases, some people are too busy to do this (I am thinking of some busy mothers I know). Brother Lawrence’s way is the solution. If you can’t spend some dedicated time every day to talk to Jesus Christ, then take every free moment you can for a brief glance, a little colloquy, a friendly conversation with your Savior who loves you.

Brother Lawrence writes, “If I were a preacher, I would preach nothing but the practice of the presence of God; and if I were a spiritual director, I would

recommend it to everyone, for I believe there is nothing so necessary or so easy”.

“There is no way of life in the world more agreeable or delightful than continual conversation with God; only those who practice and experience it can understand this”.

To sum up: “God does not ask a great deal of us: a brief remembrance from time to time, a brief act of adoration, occasionally to ask Him for His grace or offer Him your sufferings, at other times to thank Him for the graces He has given you and is giving you. In the midst of your work, find consolation in Him as often as possible. During your meals and conversations, occasionally lift up your heart to him; the least little remembrance of Him will always be most agreeable. You need not shout out: He is closer to us than we may think. We do not always have to be in church to be with God. We can make of our hearts an oratory where we can withdraw from time to time to converse with Him there, gently, humbly, and lovingly. Everyone is capable of these familiar conversations with God, some more, some less. He knows what we can do. Let’s try”.

Pray without ceasing. Practice the presence of God. Yes, let’s try! **ECL**



# YOU WILL HAVE TRIBULATION

by Father G. Scott Boghossian

“In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (Jn. 16:33).

People wonder why so often devoted Christians suffer trials and tribulations while ungodly people seem to have an easy, pleasant, pain-free life.

Suffering and enduring trials is the vocation and privilege of every follower of Jesus Christ.

God the Son, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Word incarnate, came down from heaven to suffer and die for us.

Jesus said that He would lay down His life for the world’s salvation and “give His life as a ransom for many” (Mt. 20:28). He said He would “suffer many things and be rejected” (Lk. 17:25). His adversaries would “mock Him, and spit upon Him, and scourge Him, and kill Him” (Mk. 10:34).

In the Letter to the Hebrews, Saint Paul tells us that God the Father made Jesus Christ, the Son, perfect through suffering (Heb. 2:10) and that Jesus learned obedience through what He suffered (Heb. 5:8).

Suffering was the sacred vocation of Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Therefore, suf-

fering is the vocation of everyone who follows Him. “For to this [suffering] you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps” (1 Peter 2:21).

Saint Augustine of Hippo said, “God had one Son on earth without sin, but never one without suffering”.

Our Lord told His disciples, “They will deliver you up to councils; and you will be beaten in synagogues” (Mk. 13:9), and they will “put you to death; and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake” (Mt. 24:9).

Christ says, “If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me” (Lk. 9:23). What is the cross but an instrument of suffering and death? Therefore, let the Apostle Thomas’s words be our motto, “Let us also go, that we may die with Him” (Jn. 11:16).

Paul and Barnabas preached, “saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” (Ac. 14:22).

Saint Peter writes, “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which comes upon you to prove you, as though something strange were hap-

pening to you” (1 Peter 4:12). For all Christians are required to suffer: “the same experience of suffering is required of your brotherhood throughout the world” (1 Pt. 5:9).

Our lot in life is suffering. Saint Paul directed the Thessalonians, “that no one be moved by these afflictions. You yourselves know that this is to be our lot”. (1 Thess. 3:3).

So don’t be discouraged and downcast by all that you have to suffer. It is a sign of great favor from God. Therefore, “rejoice in so far as you share Christ’s sufferings” (1 Peter 4:13). “Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials” (James 1:2).

When life gets difficult, babes in Christ (1 Cor. 3:1) often say, “Why is God angry with me? Why is God punishing me?” But trials and tribulations, patiently endured, are a sign of God’s special love and favor.

“For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ, you should not only believe in Him but also suffer for His sake” (Phil. 1:29).

After the Apostles were arrested, imprisoned, and beaten, “they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name” (Acts 4:41).

Suffering prepares us for heaven and is a sign of predestination: “For this slight

momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison” (2 Cor. 4:17). “I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Romans 8:18). Saint Thomas Aquinas says that to patiently bear a heavy cross for long time is a sign of predestination.

“You will be consoled according to the greatness of your sorrow and affliction; the greater the suffering, the greater will be the reward”, says Saint Mary Magdalen de Pazzi.

The Latin Church Father Lactantius (260-330) writes, “He who chooses to live well for eternity, will live in discomfort for the present. He will be subjected to all types of troubles and burdens as long as he is on earth, so that in the end he will have divine and heavenly consolation. On the other hand, he who chooses to live well for the present will fare badly in eternity” (Institutes bk. 7, chap. 5).

“Take your share of suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 2:3), for our Lord promises, “In the world, you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). **ECL**

## SEASONAL REFLECTIONS

Father Ronald Hatton



### OUR CELEBRATION IS NOT OVER!



Icon of Theophany, from Epiphany of Our Lord, Annandale, Virginia

Christmas is past, 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 do 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 Exo-



dus 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 de-

voted 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 to You!*

—Matins for the Feast

**ECL**

## OUR ENTRY INTO THE GREAT FAST

by Father Ronald Hatton

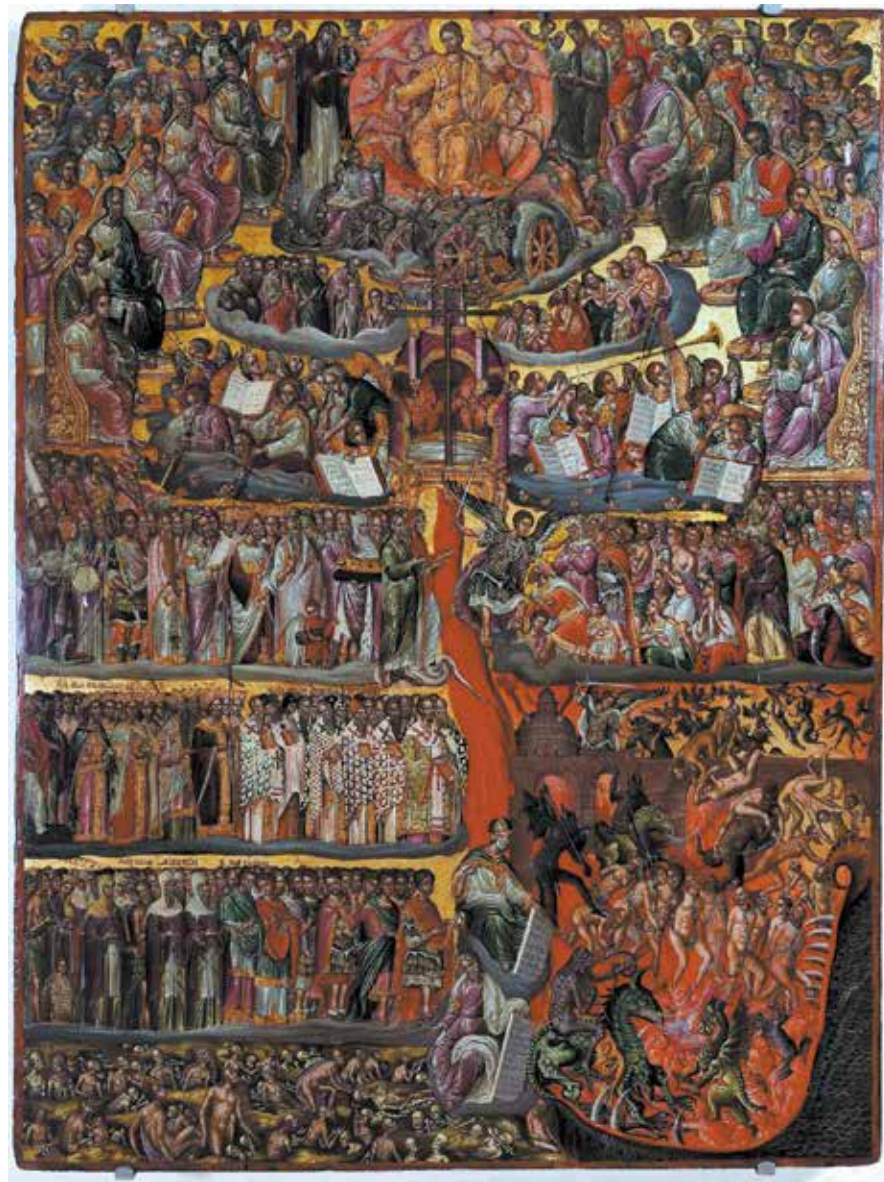
The Liturgical year moves quickly, but it does not just drop us, cold turkey, from one season to the next. One great example of this is our pre-Lenten Sundays and the beginning of The Great Fast. In the middle of January, we have already celebrated the Sunday of Zacchaeus. One thing you will notice,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

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

The Sunday of the Prodigal Son gets a little more intense, as the Epistle reading now also relates to the coming season of the Fast. Together with the Kontakion for this day, we feel the time drawing closer.

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

Finally, we come to Cheese-fare Sunday, the day before we begin the Great Fast in earnest. Not only is there a



Icon of the Last Judgement by Georgios Klontzas (late 16th Century)

special kontakion for the day, but the Prokeimenon is one of the most solemn that we can sing, and is a reminder that the Fast and our promises to God are not to be taken lightly: "Make vows to the Lord your God and fulfill them!" (Isaiah 19: 21b). From the Saturday night Vespers, through Matins and Vespers for this day, we are reminded both of our fallenness (this Sunday is the Commemoration of the Expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden) and of God's great forgiveness. And so, on this evening, we enter into the season of the Great Fast by gathering together to pray what we referred to as "Cheese-fare Vespers," singing the Stichera of Repentance. In many parishes, there

is normally a ritual of mutual forgiveness between all the members of the parish, both clergy and laity, to cleanse ourselves of any lingering resentment or lack of forgiveness in our lives before we enter this holy season. For if we do not forgive one another fully and totally, how can we expect forgiveness from God? The text for this ritual is taken from the Office of Compline.

Thus prepared, we now enter into Clean Week, with strict fast and abstinence on Monday. Traditions of services during this week may vary from parish to parish, but usually include Great Compline, and Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts. In the Typicon for our Metro-

politan Province it is prescribed that the Presanctified Liturgy is celebrated on Wednesdays and Fridays of the Fast. Since the Divine Liturgy is a celebration of the Resurrection, we do not celebrate it during the weekdays, but our bishops may prescribe other services where Holy Communion can be distributed.

Last, but certainly not least, we enter fully into the season of fasting. Depending on medical conditions or other mitigating circumstances, the Typicon prescribes fasting from meat on all Wednesdays and Fridays. Some people are in a position to fast completely from all meat and dairy, eating only vegetables; some have no meat until Pascha. It may be that they cannot fast from food at all, and have been assigned an alternative discipline to fasting from food. The main point is that it is a time of subjecting the body to the mastery of the spirit, thus reminding us that we must subject ourselves to God. Whatever the case, we must keep in mind the admonition that the holy Apostle Paul gives in his letter to the Romans: "One person believes that one may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. The one who eats must not despise the one who abstains, and the one who abstains must not pass judgment on the one who eats; for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on someone else's servant? Before his own master he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand. ...whoever eats, eats for the Lord, since he gives thanks to God; while whoever abstains, abstains for the Lord and gives thanks to God. ...Why then do you judge your brother? Or you, why do you look down on your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God" (Romans 14: 2-10). May our time of the Great Fast be profitable, and may we attain our salvation through our humility to our Lord. **ECL**



save  
the  
date

# 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.



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.



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.



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](mailto:passaiccathedral@gmail.com)



New Building arriving in 2023

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OLPHTR.ORG

## Visiting The Myrtle Beach Area This Winter?

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.

### Eastern Catholic Life

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## UPCOMING EPARCHIAL AND PARISH EVENTS

### FEBRUARY, 2024

- 18 First Sunday of the Great Fast
- 19 Presidents' Day  
*Civil Holiday; Chancery Closed*
- 25 Second Sunday of the Great Fast

### MARCH, 2024

- 2 Third All Souls' Saturday
- 3 Third Sunday of the Great Fast
- 10 Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast
- 16 Akathistos Saturday
- 17 Fifth Sunday of the Great Fast
- 23 Lazarus Saturday
- 24 Flowery Sunday
- 25 Holy Annunciation of the Virgin Theotokos  
*Solemn Holy Day*
- 26 Great and Holy Tuesday
- 27 Great and Holy Wednesday
- March 28 - April 2: Chancery Closed

- 28 Great and Holy Thursday
- 29 Great and Holy Friday
- 30 Great and Holy Saturday
- 31 PASCHA • THE GREAT DAY • THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD, GOD AND SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST

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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