



EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

Official Publication of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic

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JUNE 2015



BISHOP ANNOUNCES YEAR OF THE EPISTLE

By Bishop Kurt

“You see with what large letters I write to you with my own hand.” These very personal words appear at the end of Saint Paul’s letter to the Galatians. For two thousand years, people have argued over the exact meaning of this verse. Did Saint Paul use a secretary, and then add his own note at the end? (If you would like to show off your vocabulary, this secretary is called an “amanuensis.”) Did Saint Paul suffer from partial blindness or some other physical problem that caused him to write in large letters? Almost all of the epistles of Saint Paul contain little clues like this one that show that we are reading real letters to real people, people just like us. Many of his personal notes are very affectionate, such as “Every time I remember you I thank my God!” and in another letter, “Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that my heart may be filled with joy!” Sometimes his emotions are more complicated as when he tells a church he won’t visit them right away because he is upset with them and doesn’t want to see them while he is angry.

Sometimes Saint Paul includes extra greetings at the beginning or the end of a letter. “Say hello to Priscilla and Aquila, who risked their lives for me. ... Say hello to Epaenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in Asia. ... Say hello to Herodion, my kin. ... Say hello to Rufus and his mom.” If you spend some time looking up these people on the internet, you will be amazed to find out how much we know about the early Christians. In fact, a stone inscription was found in Corinth in recent years that may name one of the people Saint Paul mentions.

At other times, Saint Paul explains the doctrines of our faith, which is

to say, he explains the Cosmos, and sometimes he does so in passages of surpassing beauty and poetry. At other times, he provides us with encouragement in words equally beautiful, “I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from the love

In the letters of Saint Peter, we read the testimony of an impulsive and passionate man who was seared in his soul by meeting Our Lord. He witnessed the Transfiguration himself, as he mentions in his letter, and then denied Christ at the crucifixion

revealing than an eloquent volume from someone more literary. The straightforward affection and dignity of this fisherman shine from the page.

The fierce words of Saint James against gossip and discrimination are so powerful that if they were read publicly every day most of our social problems would disappear. It would certainly transform our parishes if those words were read at every service. In these days in which many Christians, and even entire churches, have decided that sins of lust are now virtues, the prophetic words of Saint Jude are just as frightening today as when he wrote them, “These dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority, and slander celestial beings. ... These men speak abusively against whatever they do not understand. ... They have chosen the path of Cain ... These men are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualms—shepherds who feed only themselves. They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind; autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted—twice dead. They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever.”

And finally, we come to the sublime letters of Saint John the Beloved Disciple. From the very first words of this eyewitness and intimate friend of our Lord, it is overpowering to hear him talk about seeing, hearing, and actually touching the Son of God made flesh. And it is in these letters that we learn the culmination of all of God’s revelation, “God is love, and he who abides in love, abides in God, and God in he.”

Continued on page 2



Icon of Saints Peter and Paul

of God!”; “We carry these treasures in earthen vessels”; and “The peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your heart and mind in Christ Jesus.” How many greeting cards have been printed over the years from these kind of quotes from the epistles!

and experienced the love and forgiveness of Christ personally after the resurrection. His letters are just as passionate in their enthusiasm for the gospel as they are in their indignation at those who disgrace it. As is often the case, a few blunt words from a simple man are more

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THE YEAR OF THE EPISTLE

Pastoral Letter of Bishop Kurt

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It seems to me that if you were to ask a devout Catholic, "What were the most important things in your life this past week?", most weeks the answer should be: the Eucharist, and the Gospel reading, and the Epistle reading. Because of limited time, we only read a tiny slice of these amazing letters at our Sunday

Divine Liturgy. So starting on Pentecost Sunday, May 24, 2015, I am declaring this year to be "The Year of the Epistle". Our Eparchy of Passaic will work together to improve our appreciation and knowledge of the Epistles. Our Word of Life Institute is preparing bulletin inserts to help educate us about the Epistles, and to

provide our pastors with material for preaching. I pray to God that during this Year of the Epistle, everyone in the Eparchy will be attentive to the reading on Sunday, and more importantly to read the entire Epistles for themselves. I pray everyone will read the Epistles, and pray on them, and allow the Word of God to enter their hearts. God wrote these letters to you.

+Kurt Brunette



BISHOP KURT ANNOUNCES THE MEMBERS OF THE EPARCHIAL COLLEGE OF CONSULTERS AS WELL AS THE RESULTS OF THE PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS.

COLLEGE OF CONSULTORS

Very Reverend Marcel Szabo

Very Reverend John Basarab

Very Reverend Peter Hosak

Very Reverend Gary Mensinger

Very Reverend Robert Hospodar

Very Reverend Robert Evancho

Very Reverend Michael Popson

Very Reverend Mykhaylo Prodanets

PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL

Central Pennsylvania Syncellate

Very Reverend Edward Higgins

Very Reverend Michael Popson

Middle States Syncellate

Reverend Michael Kerestes

Very Reverend Conan Timoney

New Jersey Syncellate

Reverend Edward Cimbala

Reverend Charles Yastishock

Southern States Syncellate

Reverend Vincent Brady

Very Reverend Sal Pignato

Susquehanna Valley Syncellate

Very Reverend Mykhaylo Prodanets

Very Reverend Michael Salnicko

Other Priests on the Presbyteral Council by virtue of their office:

Right Reverend Mitred Archpriest James G. Hayer,
Protosyncellus of the Eparchy

Very Reverend John Basarab,
Syncellus of the Middle States Syncellate

Very Reverend Robert Evancho,
Syncellus of the Southern States Syncellate

Very Reverend Robert Hospodar,
Chancellor of the Eparchy and Syncellus of the New York-New England Syncellate

Very Reverend Michael Mondik,
Syncellus of the New Jersey Syncellate

Reverend Monsignor John T. Sekellick,
Judicial Vicar

Very Reverend Marcel Szabo

Very Reverend Gary Mensinger,
Syncellus of the Susquehanna Syncellate



FROM THE OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

TO BE ORDAINED TO THE ORDER OF DEACON

Subdeacon Thomas Shubeck

Sunday, June 14th at 3 p.m.

*Saint Thomas Byzantine Catholic Church,
Rahway, NJ*

Subdeacon Peter Turko

Sunday, June 21st at 10:30 a.m.

*Epiphany of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church,
Annandale, VA*



+ROBERT BARUSEFSKI Priest's Brother Called to Eternal Repose

+Robert Barusefski, 60, died unexpectedly at his home in Virginia on Friday, May 15. He is survived by his wife of 35 years, Susan; son, Robert Edward, of Washington, D.C.; daughter, Jamie, of North Carolina; and brother, Father Ronald Barusefski, Vice-Chancellor of the Eparchy and Pastor of Saint John the Baptist Church in Bayonne, New Jersey.

Born in Scranton, son of the late Robert and Martha Barusefski, he was educated in the Hackettstown, NJ, public schools. He graduated from VA Tech in 1977 with a degree in electrical engineering and was employed as a civilian for 37 years for the US Navy.

A Parastas was celebrated on Wednesday evening, May 20 at Mar-

gotta Funeral Home, 511 Church Street, Jessup, PA. The Funeral Liturgy was celebrated at 9:30 a.m. on Thursday, May 21, at Holy Ghost Byzantine Catholic Church, 313 First Avenue, Jessup, PA, followed by interment at the parish cemetery. May his memory be eternal! *Vičnaja jemu pamjat'!*

+FATHER GARY FRANCISKO Called to Eternal Repose After Battling Illness

By Loretta Nemeth, courtesy of Horizons of the Eparchy of Parma

On April 25, 33 years to the date after the ordination of Father Gary Francisko for the Eparchy of Parma, Bishop John, clergy and faithful of the eparchy gathered for Father Francisko's funeral Liturgy at Holy Spirit Church. Father Francisko died on April 18, following a lengthy battle with cancer. He was 61.

Father Francisko was born in Cleveland on Oct. 30, 1953, to +Eleanor (nee Gladdish) and +Andrew Francisko and attended Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Elementary School and Parma Senior High School. He entered Saints Cyril and Methodius Seminary and received a Bachelor of Arts degree from La Roche College.

He was ordained to the priesthood on April 25, 1982, by Bishop Emil J. Mihalik at the Cathedral of

Saint John the Baptist.

Father Francisko's assignments included the parishes of Saint Mary, Cleveland, OH; Saint Stephen, Euclid, OH; Christ the King, Taylor, Mich.; Saint Eugene, Bedford, OH; and the Shrine of Our Lady of Mariapoch, Burton, OH.

During his years of priestly service, for a time he also was chaplain for the Boy Scouts and the Byzantine Nuns of Saint Clare and typesetter for *Horizons*. Father Francisko was retired due to his health.

He is survived by sisters Elaine Jones (Allen, deceased), Patti Kapusinski (Wesley) and Judy Grocky.

Priest's services were held Thursday and Friday evenings, April 23 and 24, at Holy Spirit church. Bishop John celebrated the funeral Liturgy there at 10 a.m. on Satur-

day, April 25. Archpriest Michael Hayduk served as master of ceremonies. Concelebrants were Mitred Archpriests Dennis Hrubiak and John Kachuba; Fathers James Batcha, Andrey Kovalenko, Michael Lee, Thomas Loya, Richard Plishka, Bruce Riebe, Robert Stash and Stephen Titko. Deacons Robert Cripps and Daniel Surniak and Subdeacon Eugene Senderak assisted at the Liturgy. Father Andrew Nagrant and Deacon Gregory Loya served as cantors. Fathers Miron Kerul-Kmec and Joseph Radvansky were in attendance.

In Bishop John's homily he spoke of Father Francisko as an icon of God in the midst of the world. "All Christians, by baptism, are called to witness to God – to the power of God," he said. "Father Gary responded to a call, to a challenging life—challenges he faced with a



fertile imagination. His willingness to serve God was actually very courageous." Bishop John said Father Francisko's acceptance of his diagnosis was "truly a witness of faith." "Father Gary's last days remind us that we, too, can embrace God's call: 'come to me.'"

After the Liturgy interment took place at Holy Spirit Cemetery and was followed by a repast in the parish social hall. *Vičnaja jemu pamjat'!*



50TH JUBILEE OF SISTER ELIZABETH DAWN GEAR, GNSH 1965-2015

Article courtesy Spring Newsletter of the Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart

Anative of Mont Clare, PA, where she was a member of Saint Michael Byzantine Catholic Church, Sister Elizabeth Dawn Gear met the Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart at Mother of Divine Providence Parish, King of Prussia, PA, where she was employed as a teacher. Entering the Congrega-

tion in 1965, Sister Dawn devoted forty-four years of her religious life to the education of youth, an integral ministry of the GNSH. In Jackson Heights, NY, she served at Our Lady of Fatima and Blessed Sacrament parish schools. Returning to her home state, she taught at Saint Norbert School in Paoli before moving to Atlanta, GA where she served at the elementary and secondary school levels. For seven years she taught at Saint Pius X High School where she was also Assistant Dean of Studies and Students. Following this Sister Dawn was Founding Principal of two Catholic Schools

in the Atlanta Archdiocese: Saint John Neumann Regional Catholic School and Archbishop Donnellan Elementary School. Sister Dawn also played a dominant role in building, creating the academic program, and opening of Our Lady of Mercy High School in Fayetteville, GA. She earned a BS/Education/English from D'Youville College; an M.Ed. in Administration and Supervision and an Education Specialist degree from Georgia State University. She was the recipient of several professional awards, including the NCEA Distinguished Principal's Award and the National Distinguished Princi-

pal's Award. In 2001, she moved to New Jersey to serve first as Assistant Superintendent and then Superintendent of Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Camden. The year 2008 saw her elected to the Leadership Council of the Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart; the additional responsibility of Congregational Treasurer was added in 2010. She is currently serving a second five-year term on the Leadership Council. We congratulate and thank Sister Dawn as we celebrate her 50 years of service as a Grey Nun of the Sacred Heart! May God grant to Sister Dawn many years! *Na mnohaja i blahaja l'ita!*



LENTEN BIBLE STUDY SERIES IN CENTRAL NEW JERSEY

By Father John Zec

In response to the generous gift of Bibles given by Bishop Kurt to the parishes of the Eparchy, some central New Jersey parishes organized a series of five Lenten Scriptural Reflections. These programs consisted of the celebration of a Moleben, presentations and reflections on seasonal Books of the Bible, and concluded with a light Lenten fellowship repast. Clergy—pastors, priests, and deacons—serving in the parishes of Saint Nicholas and Saint Michael in Perth Amboy, Saint George in Linden, Saint Elias in Carteret, Saints Peter and Paul and Saint Joseph in Somerset and New Brunswick, respectively, and Saint Thomas the Apostle in Rahway, met before the beginning of Great Lent to discuss, plan, organize, and develop the overall program. The guiding principle behind the sessions was the presentation of Old Testament selections, their origins and meaning, their relationship to what we do in liturgy making them present, and how to relate this to our Christian life. The session began each Sunday of Great Lent within the various churches to emphasize the place of Scripture within worship and liturgy.

On February 22, Deacon Charles Laskowski of Saint Thomas the Apostle Parish opened the first session entitled, “Why You Can Believe in the Bible” in Saint Michael Church in Perth Amboy, which was an introduction to the Bible, Old and New Testaments, its history and format, and important facts on its validity for faith. Father Martin Vavrak, Pastor of Saint Michael Parish, presented the second session in which he offered theological reflections and images on “The Story of Creation” in Saint George Church in Linden, taken from the first eleven chapters of the Book of Genesis. Father Martin concentrated on the creative power of God on which all things depend, the loving relationship with Adam and Eve that was affected by the Fall, and the constancy of God’s love for his creation in spite of the Fall and alienation from God by mankind. The third session was a presentation of the later chapters of Genesis, concentrating on God’s initiative in His loving call and covenant promise to the Patriarchs. Father John Zec, a bi-ritual priest in Perth Amboy, offered reflections on the patriarchal covenants in relationship to the history of the Israelites and the fulfillment of them in Jesus Christ in New Testament theology and the theology of the early Fathers of the Church in Saint Elias Church in Carteret. Deacon Mark Koscinski of Saint Mary Church in Hillsborough, NJ, gave the fourth reflective presentation in Saints Peter and Paul Church in Somerset on the history and development of the Mosaic Covenant as recounted in the Book of Exodus from the plagues and departure out of Egypt through the desert experience and the giving of the Ten Commandments. The final session was given at Saint Thomas the Apostle Church in Rahway by Father John Zeyack, Adminis-

trator of Saint George in Linden. Father Zeyack presented themes from the prophets, especially Isaiah, in regard to their use in the Divine Liturgy and their relation to Great Lent and salvation in Jesus Christ. He also referred to the importance of the writing of the early Church Fathers and their great theological and spiritual tradition.

All five sessions were followed by a period of questions and answers which gave the participants an opportunity to further inquire into the topics presented and their relationship to Christian life.

The incorporation of the Bible sessions within a worship service, a Moleben, was purposely planned so as to emphasize the importance of the Scriptures for worship at Liturgy. Likewise, in planning the sessions it was decided that in order to build a greater relationship and interaction among the members of the various Byzantine parishes of the area, the sessions would be held each week at the individual churches.

The five week program was successful in the presentation of the Scriptures, the gathering of the parishioners of the different communities into a more cohesive family, and offering time to solidify further this family though a shared Lenten meal during which they had the opportunity to share their lives, experiences, and faith with one another. Plans are being discussed to continue the program with a series of Scriptural sessions for Christmas.



Parishioners gather for a Lenten meal after the Bible Study.

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100TH ANNIVERSARY OF SAINT MICHAEL CHURCH

Perth Amboy, NJ

By Stephen Kermondy

On Sunday, November 9, 2014, Bishop Kurt joined the parishioners of Saint Michael Byzantine Catholic Church of Perth Amboy, NJ, to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of their parish.

Concelebrating the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy of Thanksgiving with Bishop Kurt were Bishop Milan Sasik, CM, Bishop of the Eparchy of Mukachevo in Uzhorod, Ukraine; Father Michael Mondik, Pastor of Saint Thomas the Apostle Byzantine Catholic Church, Rahway, NJ; Father Gregory Noga, Pastor of Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church, Trenton, NJ; Father Edward Semko, Pastor of Saint Elias Byzantine Catholic Church, Carteret, NJ; Father Martin Vavrak, Pastor of Saint Michael Parish; and Deacon Charles Laskowski, Saint Thomas the Apostle Byzantine Catholic Church, Rahway, NJ. Father Edward Higgins, Pastor of Holy Ghost Parish in Philadelphia, PA, served as Master of Ceremonies for the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy.

In May 1914, the charter of the parish was approved and signed by Bishop Ortynsky and Father Victor Kovaliczky was appointed Pastor. The first Divine Liturgy was celebrated in the newly decorated hall on Amboy Avenue which was purchased for use as the church and a house was purchased next door for use as the rectory. Building of a new church was authorized in May 1936. Upon completion in May 1937, the new church was blessed by Bishop Basil Takach. The church was refurbished in 2014 to celebrate the 100th Anniversary.

Area clergy, parish families, friends, and city dignitaries joined Saint Michael Parish in a celebratory dinner at The Forge Inn in Woodbridge, NJ. 250 adults and children enjoyed the celebration. Mayor Wilda Diaz of the City of Perth Amboy presented Father Vavrak with a proclamation from the city.

The children of the parish made presentations made to Bishop Kurt, Bishop Milan, and Father Vavrak. Father Vavrak presented Certificates of Appreciation to the Anniversary Committee. We give thanks to the Blessed Trinity through the Most Holy Theotokos and Saint Michael the Archangel for the many blessings bestowed on our parishioners over these 100 years.



Clergy and parishioners enjoy the banquet.



Bishop Kurt, Bishop Milan, Father Martin, and young parishioners.

Now Open to All Ages

Young Adult Marian Pilgrimage

Sponsored by the Orientale Lumen Foundation

The Orientale Lumen Foundation, a "grass roots" non-profit organization that promotes Eastern Christianity, will sponsor a Marian Pilgrimage to Slovakia, Hungary, and Austria on August 7-18, 2015. Byzantine Catholic young adults, age 20-29, from across the US, are invited to participate in this exciting trip to religious sites, churches, and cultural centers of Eastern Europe. In addition to learning more about their "roots," they will meet other Byzantine Catholic young adults in Presov and Bratislava, and experience the vibrant, growing Churches in that region. This pilgrimage is designed to provide those who attended the ByzanTeen Rallies, and are now in their twenties, with an enjoyable and educational way to keep involved in the Byzantine Catholic Church. Similar to the seminary Concert Tours organized by the OL Foundation, this pilgrimage will also promote further direct communication between young American and European Byzantine Catholics.

Father Andrew Deskevich, Protosyncellus of the Archeparchy of Pittsburgh, and frequent visitor to Eastern

Europe, will be the pilgrimage Chaplain. The Tour Director will be Lector Jack Figel, who has been traveling to this area for more than 30 years. He also successfully arranged the Ecumenical Pilgrimage in October 2014 that had private audiences with Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. He is directly arranging events for this pilgrimage.

The pilgrimage will include attending the large outdoor gathering on Zvir Mountain near Litmanova, Slovakia where an apparition of Mary appeared to several Greek Catholics 20-25 years ago. This year is the 25th anniversary of the last apparition. It will also include touring wooden churches of the Carpathian Mountains, visiting the cathedrals of our eparchies, and traveling to the famous Mariapocs icons in Hungary and Vienna, Austria.

Local transportation, accommodations, and some meals are included in the pilgrimage package for only \$1,995 per person, double occupancy. Any who do not register with another person will be assigned a roommate. Air travel

to and from Vienna is not included, but can be arranged through the OL Foundation office.

A registration deposit of \$500 is due by May 1, 2015, with monthly payments due until August 1st. Only a limited number of spaces are available, so register early to insure your place in this wonderful spiritual and cultural experience. Parents and grandparents of young adults might want to consider this pilgrimage as a gift for graduation, or some other purpose, to help younger generations learn about their religious background in Eastern Europe.

Visit the website for more details, to download a flier or detail itinerary, or to register online. Click on the Pilgrimage button at www.olconference.com. Or call 703-691-8862 for more information.

August 7-18.
2015

THE EPARCHY OF PASSAIC IS PARTICIPATING IN THE 8TH ANNUAL WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES IN A PROFOUND WAY. BISHOP KURT BELIEVES THIS WILL BE A LIFE-CHANGING SPIRITUAL EVENT, AND IN ORDER FOR AS MANY AS POSSIBLE TO ATTEND AND BENEFIT FROM THIS MEETING, THE EPARCHY OF PASSAIC IS SPONSORING OUR CHILDREN, TEENS, AND FULL-TIME STUDENTS, AT \$125 PER DAY.

SEPTEMBER 22-27

LOVE IS OUR MISSION THE FAMILY FULLY ALIVE



REGISTER NOW!
REGISTER NOW!
REGISTER NOW!
REGISTER NOW!
REGISTER NOW!

FAMILIES WILL BE REIMBURSED AFTER THEY REGISTER ON THE OFFICIAL WEBSITE FOR THE WORLD MEETING.

BISHOP KURT INVITES ALL THOSE ATTENDING TO JOIN HIM FOR A SPECIAL DINNER. MORE DETAILS WILL BE PROVIDED AFTER YOU REGISTER.

The World Meeting of Families will take place in Philadelphia, PA, from September 22-25, 2015. This gathering will offer an Adult Congress and a Youth Congress for ages 6 to 17. The Adult Congress, for ages 18 and older, will consist of keynote presentations and breakout sessions that address the many ways in which families can strengthen their bonds, especially in the face of significant challenges facing the family globally in the 21st century. The Youth Congress will provide interactive programs designed for young people to play, listen, serve, build and embrace the mission of love in a family.

Held every three years and sponsored by the Holy See's Pontifical Council for the Family, the World Meeting of Families is the world's largest Catholic gathering of families. Each World Meeting of Families has a theme that energizes and enlivens the event while adding great depth of meaning to our understanding of families. The theme of the World Meeting of Families -Philadelphia 2015 is "Love Is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive," emphasizing the impact of the love and life of families on our society.

We are hopeful that many of our families of the Eparchy of Passaic will participate.

1 Please go to <http://www.worldmeeting2015.org> for more information and to register.

2 Once you have registered, please forward a copy of your registration to the Eparchy of Passaic at secretary@dioceseofpassaic.org.

Bishop Kurt is planning a special event that will bring together everyone who will be attending. The Eparchy will also be offering a partial registration reimbursement to families who attend with children.

If you have any questions, please e-mail Father Ed Cimbala at: FREDSTMARY@aol.com



WORLDMEETING2015.ORG



WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES IN PHILADELPHIA

CELEBRATE THE FAMILY

By Ann M. Koshute, MTS

Ann M. Koshute, M.T.S. is Adjunct Instructor in Theology at Immaculata University and Saint Joseph's College of Maine. She obtained her Master of Theological Studies from the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family at the Catholic University of America. She is a writer and speaker, offering parish and retreat presentations on marriage and family issues, the Theology of the Body, and spirituality. Ann and her husband, Keith, are parishioners of Saint Ann Byzantine Catholic Church in Harrisburg, PA.

The world is rapidly changing: new technologies, internet and social media, scientific discoveries that just 10 years ago would have seemed to be science fiction, and human limits are being tested and pressed biologically, socially and culturally. Some of the changes are good and beneficial, but others are proving to be morally and ethically problematic. There is one thing, however, that doesn't change: our need for love and human community. This need comes from deep within us because the God who is Love placed it there. We long for Love because we long for Him.

Pope Saint John Paul II loved *love*! He thought about it, wrote poetry, plays and books about it, and pastored his people (as priest and Pope) with love. He is also rightly called "the Pope of the Family," having spent most of his life devoted to protecting and proclaiming the goodness of Family. He even founded a Pontifical Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family, which bears his name. Why would Saint John Paul II devote so much of his personal study and Pontificate to the Family? Because, as he once wrote, the family is "the natural, primary cell of society." The Family, comprised of a communion of persons, images God (who is a communion of Persons) in their love for each other, and in the ways that this love reaches beyond them to the world.

In 1994, Pope Saint John Paul II declared the Family such an important community of life and faith that it should be studied, nurtured and celebrated in a particular way. That year the first World Meeting of Families (WMOF) was held in Rome, and six more meetings followed since then. These meetings have been held all over the world, except for in America – until now. The 8th

WMOF will be held in Philadelphia on September 22-25, 2015. People from across the globe will gather for conferences, engage in dialogue, and meet each other to celebrate and pray for the Family. Pope Francis will join the gathering on Saturday the 26th, and celebrate the closing Liturgy on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway in Center City on Sunday afternoon.

As Byzantine Catholics, we have a lot to contribute to the discussion of family life. Comparatively speaking, our Church is small. Our parishes are not "mega-churches," but they are tight-knit communities. Our parishes truly are "families," and this is our gift to the Universal Church, and the world. Tight-knit does not, however, mean closed. It is our baptismal call to live the Gospel and invite others to experience the love of Jesus Christ through our Liturgy and spirituality, as well as our generosity and hospitality. The WMOF is an opportunity for us to strengthen our families and our relationship with Christ, and to invite the world to experience the family that is the Byzantine Catholic Church.

Over the remaining months leading up to the WMOF, you will be hearing a lot about the Family: marriage, raising children in the world and in the Faith, discerning one's vocation, and the many social, economic and spiritual challenges facing us today. This information and items for reflection will be found right here in the *ECL*, as well as in your Sunday bulletins, pastors' homilies, and updates on social media. There will also be two special opportunities for us to listen, learn, pray and celebrate as a Church Family. Bishop Kurt invites those attending the WMOF Congress for an evening of food, fellowship and prayer on Wednesday, Sept. 23 in Philadelphia.

Watch these pages, and your parish bulletins, for details. We will also have an Eparchy-wide opportunity to celebrate the Family in a series of 5 regional Days of Recollection. These one-day gatherings will take place in Connecticut, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Virginia, and Florida, and will focus on the themes for the WMOF. The Days will include conferences for adults, activities for children and "Byzanteens," and the opportunity to meet, learn, and pray. The Days of Recollection are free of charge and will include continental breakfast and lunch. The Days are open to families with children, married, dating and engaged couples, widows/widowers, single persons – everyone! We all come from a family – with all the joy and the brokenness that entails – and we all have a stake in the flourishing of the Family.

To stay up-to-date with the latest WMOF news "Like" us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/EparchyPassaicWMOF. Read the *ECL* and watch your bulletins for news, spiritual reflections and event information. Visit the official WMOF website at WorldMeeting2015.org for news about the events surrounding the Meeting, and beautiful reflections on marriage and family life.

In 1981, Pope Saint John Paul II wrote, "Each family finds within itself a summons that cannot be ignored, and that specifies both its dignity and its responsibility: family, become what you are." This summons comes from God, and it is a responsibility and a mission: to love as God loves, to see each other with His eyes, and to thrive and flourish as His icons. Let us together, as a Byzantine Catholic Church – as a Family – take up that summons and become who we are: witnesses to the love and mercy of Jesus every day!

Byzan-Teen Rally: We Are Family!!!

Sponsored by the Eparchy of Passaic

JULY 26-29, 2015

Faith, Fun, Food, Fellowship, and of course Family! This year's Eparchial Byzan-Teen Rally will focus on knowing who we are as people of God, by engaging in personal prayer, loving ourselves, building self-confidence, building good relationships with others, and learning how we fit into God's family. An emphasis will be placed on how the Byzantine expression of Christianity experiences this understanding of family and calls us to focus our everyday lives on Jesus Christ. There will be a lot of fun activities, good food, a field trip, and new friends to be made by all.

The Byzan-Teen Rally will be held at the Carpathian Village in Cresco, PA.

For more information contact: Father Steven Galuschik
frstevengaluschik@gmail.com





Front Row, L to R: Fathers Sal Pignato, Jody Baran, Charles Yastishock, Alex Shuter, John Cigan, Conan Timoney, Peter Tomas, Gary Mensinger, Michael Salnick, Jerome Wolbert, OFM, James Demko, Robert Hospodar, Michael Yurista, Marcel Szabo, Msgr. John Sekellick, Fathers Richard Rohrer, Vasyl Chepelskyy, James Hayer. **Second Row, L to R:** Fathers Mikhaylo Prodanets, Michael Kerestes, John Basarab, Robert Lozinski, CSC, Frank Hanincik, Michael Popson, Vincent Brady, Bishop Kurt, Fathers Steve Galuschik, ohn Zec, Edward Semko, James Carroll, OFM. **Third Row, L to R:** Fathers Eduard Shestak, Robert Evancho, Edward Higgins, James Badeaux, Scott Boghossian, Edward Cimbala, Deacon Robert Shalhoub, Frank Twardzik, SDB, Deacon Daniel Dozier, Fathers Peter Donish, Joseph Bertha, Gregory Noga, Martin Vavrak, Ronald Barusefski, Leonard Martin, SJ, Francis Rella, Gregory Hosler, Peter Hosak, Nicholas Kraynak, and Deacon Lewis Rabayda.

EPARCHIAL PRESBYTERAL DAYS 2015

Marriottsville, MD

By Father James Badeaux

As is their custom, the Priests of the Eparchy of Passaic gathered with their Chief Shepherd, Bishop Kurt, at the Retreat and Conference Center at Bon Secours in Marriottsville, MD, from Monday, April 27, through Thursday, April 30, 2015, for a time of prayer and reflection on parish ministry.

The Retreat and Conference Center at Bon Secours is a ministry of the Sisters of Bon Secours. Since their religious order officially formed in 1824, the Sisters have strived to provide “good help” (bon secours) to those in need, and compassionate care and concern for all people. This was an appropriate setting for the Presbyteral Days gathering of 2015. The grounds of the retreat center were absolutely ablaze with bursts of spring color: redbud trees, dogwoods, forsythia, tulips, and all sorts of flowering trees and plants provided beautiful scenery to sit and contemplate God’s creation or to take a walk through the extensive paths on the grounds.

Presbyteral Days opened with a dinner Monday evening, followed by a Presbyteral Council and Pension Board meeting. The priests were then invited to relax catch up with each other at a social gathering. With parishes scattered along the East Coast, this occasion is one of the few where many priests have a chance to see each other. It was nice for them to share their Paschal joy. While renewing fraternal contacts and reminiscing about days gone by, they shared ideas and programs



Bishop Kurt welcomes the priests



Deacon Robert Shalhoub, Eparchial Finance Officer



Monsignor John Sekellick



Father G. Scott Boghossian



Father Edward Higgins



Archpriest James G. Hayer



Father James Badeaux

that are helping them to reinvigorate their parishes. On Tuesday, the priests were informed and updated about the ongoing business of our Eparchy, with reports from the new Eparchial Finance Officer, Deacon Robert Shalhoub. Msgr. John Sekellick explained policies and procedures of the Eparchial Tribunal and Family Life Office; Father Scott Boghossian spoke about the Respect Life Office. Father Ed Higgins gave a report from the Eparchial Liturgical Commission; Father James Hayer, kept the priests informed about the Eparchial Building Commission. Father James Badeaux explained the new policies and procedures for the *Eastern Catholic Life*; and finally, Father Robert Hospodar spoke about procedures and policies for communicating with the chancery on issues related to Canon Law. Father Ed Cimbala and Ann Koshute, a parishioner of Saint Ann Parish in Harrisburg, PA, spoke to the assembled priests about the upcoming World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia in September and the involvement of the Eparchy and our parishes in that important event. In between conferences, the priests had a schedule of liturgical services. Morning Prayer was celebrated on Tuesday, with Father Vincent Brady as the celebrant and Father Michael Salnick as the Cantor. On Thursday morning, Matins was celebrated with Father Ron Hatton as Celebrant and Father Michael Salnick as Cantor.

One of the highlights of Presbyteral Days 2015 was the celebration of the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy by



Father Robert Hospodar



Bert Reimann,
Employee Benefits Services



Ann Dicks,
Employee Benefits Services



Father Edward Cimbala

Bishop Kurt on Wednesday at Saint Gregory of Nyssa Byzantine Catholic Church in Beltsville, MD, where Father Michael Kerestes is Pastor. Concelebrating with Bishop Kurt were Father Joseph Bertha, Father Peter Donish, who were celebrating special ordination anniversaries, and Father Steven Galuschik, our most recently ordained priest. Quite a few parishioners were on hand to welcome the Bishop and the clergy and to participate in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, and also to offer their gracious hospitality before and after the Liturgy. The clergy were very grateful for the warm welcome they received from the Pastor and faithful of Saint Gregory Parish. In his homily, Bishop Kurt especially encouraged his priests to preach on the Epistles and really encouraged everyone to read the Acts of the Apostles. Afterwards, Bishop Kurt also thanked the parish cantors, who led the clergy with prayerful singing, and he thanked Father Kerestes and the parishioners for their hospitality.

Guest speaker Deacon Daniel Dozier gave a presentation about vi-

brant parishes Wednesday afternoon and explained that they are places to encounter the Living Christ. Vibrant parishes, he explained, exhibit these six characteristics: Word, Worship, Service, Unity, Missionary Spirit, and Stewardship. There were also “break out” sessions among the clergy for each topic. Each table of priests was asked to explain how these characteristics are being made manifest in their parishes. He also talked about a new catechetical program in the Eparchy called “Advent of Salvation,” which will seek to incorporate our beautiful Eastern Christian perspective on the Scriptures.

Presbyteral Days 2015 was a time of bonding between the Bishop and presbyters; renewing old friendships; reflecting on pastoral insights; but most importantly reigniting the transforming power of Word of God, especially the Epistles, in the hearts of all present and in the parishes they serve. The clergy owe thanks also to Father Gregory Noga, who organized this year’s Presbyteral Days. **ECL**



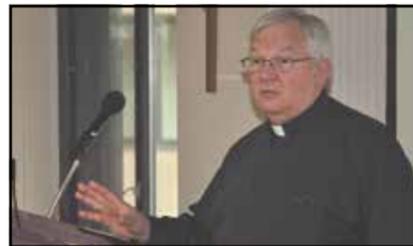
Ann Koshute,
World Meeting of Families



Father John Cigan



Deacon Daniel Dozier,
Guest speaker



Father Gregory Noga,
Presbyteral Days 2015 Facilitator





SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

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

SIMON THE ROCK: THE MAKING OF A SAINT

This month, our Church celebrates the memory of the Prime Apostles, Peter and Paul. This month and next, we will explore what the New Testament tells us about how these men grew into the saints we honor.

Simon, son of Jona (Matthew 16:17) worked as a fisherman in the lakeside town of Bethsaida in Galilee (John 1:44), together with his brother Andrew. The future Apostles, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were his business partners (Luke 5:10) and, jointly or alone, Peter owned his boat (Luke 5:3). We hear about Peter's mother-in-law (Mark 1:29-32) but never about his wife or children, so he was probably widowed very early. The impression we get is of a comfortable, self-sufficient working man.

Peter's path to discipleship was gradual. He may have been among the followers of John the Baptist when Andrew first introduced him to Jesus (John 1:40-42). Apparently, he traveled back to Galilee with Jesus; he witnessed the first miracle at Cana (John 2:1-12). In Galilee, the fishermen returned to their normal life. It was there that Jesus borrowed Peter's boat to preach from and rewarded Peter with a miraculous catch of fish after a long and

fruitless night's work. This miracle frightened Peter, who begged Jesus, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man" (Luke 5:1-9). This is a critical moment: Peter has finally realized that associating with Jesus would change his life radically and he resisted. Is his claim to be a sinner an expression of humility or an excuse? In any case, Jesus persisted and Peter's life did change. Peter, Andrew, James and John left everything to follow Jesus and become "fishers of men" (Luke 5:10-12).

Peter's personality emerges very clearly. He is impetuous, even brash. He is almost always the first to speak and is repeatedly humbled for what he says. It is Peter who speaks up to answer Jesus' question "Who do you say I am" by asserting, "You are the Christ, the son of the living God" (Matthew 16:15-16) but in the same breath he reveals how little he still understands when he objects to Jesus' prediction of His passion and is rebuked by Jesus as a "satan" (Matthew 16:21-23). Peter alone objects to having his feet washed at the Last Supper (John 13:1-9). Moments later he swears he will never abandon Jesus but then denies Him three times before that Thursday night is over (Mark 14:27-31 and 66-72). In Gethsemane, he

brandishes a sword, earning yet another rebuke from our Lord (John 18:10-11).

Throughout the Gospels, Peter is repeatedly singled out as the leader of the Twelve. With James and John, he witnesses Jesus' transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-9) and His agony in Gethsemane (Luke 22:39-46). Jesus renames him Cephas ("rock" in Aramaic; "Petros" in Greek) and announces that "upon this rock I will build my Church" (Matthew 16:18). Peter is likewise given precedence in the events following Jesus' Resurrection (Mark 16:7; Luke 24:12 and 34; John 21:7-19). In John 20:1-10 it is noteworthy how the "other" disciple defers to Peter.

Peter was clearly the leader of the original Jerusalem Church. He arranged Judas' replacement (Acts 1:15-26), was the first to preach at Pentecost (Acts 2:14-41) and dominates the first twelve chapters of the book of Acts. He helped found the Church in Samaria (Acts 8:14-25), ministered in Galilee (Acts 10) and eventually moved to Antioch (Galatians 2:11), leaving James as head of the Jerusalem Church (Acts 15:13). He spent his last years in Rome, where Saint Mark recorded his reminiscences in the first written Gospel (see 1 Peter 5:13). Peter's two Epis-

cles also come from his last days in Rome (1 Peter 5:13; 2 Peter 1:14).

Unlike the way politicians and celebrities manage their public personas, the New Testament is refreshingly honest about the strengths and the weaknesses of Jesus' closest disciples. This honesty serves as encouragement for us. Peter's greatest strengths were sometimes also the source of his temptations and failures. What is most edifying is Peter's willingness to repent, to pick up and to move on in his journey with the Lord. Peter accepts all the Lord's rebukes; he never walks away in a huff with his pride wounded. Peter and Judas both betray Jesus on Holy Thursday. The difference is that Peter can shed tears of repentance (Matthew 26:75) and can allow Jesus to humble him (John 21:15-22), while Judas falls victim to despair (Matthew 27:3-10).

Simon the Rock's long and twisted road toward sainthood was not easy but it is exemplary for us all. Our strengths and weaknesses, our life experiences, our family and our friendships are the arenas in which we will grow in virtue or fall into temptation. Our real, daily life is where we can expect to find God's call to us and the grace to respond.

ECL



We serve a great God who hears and answers prayer. We know that there are four different kinds of prayer: adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication. Any kind of prayer is communication with God. Saint Gregory of Nyssa says, "prayer is a familiar conversation with God." Sometimes prayer doesn't require words at all, as Saint John of Damascus says, "prayer is a lifting up of the heart and mind to God."

There is an excitement and dynamism to our spiritual lives that is lost if we neglect prayer, or waver in

our faith in God's promises to hear and answer prayer. Should we ask for things from God in prayer (the prayer of petition)? Isn't it better to just accept things as they are and not expect God to do anything for us? Isn't this more spiritual and more humble?

If so, then why would Our Lord, in the Gospels, urge us to pray, and promise to hear and answer prayer? Granted, we must not ask for things that would harm us spiritually, or that would allow us to indulge our lusts or evil desires. Nevertheless, we need to get excited about the

fact that our God, the God of the Bible, the God who reveals Himself in Christ, is a God who wants us to ask for things from Him and wants to hear and answer our prayers!

It's important to look at God's Word in the Holy Bible and see what He says about prayer: "Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened" (Matthew 7:7-9). "Whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith" (Matthew 21:22). "Whatever

you ask in my name I will do it... If you ask anything in my name I will do it" (John 14:13,14). And there are many more promises found in God's Word just like this. So instead of complaining and lamenting about our problems, let's turn to God in prayer.

But to get results we must pray with faith! "Whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you receive it, and you will" (Mark 11:24). When the Apostles failed to cure a boy who was demonized, they asked Jesus why that had failed. Our Lord

Continued on opposite page.

GUEST COLUMNIST

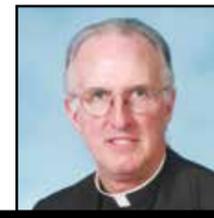
Father G. Scott Boghossian



THE POWER OF PRAYER

CATECHETICAL REFLECTIONS

Father Robert F. Slesinski, Ph.D.



OMG: A SHOUT IN THE STREET?

Installment 4 of 6

The lament of the poet T. S. Eliot that we have “knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word” is one well-taken. In the past there was certainly a greater reverence shown to the Name of God. Indeed, in numerous languages we see the Name of God pronounced when taking leave of someone. The French say “adieu,” the Spanish “adios,” the Rusyns and other Slavs “S Bohom”—“Go with God” or, more simply, “Godspeed,” even if this term has a somewhat archaic ring to it. The point of the matter is that the Name of God properly speaking is an essential accompaniment to all language, hence the need for it to be duly revered. But, alas, in our time many have taken leave of the Name of God; it no longer resonates in many a heart. It no longer instills awe in us.

More pervasive than this specific fault is the general loss of childlike wonder on the part of so many in our society. In this regard, it behooves us to recall the words of the Lord to his disciples: “I assure you, unless you change and become like little children, you will not enter the kingdom of God” (Mt 18:3). The loss of a sense of wonder is aptly surmised in one hackneyed expression of “not being able to see the forest for the trees.” Plato and Aristotle, the grandees, as it were, of ancient Greek philosophy both, on the other hand, stressed how all true philosophy not only begins with the act of wonder, but on principle is through

and through marked by wonder—wonder before the actuality of being. To the mind of the ancients and later the medieval Schoolmen, wonder—and not doubt as in modern philosophy—is the mark of the philosopher. “All men by nature desire to know” writes Aristotle in the first sentence of his treatise *Metaphysics*, and the knowledge that is desired is truly meta-physical, i.e., “beyond all physical appearances” to the very causes or source of all being itself.

Great poets and playwrights as well as philosophers have all appreciated this truth. Who, for instance, cannot be struck by the words of the soothsayer in *Anthony and Cleopatra* (Act 1, Scene 2) of William Shakespeare (1564–1616), who seeks to underscore the importance of a more reflective mode of human discourse:

In nature's infinite book of secrecy

A little I can read.

There is surely no pretension in these humble words, but they are an expression of true human yearning: we seek to penetrate the secrets of human being beyond the immediacy of the merely empirical—the blunt facts of humdrum, everyday life, as it were.

For their part, two English romantic poets proffer their own thoughts on the primacy of wonderment in grasping the true reality behind the real we encounter in life. Beautifully, John Keats (1795–1821) in

his poem “On the Grasshopper and Cricket” (1816) directly writes: “The Poetry of earth is never dead,” thus expressing his marvel before the beauty of nature, a theme he returns to in his poem “Endymion” (1818):

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever. Its loveliness increases; it will never

Pass into nothingness; but still will keep

A bower quiet for us, and a sleep

Full of sweet dreams...

In a similar vein, his compatriot, William Wordsworth (1770–1850) pens similar verses. In his “Lines, Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey” of July 13, 1798, we read the following moving words:

While with an eye made quiet by the power

Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,

We see into the life of things.

He equally waxes eloquent when he bemoans the intrusion, as it were, of the Industrial Revolution on simpler, sylvan living, overtaking its beauty with the new “ways of the world.” For instance, in his ode “Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood” (1807), we read the following opening regretful words:

There was a time when meadow, grove and stream,

The earth, and every common sight,

To me did seem

Apparelled in celestial light,

The Glory and the freshness of a dream.

It is not now as it hath been of yore;--

Turn wheresoe'er I may,

By night or day,

The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

Another poem from the same collection is similarly melancholic:

The world is too much with us; late and soon,

Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;

Little we see in Nature that is ours;

We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!

This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon,

The winds that will be howling at all hours,

And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;

For this, for everything, we are out of tune;

It moves us not... ECL

Continued from opposite page.

replied, “because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to



you.” Saint Gregory the Wonderworker (213-268) by prayer moved a mountain that prevented the construction of a Church! Saint Gertrude the Great said, “Confidence (faith) obtains all things.”

If we don't receive the answer right away, the Scriptures teach us to persevere in prayer. Don't give up. Saint Monica, the mother of Saint Augustine, prayed for the conversion of her wayward son (who was living in sin with his girlfriend and had a child out of wedlock) for seventeen years before she saw him surrender his life to Christ. Seventeen years! Most of us would have given up after a few months. If we want to see miracles we must never give up!

Remember the Parable of the Widow and the Unrighteous Judge? See Luke 18:1-8. Jesus told this parable of the widow who would not give up asking the judge for help, and received what she asked because of her relentless persistence, to make one point: that we “ought always to pray and not lose heart.” Keep praying!

All of us face many challenges and difficulties in our own personal lives. Our family members are struggling. Our friends have difficult trials. Illness, lack of financial resources, children who have left the Church, and so many other things. Yet we often forget to go to God in prayer, asking with faith, and not giving up.

Commit to prayer! Prayer is not something that we should do only when we find ourselves in a desperate situation. We need to make time every day to pray. Set aside some time every day to talk to God, to express your love for Him and your commitment to do His will. Stop and think about all the blessings He has given you, and thank Him for His gifts. Think back to those prayers that God has already answered and thank Him for answering. Then ask God for all that you need. Ask in faith, believing, and don't give up.

“When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles” (Ps. 34:17).



UNDERSTANDING ICONS

Father Joseph Bertha, Ph.D.

THE HOLY FAMILY ICON

The oldest depictions of the Holy Family date back to the early Christian centuries, and depict the Holy Family in different poses in the Flight to Egypt. The Coptic Christians painted icons of this journey showing the Virgin Mother on horseback, while Saint Joseph with Jesus tenderly poised on his shoulders lead the procession. Within the last 50 years, the Holy Family icon showing the three Holy figures in a family pose at home has become very popular.

In our icon of the Holy Family several indirect references highlight family life. The entire background of the scene is an elaborate system of architecture which depicts stylized church architecture: columns, entrance ways, roofs, even a parted red curtain leading to the holy of holies are shown.

phasizes the role of the Jewish High Priest, that of atonement of sins. This is derived from the careful instruction from God to Moses in Exodus 29 for the color choice of the priestly robes. The Lord specifies that they be made of purplish blue, scarlet red or white.

The deep blue color of the sky illustrates the beginning of a new day, the day of salvation. The ground on which Saint Joseph stands is green grass, the color of the meadow receiving the gentle rain of the Eternal Godhead, Jesus being born by the Holy Theotokos. Psalm 72:6 typical of Old Testament prophecies depicts the Messiah as coming down to earth as gentle showers on the newly mown meadow.

The entire background of the Holy Family icon portrays a Church, the

place, by portraying the three figures in front of church architecture. Therefore we have visualized for us in this image eternity, with intermingled with references to temporality. This only adds to the beauty of the icon of the Holy Family, and highlights the supernatural nature of family life as lived here on the face of the earth.

Saint Joseph

In icons he is shown as an gray-haired, elderly, bearded man, wearing a blue himation, over a light blue chiton, with a gold clavus over his right shoulder. His two arms and hands crossed over his upper chest form a gesture of meekness and humility. Haloed he stands with a slightly bowed head gazing at the enthroned Virgin Mary, while the Christ Child stands on her right leg.

Saint Joseph, who does not utter one word in Sacred Scripture, is described as a righteous man in our liturgical commemorations. According to the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, a righteous man is one who is meek and humble and follows the will of the Lord. He exemplifies these virtues, as he learns in the three dreams he has, like his namesake in Genesis, by seeking to protect the chastity of the Virgin Mary.

He follows the instructions given by the angel during these nightly commands, this is meekness, to listen and obey to the word of God. Saint Joseph exemplifies this two great virtue needed by fathers, he determines, listens to, and follows the will of God.

As Jesus becomes of the age of wisdom as depicted here in the icon, Joseph inclines his head in respect and honor, not only to the Messiah, but his Chaste Spouse, the Virgin Mary.

His clothing is penetrated with the blue color of the waters of God's mercies flowing in every direction, seemingly without beginning or end. On his right shoulder Joseph is designated as teacher by the clavus, the ribbon inset with gold highlights. Joseph, through his obedience to Words of God the Father, himself serves as a fatherly example for his son Jesus to emulate.

The Holy Virgin

The Holy Theotokos is shown enthroned, her slipper clad feet rest on a foot stool. Her posture imitates that of the Byzantine Empress, for-

mally posed. She is portrayed architecturally, her womb has served as the Byzantine poet calls her the throne of Mercy. i.e., Jesus, to enter the world.

Interestingly, the earliest surviving depictions of the Holy Virgin show her enthroned and pointing or indicating her Son with her arm. This prototypical arrangement is called the Hodegetria (Shower of the Way) type of icon. It is thought to originate from the Visitation of the Magi to the New Born Christ Child. The Virgin demurely shows them (and by extension, the viewer) the Way to live our lives.

The Holy Mother wears a maphorion (her veil) in the priestly color of atonement, scarlet. Through her intercession she expiates sin and leads us to Christ her son.

Our Lord Emmanuel

Our Lord is shown in Holy Family icons as a youth in body, but his facial expressions and demeanor are that of an adult and the pre-existent Godhead.

He wears a himation radiating with gold highlights, which indicate the manifold mercies of God the Father.

He stands on the right leg of his mother fully frontally engaged with encountering the world to bring salvation, while simultaneously humbly obedient to his parents submitting to their authority.

Making myself present to the Holy family

This wonderful icon portrays the life of the Christian family. The Catholic Catechism teaches us: The Christian family is a communion of persons, a sign and image of the communion of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit (CC 2205).

We all come from a family. How can I make myself present to the Holy Family, how can I model my family on that holy group? We can follow the example of Saint Joseph who as the Byzantine poets write: proclaims the wonders, gives glory and worships God. By following the fourth commandment, Honoring our mother and father, we pray for, support, visit, offer gratitude and worship God we are obedient to the will of the Father. We together with the Holy Family continually entreat Christ God to save our souls. **ECL**



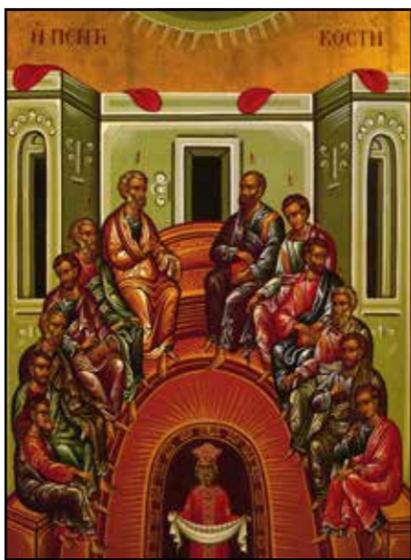
Icon of the Holy Family

Stretched over the background roofs is a crimson red cloth with parallel gold embroidery stripes. Typically, this cloth indicates that the scene is situated indoors, in this instance it also proclaims by its similarity to the tallit, the Jewish prayer shawl, that this is a house of prayer.

Furthermore, the scarlet color of the shawl with its embroidery em-

domestic church of the family. In the Catholic Catechism we read: (2204 CC) The Christian family constitutes a specific revelation and realization of ecclesial communion, and for this reason it can should be called a domestic church.

Nazareth is the location where the Holy Family is depicted, but the icon transcends temporal time and



Icon of Pentecost

May the Holy Spirit come upon you and the Power of the Most High overshadow you.” This rather short but compelling hymn is sometimes sung for a bishop, priest or deacon prior to his homily in our Church. It recalls the stirring event of Pentecost which is solemnly celebrated ten days after our Lord’s Ascension and fifty days following His Holy Resurrection. It is recorded in chapter two of the Acts of the Apostles and is the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise recorded by Saint John in Chapter 16 of his Gospel.

Our Church teaches that the Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, a mystery so profound, it is beyond human comprehension. How can One God exist in Three Divine Persons? Many who are not Christians are truly puzzled about our claim that although God is One, He is also Three – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – revealed at the baptism of our Lord by John in the Jordan River. Jesus commissions the apostles as His earthly ministry ends to “...make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the

Name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

Saint Patrick, the Enlightener of Ireland, used the simple example of a shamrock (three-leaf clover) to attempt an explanation of the Triune God: just as the three leaves of the clover exist on one single stem, so the Three Persons of the Trinity are united as One by nature but Three as separate Persons. Saint John tells us in his Gospel (15:26) that the Spirit “...proceeds from the Father...” This simple declaration through the ages has stirred much discussion and such great enmity resulting in part for the tragic schism between the Eastern and Western Churches in 1054 down to our present time.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church offers this explanation: “... the Eastern tradition expresses the Father’s character as first origin of the Spirit. By confessing the Spirit as He “who proceeds from the Father,” it affirms that he comes from the Father through the Son. The Western tradition expresses first the consubstantial communion between Father and Son, by saying that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son (filioque). It says this, “legitimately and with good reason” (citing the Council of Florence) for the eternal order of the divine persons in their consubstantial communion implies that the Father, as “the principle without principle,” is the first origin of the Spirit, but

also that as Father of the only Son, he is, with the Son, the single principle from which the Holy Spirit proceeds” (No. 248).

All the same, the Trinitarian Mystery defies human explanation and exacts our faith in the knowledge of God as One in nature, Three in Person. A hymn from our Vespers for Pentecost exclaims: “...How wonderful and awesome is this great mystery! Therefore, O Lord and Creator of all, we cry out: Glory to You!” The Holy Spirit down through the centuries has been called the “forgotten God” because of what seems to be a greater, more prominent, role set for Jesus, the Son as Redeemer and the Father as Creator.

Some Christian sects in recent times in an effort to appear politically correct when baptizing use the formula “I baptize you in the Name of the Creator, of the Redeemer and of the Sanctifier” – clearly invalidating terms since these identify the work done by the Father in creating, the Son in redeeming the fallen human race, and sanctification wrought by the Spirit. In truth, all Three Persons co-create, redeem and sanctify, expressing the perfect unity among the Three Persons.

We can surely count very personally gratifying among the teachings of our Catholic Faith the mystery of the very divine indwelling of the

Holy Spirit assured us by Christ at the Mystical Supper: “...I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever ... the Spirit of Truth, Whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be with you” (John 14:16).

The Holy Spirit is the product, as it were, of the love between the Father and the Son, and this love is shared with us through grace which raises us to that divine Family and makes us partakers in the very nature of God. In theological terms, this is called *Theosis* or *divinization*. The evangelist John tells us how God comes to illumine everyone born into the world so that all who receive His Son, who believe in His Name, He gives power to become children of God” (Cf. John 1:12).

Another Vesper hymn tells us, “The comforting Spirit has now been poured out on all flesh; for beginning with the rank of the apostles, He extended grace through the communion of believers. He confirmed the truth of His presence by the distribution of fiery tongues to the disciples for the praise and glory of God. With the spiritual light that enlightens our hearts, and strengthened in the faith by the Holy Spirit, let us beseech Him to save our souls.”—Aposticha, Pentecost Sunday Vespers **ECL**

SEASONAL REFLECTIONS

Monsignor John. T. Sekellick, JCL



THE HOLY SPIRIT



HOLY DORMITION FRIARY

Contact: Father Carmen at holydormition@gmail.com or 570-788-1212 x406

GUARDIAN ANGEL ICON RETREAT Icon Retreat with Marylyn Barone

Having studied under Phil Zimmerman, Marylyn has written icons since 1997. She gives workshops in parishes from Ohio to New Jersey. She has written icons for many parishes and individuals, also teaching individuals and groups of all ages and abilities.

COST: \$250

JULY 23-26, 2015 THURSDAY—SUNDAY

Each Student will write a 10”x12” icon of a Guardian Angel on a gesso covered board, using a prepared prototype and 23k gold-leaf gilding, learning techniques for painting details. All supplies included.



Housing and other meals available at added charge: room & board \$50/night, shared bath



FAITH AND COMMUNITY ISSUES

By Father Carmen Scuderi, OFM, Ed.D., P.C.C.

UNDERSTANDING SUICIDE: STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

There is a barrier of major proportion in the study of suicide, namely, the subjects of the study are no longer in this world! The question, then, is begged, how can any conclusion regarding the emotional, sociological, psychological, and spiritual aspects be accurate when the individuals most expert in answering these issues are no longer available for comment? According to Comer (2011) Research scientists have devised two methodologies in attempting to answer these questions, albeit with only partial success in each of them.

Comer identifies the methodologies as retrospective analysis and the study of suicide survivors. In his text, Comer (2011) quotes Wetzell and Murphy (2005) in defining retrospective analysis as "a kind of psychological autopsy in which clinicians and researchers piece together data from the suicide victim's past (Comer, 2011, p. 233). The subjects of the research are the people who had interaction on the long term basis with the suicide victim, family, friends, relations, psychotherapists, family physicians and or psychiatrists whose recollections of the victim provide meaningful data on the suicidal circumstances. If there are any notes left behind by the victim they may shed some light providing some circumstantial evidence or modus for the act. Comer, citing Sudak and colleagues (2008), cautions however that such data often suffer credibility deficits due to lack of availability or reliability of the sources researched. Again, citing Sudak and Stolberg and colleagues (2002) as well as Maris (2001), Comer reveals that approximately 50% of all suicidal victims have never participated in psychotherapeutic modalities and less than one-third leave suicide notes.

Responding to the challenges set by the aforesaid limitations, researchers have recourse to a second strategy, namely studying suicide survivors. Comer cites Maris (2001) in the estimation that for every fatal attempt at suicide, 8 to 20 survive. There is reason for speculation that the

survivors own qualities which significantly differ from the victims.

One speculation Comer (2011) considers is the desire of the survivor to ultimately live and not die. Such desire notwithstanding, research analysts find the study of survivors useful and through it, add to the body of knowledge regarding suicide and those who commit suicide.

The Statistics

According to Comer (2011), suicide does not happen in isolation; there is a larger setting socially speaking within which the act occurs. There is much statistical evidence that researchers have gathered that shed light on the social contexts in which suicides occur. Comer cites the studies of Sadok and Sadok (2007) that the rates of suicide vary countrywide: Russia, Hungary, Germany, Austria, Finland, Denmark, China and Japan are cited as possessing very high rates (>20 annually/100,000 persons) as opposed to Egypt, Mexico, Greece and Spain with rates of fewer than 5/100,000 persons; England cited as having a rate of 9/100,000. The placement of the U.S. and Canada fall in between both having a rate of 12/100,000 persons (Comer, 2011 citing Sadok & Sadok 2007).

One possible factor influencing the suicide stats with regard to differences on a national level appears to be religious affiliation and beliefs. Comer, again citing Sadok and Sadok (2007) that countries that boast a large Catholic, Jewish or Muslim population, concomitantly tend toward lower suicide rates than other countries without these influences. Comer cites Stack and Kposowa (2008) that the strict prohibitions around the issue of suicide due to the long-standing strict traditions these Religions of the Book maintain may be a *fors d'jure* discouraging people from suicide; yet Comer is quick to add the fact of exception to the rule citing, Austria as having a large Roman Catholic Population yet conversely owning one of the highest suicide rates worldwide.

One response to the apparent conundrum is the trend research seems to point namely, that it is not so much religious affiliation but the devotion on the part of the individual that offsets the suicidal trends, particular Church or belief notwithstanding. According to Comer (2011) the appearance of the stat evidence is that people who are highly devoted to their particular religious affiliation are less likely to commit suicide (Comer, 2011 citing Stack & Kposowa, 2008) as are people who hold life in great esteem and reverence (Comer, 2011 citing Lee, 1985).

Comer cites the studies of Humphrey (2006) in stating that the rates of suicide between men and women differ in that three times as many women as men attempt suicide although the success rate at suicide is more than three times greater than that of women. Comer cites the study of Levi and colleagues (2003) stating that worldwide, 19 out of every 100,000 men successfully commit suicide yearly while the rate for women

is 4/100,000. Stack and Wasserman (2009) are cited by Comer presenting as a possible reason for the differences in suicide rate as the differing methodologies used by men and women in the act of committing suicide.

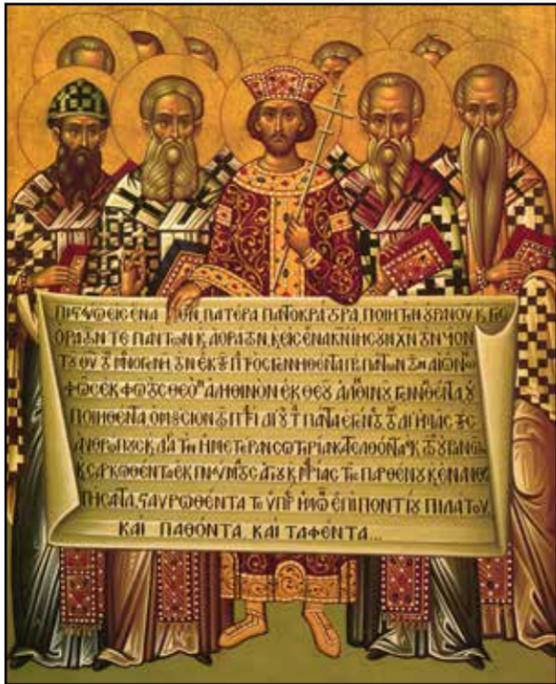
Men attempting suicide tend to more violent methods, e.g. shooting, stabbing or hanging; conversely women are less violent, drug overdose; guns, found at the scenes of suicides, have a male person as the victim nearly two-thirds of the time as compared to females which account for 40% of suicides committed by women using guns (Comer 2011, citing Maris 2001). Comer cites from a study by Cutright and colleagues (2007) that a correlation exists between suicide and social support and marital status. In one such study it was found that approximately 50% of the individuals committing suicide had no close extra-familial social support system in place. Another study discovered that even fewer had close familial relationships among parents and siblings and relatives (Comer, 2011). Research has discovered that persons who have undergone a divorce in their relationship have higher suicide rates than married or people living together (Comer 2011 citing Stolberg and Colleagues 2002).

According to Walker and colleagues (2008) as well as Oquendo and colleagues (2005) as cited by Comer (2011), the suicide rate varies according to race. They state that overall, the rate of suicide among the Caucasian Americans is 12/100,000; twice as high as found among African Americans, Hispanic Americans and Asian Americans. Native Americans form a sizable exception in that the rate of suicide among the Native American population is overall one and a half times the national average (Hill, 2009 as cited by Comer, 2011). The extreme poverty found among Native American Populations serves as partial explanation, factors as alcohol, parental example being lived out in the children and the readily availability of firearms and ordinance for the firearms may also play a role (Goldston et al. 2008 as cited by Comer, 2011). The situation of the Native American in Canada reveals similar results (Matsumoto & Juang, 2008 as cited by Comer, 2011).

Comer cites Leach and Leong (2008) as stating that some of the stats on suicide have been questioned with some results stating that actual rates of suicide among the African American population may be 15 percent higher and that according to Phillips and Ruth (1993) as cited by Comer (2011) women are 6 percent higher than generally reported. The rationale behind these discrepancies is that the method of suicide utilized by people of these groupings can be mistaken as causes for accidental death, e.g., poisoning, drug overdose, single-car crashes and pedestrian accidents.

In light of all these parameters, the question is raised, what triggers a reaction such as Suicide? The answer to this is the subject of our next installment in this series. **ECL**





Icon of the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council

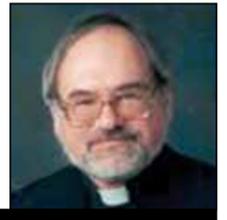
Recent surveys have shown that the number of atheists and agnostics has nearly doubled, while the number of Christians has dropped drastically. This is all around us, and probably most of us know a friend or relative who has lost faith. This is important also for our faith in resurrection, for if there is no God, there is certainly no resurrection. I am reminded of the verse from the Psalms: “The fool has said in his heart: ‘There is no God above’ (Psalm 13:1). A Jesuit poet from the nineteenth century made a powerful statement about God’s presence in creation and echoed the foolishness of not believing: *The world is charged with the grandeur of God. It will flame out, like shining from shook foil; it gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil crushed. Why do men then now not reck His rod?* [“reck His rod” means “recognize His scepter”]

The Acts of the Apostles tells us, “The God who made the world and all that is in it, the Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in sanctuaries made by human hands, nor is He served by human hands because He needs anything. Rather it is He who gives to everyone life and breath and everything. He made from one the whole human race to dwell on the entire surface of the earth, and He fixed the ordered seasons and the boundaries of their regions, so that people might seek God, even perhaps grope for him and find him, though indeed He is not far from any one of us. For ‘In him we live and move and have our being,’ as even some of your poets have said, ‘For we too are His offspring’ (Acts 17:24-28).”

As Christians, however, our faith is in God, and

THE BYZANTINE LITURGY

By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD



WHO IS GOD?

at every Liturgy we begin our profession of faith with the words, “I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth and of all things, visible and invisible.” The teachers of the Church tried to say who God is. Saint Gregory the Theologian writes, “As far as we can tell, “He who is” and “God” are the special names of His divine essence, particularly “He who is,” because this is the name that He revealed to Moses...and also the one that is most appropriate...Here we are inquiring into a nature whose being is absolute and not into a being that is bound up with something else. In its proper sense, being is peculiar to God and belongs entirely to him. It is not limited to before and after, because in Him there is no past or future” (*On the Son, Theological Oration 4* (30).18). The sixth-century Syrian writer who called himself Dionysius gave, in my opinion, the best description of God, “Nor can any words come up to the inexpressible Good, this One, this Source of all unity, this supra-existent Being, Mind beyond mind, word beyond speech, it is gathered up by no discourse, by no intuition, by no name. It is and it is as no other being is. Cause of all existence, and therefore itself transcending existence, it alone could give an authoritative account of what it really is” (*The Divine Names*, 1,1).

Resurrection has no meaning or basis of faith unless there is God. Many theologians have offered rational arguments for why there is God, but not to force minds to believe, but for the support of the faithful, to show that faith in God is reasonable and sound. Generally, people are not convinced by argumentation, and, at any rate, God, in whom we are interested, is God who revealed Himself and His plan of salvation to us. Since there is existence, it is reasonable to presuppose a “principle of existence,” but for our purposes, some abstract, unconscious “principle” is not sufficient, God is a dynamic, creating, conscious Creator of all, who loves us and reveals Himself to us. Today, the attack upon the concept of God’s existence continues, it is nothing new. Most prominent and popular today are Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins, the late Christo-

pher Hitchens, and Daniel Dennett. These four are sometimes called “the Four Horsemen” of the New Atheist Movement. They often label believers as fools or children. They champion scientific knowledge and hold that faith is incompatible with it. Actually, many famous scientists were believers. Werner von Heisenberg, who formulated Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle, which some atheists hold disproves the existence of God, was himself a pious Lutheran. Gregor Mendel, who pioneered the field of genetics, was a Catholic monk. The “Big Bang” theory for the beginning of the universe, was first formulated by a Catholic priest, Msgr. Georges Lemaitre. One of the most prominent Christian scientists, Francis Collins, head of the National Institutes of Health, said, “most importantly to my Christian faith is the literal and historical resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, which is the absolute cornerstone of what I believe.” Saint John Damascene observed, “God is ineffable and incomprehensible ... but He has not left us in absolute ignorance...He has implanted the knowledge of His existence in everyone by nature [“The world is charged with the grandeur of God ...”] (*On the Orthodox Faith* 1.1).

God is truly unity. This is why it is so crucial to confess the oneness of God. God is not “dispersed” in space and time, but is the one ground from which all being exists, explaining our hope for “being in God.” Jesus taught: “I pray not only for them (the disciples), but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as You, Father, are in me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, that the world may believe that You sent me. And I have given them the glory You gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and You in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that You sent me, and that You loved them even as You loved me” (John 17:20-23). This helps also to explain the nature of our consciousness, the possibility of deification, and the hope of resurrection. We find our center in the one God, who is closer to us than we are to ourselves. **ECL**



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SPIRITUAL REFLECTIONS

Deacon Lewis Rabayda

PEACEFULLY RESISTING THE WORLD

To truly take on this pleasure of following Christ, the Tradition of the Church and Scripture tell us that we have been chosen by God to be outside of the normal workings of the world. This is not a concept that we have not heard before, for it permeates the whole body of Scripture. However, it is indeed both a concept and ideology to which it is very difficult for us to adhere. We are surrounded by the world, the world that has been crafted and influenced by the devil and his demons. Why such stark language? How have the culture and society we live in been demonized? Everything that is bad, destructive, deviant, and especially that which is slyly deceptive is from “the father of lies” (John 8:44). For God can do nothing contrary to His nature, which is absolute love. But God has placed us in this world, and requires us to engage it and to withstand its evils and blasphemy.

But when do these occasions for withstanding the temptations of the world occur? Constantly. Every time we go to work, school, or other public places, turn on our television, every time we turn on the radio, visit webpages, watch YouTube videos, browse Facebook pages, even watch the major

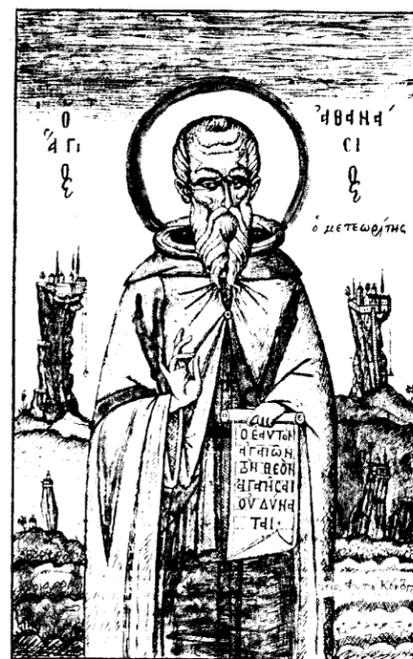
news networks, we are persuaded to accept what we are shown and experience as normal. We are persuaded to accept that the thoughts we encounter, the ideas we are offered, and the “morality” that is being supported is not only not bad, but is indeed good and is to be celebrated. This is the slyness of Lucifer, this is how we as a culture lose our sense of morality and devotion to God’s commands: very slowly, over decades. This deterioration happens until there remains little reason for us to have faith in God, because our faith, has then shifted to believing in and accepting the vulgarity, vice, and sin of the world as normal and good.

So what are we to do, how are we to act against this deformation of God’s plan that is called the world? It seems that Jesus gave us His example of how to interact with the world while not being swept up in its chaos. Yes, there was the incident in the Temple when Jesus overturned the tables of the money changers in a rage, but He was protecting the one sanctuary people had, the Temple, or for us, the Church. But when Jesus confronted the Devil during His temptation, He recited Scripture to Satan and gave him the words of God to refute his lies. In

other examples, Jesus confronts malice and vice with simple acts of non-acceptance. He does this so well, that those being confronted and bystanders are forced to take notice at Jesus’ response to the evil of the world. Jesus acted with confidence and authority over these situations, because He alone was able to properly judge the situation and apply the solution for the benefit of the souls involved.

By living in the world and being followers of Christ, we have this great opportunity to resist its temptations and to respond to its deformation of reality with a confident, non-violent act of peace. It is important for us to not accept the wrong happening all around us, but at the same time, we must not despair. The example Jesus gave us is our encouragement to fight against these evils; sometimes with swords, sometimes with kind gestures, and other times with our simple example of acting contrary to the evil. When we do this, when we fight actively or passively, we experience the joy that Christ gave us. We experience peace in ourselves because we know that we are acting according to God’s plan. By taking on this fight against the world, we are practicing six of the spiritual works of mercy: instruct the ignorant,

council the doubtful, admonish the sinner, bear wrongs patiently, forgive offenses willingly, and comfort the afflicted. By participating in this fight against the world, we can by the Grace of God heal those who are influenced by the evil in this world. They may not experience it immediately, but when we continue to show them the Face of Christ, they will see the pain in their actions, and God willing, they will turn their hearts away from evil and towards the true God. **ECL**



UPCOMING EVENTS FOR JUNE

Eparchial and Parish Events

Glory to Jesus Christ!
Glory to Him forever!

- 6 Induction of Catechists into the Order of Saints Cyril and Methodius
Saint Michael the Archangel Cathedral Chapel, Woodland Park, NJ, 11 a.m.
- 7 100th Anniversary Celebration
Saint Joseph Byzantine Catholic Church, New Brunswick, NJ, 9:30 a.m.
- 14 Ordination of Subdeacon Thomas Shubeck to the Diaconate
Saint Thomas Byzantine Catholic Church, Rahway, NJ, 3 p.m.
- 20 Induction of Catechists into the Order of Saints Cyril and Methodius
Epiphany of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church Annandale, VA, 11 a.m.
- 21 Ordination of Subdeacon Peter Turko to the Diaconate
Epiphany of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church Annandale, VA, 10:30 a.m.
- 24 Nativity of the Holy Forerunner and Baptist, John
Chancery closed
- 29 Holy, Glorious, Illustrious, and Prime Apostles, Peter and Paul
*Chancery closed * Holy Day of Obligation*

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Special Announcement: 2015 Women’s Retreat in the Poconos has been cancelled. Please look for information about next year’s retreat.