



# EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

Official Publication of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic

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## MARCH FOR LIFE 2019

### March For Life Events of the Eparchy of Passaic

By Christian N. Braunlich, Annandale, VA

As a high school senior, Jerry Wutkowski considered himself pro-life, but it wasn't until the nuns at his now-closed Catholic High School took him to Washington for the annual March for Life that he became truly engaged in the issue.

That was ten years ago. Wutkowski has been to every March for Life since then, and his appreciation for the meaning of the event has grown. He notes that the message has expanded beyond abortion to include the sanctity of all life, including end of life issues.

"It was transformative," says Wutkowski, a parishioner at Saint Elias Byzantine Catholic Church in Carteret, NJ. "Being part of hundreds of thousands of marchers ... being part of something that overwhelming just made a tremendous difference in my life."

"Being pro-life includes all stages of life," he points out. "We march and pray in Washington so that all stages of life may be protected. If we follow that the sacredness of life begins from conception to natural death, we must continue to be a voice for all."



Bishop Mark Bartchak and Bishop Kurt



Young people march towards the Supreme Court in Washington, DC.

"It's easy to look at the March as a campaign rally sort of thing, but it's not," he says. "There are dozens of opportunities to powerfully engage in prayer ... even on the streets as we walk, where so many young people will stop and pray."

Those quiet prayerful reflections start the evening before the March for Life, at the Byzantine Catholic Order of Compline, which begins an All-Night Vigil for Life in the evocative Crypt Church in the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. There, hundreds of faithful—including a large

number of priests, seminarians and other religious from both the Eastern and Western Churches—spend time in quiet contemplation for the next day's March.

Bishop Kurt, the main celebrant, was joined this year by Bishop Milan, Bishop of Parma, and Bishop Mark Bartchak, Bishop of Altoona-Johnstown, PA, who was also the homilist. Past homilists have included Ukrainian, Maronite, and Roman Catholic bishops from across the United States.

With details administered by Father John

Basarab, pastor of Epiphany of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church in Annandale, responses were led by the Epiphany Slava Men's Chorus and the Epiphany Cantors, joined by clergy from throughout the Eparchy of Passaic.

For many, the Vigil concluded with Divine Liturgy the next morning at Epiphany Parish, giving thanks for the gift of life. This year, Bishop Kurt also blessed Epiphany's newly-completed compass point icons of the pivotal mysteries of our salvation. This was followed by a brunch provided by Epiphany pa-

rishioners, where attendees watched early reports on EWTN, before heading off to join the 46<sup>th</sup> annual March.

Future dates for the March for Life all occur on a Friday, making the date an ideal opportunity to visit Washington. Epiphany invites all to take advantage of its hospitality, and be a part of this spiritual opportunity.

"This isn't just a March," said Wutkowski. "It's a pilgrimage. Coming to this will inspire you to become more like Christ. It will change your life."

*more photos on page 2*

## AT RALLY CATHOLIC YOUTH, YOUNG ADULTS FROM NEAR AND FAR STAND UP FOR LIFE

By Mark Zimmermann Catholic News Service

Discovering who had traveled the farthest to be at the Archdiocese of Washington's annual Youth Rally before its Mass for Life quickly became apparent by scanning the crowd of young people near the stage at the Capital One Arena.

Among the estimated 18,000 people in the arena was Monica Pazniewski, waving a life-sized inflatable yellow plastic kangaroo with green boxing gloves. She had journeyed with a group of about 120 young

adults from Sydney, Australia, who stopped in Washington to join the March for Life Jan. 18 before continuing on to World Youth Day in Panama.

The 23-year-old Catholic, who is studying physical therapy at her college Down Under, said she had come to the Youth Rally and Mass for Life preceding the march "because I believe every human life has dignity and value, and I want to stand up for everyone."

Next to her sat a fellow Aussie, Sarah Alimangohan, who had small temporary tattoos of the Australian flag on both sides of her face. The young woman, also 23, recently earned her degree in fashion and textiles. "I want to stand up for the voiceless," and for "the truth that there's beauty in our lives," she said.

Mitchell Gallagher, 20, who does catering work in the Sydney area, said: "It's important for people to come together and support unborn children and

also mothers ... who sometimes feel they don't have a choice, who feel alone and isolated."

He added, "One day we young people will be in leadership roles. It's important to show a strong stance of where we are, that we're supporting life." That might mean opposing laws or cultural trends, he said. "We can change it."

Joining the young adults was Sydney Archbishop Anthony Fisher. "I have known about the March



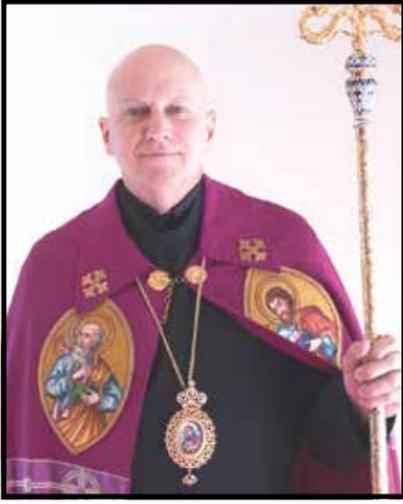
Catholic youth cheer in the Capital One Arena

for Life for decades," he told the Catholic Standard, Washington's archdiocesan newspaper. "This is my first time. I'm excited to be here. ... This is just ideal to make a pilgrimage for life on the way to World Youth Day. We'll get double bang to the buck."

The archbishop noted, "For us to see so many people standing up for life is inspiring. Who knows, maybe someday we might do the same in Australia."

The pro-life cause helped inspire his own vocation when he was young, he

*continued on page 7*



# I LIFT UP MY EYES...

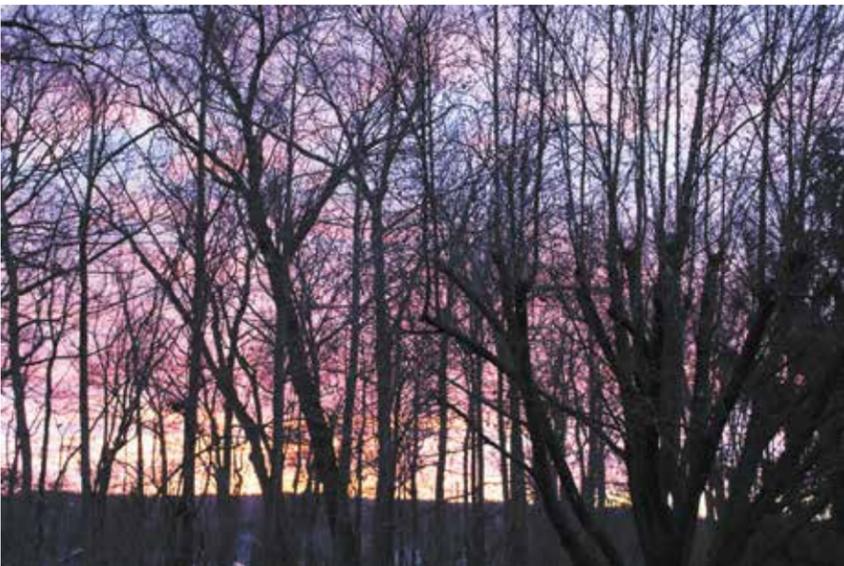
*Pastoral Reflections of Bishop Kurt*



“HE MAKES THE CLOUDS HIS CHARIOTS. HE WALKS ON THE WINGS OF THE WIND.”

**H**e makes the clouds His chariots. He walks on the wings of the wind.

It is very common for people nowadays to say that they can pray just as well in nature as they can in church. As a matter of fact, people have said that for a long time—there is nothing new about it. I would say, it is difficult not to pray in nature. Whether one is walking in the awesome splendor of a forest, or one sees clouds in a blue sky, or thunder clouds with lightning, or a river in a valley, we are naturally filled with a sense of awe and wonder at the one who made these things. Close to the city, it is difficult to see very many stars. If you ever see the night sky in the desert, you will see something you cannot imagine. Even if you have seen the desert sky at night, it is impossible to remember how beautiful it is. When you see it again, it leaves you speechless—the jewels in the sky are too numerous to count. With telescopes we learn that there are even



more stars than there are grains of sand on the sea shore, each one as large and powerful as our own sun. Some of the light that we see in the night sky is years old, or centuries old, or even thousands of years old!

Our own salvation history begins in the great desert of the Near East when God took our father Abraham out into the night and made a covenant with him. God promised Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky! That was quite a promise to make to an old man with an old wife and no children at all. It was in the desert night that Abraham experienced his most intimate and dread meetings with the Creator of the stars. God placed Abraham in a deep sleep so that He could meet him in a manner beyond the capacity of our flesh and senses.

The psalms speak incessantly about the beauty of nature, presenting the great natural wonders as God's calling card. For example, “Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who have pleasure in them. Full of honor and majesty is His work.” The psalms of David are such an amazingly vast collection of spiritual wisdom, covering every beautiful or good or evil thing that comes in life, it makes one wonder, where

did King David's close friendship with God come from? In his first appearance in the scriptures, when he is anointed by Samuel, we learn nothing about him except that he keeps the sheep and that the rest of his family doesn't consider him worth mentioning. The next time we meet him is when he goes to the military camp to take food and supplies to his older brothers. By this time, he is already so fanatical in his devotion to God and to God's holy people, that he embarrasses his brothers with his mouth. Where did he get this single-minded devotion to God?

There is a clue in a psalm that is in the Greek Septuagint, in which David describes himself sitting on the hillside at night and singing songs to God with a harp of his own making. As a matter of fact, a shepherd must stay awake most of the night, just as parents of newborn babies do. It is during the night that the predators will come to steal from the flock. David himself tells us he killed lions and bears to protect his sheep. If he was awake at night, on a hillside in the wilderness, he had plenty of time to look at the stars and think about God. So, he made his own harp, and wrote

his own songs, and sang them to God on his lonely watch. He goes on to say, “Who will carry my songs to God? The Lord Himself heard them,” and chose him from among his larger stronger brothers to be the king and shepherd of God's flock.

King David spent a good deal more of his time in the outdoors after he left his father's



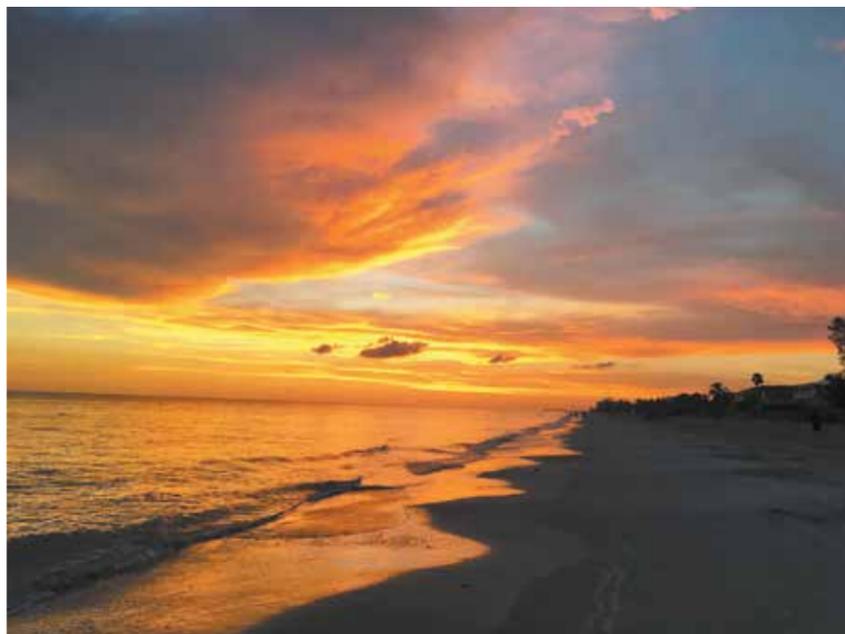
flock. He was outdoors most of the time that he fled from Saul with his gang of followers, and then after he became king, he camped outdoors as a soldier who stayed in the field with his men. Throughout his hymns, there are constant references to David's experience of the Divine in nature.

Sometimes the psalms talk about creation as if it is alive. “Let the heavens rejoice and let the earth be glad. Let the sea roar and all that is in it. Let the fields be jubilant and everything that is in them. Let all the trees of the forest sing for joy.” If you ask an astronomer whether the heavens can feel joy, he would reply that it's mostly vacuum with some violent gases here and there. Likewise, the ocean is a lot of water with random waves on it. But the psalmist sees the intelligence of God in all of His handiwork, and therefore sees something beyond the physical. What a delightful idea, that the heavens, the oceans, and the fields are celebrating their creator. And even more delightful for the trees to sing a chorus.

One of the psalms that we sing often says, “Their voice resounds throughout the world; their message reaches to the ends of the earth.” We sing that psalm as the Prokeimenon whenever we have a feast of an Apostle. In our Liturgy, the verse is supposed to describe the teaching of the Apostles. Indeed, their teaching has spread throughout the whole world. However, if you look up the psalm in your Bible, you will find it's a psalm about the divine beauty

of nature. The voice that goes to the ends of the world is day and night. “Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard, yet their voice goes out throughout the world, and their message reaches to the ends of the earth.” According to this psalm, the glory of God is proclaimed as the celestial lights shine on the earth in their daily cycles. “The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.” (By the way, to understand this ancient poetry, you need to know that our ancestors believed the stars, etc., were attached to some kind of faraway spherical surface, which they called the “firmament.” Since the stars don't seem to move in relation to each other, it's easy to see why they thought this.) This same psalm about nature has a colorful description of the sun. It describes the sun as a newly-married man who comes enthusiastically bursting out of the bridal chamber on the morning after the wedding night. He runs clear across the sky in his excitement like an athlete.

This same psalm is the basis for one of the most popular compositions of Haydn. In 1791-1792 and again in 1794-1795, Franz Josef Haydn visited England where he was wildly successful. In fact, he composed twelve symphonies for his trips to England, including the “Surprise Symphony,” the “Miracle Symphony,” the “Clock Symphony,” and the “Military Symphony.” While in England he was exposed to the great oratorios of George Frederick Handel, including “Messiah.” He decided to write his own oratorios when he returned to Austria. Early in his career he was at the mercy of employers and patrons, but by now he had the leisure to write what he wanted, and he wanted to make more important contributions to world art and the spiritual heritage of the human race. In fact, he spent a whole year on his first oratorio, “The Creation.” Because Handel had written in English, Haydn chose an English libretto based on Genesis, the Psalms, and John Milton, the great English poet. His colleague Baron Gottfried von Swieten prepared the libretto in both German and English. The text was carefully constructed so that the rhythm matched in the two languages, and Haydn's music could be performed in either English or German.



Haydn's version of the Psalm 19(18) is this:

*The heavens are telling the glory of God,  
the wonder of his work displays the firmament.*

*To-day that is coming, speaks it the day,  
the night that is gone, to following night.*

*The heavens are telling the glory of God,  
the wonder of his work displays the firmament.*

*In all the lands resounds the word,  
never unperceived, ever understood.*

*The heavens are telling the glory of God,  
the wonder of his work displays the firmament.*

I encourage you to listen to a recording of this beautiful anthem on YouTube. There are many fine recordings of it on the internet you can hear for free. As you can see, sometimes the English doesn't quite make sense because both Haydn and his librettist spoke German, but the music is so beautiful, it doesn't seem to matter. It certainly wouldn't have bothered Haydn, who is considered one of the most good-natured of composers. He kept his composure when (according to stories) his wife used his manuscripts for hair curlers. Mendelssohn commented that even Haydn's sacred music was "scandalously gleeful." But Haydn said, "Since God has given me a cheerful heart, He will forgive me for serving Him cheerfully." The "Miserere" is the name sometimes given to the great penitential Psalm 51(50). Haydn's version of the "Miserere" is so happy he had to defend himself. He said that he prayed before composing and prayed that "an infinite God would surely have mercy on His finite creature, and pardon a handful of dust for being dust." He was so happy after praying that he wrote his "Miserere" in allegro. (Allegro is Italian for happy.)

Haydn was actually the inventor of the symphony, the string quartet, and other

classical forms that great geniuses borrowed after him, geniuses like Beethoven and Mozart and down to our day. Haydn took no credit for his creations, but said, "Not from me—from there, above, comes everything." When he needed to write and had no inspiration, he would take up his rosary and begin to pray. He said that before he was through the first decade he was so full of ideas that he couldn't write them all down. Another time he said, "Whenever I think of God I can only conceive of Him as a Being infinitely great and infinitely good. This last quality of the divine nature inspires me with such confidence and joy that I could have written even a Miserere in tempo allegro."

Getting back to praying to God in nature, the psalm that we sing at vespers Psalm 104(103) is the greatest of the nature psalms. It describes the sun, the moon, the stars, the skies, the clouds, and any number of animals, and us too, all as part of God's great work of art. From the sun to the badger, each creature has a place in God's panoramic painting, but it is a moving painting, what we now call kinetic art, and all the motion is coordinated in a cosmic pleasing dance.

One of the psalms ponders our own place in the great creation. "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have set in place, what is man that You are mindful of him? And the son of man that You care for him? Yet You have made him a little less than the angels, and have crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of Your hands, You have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen and all the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the path of the seas. O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth!" When King David expresses wonder at our place in the universe, notice how he also implies that we have custody of nature as well. Three

thousand years before the environmental movement started, King David was telling us that our great power over nature is also a great responsibility. We have power over the natural world, but that doesn't mean it is our disposable property—it all belongs to someone else.

In 1969, a book was published in France called *Papillon*, the autobiography of a French criminal sentenced to Devil's Island, and his attempts to escape. He says he ran across the famous writings of a French artist who spent a night in jail, and thought to himself, "I can do better than that." He bought some school notebooks and began writing about his own 14 years of imprisonment. He took his handwritten notebooks to a publisher, and it was the #1 bestseller in France for 21 weeks. I remember reading the book when it first appeared in the United States while I was in high school, and I reread it many years later as a pastor. There is not a lot of religion or spirituality in this book about the criminal life and prison life by a man who defies all authority. However, as I said at the beginning of my column, "I would say it is difficult not to

pray in nature." When we are alone in the presence of God's great works, anyone is deeply moved. During one of Papillon's escapes, he and a friend fashion flotation rafts using large net sacks of coconuts. He studies the currents over a period of time, and they finally launch themselves out onto the open sea with no sail or motor. Their rafts are soon separated. As he is rising up and down on the swells, seeing great distances at the top of the waves and hemmed in at the troughs, alone and powerless under the Caribbean sky and at the mercy of the ocean currents, Papillon writes an evocative passage about the presence of God and his own soul. He says it is impossible not to feel the power and the presence of our Creator on the slowly drifting raft.

Praying in nature, and praying in church are two different kinds of prayer. We pray in church because the Church is the Body of Christ. We pray in nature because sometimes we need to be reminded just how great God is.

+Kurt Burnette



## +SISTER MARIA LUBOV PETROKA, OSBM, REPOSES IN THE LORD



During the night of December 26, 2018, Sister Maria Lubov Petroka, OSBM, passed from this world to eternal life. Her contemplative Sisters surrounded

her with prayer during her final four days and nights in the hospital in Middletown, NY.

Sister Lubov was born on September 27, 1924, in Palmerton, PA. On September 21, 1943, she entered the Sisters of the Order of Saint Basil the Great in Uniontown, PA, Our Lady of Perpetual Help Province, where she was professed in 1951. She served for many years in various teaching assignments in parish schools in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. On September 8, 1967, she entered Sacred Heart Monastery in Astoria, NY, the contemplative branch of the Sisters of the Order of Saint Basil the Great. Between 1972 and 1975, at the request of General Superior Mother Emelia Prokopik, OSBM, Sister Lubov spent time helping the contemplative nuns in Albano, Italy, and then writing the Monastery Directory for the Astoria contemplative nuns while at the Generalate in Rome. The majority of her contemplative life was spent in Middletown, NY, where the contemplative community relocated in 1992.

Sister Lubov loved music and would sing at any opportunity. She loved the Divine Office, and even when ill, wanted to be present to pray it. She had a deep reverence for the Holy Eucharist, as well as a great devotion to her guardian angel, the Mother of God, and all the saints, especially Saint Michael the Archangel. She had a love and reverence for priests, and faithfully prayed for them. At communal prayer in the evening, she always prayed by name for the deceased Sisters from Uniontown. She had a special love for the holy souls in purgatory, and in the "Heroic Act of Charity," offered the merits of all her prayers, works, and suffering for them.

Sister Lubov struggled with many health issues in the past few years, including a number of hospitalizations and then months at a time in rehab. Yet she never complained, but always accepted the suffering as God's will and offered it for souls. On December 26, Sister Lubov's fervent and frequent prayer was answered as she went "home" to the God she so loved and had faithfully

served during her 75 years of monastic life. She died as she had lived, seeking to pray always. Even as she struggled to breathe on Christmas Day, her whispered prayer was, "My God, my God! I love You."

Funeral Services were held at Saint Andrew Ukrainian Catholic Church in Campbell Hall, NY. Father Yaroslav Kostyk celebrated Parastas on Sunday, December 30, at 4:00 PM. On Monday, December 31, a 10:00 AM Funeral Divine Liturgy and Burial was offered and officiated by Bishop Paul (Chomnycky), OSBM, Bishop of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Stamford, CT, and Father Yaroslav Kostyk.

*Eternal Memory!*

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# PEOPLE YOU KNOW

## IN BEAVER MEADOWS...

*Caroling at Weatherwood Nursing Home*

The singing group from Saints Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church in Beaver Meadows, PA, sang Christmas carols to the residents of Weatherwood Nursing Home in Weatherly, PA. The group did this as a project to help bring the residents some Christmas cheer. After singing carols, both in English and Slavonic, they passed out cookies and hot chocolate to the residents. Father James Demko is the pastor of Saints Peter and Paul Parish.



## SLAVIC DINNERS

### At Saint Mary Parish Hillsborough, NJ

1900 Brooks Blvd, Hillsborough, NJ, 08844

On the second Wednesday of every month, Saint Mary Parish in Hillsborough, NJ, hosts a Slavic Dinner in Saint Mary's Parish Center, featuring holupki, kielbasa and sauerkraut, pirohi, halushki, plus a monthly special entree, soft drinks, and dessert! Tickets are \$15 and the next one will be held on February 13, from 4-7 PM. Take-out is available. Tickets are available at the door.

**Tickets \$15**

**Next Dinner February 13 4PM-7PM**

## IN TOMS RIVER...

*Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church Celebrates Saint Nicholas Day*

Toms Rivers, NJ – On Sunday, December 2, 2018, Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church celebrated Saint Nicholas Day at the Clarion Hotel in Toms River, NJ. Over one hundred people were in attendance. Everyone enjoyed a delicious meal. There was great music from DJ Mike and dancing. Saint Nicholas came to visit all the children and delivered a gift to each of them. Saint Nicholas' helpers, Mary and Cal, helped to distribute the gifts. There were even some gifts for the adults. A great afternoon was had by all. Father Frank Rella is the pastor at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church. Pan'i Tammy and the three Rella children were also there to help us celebrate.



## IN NESQUEHONING...

*Annual Saint Nicholas Festival Held*

The annual Saint Nicholas Festival was held at Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church Hall in Nesquehoning, PA, on Saturday, December 8, 2018. Ethnic foods supplied by the kitchen, basket raffles, baked goods, and grab bags were sold. Parishioner, Ed Kusko, played ethnic music on his accordion, throughout the day. Saint Nicholas made his annual visit and greeted the attendees. Our annual festival brings our community, as well as surrounding communities, together for a festive social event! Gini Steigerwalt, a parishioner, displayed a Nativity scene using Cabbage Patch dolls. She designed and dressed them in appropriate clothing, for both young and old to view. It was a day filled with fun, joy and fellowship.



## NEW BYZANTINE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY FORMING IN GREATER CHARLOTTE, NC, AREA

A Byzantine Catholic community is forming at Saint Philip Neri Church, 292 Munn Rd., Fort Mill, SC. Please join us as we grow our community and celebrate the Byzantine Divine Liturgy. Father Steven Galuschik of All Saints Byzantine Catholic Church in North Fort Myers, FL along with bi-ritual Deacon Ron Volek are now offering weekly Divine Liturgy in the area. This community will serve the northern part of South Carolina as well as Charlotte, NC. Please share this information with your friends and family – especially those who have moved “down South.” We will be celebrating the Byzantine Divine Liturgy on Saturdays at 4:00 PM. If you would like to participate in any way, or have questions please contact Ron Somich at 440.477.6389 or ron.somich@gmail.com. Please check the website for news, upcoming gatherings, and service times at <https://carolinabyzantine.com/>

**February 2, 9, 16, 23**

# AROUND THE EPARCHY



## IN RAHWAY...

*The Knitters and Crocheters of Saint Thomas the Apostle Church are spreading love - one stitch at a time.*

Several years ago, the Altar-Rosary Society of Saint Thomas the Apostle Church in Rahway, NJ, decided that they would knit and crochet blankets for the shut-ins of the parish. Since then, the group has evolved and expanded to create necessary items, not only for parishioners, but for the community. Though members have come and gone since the start, faith, fellowship, and the fabric of a charitable heart giving back to community have remained strong. Just this past year, 24 prayer shawls were handmade and delivered to the Sharing Network; these shawls are given to family members of organ donors. The families have been overwhelmed with gratitude for the gift, which often would be in their beloved's favorite color. This shows how divine providence is ever present within the group and weaves together the projects with the recipients, since colors are never requested or predetermined, rather prayerfully chosen to be made into a necessary item. A parishioner of Saint Thomas was the recipient of a kidney donation through the Sharing Network. The love and support shown to his wife during that trying time inspired our relationship with them, giving to family members who sometimes have to

make a difficult decision. It is a small loving token of appreciation which embraces them in the memory of their loved ones. This act of kindness also inspired a parishioner's wife (along with a few of her closest friends) to participate in a Sk raising awareness for the Sharing Network.

The group has also made nearly 200 hats and blankets for premature babies, scarves for the homeless, hats for women undergoing chemo, lap blankets and quilts for homeless shelters, foundations, and hospitals.

The Knitters and Crocheters of Saint Thomas are always looking for new members. Whether you are a seasoned pro at the craft or have never picked up knitting needles or a crochet hook, you will be warmly welcomed and blessed with the grace of knowing you are doing the Lord's work.

The group meets the second Wednesday of each month in the church library at 6:00 PM. Prayerfully consider joining – you are guaranteed to enjoy the good conversation, laughter, and friendship!



## IN JERSEY CITY...

*Bishop Baptizes Priest's First Son*

On September 25, 2018, Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church in Jersey City, NJ, along with Father Gregory and Pan'i Mariia Lozinsky, welcomed its newest parishioner, Zakhar Lozinsky. On October 21, 2018, they were blessed to have Bishop Kurt celebrate the Baptismal Liturgy. Bishop Kurt, along with Father Marcel Szabo, parish administrator, other priests, family, friends, and parishioners gathered together in the church hall for a celebratory dinner, hosted by Father Gregory and Pan'i Mariia. Welcome, Zakhar! *Mnohaja i blahaja l'ita!*



# “SUPERB APPROACH TO NATIVITY”

by Roger Embley

‘Twas a most celebratory time in the Trenton and Roebling, NJ, churches instilled by the festive, spiritual, and holiday events approaching the Nativity of our Lord. Our parishes are blessed with Father Yuriy Oros as the Administrator and his adorable family, Pan’i Kateryna and daughter, Margarita enriching our parish life with their presence.



Father Yuriy, Saint Nicholas, Pan’i Kateryna, and daughter Margarita

Envisioning the fast oncoming Christmas season, Father Yuriy assembled some of the proven and capable volunteers of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary to give thought to a Saint Nicholas celebration. The resulting contemplation yielded a three-tiered event, planned to be enacted on Sunday, December 2. Initially, our spiritual needs would be addressed by our participation in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy by Father Yuriy with Cantor Andrew Skitko leading the congregation in all hymns, responses and prayers. This celebration was not only available to parishioners of Assumption, but also for those of Saint Nicholas in Roebling and Our Lady of Perpetual Help of Levittown, PA. with their friends, and the local community. Having referred to a three-phase plan and having since been spiritually nourished, the next phase was to take place in the parish hall where a splendid holiday dinner buffet was laid out quite a varied menu: such as Black Forest ham & egg strata, French toast, pork roll slices with caramelized onions, and mixed greens salad, accompanied by breads, rolls, and other trimmings all most appealing to the eyes and teasing to the palate. Additionally, savoring this buffet was Father Taras Lonchyna and Pan’i Yaroslava of Saint Josaphat Ukrainian Catholic Church, a neighboring parish, and whose visit was most welcomed. Now that we’ve enriched ourselves with such delicious sustenance, and with several renditions of “O Kto, Kto” one then heard the sound of jingling bells becoming more pronounced with both the vocal and squirming reactions by the children as Saint Nicholas came among them in his

saintly garb as a bishop. Yes, adorned with a golden crown and glittering gold vestments while walking with a staff crowned with bells in majestic fashion, he was immediately surrounded by the gleeful children with various enlightened expressions on their faces. Father Saint Nicholas lost no time in presenting gifts to the children, which was most joyful and satisfying to all to witness in this idyllic setting. Then, Saint Nicholas bid all farewell and departed, leaving us all for the better!

We’ve reached our final tier. We reassembled in the church, where we were all impressed by its Byzantine splendor and décor. In this beautiful setting, The Theoria Chamber Choir, directed by parish Music Director and Cantor, Drew Skitko, offered an *a cappella* concert of Slavic Christmas music. Andrew introduced the members of the choir and they presented a full program of artistically rendered songs with Slavonic and English lyrics. The audience wasn’t shy



Women and children make Christmas tree ornaments together.



Saint Nicholas visits with the children



The Theoria Chamber Choir perform in the nave.

in showing their appreciation with much applause during the program. The quality and accomplishment of the choir as amplified in the church was unmatched. This was truly evident with the final applause and standing ovation given to these artists.

Our Holy Father, Saint Nicholas, found the church and the parish named in his honor in Roebling, NJ, with a memorable visit on December 9. Here, too, the parish committee planned a grand homemade ethnic dinner and invite those from Saint Mary Parish and the community. It was served in the parish hall after a Divine Liturgy celebrated by Father Yuriy. Shortly after the tasty desserts, one could sense the anticipation and restlessness of the children building for the appearance of good Saint Nicholas, who arrived in his golden crown and vestments, with the jingling of bells, announcing his arrival. The children were ecstatic, and the gifting began, bringing great joy and happiness to all.

after the Divine Liturgy to have all family, friends, and guests gather in the “Spirit of the Nativity” to create their own various Christmas decorations. It proved to be fun-filled and very productive for all participating.

On Christmas Eve at Saint Mary Parish, Father Yuriy arranged with Cantor Skitko to have his *a cappella* choral group participate in the Divine Liturgy. The parishioners entered a most beautifully decorated church with the Icon of the Nativity of Christ at one end of the Iconostasis and the artistically crafted creche of olive wood at the other, both highlighted by candles, flowers, trees, and colorful decorations. As carols were sung in English and Slavonic, the altar servers provided lit candles to the parishioners as the lights began to dim. Great Compline was now celebrated and, upon reaching the singing of “S’nam Boh,” the candles were then extinguished and the church becomes brilliantly lit. Father



Parishioners enjoy a meal together.

While still observing the “Spirit of the Season,” on December 15, Saint Nicholas parish in Roebling remained on course and further planned to hold a “Pre-Holiday Creativity for Kids Party” in the parish hall. This event provided the opportunity

Yuriy continued the liturgical celebration, with the cantor and choir, together with the people, singing the responses. Upon the conclusion of this inspirational and heartwarming Liturgy, Father Yuriy proceeded to receive and bless all with blessed oil and proclaimed “Christ is Born,” with the response of “Glorify Him.”



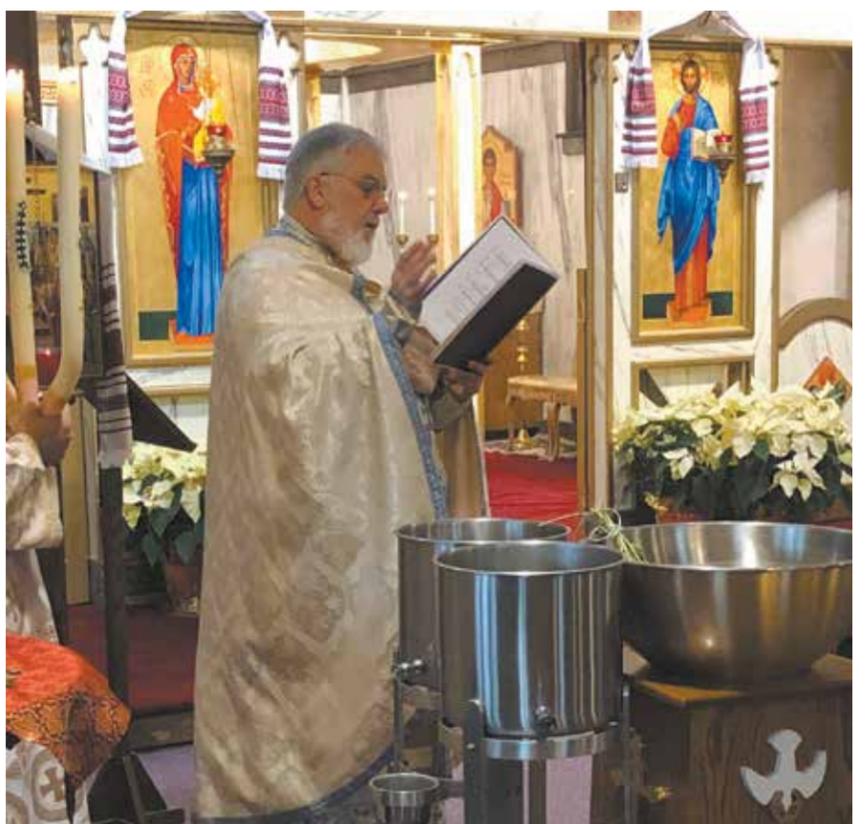
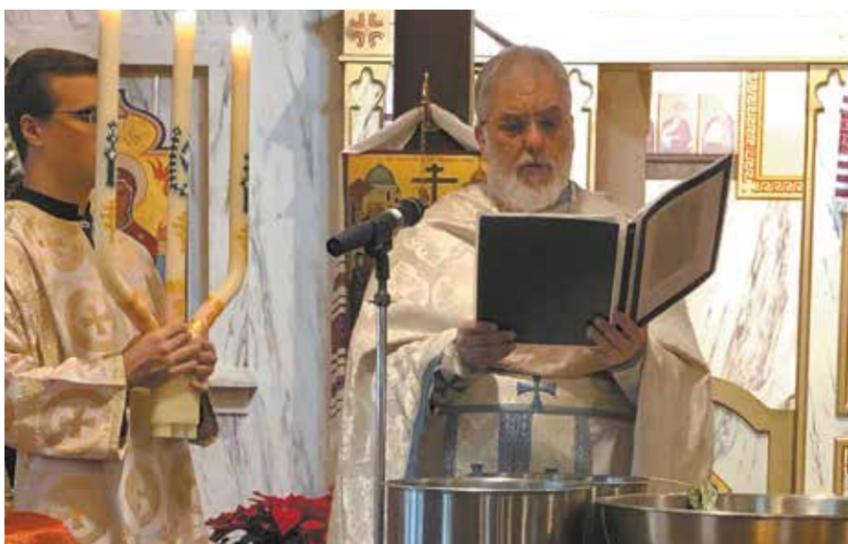
Parish mothers and children await their special visitor.



## THEOPHANY BLESSING OF THE NISSEQUOGUE RIVER ON LONG ISLAND

Resurrection Byzantine Catholic Church in Smithtown, Long Island, NY, celebrated Theophany with a traditional Blessing of the Waters performed at the Nissequogue River that runs through the town and into the estuary of Long Island Sound. Thanks to the generosity of the Smithtown Fire Department, supporters of

the parish for years, access to the river was granted at the department's picnic grounds. There was a good turn-out, excellent weather, and a delicious lunch following. They're hoping it becomes an annual event. Resurrection Parish is served by Father Tyler Strand.



## AT RALLY CATHOLIC YOUTH, YOUNG ADULTS FROM NEAR AND FAR STAND UP FOR LIFE

*Continued from page 1*

said. "When I look at them and their idealism, it reminds me of the spark of my faith. It helps renew my ideals. ... It gives me hope the next generation will do great things."

Also, near the stage were students and teachers from Saint Mary's School in the Washington suburb of Rockville, Maryland.

"I've always been very passionate about life because I was born prematurely," said Olivia Crosby, who teaches religion and science to sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders at Saint Mary's. "This is an opportunity to be here with my students. They get to see they're not alone in their Catholic faith and in their desire to affirm life. ... I hope it fills their hearts with joy and courage and a desire to be a witness for Christ."

At the Capital One Arena, the Washington Capitals' red 2018 Stanley Cup banner honoring the championship hockey team hung from the rafters. Many of the students participating at the rally wore colorful matching hats or sweat jackets.

In one section, 60 students from the Academy of the Holy Cross in Kensington,

Maryland, wore matching purple knit caps displaying the words "AHC FOR LIFE," and many wore pullovers or sweatpants also displaying their school's colors.

"We all here believe in the dignity and value of every life, and we support and advocate for those who don't have a voice yet," said Cecilia Rogers, a senior at Holy Cross.

Asked why she had come to the rally, Jennifer Olcott, also a Holy Cross senior, said: "For me, it's to give courage to mothers who are pregnant and contemplating whether to have a baby. When they see all the people who come to march, they'll know they're not alone, and there will be people for them."

The speakers at the rally included Obianuju Ekeocha, the founder and president of Culture of Life Africa, an initiative that promotes African values of sanctity of life, the beauty of marriage, the blessings of motherhood and the dignity of family life.

"We are here to end the human rights crisis that is abortion," she told the crowd, noting other historical assaults against humanity, like slavery, the Holocaust and the

Rwandan genocide. "Laws come and go, but universal truths remain," she said. "Human life begins at conception, without exception."

Ekeocha encouraged the young people to stand up for life at their schools, in their families and with their friends. Noting that she studied microbiology in Nigeria, she said scientific facts about the development of the unborn child show that being "pro-life is pro-science," which was the theme of the 2018 March for Life.

The message board ringing the arena's middle section encouraged students to use #Mass4Life or #iStand4Life or #WhyWeMarch to use social media to promote their pro-life stance, and many students held small placards with those hash tags.

Sister Maria Juan -- a Religious Sister of Mercy of Alma, MI, who was an emcee at the rally -- led the crowd in a pro-life rap and then started a wave that cascaded through the arena, with young people jumping up and waving their arms in unison, section by section. "I've always wanted to start the wave!" she said.

Filling up one corner section of the arena were about 150 students from Benet Academy, a Benedictine school in Lisle, Illinois, who wore matching red hooded sweat jackets with the words "LIFE GUARD" emblazoned on the front. They had made a 15-hour bus ride to attend the rally, Mass and march.

Matteo Caulfield, a 17-year-old senior at Benet Academy, said, "I've been here every single year for four years. I have a younger brother adopted from China, and I know he's an irreplaceable part of my life. I'm here because I want to stand up for lives like his throughout the world. People need to know adoption is an option."

His classmate Caroline Rotkis, who turns 18 in February, was attending her first March for Life. "As a woman, I don't have to buy into the lie that abortion helps women. It hurts them," she said.

Both students said it was inspiring to be a part of the Rally for Life.

"It's absolutely insane to see this many fellow Catholics in one place," said Rotkis.

Caulfield added, "It's really cool. We're all one body in Christ, and we can really see that when we all come together."

On the back of the Benet students' sweat jackets was a quote from Jeremiah 29:11 -- "For I know the plans I have for you ... plans to give you hope and a future."

To Caulfield, those words offered a reminder that it's part of God's plan "to keep my faith in my life and make it a more important part of my life, (so) I can celebrate it publicly. I know that God is opening the right doors for me. In all things I do, God can be glorified."



## EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD CELEBRATES PARISH FEAST DAY

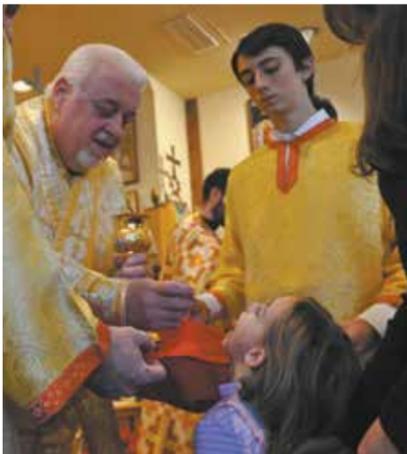
By Carol Evanco, photos by Hanna Grace Fuchko

The weekend of January 4-6 was a very special time for Epiphany of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church in Roswell, GA. Over these three days, parishioners and friends gathered to celebrate the patronal feast with the fullness of our rich liturgical rites and traditions. Royal Hours were celebrated on Friday morning and Great Vespers with Litija on

Saturday evening. On Sunday morning, the feast of Theophany, the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil was celebrated, followed by the Great Blessing of Water and Mirovanije; afterwards, as the troparion of the feast was sung, all processed around the church to hear the Gospel proclaimed to the four corners of the world. The day was brought to a joyful end as the parish enjoyed a

catered Italian luncheon. There was an abundance of food and anniversary cake which was shared with enthusiasm as parishioners recounted the parish history with visitors and new church members. Many parishioners and friends from around the state of Georgia travelled considerable distances to attend these special liturgical celebrations and events which were offered

for the first time. The entire weekend was a blessing for everyone. Epiphany of Our Lord is served by Father Lewis Rabayda, Parochial Administrator, Deacons Michael Tisma and James Smith, and Subdeacon John Reed.



Deacon Michael Tisma distributes the Eucharist.



Father Lewis Rabayda gives the blessing of Mirovanije.



The congregation intently prays the Divine Liturgy.



The procession pauses for the proclamation of the Gospel.



Altar servers and Deacon James Smith assist Father Lewis during the Great Blessing of Water.



Parishioners share a meal and Christian fellowship.



The faithful listen to the Ambon Prayer.



The clergy serve the luncheon.

## SPRINGS IN THE DESERT: INFERTILITY, ACCOMPANIMENT AND FRUITFULNESS

Kimberly Zenarolla Henkel, Ph.D. and Ann M. Koshute, M.T.S.

This article appears courtesy of Humanum Review. Please visit their website at [www.humanumreview.com](http://www.humanumreview.com) for more information.

In his play *The Jeweler's Shop*, Karol Wojtyła writes movingly, and with great perception, about the heights and the depths of love and marriage. The story follows three couples as they discover, and sometimes resist, the requirements of love within marriage. In each case, the spouses must navigate the dynamics of their families of origin as they struggle to reconcile their individual sense of identity with the demands of loving another. In Act One, Teresa reflects on what makes love exciting, and marriage such a challenge. Sexual attraction is mixed with fear of the unknown. Even before she and Andrew make their vows, Teresa knows that their dreams of how married life should unfold, and the *reality* of two becoming one, do not necessarily correspond: "I was thinking about signals that could not connect. It was a thought about Andrew and myself. And I felt how difficult it is to live."

We need not be married ourselves to understand that marriage is hard. We all come from families with some level of dysfunction. We observe marriages in our extended families, among our friends and associates and, from afar, the endless coupling and uncoupling of celebrities. Just as Teresa and Andrew struggle to send and receive the individual "signals" that express both their love and their expectations of each other, married couples experience the challenges of "connecting" in a multitude of ways. This is part of what makes marriage so *wonder-full*, and even frightening. It's also what binds the couple more closely together, allows for constant discovery of the mystery of the other, and makes the

"Yes" of the vows—a "Yes" that takes a risk in promising what it cannot fully know, for a future that is always ahead of them—an opportunity to enter into the adventure together.

The daily work of "connecting signals" takes on an added challenge for the couple experiencing infertility. In a world that simultaneously prizes an autonomy that embraces a "child-free by choice" lifestyle and indulges celebrations of baby bumps and clever "gender reveals," it is the childless couple, longing to conceive, that often experiences "how difficult it is to live." Such couples may find themselves frustrated and confused by the signals coming from family, friends and media about starting a family, while trying to remain tuned in to each other's feelings, fears and desires. Faithful couples may perceive mixed signals coming from a God who commands them to "be fruitful and multiply," promises fidelity and has proven to be the womb-opening miracle worker, from Sarah and Rachel to Anna and Elizabeth. They can feel mysteriously impeded in their ability to carry out the mission of parenthood, perplexed by which criteria they have yet to meet to qualify for their own miracle of Biblical proportions.

The signals received from the culture, and even from within our families, are equally mixed: *don't rush into marriage/don't wait too long; don't have a honeymoon baby!/when are you starting a family?* The expectations placed on couples are often unrealistic, confining them to a view of marriage constructed by the perceptions of parents, in-laws, friends, and strangers. Daughters or sons dealing with infertility are asked

(sometimes repeatedly) by parents when they will start "giving us grandchildren." Many experience perfect strangers asking about their parental status, and are met with intrusive follow-up questions: "What are you waiting for?" "Does one of you have a *problem?*" Finally, the childless spouses have their own signals to deal with, each one trying to keep open with listening hearts. Even as they focus on each other, communication with each other can become strained, and it can be equally difficult to approach God with openness and trust.

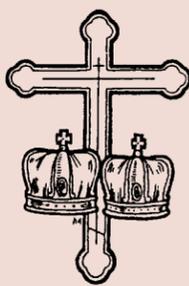
While all marriages are called to model the love between Christ and His Church, which inevitably requires every couple to take up its cross, the couple struggling with infertility suffers a particular cross, one that can distort the very perception of their marital union. Infertility is indeed a "cross," a lifelong burden for many, and a source of great pain and suffering. Yet salvation history is the story of God's faithful *accompaniment* of His people through pain and suffering, and the transformation that is possible when we surrender to God's providence and tender care ("Behold, I make all things new." Rev. 21:5). For the infertile spouses, their union is far from incomplete: while unable to bear children, they remain witnesses to the fullness of a sacramental marriage that is always a participation in the fruitfulness of the Trinity. This, however, requires a shift in thinking whereby the concept of fruitfulness is not limited to the act of procreation. In Timothy O'Malley's excellent article, "Editorial Musings: The Charism of Infertility," O'Malley suggests that,

*It is precisely the charism of the infertile couple in the Church to remind us that the fundamental end of marriage is not reproduction at all costs. Rather, it is the giving over of the entire life of the couple to God.... [Through their struggle,] the couple is to love unto the end, to transform even this diminishment into an occasion of Eucharistic love. For in Christ's Cross and Resurrection, every dimension of human life can become a new occasion for fruitfulness.*

This is an important point, both for infertile spouses and for pastors and others who might accompany them on this path: infertility is not a "journey of hopelessness," but a *pilgrimage* of Faith (in God, who provides, and does not abandon); Hope (growth in the knowledge that God is leading them, rather than "wishfulness" that the situation might change); and Love (the self-emptying presence to each other that brings new life in unexpected ways). With the help of spiritual and emotional accompaniment, the couple can learn to acknowledge and *be with* the suffering (never denying it or forcing themselves to "get over it") and discern what God is calling them to, a fruitfulness that *only they can fulfill*. If the infertile couple can finally embrace the vocational aspect of their infertility, they can cultivate a strong marriage, a strong relationship with God, and become effective witnesses to other married couples, priests and religious, and to a world that is starved for true Love. The question for them—and for the Church—is: *How best can this be done?*

Answering this question cannot possibly be accomplished in one brief article, nor can we offer a solution to the mysteries surrounding infertility. What we propose here is the start of a conver-

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9AM - 4PM

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### Presenters



Deacon Thomas Shubeck, PhD, a father of three with Caroline, his wife of 25 years, serves at Saint Thomas the Apostle Parish in Rahway, NJ, and at Seton Hall University. Much of his 30 years as a licensed psychologist has been spent providing therapy services to married couples and families.



Ann Koshute, MTS, earned a Master's degree at the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family at the Catholic University of America. She speaks and writes on marriage and family issues, has served in the Family Life ministries of several dioceses, and teaches theology at Saint Joseph's College of Maine. She and her husband, Keith, have been married for 7 years.



Michael and Lisann Castagno have been married for 24 years 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 prepared over 100 couples for marriage in his 35 years of priesthood. He holds degrees in Scripture and Theology and currently serves as Rector of St Michael's Cathedral.

sation that accounts for the complexity of the emotional and spiritual difficulties surrounding infertility. While the infertile couple desperately searches for a solution to their infertility, what they need most from the Church is to be heard and understood and, most of all, *to be accompanied* on their path in order to discover a way of fruitfulness in what they may have come to view as the barren landscape of their marriage. While the Church has spoken on theological and ethical aspects of the issue, there is a need at this moment in history to consider more fully the practical and spiritual challenges of the experience of infertility. Because of the sheer scale of infertility, let alone the pervasiveness and destructiveness of the ‘fixes’ offered for it, there is a sense of pastoral urgency. By listening to the experience of infertile spouses, the Church can better learn to minister to these couples, to acknowledge the difficulty of their plight, and to help them move forward with hope. This is a moment for the Church to reach deeply into its own tradition and articulate more clearly to infertile couples the fruitfulness that *every married couple* already shares in, whether they have children or not. how

While every couple experiences trials in marriage, infertility strikes at the heart of its identity, as “one flesh” created to “be fruitful and multiply.” What is the meaning of this desire to conceive and bear children, when this very desire is continually thwarted? It is commonly reported that one in eight couples experience difficulty conceiving: whether it is the total inability to conceive, or to bring a baby to term. The reasons are many, and range from genetic factors, disease and accidents rendering either spouse sterile; to environmental (pollution, water systems and food sources contaminated by medical waste, synthetic hormones, and pesticides); to the simply mysterious “no diagnosis.” This last is, in some

respects, most trying for a couple’s faith, because there is no cause to pinpoint, no person or circumstance to “blame.” None—except for God.

Whatever the cause, the inability to conceive begins as an unexpected but more or less manageable obstacle. As time passes and new interventions are tried and fail, what seemed like a temporary setback gives way to frustration, anger, envy and desperation. Every month brings a physical reminder that no baby is coming. Friends and family members begin sending out their own birth announcements, and the pressure to “catch up”—along with the continuing intrusive questions—puts a strain on all of the couple’s relationships. Every exhortation to “just relax,” or “have fun trying” may be well-meaning, but exerts more pressure on the couple to “perform and produce.” Such words deliver a blow to the couple’s already fragile sense of masculinity and femininity and intensifies the crisis of faith their infertility engenders. In the search for answers, and for blame, they are tempted to point fingers at each other, to look inward with self-hatred, and heavenward in desperation.

Because the Church prohibits the use of Artificial Reproductive Technologies, it can seem that a couple is left to figure out how to deal with their situation on their own. So often it appears that the Church is giving them a “no” without providing any acceptable alternative. And there is a real danger of merely offering *technical solutions* to the problem of infertility—even morally licit ones. Obviously, it is important for spouses to optimize their health so they might achieve pregnancy, but when the technical approach begins to endanger the well-being of a couple, it no longer becomes life-giving. A shift from achieving health to achieving a baby at all costs threatens not only the physical, mental, and spiritual health of

the spouses, but also the health of the marriage. Besides the obvious physical risk of injecting hormones and surgery, there is the mental strain brought on by the constant monitoring of signs of fertility and timing sexual relations to coincide with the woman’s peak fertility. Stress can be a major contributing factor to infertility, and trying to *relax* and be a generous, self-giving lover while optimizing fertile times becomes increasingly difficult. The question of how far a couple is willing to go with medical interventions must be faced, since there will always be couples for whom technical solutions don’t result in having a baby. Beyond all this, there are the not-so-obvious risks of considering a child as a product or personal project. When a couple tries months or years to conceive, it becomes difficult to remember that a child is a gift. If they are not careful, the spouses’ endless attempts to interpret possible pregnancy signs, as well as the continual focus on hormonal evaluations and interventions, can have the effect of esteeming the act of achieving pregnancy as a mission in and of itself.

While some may argue that those experiencing infertility are too *sensitive*, the language used to discuss infertility is important. Being compassionate toward the infertile couple, while helping them to integrate their physical, emotional and spiritual woundedness into a creative surrender to God, is a difficult balancing act. It embraces the unique and mysterious fruitfulness only they—in cooperation with God—can bring to fullness. Infertile couples must guard against internalizing unintentionally hurtful words of “advice” and intrusive questions, which may fuel their pain, rather than bring them through it. Well-meaning friends, can say things such as, “I can’t even *imagine* how difficult it must be to not be able to conceive a child. You must be so strong. My children are my whole life!” Rather than feeling affirmed and understood, this can leave those struggling with infertility discouraged, isolated, and resentful. Should infertile couples just move on with life (and stop being “snowflakes”)? Or should everyone in their sphere (family, friends, social media) tip-toe around them? The answer lies somewhere in the middle: increased knowledge of the challenges of infertility and compassionate pastoral accompaniment.

The descriptive “infertile” itself is a point of contention when considering how to talk about the state of childlessness. Some—especially women—may recoil at being referred to in this way, since it marks them out as something other than whole, worthwhile persons. Irrational as such thoughts might be, they are reinforced by some Catholics who assume childlessness to be a voluntary “no,” resulting from of a lack of faith, or a failure to make exhaustive use of morally licit technical solutions to the problem. Women feel this most acutely, since it is their bodies that bear the brunt of side-effects from medications, hormone treatments and (sometimes repeated) surgeries. They feel the physical and emotional side-effects of treatments in their very being. This is not to mention the distinctive toll in-

fertility takes on men, too often overlooked or underplayed.

Whether infertility is a temporary burden or a permanent state, the infertile couple’s marriage takes the shape of the cross, with its dual meaning of suffering and salvation. Christ’s Cross gives *our* suffering its paradoxical nature, proving that abundance and light can emerge from the depths of barren darkness. So, it is with spouses who evidently carry their infertility as a cross, but which need not mean a burden that forever weighs down their relationship, or breaks (cf. Mt 11:30). The language of the cross is appropriate but often misunderstood as a pain from which there is no relief: wrenching, humiliating, *inescapable death*. The infertile spouses must seek the dual meaning of their particular suffering, and find in it God’s fidelity to them, and the fruit that He desires to bring out of it. On Golgotha, Christ was stripped of everything, and poured Himself out completely. Similarly, the infertile couple feels *stripped* of their hopes for a family, and emptied physically, given the toll that medical interventions take on the body. Yet Christ, by handing Himself over to the will of God, brought forth the fruit of Salvation, the defeat of Death. His embrace of desolation and loss transformed suffering into a way of unleashing Love. Likewise, if the spouses can hand themselves over to Christ, will allow their wounds to be absorbed by His, new life will emerge from their union.

Though the cross of infertility diminishes with time, the scar it leaves remains tender. And yet this can be transformed by Christ’s Cross into a path of Love and Life unique to the couple, bringing forth fruits that could only have come from *their union* and *this particular* suffering. St. Josemaria Escriva states: “God in his providence has two ways of blessing marriages: one by giving them children; and the other, sometimes, because he loves them so much, by not giving them children. I don’t know which is the better blessing.” This may be shocking to those who cannot imagine an inability to conceive as a *blessing*. Yet Escriva continues, “Often God does not give children, because He is asking them for something more.” God does not abandon couples struggling with infertility. Even without a biological child, a husband and wife can find abundant fruitfulness in their marriage by remaining close to the Lord and allowing Him to guide them.

As a couple attempts to carry the cross of infertility, it is essential that others come alongside to help shoulder the burden. The Church can help a couple sort through the myriad of options, clarifying the moral alternatives available; but *the fundamental task of the Church is to accompany the couple*. Above all, the infertile couple needs spiritual guidance and support through the journey. It is easy for spouses to feel forgotten and isolated and to question why a good God would not bless them with children. Pastors, parishioners, people in ministry, family and friends must learn to walk in a better way with the infertile couple; and infertile spouses must become docile to the prompt-

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ings of the Holy Spirit in embracing a *parenthood* unique to them.

Priests are in a unique position to affirm the goodness of the struggling couple's marriage, encouraging them in knowing the presence of God. They must, of course, be aware of the impact infertility has on a marriage in the first place. One simple way that a priest might support those in his parish struggling with infertility is by offering a Mass specifically for infertile couples, that they might receive physical/spiritual/emotional healing and discern where God is calling them to be fruitful. This would allow couples to see that the Church is attuned to their situation and help them connect with other couples with similar struggles. Another

way that a priest can be sensitive to this struggle is on "trigger days" like Mother's Day and Father's Day. These can be tortuous to those who long to be parents. He might give the blessings for mothers and fathers at the end of Mass when the entire congregation is already standing so as not to draw attention to those remaining seated, grieving anew—and publicly—that they have no children.

In the third act of Wojtyła's play, Christopher and his bride-to-be wrestle with the same excitement and uncertainty that his parents—Andrew and Teresa—faced when contemplating the *unknowns* in their married future. They've already experienced through their respective parents' marriages that

every relationship is susceptible to circumstances that make it "difficult to live." Their future—like that of every couple who enters marriage with hope and expectation—is a mystery to be unfolded anew. The *mystery* of childlessness is unexpected, unplanned and unwanted; yet, it need not be without hope or fruitfulness. The journey into this mystery must be done together, but also *accompanied* by family, friends and the Church. The spiritual support offered by the Church not only gives meaning and purpose to the couple's suffering but leads them to discover the mission of every marriage to *go together* where God leads.

Spiritually uplifting and supporting infertile couples is a task in which

the Church, as an expert in humanity (cf. Pope Benedict), must be engaged. The Church is in a unique position to *mother* infertile couples: not merely seeking for them technical solutions, but *listening* to them, *learning* from them, and *discovering* together the shape authentic and fruitful accompaniment must take.

*Kimberly Henkel, Ph.D., and Ann Koshute, M.T.S., are the founders of Springs in the Desert, a Catholic ministry devoted to helping women and couples struggling with infertility to process and move beyond their grief to find the fruitfulness God has planned for their marriage. They are currently writing a book, Springs in the Desert, which will lend itself to individual as well as group study.*

## MARCH FOR LIFE 2019

### March For Life Events of the Eparchy of Passaic

*Continued from page one*



Father Conan Timony and Father John Basarab process at Compline in the crypt church of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, DC.



Bishop Kurt and Deacon William Szewczyk celebrate Compline



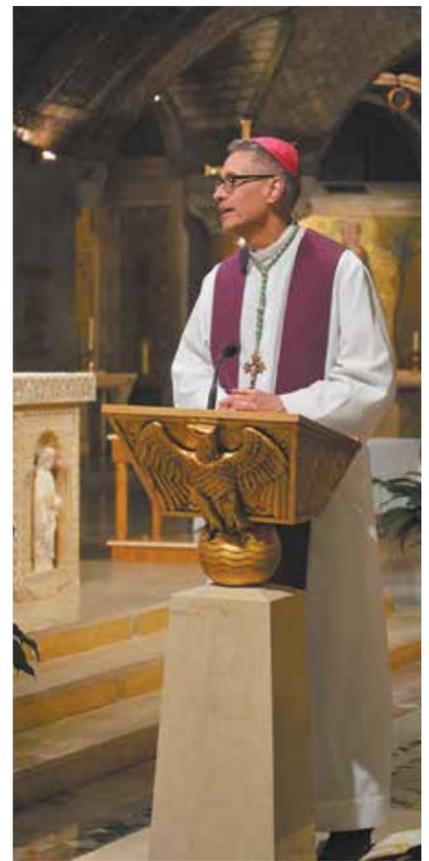
Bishop Milan gives the homily at Epiphany of Our Lord, Annandale, VA



The Slava Men's Chorus leads the Compline in the crypt church of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington DC.



Bishop Kurt blesses one of the newly-installed compass point icons in the church during the Divine Liturgy.



Bishop Mark Bartchak gives the homily at Compline in the crypt church of the Basilica.



Cantors of Epiphany of Our Lord, Annandale, VA, sing at Compline in the crypt church of the basilica

THE BYZANTINE CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF PASSAIC subscribes to the  
**Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People**

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

Father David J. Baratelli, Ed.S., M.Div. • *Safe Environment Program Coordinator* • 973.890.7777  
Dr. Maureen Daddona, Ph.D. • *Victim's Assistance Coordinator* • 516.623.6456



# LIFE, LOVE, AND THE HUMAN PERSON

By Ann M. Koshute, MTS

## NAKED AND—AFRAID?

Unless you've been living in a cave, or just refuse to buy a television, we've all seen or heard about the many "reality shows" flooding the airwaves for more than two decades. Shows about wilderness survivors, people looking for love and crazy competitions are entertaining, weird, and sometimes plain gross. If it can be imagined, it'll be turned into a ratings boon. One show combining human survival under extreme conditions with pure voyeurism is *Naked and Afraid*. In the interest of full disclosure, I've seen a total of about ten minutes of the show, and this column is not an endorsement of it. But the premise and title are interesting to consider in light of the Fast and our preparation for Pascha. Two strangers are dropped off in what the show describes as "the world's most hostile climates," and they have nothing with them – not even clothes. Careful camera work and well placed distorted "dots" preserve some level of modesty, while allowing for enough quick glimpses of nudity to appeal to the public's prurient interests. Eventually the contestants gather foliage and other materials they can find to fashion makeshift clothes, but that's probably the least of their worries, as they forage for food, dodge wild animals and try to find shelter in extreme weather conditions. As with other reality shows, the "confessional" is a feature that allows participants to speak directly to the audience about their experience, and their feelings about their partner. Honestly, I'm not even sure if the participants win anything for their trouble, but

in our attention-starved, publicity-seeking culture, that's probably not the point. Being known, being seen, being able to "make a confession," and being a focus of attention are motivators enough. While most of us probably won't ever be on a reality show, these desires are ours, too. The Great Fast draws our attention to this, providing an opportunity to re-focus our desire from self-centeredness and allow God to shape us into our *true selves*.

Our first parents were not "dropped" into the Garden, but they were created to live in and enjoy it. The Man and Woman were "naked, yet they felt no shame." (Genesis 2:25) Of course, they didn't have the pressure of cameras following their every move, or violating their personal privacy, but they were "on their own" in the sense that they were given to each other – *for* each other. The animals surrounded them, and though they posed no threat, they weren't the same as the man and woman, the truth of which hit the man full force when God brought the woman to him. Their primary companion (apart from each other) was God. Genesis doesn't give us all of the detail we'd wish for, but it does convey the sense that God created these first humans not as an experiment or to be slaves, but for an intimate relationship: they with each other, and Him with them. What a sweet image, God "walking about the garden at the breezy time of day" (Genesis 3:8), indicating that He was not aloof, but spent time with the man and woman, even sought them out. We might imagine

that no "on camera confessional" was necessary, when the God who is Creator and Friend makes Himself available to listen to His creatures.

We all know how the story ends. The serpent deceives and tempts, the woman falls for the lies while the man stands idly by and gives in, too. Now the pair know everything has changed, and that they are naked. They were created *naked without shame*, but now they truly are *naked and afraid*, and just like a scene from a reality show, they grab what they can find to cover themselves and go into hiding. God finds them, of course, and in what could've been a scene from one of the shows, they begin pointing fingers, deflecting responsibility, and even lashing out at God. (Genesis 3:12) The man and woman – who now go by the names Adam and Eve – fear God and each other, and it will take time for trust to be restored. *This is reality*, and it's all too real. Even so, God does not abandon them, nor do they abandon each other. Fear and suspicion will haunt their relationship, and those of the generations that follow, but the promise of redemption is a light in an otherwise darkened world.

Life is not reality TV; in fact, there's little that's *real* in these shows. There's plenty of drama in our lives, but that doesn't mean shouting, being outrageous, or exposing all of our demons. The real drama is in our experience of the world around us, in our relationships, in our work and creative thinking. It is in living in the reality of sin and seeking the grace to rise above it. Life isn't a

silly TV show in which God drops us into a hostile world, making us fend for ourselves. But *sin* is real, and if we don't see talking serpents slithering through our gardens we shouldn't get too comfortable. The devil is real. He hates us, and he wants us to be *naked and afraid*. The devil would like us to be tempted in all sorts of ways, including in our sexuality. He tempts us to a "nakedness" that is brazen, shameless, and sees our bodies as *things* to be used. The *fear* he instills in us is not of retribution from God, but of missing out on every opportunity for self-gratification. Yet there is another form of "nakedness" (one the *devil* fears) that is closer to our First Parents' experience in the Garden, and it's not about the clothes we wear. God wants us above all to be *spiritually naked*; to be vulnerable and open to Him, and to learn again how to be so with each other. The Fast *strips us naked* in a way, pulling us out of ourselves, our need for attention and for every desire to be fulfilled immediately. The Fast should help us to be nakedly transparent and honest with God, in our prayer, in the Mystery of Confession, and in listening to where He is calling us to conversion. As we enter into the Great Fast, let's look at our *deprivation* as a means of *receiving* Him more fully. Let's not waste time foraging for whatever we can get, but instead be still and receive what we need from Him. Let us be truly *naked* before God, confident that because of Christ's sacrifice we need not be afraid. **ECL**

There are many times that our faith is tested by those who do not know Jesus Christ, or by those who profess to know Him but do not truly have Him living in their hearts. These tests come to us in various forms and from various people. Many times, these tests even come from those who profess to know Jesus Christ, but who have barely accepted the milk of His Church, let alone the full-course meal of all the tenets of the Catholic Faith. They tend to attack our mind, body, and soul to wear us down so that we will give up the fight for Catholic truth, and so that we will give-in to sin and apostasy—so that we will abandon our true faith.

But Jesus Christ has shown us and taught us His "hard sayings," His difficult commandments, as well as His unending compassion and His example of never backing down when challenged. Each time

a Pharisee, Scribe, or Sadducee challenged Jesus' understanding of the Scriptures or the correctness of His teachings, He advanced against these vicious attempts and their human ignorance. Jesus knew that what He taught was correct because He received it from His Father, the One with Whom He created the universe and all life within it. Jesus knew that every word which came from His mouth was not based on human education, but on the divine understanding of reality.

When encountering those who doubt or those who seek to harm us, Jesus has shown us the effects of offering our other cheek to them for insult, attack, or violence.

Freely offering another opportunity to be insulted or assaulted shows the aggressor that we will not give-in or run away from their disorder, lies, coercion, and violence, but that we will meet them face-to-face and show them the true color of their distortion. Some may only be open to correction or change in their lives and in their thinking after being exposed to their own true image. It may be that those who wish to attack us will only realize that they have been following an imperfect doctrine when they encounter someone who will not bend, who will not run away, and who will not fight them back. These testers of the faith may then be subconsciously impressed by

someone who will continue to offer themselves as a target, even after many barrages.

Ultimately, it was Jesus Christ's compassion for all of mankind that fueled Him to freely offer Himself to worldly injustice of: a false accusation, a cruel torture, and a gruesome crucifixion. Jesus offered Himself for each sinner in every age of the world because He loves them, and He wants them to experience eternal salvation. It is now up to us to follow Jesus' example, to stand our ground, to offer our cheek, to not back down, and to show compassion to all those who are hurting from a lack of Christ in their hearts. **ECL**

## SPIRITUAL REFLECTIONS

Father Lewis Rabayda



### STANDING OUR GROUND AND OFFERING OUR CHEEK



## Carpatho-Rusyn Society's New Branches

The Carpatho-Rusyn Society has developed branches in Georgia (near Atlanta), Western NC (Asheville), Eastern NC (Charlotte), and mini-branches in the cities of Gainesville, Lakeland, Leesburg, Boca Raton and Nokomis in the state of Florida. Meetings are held two to three times a year to learn, share, and perpetuate the Carpatho-Rusyn culture. For more information visit the website at [c-rs.org](http://c-rs.org) or contact Bonnie at [bb@c-rs.org](mailto:bb@c-rs.org).

Left: Icon of the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple with Simeon



## SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

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

### NOW YOU MAY DISMISS YOUR SERVANT

Everybody seems to have a “bucket list” these days. What’s on yours? What do you still hope to experience or accomplish before you die? Our bucket lists reveal a lot about our values and priorities.

The righteous elder Simeon’s priorities could not have been clearer. He truly felt what all Jews are supposed to feel: an intense longing for the coming of the Messiah. God rewarded his righteous desire with a flash of insight. When Joseph and Mary came to the Temple forty days after Jesus’ birth to perform the customary rites of redeeming the firstborn son and purifying the mother after childbirth (see Exodus 13:11-16 and Leviticus 12:1-8), Simeon recognized this infant as the Messiah (Luke 2:22-38).

The Gospel tells us that Simeon burst into a joyful song of praise at the sight:

*Now You may dismiss Your servant, O Lord, in peace, according to Your word. For my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all people: a light for revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of Your people*

Israel (Luke 2:29-32).

Simply put, Simeon’s prayer says, “I can die now. I’ve lived long enough to see what I always hoped to see. I know that the Lord keeps His promises.” What would you have to see or hear or experience before you were ready to say your life had been completely fulfilled? The answer says a lot about us and our relationship with the Lord. Are there any wrongs you would need to make right before you could pass on in peace? There’s an even more challenging question!

Our Church prays Simeon’s prayer every evening at Vespers; its traditional chant melody is especially beautiful. Even though it’s tough to find a Vesper service these days, we can still make Simeon’s prayer part of our daily night prayers. In a gentle, musical way, the prayer challenges us to do what we should be doing anyway: looking back over each day, identifying our shortcomings and failures and asking God’s forgiveness; identifying God’s blessings and giving Him thanks. What if the day now ending is the last day I will ever experience? Am I at peace with God and with my neighbors? What do I have to be thankful for today?

The Prayer of Simeon is also part of one of the most beautiful rituals of the Byzantine Tradition. Since every newly baptized person “has been clothed with Christ” (Galatians 3:27) and united with Christ in Holy Communion, the Church recognizes the presence of Christ in that white-robed infant. Therefore, the priest takes the newly baptized child in his arms, as Simeon did (Luke 2:28) and presents the child in the sanctuary, in imitation of how Jesus was presented as a firstborn son. During this rite, the priest chants Simeon’s hymn. Think about it! “My eyes have seen Your salvation ... a light for revelation ... and the glory of Your people:” those words were prayed over YOU! I’ve been a priest long enough to see many of the infants I baptized grow into adulthood. It’s been encouraging to me to witness their struggles to grow into all the promises they made and received in Baptism. It’s a joy to see the faithful Christians some of them have chosen to remain.

The Prayer of Simeon asks us all to consider what we have done to “work out our salvation” (Philippians 2:12)—that is, to accept and grow into the grace the sac-

raments give us. What are we actually doing to serve as a “light of the world” (Matthew 5:14). Are we attracting “Gentiles” to Christ by our example? How do our actions and attitudes give glory to God (Matthew 5:16; 1 Corinthians 6:20)?

Your Baptism may well have been on your Baba’s bucket list. Think of all the hopes and dreams our families pinned on us on the day we were baptized. They wished for health, happiness, material success and peace for us. God wished for even more. If sainthood isn’t on our bucket list, maybe it should be. **ECL**

## CHURCH SLAVONIC DIVINE LITURGY

With Homily Ponašemu

Saint Mary’s Byzantine Catholic Church  
(Saint Mary’s Ruthenian Greek Catholic Church, Inc.)

246 East 15th Street, New York, New York 10003

Telephone: 212-677-0516

Email: [Fredcimbala@gmail.com](mailto:Fredcimbala@gmail.com)

Father Edward G. Cimbala, D.Min.—Pastor

Beginning Sunday, December 16, 2018, at 8:00 AM, and every Sunday thereafter, Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church, 246 East 15th Street, New York, NY, will offer the Divine Liturgy celebrated in Church Slavonic with the homily preached ponašemu. The celebrant and homilist will be Father Gregory Lozinskyy, parochial vicar of Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church in Jersey City, NJ. This Divine Liturgy is being established as an outreach for people from Eastern Europe with the blessing of Bishop Kurt Burnette, Eparch of Passaic, NJ, at the request of Bishop Milan Šašik, Eparch of Mukachevo, Ukraine. Saint Mary Parish is located on the corner of East 15th Street and Second Avenue and is easily accessible by subway. The 14th Street-Union Square Subway stop is less than a ten-minute walk. Everyone is invited. For more information, please contact Father Gregory Lozinskyy at 201-333-2975.



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Fr. Edward G. Cimbala, D.Min.—Pastor

246 East 15th Street, Manhattan, New York  
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**8:00 AM** – Church Slavonic & Homily Ponašemu  
(Beginning December 16, 2018)

**10:00 AM**

**6:00 PM**

(Beginning January 13, 2019)

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North Fort Myers, FL 33917  
1-239-599-4023

**Epiphany of Our Lord**

2030 Old Alabama Road  
Roswell, GA 30076  
1-770-993-0973

**Holy Dormition**

17 Buckskin Lane  
Ormond Beach, FL 32174  
1-386-677-8704

**Our Lady of the Sign**

7311 Lyons Road  
Coconut Creek, FL 33073  
1-954-429-0056

**Saint Therese**

4265 13th Avenue North  
Saint Petersburg, FL 33713  
1-727-323-4022

**Saint Anne**

7120 Massachusetts Ave.  
New Port Richey, FL 34653  
1-727-849-1190

**Saint Basil the Great**

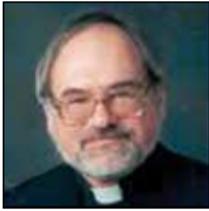
1475 N.E. 199th Street  
Miami, FL 33179-5162  
1-305-651-0991

**Saints Cyril and Methodius**

1002 Bahama Avenue  
Fort Pierce, FL 34982  
1-772-595-1021

**Saint Nicholas of Myra**

5135 Sand Lake Road  
Orlando, FL 32819  
1-407-351-0133



# THE BYZANTINE LITURGY

By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD

## THE SACRIFICE OF PRAISE

The most important prayer in the Divine Liturgy is called the Anaphora. It begins with the deacon's invitation, "Let us stand aright! Let us stand in awe! Let us be attentive to offer the holy Anaphora in peace!" It ends with the doxology said by the priest, "And grant that with one voice and one heart we may glorify and praise Your most honored and magnificent name, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever," which the faithful complete by adding their assent, "Amen," a Hebrew word meaning, "Let it be so." The Greek word "anaphora" means an offering. The anaphora, therefore, is our offering to God. The old translation rendered "anaphora" as "the holy oblation." In the present translation, we leave the word "anaphora" in its Greek form, since the Divine Liturgy itself was called "anaphora" as early as the third century. The Roman Catholic Church usually calls the Anaphora the Eucharistic Prayer, which means, "the prayer of thanksgiving."

We respond to the deacon's invitation by an acclamation, "Mercy, peace, a sacrifice of praise." It is not an actual sentence, but simply an acclamation. It means that the anaphora is mercy, the anaphora is peace, the anaphora is a sacrifice of praise. The old translation did not understand this and changed the word "mercy" to "offering." However, the Anaphora is truly

mercy, an overflowing of love and compassion. It reminds us of Matthew 9:13, where our Lord says, "what I desire is mercy, not sacrifice." Christ denounced empty sacrifices, without an internal spirit of love. The sacrifices of the Old Testament were considered empty after the sacrifice of Christ. It was the mercy he demanded and at the same time a sacrifice. As a commemoration of this sacrifice, the Divine Liturgy is perfect; it is a sacrifice of praise offered to God out of love. It is the peace that comes to us from above, since the eucharistic offering is Christ, "Who is our peace, [and] Who made both one and broke down the dividing wall of enmity through His flesh." (Ephesians 2:14) The peace of reconciliation between God and humanity that unites both is Communion.

Some also complained that the Liturgy is more than a "sacrifice of praise," that it is the true sacrifice of our Lord on the Cross, and his resurrection. It is true that our Divine Liturgy is one with the sacrifice of the Lord, it is not a different sacrifice, but now it is offered in a different way. The Divine Liturgy often identifies it with Jesus' sacrifice, but always with a qualifying word, "of praise," or "unbloody," or a "spiritual sacrifice." The exact same reality is present in its totality, our redemption through the Cross and Resurrection, but the blood of our Lord was shed only once, for Jesus

entered once for all into the sanctuary, not with the blood of goats and calves but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption." (Hebrews 9:12) The body of our Lord, and the cup of His blood that we receive in Communion unites us with that one sacrifice.

After the deacon invites us to pray the Anaphora, the priest invites us also in a more solemn way. He first says, "Let us lift up our hearts." In Greek this is very simple, "Up with the hearts." Our response is "we have - to the Lord." The original meaning was probably to put aside all earthly cares, to direct our attention to the Lord who is above, as in Colossians 3:1-2: "If...you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Think of what is above, not of what is on earth." The response, "We have - to the Lord," also means that the Christian prays toward the East, the direction from where our Lord would come on the last day. That is why churches were built to face the East, though this is sometimes ignored today because of the layout of the church's property. It was a characteristic of Christian prayer as opposed to pagan prayer. Christians looked up, not down - downcast eyes were for those in need of penance, or for the unbaptized.

The final part of the dialogue leading to the anaphora is, "Let us give thanks to the Lord," and the people respond, "It is proper and just." "Let us give thanks" was the best Greek attempt to translate the Jewish "berekah," a much more general word meaning, "to praise, to glorify, to bless, to thank, to 'proclaim the greatness.'" It is a sense of our acknowledgment of all God's works, an acceptance of his acts of love, and our offering and consecration to him in return. If God has given us Himself in the Liturgy, "what," as the psalmist says, "can I return to the Lord for all He has given me?" (Psalm 115:3) God has no need of anything that we can give Him. What we can give him is our sacrifice of praise, our words of glorification. With this invitation, the priest is really asking the permission of the congregation to continue, "Should we give thanks to the Lord." The people respond, "Yes," that is, "It is proper and right," "this is what we should do." The priest then accepts the people's permission and continues, "it is truly proper and right." The Divine Liturgy that we celebrate then becomes a true sacrifice of praise, which, because God, whose only-begotten Son offered himself on the cross, becomes one with that one, holy and true sacrifice that takes away sin and brings us eternal life. **ECL**

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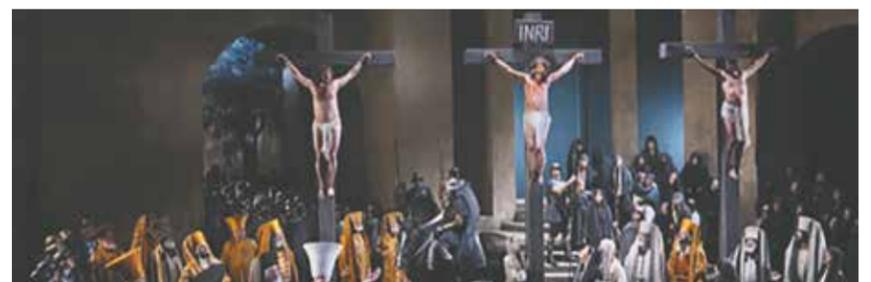
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# SEASONAL REFLECTIONS

Father Ronald Hatton



## OUR ENTRY INTO THE GREAT FAST

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. With the beginning of February, we celebrate 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 importantly, 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 Meatfare 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 Cheesefare Sunday, the day before we begin the Great Fast in earnest. Not only is there a 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 Metropolitan 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**

## Saint Ann Byzantine Catholic Church

5408 Locust Lane, Harrisburg, PA

Parish Education Calendar 2019

Join the Saint Ann Parish family for these upcoming spiritual formation events

- Parish Lenten Reflection given by Father John Zeyack: Date TBA.
- Pysanky Workshop: Sunday March 24, 2019. Registration Required.
- “Being the Hands, Feet, and Heart of Jesus.” Sister Ruth Plante, Provincial, Sisters of Saint Basil, Uniontown. Parish Formation Day Retreat: Sunday, May 19, 2019, following Divine Liturgy.

All programs take place at Saint Ann Byzantine Catholic Church, 5408 Locust Lane, Harrisburg, PA 17109. For more details on events, location, or speakers, please contact the parish office at 717-652-1415.



## SCHOOL OF PRAYER

Father G. Scott Boghossian

### WAITING ON THE LORD

Typically, our time for prayer is full of different spiritual activities. We may have developed the practice of reading scripture, praying the Psalms, reciting prayers from a prayer book, saying our beads, or engaging in a familiar conversation with God. There is another kind of prayer: the prayer of waiting on the Lord. This kind of prayer rests in the presence of God, fixes its attention on Him, and engages in one prolonged act of love for Him. In the Christian tradition, this kind of prayer is sometimes called the prayer of simplicity, the prayer of recollection, the prayer of simple regard, or acquired contemplation.

Holy Scripture endorses the practice of waiting on the Lord. “Wait on God with patience” (Sirach 2:3). The Psalmist spoke of this kind of prayer when he said, “I waited patiently for the LORD” (Ps. 40:1), and “be still before the LORD and wait patiently for Him” (Ps. 37:7). The prophet Isaiah says, “Those who wait upon the LORD will renew their strength; they will mount up

with wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not faint” (Is. 40:31).

What are the advantages of this kind of prayer? According to the saints and masters of the spiritual life, it is this kind of prayer, the prayer of waiting on the Lord, that most effectively enables us to love God above all things, live a holy life, and become great saints. It is true that this kind of prayer is not required to attain the heights of holiness, but it is the form of prayer that is most conducive to real progress. Father Adolphe Tanquerey writes that this form of prayer enables us to glorify God better, love Him more intensely, forget ourselves, detach ourselves from creatures, and grow in humility.

An indication that we are called to this form of prayer is an attraction to the notion or idea of waiting on the Lord. It might be described as “a simple loving gaze on God and Jesus Christ.” The Cure of Ars paints a

vivid picture when he says, “we do not need to say much in order to pray well. We know that the Good Lord is there in the tabernacle; we open our heart to Him; we delight to be in His Holy Presence. This is the best form of prayer.” We find the same idea in Theophan the Recluse who states, “The principal thing is to stand before God with the mind in the heart and to go on standing before Him unceasingly day and night until the end of life.”

If we have a spiritual father or spiritual director, let us make waiting on the Lord one of the topics of our next meeting. Ask your director if this is something you might pursue.

If so, two rules will help us to enter into this sublime form of communion with God. First, slow down! When saying your other prayers, don’t rush through them. Saint Francis De Sales warns us, “Haste is the death of devotion.” God forbid we recite our prayers like the auctioneer at the

county fair. Rattling off our prayers to get them over with isn’t conducive to entering a peaceful, gentle awareness of the presence of God, and that is what we want to do if we’re going to spend time waiting on the Lord.

Second, we should occasionally interrupt our reading, prayers, or familiar conversation to become aware of the presence of God. Stop for a moment and practice an attentive silence. Wait on the Lord, and then return to your other prayers. With a little practice, you’ll be able to spend a considerable amount of time waiting on the Lord.

The prayer of waiting on the Lord won’t be easy. It is something we will grow into. But by spending time with God in this way, we will grow in faith, hope, and love, and develop a more profound friendship with Him.

“Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, and I will be exalted in the earth!” (Ps. 46:10). **ECL**



# SEMINARIAN REFLECTIONS

Reader Paul Varchola West

## “BE A SIMPLE MAN”

I know I often write articles having to do with song lyrics. I would say that I am sorry for this, but I cannot help it! Not only do I have advanced degrees in music, but my music education began at a very early age. Since I can remember, music was always present in our household and holds a very deep meaning for me. I can remember being a small boy listening to music (on vinyl records!) with parents. They raised me on the classics. My mom and I would listen to Carly Simon, Van Morrison, Carole King, Neil Diamond, and similar artists. She would also sing classics to me from the American Song Book such as *Shine on Harvest Moon* and *Bill Bailey, Won't You Please Come Home*. Those were two of my favorites. Through osmosis, apparently, I managed to learn a great deal about songs in general. My dad, on the other hand, would teach me the single most important lesson about music that I would ever learn. At the tender age of four, my dad taught me that there were essentially two genres of music: Lynyrd Skynyrd, and everything else. We would sit for hours listening to Skynyrd records. I memorized every lyric to every song, memorized all the album covers and, after I went through all those, I would memorize B-sides of singles as well as early demo versions, and bootleg recordings, too! I remember being about ten or so and my dad was amazed that I could compare all the different versions of the songs, tell him which lyrics were different, where the music sounded differently, and which ones I preferred to listen to, and why. Clearly, music was for me.

This past Christmas, after an entire year of being away, I was finally blessed to return home for a much-needed visit. While home, I of course ended up at my dad's record shelves and began to thumb through his collection as I have done countless times in the past. Very quickly I happened upon his complete collection of Skynyrd records that have their own exalted section on the shelf (to the extent that they do not even touch the other records – I love my

dad!). I began to look at the cover of the band's debut album and began to reminisce about my childhood and all I mentioned in the previous paragraph. I remembered being a small boy, looking at that album and thinking that those guys were the seven coolest guys on the face of the planet. I wanted to be just like them when I grew up – a rock star. While I am fortunate enough that my music career did in fact bring me to the Grammy Awards in 2013, obviously I am not a rock star. I began to think where my life began and where I am now and I became sad. I was filled with emotions. I had been away from home for so long that I felt lost, not knowing who I was or in what direction I was headed. I felt as if I have betrayed my dreams as a child and that, although my path is a seemingly respectable one, I am doing something with my life that was never intended. Who have I become? Have I betrayed all those hours spent with my dad at the record player?

Fortunately, my despondency was short lived as I began to think of the songs contained on the very record that I was holding. There is a song on this record titled *Simple Man*, a song I know very well. The lyrics, reportedly, are comprised of advice given to one of the band members by his grandmother. The verse that immediately came to my mind is as follows:

*Boy, don't you worry, you'll find yourself*

*Follow your heart and nothing else*

*And you can do this, oh baby, if you try*

*All that I want for you, my son, is to be satisfied*

Immediately following these lines, here is the chorus:

*And be a simple kind of man*

*Oh, be something you love and understand*

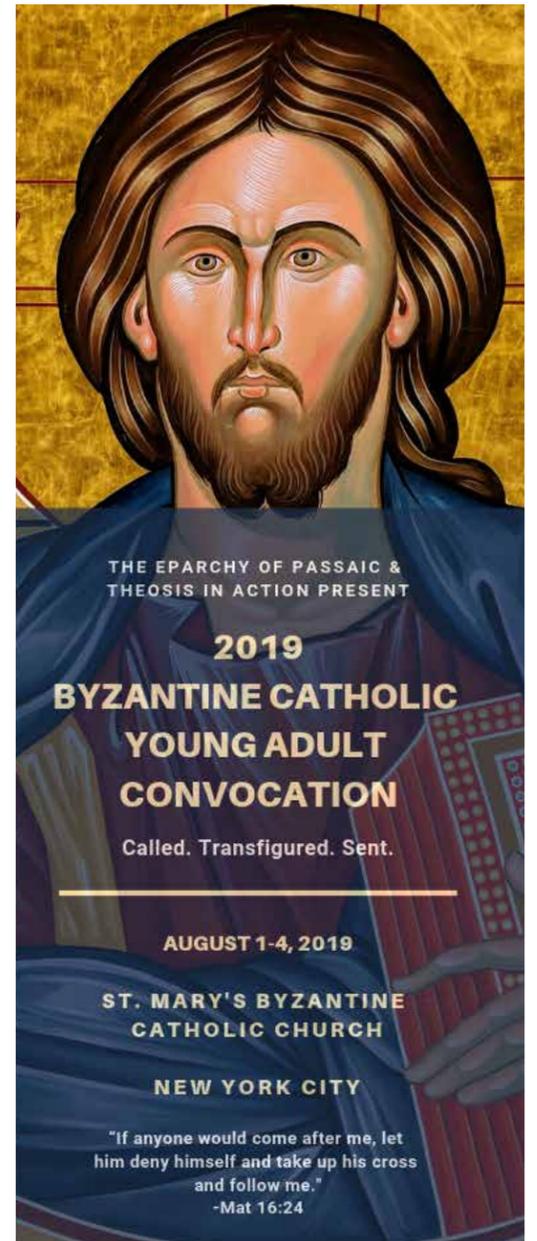
*Baby be a simple kind of man*

*Oh, won't you do this for me, son, if you can.*

It became clear to me, sitting in the living room in which I first listened to this song over 30 years ago, that I have not betrayed my dad's teachings at all. In fact, I am living them!

I was away for so long, I lost touch with myself and my own upbringing. I realized that I am the same person I was all those years ago when my father was teaching me how to be a good man. Being a father myself, I realized that truly, all I want for my children is for them to be satisfied, just as my dad wants me to be satisfied, or even better, to be at peace. Well, after listening to *Simple Man*, and having the flood gates opened, I can confidently say I am satisfied. I realized I was raised to love God, and to love music. I realize now that I have grown do all those things but, for a little while, I let my life get to complex. I allowed myself to get so wrapped up in Seminary life that I did, in manner of speaking, lose track of who I am and what is most important.

Whenever this happens, it has become clear to me that what one needs to do is to simply stop. If one takes the time to step back from the stress and business of life, and to allow God into one's heart through prayer, one will most likely find that things have simply become too complex. Taking the time to escape for a few moments and to think could be very beneficial. If we simplify our lives, both externally AND internally, we are able to make room for the things that really matter: God, love, family and self-care. Allowing God into our hearts makes Him a part of our lives so that we may follow Him and He will follow us. It is easy to lose sight of this; however, as one of the lines in *Simple Man* reminds us that when all seems lost, “Don't forget son, there is someone, up above.” I hope my parents themselves can be satisfied to know that I have not forgotten this and that I have indeed grown to be something that I can love and understand. I am satisfied to know that I am indeed the simple man they raised me to be. **ECL**



THE EPARCHY OF PASSAIC & THEOSIS IN ACTION PRESENT

### 2019 BYZANTINE CATHOLIC YOUNG ADULT CONVOCATION

Called. Transfigured. Sent.

AUGUST 1-4, 2019

ST. MARY'S BYZANTINE  
CATHOLIC CHURCH

NEW YORK CITY

"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."  
-Mat 16:24

TOGETHER WE ARE:  
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DISCIPLESHIP.  
TRANSFIGURED  
THROUGH A NEW LIFE  
IN CHRIST.  
SENT TO PROCLAIM  
THE GOSPEL TO THE  
WORLD.

Hosted by the Eparchy of Passaic and Theosis in Action, the convocation is open to young adults between the ages of 18-35 from all Eparchies in the Byzantine Catholic Metropolia.

This event will coincide with the feast of the Transfiguration, and will challenge participants to recognize their own call to discipleship.

Information about registration, events, and lodging options will be announced in early 2019. Stay tuned and save the date!

#### CONNECT WITH US!

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## UPCOMING EPARCHIAL AND PARISH EVENTS

### FEBRUARY, 2019

- 2 Encounter of Our Lord with Simeon and Anna  
*Solemn Holy Day*
- 3 Sunday of Zacchaeus  
*Pre-Lenten Sunday*
- 10 Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee  
*Pre-Lenten Sunday*
- 17 Sunday of the Prodigal Son  
*Pre-Lenten Sunday*
- 18 Presidents' Day  
*Civic Holiday \* Chancery closed*
- 23 First All Souls' Saturday
- 24 Sunday of Meatfare  
*Sunday of the Last Judgment*