



# EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

Official Publication of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic

VOL. LIII, NO. 6

JUNE 2017

## POPE, PRESIDENT TRUMP SPEAK OF HOPES FOR PEACE

Vatican City—Article by Cindy Wooden and Photograph ©2017 Catholic News Service

Pope Francis and U.S. President Donald Trump spent 30 minutes speaking privately in the library of the Apostolic Palace May 24, and as the president left, he told the pope, "I won't forget what you said."

The atmosphere at the beginning was formal and a bit stiff. However, the mood lightened when Pope Francis met the first lady, Melania Trump, and asked if she fed her husband "potica," a traditional cake in Slovenia, her homeland. There were smiles all around.

Pope Francis gave Trump a split medallion held together by an olive tree, which his interpreter told Trump is "a symbol of peace."

Speaking in Spanish, the pope told Trump, "I am giving you this because I hope you may be this olive tree to make peace."

The president responded, "We can use peace."

Pope Francis also gave the president a copy of his message for World Peace Day 2017 and told him, "I signed it personally for you." In addition, he gave Trump copies of his documents on "The Joy of the Gospel," on the family and "Laudato Si'" on the environment.

Knowing that Pope Francis frequently has quoted the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., Trump presented Pope Francis with a large gift box containing five of the slain civil rights leader's books, including a signed copy of "The Strength to Love."

"I think you will enjoy them," Trump told the pope. "I hope you do."

After meeting the pope, Trump went downstairs to meet Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, and Archbishop Paul Gallagher, the Vatican foreign minister. He was accompanied by Rex Tillerson, U.S. secretary of state, and H.R. Mc-

Master, his national security adviser. The meeting lasted 50 minutes.

Tillerson later told reporters that climate change did not come up in the meeting with the pope, but that U.S. officials had "a good exchange on the climate change issue" with Cardinal Parolin.

"The cardinal was expressing their view that they think it's an important issue," Tillerson said. "I think they were encouraging continued participation in the Paris accord. But we had a good exchange (on) the difficulty of balancing addressing climate change, responses to climate change, and ensuring that you still have a thriving economy and you can still offer people jobs so they can feed their families and have a prosperous economy."

Asked how Trump responded to Cardinal Parolin's encouragement to stick with the Paris climate agreement, Tillerson said: "The president indicated we're still thinking about that, that he hasn't made a final decision. He, I think, told both Cardinal



First Lady Melania and President Donald Trump with Pope Francis

when he told the pope, "I won't forget what you said."

The Vatican described the president's meetings with both the pope and with top Vatican diplomats as consisting of "cordial discussions," with both sides appreciating "the good existing bilateral relations between the Holy See and the United States of America, as well as the joint commitment in favor of life, and freedom of worship and conscience."



Pope Francis with President Donald Trump

Parolin and also told Prime Minister (Paolo) Gentiloni that this is something that he would be taking up for a decision when we return from this trip. It's an opportunity to hear from people. We're developing our own recommendation on that. So it'll be something that will probably be decided after we get home."

Tillerson also told reporters he did not know what Trump meant

"It is hoped that there may be serene collaboration between the state and the Catholic Church in the United States, engaged in service to the people in the fields of health care, education and assistance to immigrants," the Vatican said.

The discussions also included "an exchange of views" on international affairs and on "the promotion of peace in the world through political

negotiation and interreligious dialogue, with particular reference to the situation in the Middle East and the protection of Christian communities."

Because of the pope's weekly general audience, Pope Francis and Trump met at 8:30 a.m., an unusually early hour for a formal papal meeting. The early hour meant Pope Francis still could greet the thousands of pilgrims and visitors waiting for him in St. Peter's Square.

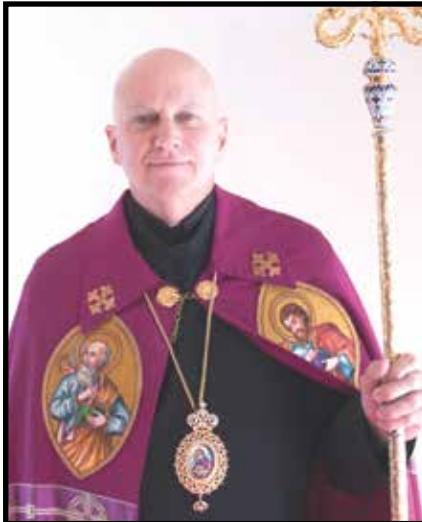
Many of those pilgrims, though, had a more difficult than normal time getting into the square. Security measures were tight, with hundreds of state police and military police patrolling the area and conducting more attentive searches of pilgrims' bags.

Reaching the St. Damasus Court-yard of the Apostolic Palace, where the U.S. flag flew for the morning, Trump was welcomed by Archbishop Georg Ganswein, prefect of the papal household, and a formation of 15 Swiss Guards.

Accompanied by the archbishop up an elevator and down a frescoed hallway, the president passed more Swiss Guards in the Clementine Hall.

Although the president and Pope Francis are known to have serious differences on issues such as immi-

...Continued on page 8



# I LIFT UP MY EYES...

*Pastoral Reflections of Bishop Kurt*

## REJOICE O PURE VIRGIN



Two thousand years ago, Jesus told his followers, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." His words were the culmination of thousands of years of divine history, beginning with God's revelation and promises, to Adam and Eve, to Abraham and David and the Prophets. God promised Eve after the first sin that her seed would attack the head of the serpent while it could only strike at his heel. God promised Abraham, a childless hundred year old man, that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore, and that all nations would find blessing in his descendants. God promised King David, the man after God's own heart, that his heir would sit on the throne forever. All of these promises were fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ, who took away our sins and opened the gates of Paradise again returning us to the Garden of Eden. As St. John says, He gave to those who believe in Him the power to become children of God. Jesus commanded us to bring this Good News to all nations.

I'm very happy to tell you that in the past year or two, members of our own Eparchy of Passaic have been bringing the Word of God in a spectacular manner to hungry souls across the country. At a recent event at the Pittsburgh Cathedral, over a hundred people gathered for a day and a half of scripture study with presentations and questions and answers from experts. These are not shallow presentations, but deep investigations into the entire corpus of scripture. As St. Luke tells us after the Resurrection, "And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself."

Then in Phoenix, our Byzantine churches, together with Melkite parishes of Arizona and California. Bishop John Pazak, Bishop Gerald Dino, Bishop Nicholas Samra, and your own bishop gathered at St. Stephen's Cathedral to join the people from around the western United States to read the scriptures together and be uplifted by the God's promises. One of the talks was the most fascinating explanation of life in the Garden of Eden, and God's plan to bring us back there through His Covenant with His Chosen People, and then through the Church. However, our return to the Garden will be unimaginably better than the original. He also showed how we already live among the beauties of the Garden in the Church today: bathing in the waters of Baptism, breathing in the Holy Spirit, and eating from the Tree of Eternal Life which is the cross of Jesus where He feeds us with his Body and Blood.

One of the joys of visiting our church in Phoenix has been to see the smile of Sister Jean Marie Cihota OSBM. Sister Jean Marie always radiated love. Her joy in Jesus Christ was like the

sun. When people from the north are traveling to Phoenix, they often look forward to seeing the sun. You can almost always count on having sun when you visit Phoenix. You could always count on the sun of Sister Jean Marie. But sometimes the sun burns. The radiance of Sister's joy never burned.

If there was ever anyone who showed on the outside what Christians should believe on the inside, it was Sister Jean Marie. Her smile and joy were not superficial. Every waking moment of her life was service to others. If God loved you, then Sister Jean Marie did too! She couldn't see any flaws in a child of God. She saw only the best in everyone she ever met. She was so full of life, it seemed like she would live forever. When Bishop John told me on Friday morning that Sister died the previous evening, I was sure that I had misunderstood. What was Sister doing when the Lord came for her? She was serving others, of course. She was working at the last minute on the Bible Conference, running back and forth between the offices and the parish center. In the conference room, she was making last minute preparations when her heart stopped. The Rector of the Cathedral, Father Diodoro, discovered her there and administered the last sacraments.

The next morning, I went to visit Sister Christopher to give my condolences. She told me very calmly and with a slight smile, "We never know when Jesus will come for us." Sister Christopher knew, as everyone who knew Sister Jean Marie, that she must be in heaven with no delay. I think most of us look forward to heaven as a place where God will make us completely happy leaving behind the sorrows of this world. However, I think Sister Jean Marie is someone who brought happiness to heaven with her. As we learned after her death, she had numerous health problems, but she didn't talk about them and she didn't complain. She just kept joyfully working, serving others, until God called her.

Sister Ruth, the mother superior of the convent in Uniontown, flew out to Phoenix to finish the arrangements. It was her plan to have the Divine Liturgy in Uniontown on the Wednesday before Ascension Thursday while it was still possible to sing "Christ is Risen!" As Sister Ruth said, "She was always such an Easter person." So the Parastas and Divine Liturgy in Uniontown were already scheduled. By Arizona law, the body couldn't leave the state without a death certificate, and the unexpected death together with the weekend were obstacles to a quick resolution. So Sister Ruth said she kept asking Jean Marie for help. Finally, the death certificate was complete with some help from special connections of the funeral director, but her plane flight was still a little too late. So Sister Ruth says that she kept saying, "Jeannie, you better help out. Jeannie, if you don't do something, you'll be late for your own funeral." Finally, her transfer was moved to a different flight, and everything was in order for her to arrive in Uniontown in time for an Easter Funeral. "Christ is Risen!"

Years ago, when the bishop asked for help out on the West Coast, Sister Jean Marie was reluctant to go. She said that she couldn't see starting

all over at her age. But then she came to her superiors and said, "I've been praying about it, and if I'm asked to go, I can't say no." Then she said, "There must be something that God wants to give me, and there must be something that God wants me to give them." What a beautiful way to look at God's requests, and so like Sister Jean Marie. It's easy to see our duties in life as burdens, although we carry that burden of our own free will, and carry it well. But Sister said, "God wants to give me something—and He wants me to give them something." For her every new task from God was a new adventure, no matter her age or health.

And indeed she did give so many things to the people out West. On the West Coast there grew up a very successful retreat for boys in the parish. It was originally called "Spiritual Bootcamp" and was unique because a boy could only attend with his father. Originally in the rugged wilderness of the mountains between Arizona and New Mexico, the boys and their fathers spent several days camping and listening to talks and praying together the prayers of the Church. The Spiritual Bootcamp evolved into the Alive in Christ event and under the guidance of the Bishop it moves around the West Coast. Well Sister Jean Marie looked at that success and said, "Why don't we have anything for the girls and women?" In no time, she organized the Myrrh Bearers Women's Retreat. Each year this retreat grew in popularity and was a place of healing and spiritual renewal for "daughters and mothers of all ages."

I was able to change my own flight back to New Jersey so that I could stay for the Parastas service in Phoenix. God honored Sister with four bishops in attendance, numerous priests from Arizona and California, as well as a deacon and Mother Superior. As we sing in the Parastas, "What joy is there in life that is not mixed with sorrow?" Everyone still felt the luminous joy of Sister, and our own sorrow for the emptiness in our lives, but also the joy of Jesus Christ who had taken her to a better place. Bishop Gerald told us that she had been the face of our Church at the Los Angeles Religious Education Congress every year for the past nine years. That four day convention is the largest in the United States. This year she told Bishop Gerald (with great joy of course) that she was so happy because not one person asked her this year if we are really Catholic. Instead they told her they were so looking forward to "your Liturgy", that is, the Byzantine Divine Liturgy celebrated at the Congress each year. That joyful proclamation was the culmination of a life of service in Religious Education. She was one of the original team that wrote the God With Us catechism series, a series even now being digitized to be used in the Ukrainian school systems of Canada at the expense of the Canadian government.

How did Sister live such a joy filled life? How can we have that same joy? I think it is easy to be joy filled when we think about God and His wonderful works for us. But then we look at the sorrows of the world and see the faults of the people around us, and we believe joy is something for the future, something in heaven. Sister Jean Marie saw the very best in everyone around her. If God made you, then you must be valuable. If

were made in the image and likeness of God, then Sister saw beauty in you. If God loves you, then so did she. I am certain that the secret to joy in this life is so be like Sister was, to see the very best in others, to see their good qualities and forgive their bad ones. And when she saw the best in oth-

ers, then she wanted to serve them too. Indeed she died in service—planning the next Myrrh Bearers Women's Retreat and running around preparing for the Bible Conference. She saw God's image in us and wanted us to see it too. Jesus, the Bridegroom, came for her when she least

expected, and He found her busy at His work.

*+Kurt Burnette*

## DEGREES CONFERRED AT BYZANTINE CATHOLIC SEMINARY Pittsburgh, PA



Center: Father Robert Pipta, Subdeacon Thomas Moses (Melkite Eparchy of Newton), Bishop John Pazak (Eparchy of Phoenix), Helenanne Hochendorner (Archeparchy of Pittsburgh), Metropolitan William Skurla, Subdeacon Bryan Scotton (Eparchy of Parma), and Bishop John Kudrick

Following a Moleben prayer service in honor of Ss. Cyril and Methodius, patrons of the Byzantine Catholic Seminary, Metropolitan William Skurla, Archbishop of Pittsburgh, conferred diplomas upon three graduates of the Seminary's School of Theology on May 12, 2017. Board members, faculty, alumni, staff, family and friends were in attendance as diplomas were conferred upon Subdeacon Thomas Moses, Subdeacon Bryan Scotton and Helenanne Hochendorner. A luncheon honoring the graduates was held after the service. The Seminary rejoices in the accomplishments of these fine individuals.

The Byzantine Catholic Seminary is a com-

munity of mentors, teachers, and students which forms leaders for the Church in an environment of Christian unity, integrity, collaboration, and missionary spirit.

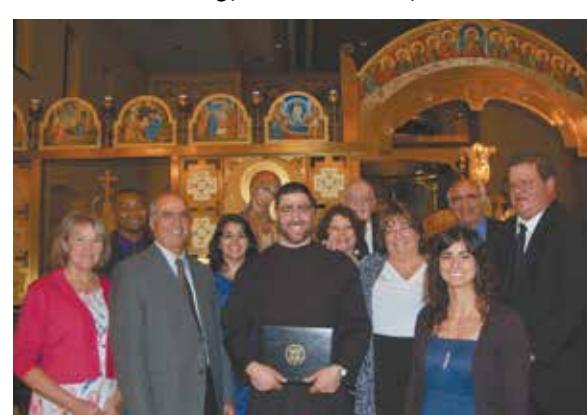
Founded in 1950 at its current location on the Northside of Pittsburgh PA, it is the only free-standing, English speaking, Byzantine Catholic Theological Seminary in North America. It is the official seminary of the Byzantine Catholic Metropolitan Church of Pittsburgh, is open to all the North American Eastern Eparchies, and welcomes all those seeking the knowledge possessed by the Eastern ecclesial traditions. As a school of theology, the Seminary is authorized

by the Pennsylvania Department of Education and Accredited by the Association of Theological Schools.

The Seminary operates as a non-profit 501(c) (3) organization incorporated in Pennsylvania, and is governed by a Board of Directors under the leadership of the Metropolitan of the Archeparchy of Pittsburgh. As an Eastern Christian Center of Learning, the Seminary will continue to prepare men for priestly ministry, and serve as a center for the general public interested in theology, spirituality, liturgy, and scripture.



Subdeacon Bryan Scotton with family and guests



Subdeacon Thomas Moses with family and guests



Helenanne Hochendorner with family and guests

### 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. • Eparchial Victim Advocate • 516.457.5684

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# PEOPLE YOU KNOW

## IN HARRISBURG...

Congratulations to Francis Nehilla, who represented Saint Ann Byzantine Catholic Church in the Catholic Faith Bee sponsored by the Diocese of Harrisburg, PA, on April 24, 2017. The Catholic Faith Bee encourages 7th and 8th grade students to learn more about the Catholic faith and to challenge the students through competition.

Francis is the son of Stephen and Melanie Nehilla and a member of Saint Ann Byzantine Catholic Church, Harrisburg, PA. Father Michael Popson is pastor of Saint Ann Church.



Mrs. Melanie Nehilla and Francis Nehilla

## IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY...

On Sunday, May 7, the Epiphany of our Lord-Montgomery County Mission held a reception following Divine Liturgy in honor of Larry Barayani and his wife Debbie. Larry has been the cantor at the Mission from nearly its inception. The Barayani's will be moving from the Washington, DC area to North Carolina. Larry has been a true selfless servant to our mission church.



Father Lee Gross, Larry and Debbie Barayani, Father John Basarab and Deacon Elmer Pekarik



Father Lee Gross and Larry and Barayani

### HOLY LAND PILGRIMAGE

**10 DAYS: JANUARY 30 - FEBRUARY 8, 2018**

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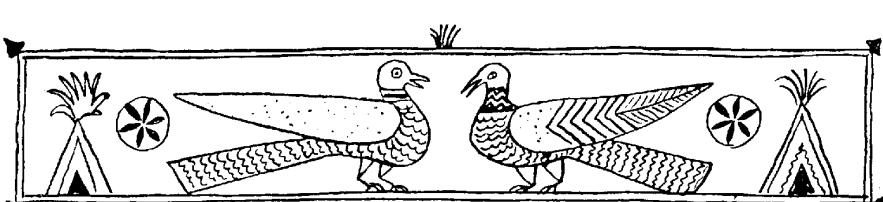
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**FOR A DETAILED BROCHURE PLEASE CONTACT: FR YASTISHOCK**  
Tel: (732) 255-6272 / Email: czaremy@comcast.net

**WALK IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF JESUS!!  
DON'T MISS THIS TRIP OF A LIFETIME!!**



# AROUND THE EPARCHY



## IN POCONO SUMMIT...

### *Flowery Sunday Celebration at Saint Nicholas*

The children of Saint Nicholas ECF program and the Catechumens preparing for Holy Enlightenment during the Paschal Season lead a joyful procession into the church before the Divine Liturgy of Palm Sunday. Kimberly Fedor is the ECF Coordinator at Saint Nicholas Church, where 12 children are preparing for their First Confession and Corporate Communion and five Catechumens are preparing for their Baptism.



*Epistle Reader Alex Zidock leads the procession into church*



*Joyous children preparing for their First Confession*



*Catechumens Amanda and Henry will soon be clothed with Christ!*

## IN PITTSBURGH...

### *Priesthood Class of 1977 Celebrates 40th Anniversary!*

On May 3, 2017, the class of 1977 had a reunion at Saints Cyril and Methodius Byzantine Catholic Seminary in Pittsburgh, PA, to celebrate their 40th anniversary of priestly ministry.



*Father Frank Firko (Pittsburgh); Father James Kubajak (Parma); Father Charles Yastishock (Passaic); and Father Michael Hayduk (Parma)*



*Father Charles Yastishock (Passaic); Father Frank Firko (Pittsburgh); Father Michael Hayduk (Parma), and Seminary Rector Father Robert Pipta*

## SUNDAY AFTERNOON DIVINE LITURGY IN BAYONNE PARISH **SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST**

15 EAST 26TH STREET, BAYONNE, NJ

**All Welcome to Attend!**

For the convenience of the area faithful, Bishop Kurt has introduced the celebration of a Sunday afternoon Divine Liturgy at Saint John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church, Sundays at 4 PM

Father Marcel Szabo, Pastor, together with Byzantine Catholic clergy from Northern and Central New Jersey, will provide a weekly schedule of service which will include:

- The Holy Mystery of Reconciliation prior to services
- 3:30 PM - Prayer Service (Moleben) to Blessed Miriam Teresa
- 4:00 PM - Celebration of the Sunday Divine Liturgy.

**Saint John Church is the baptismal parish of  
Blessed Miriam Teresa Demjanovich.**

## 2017 SUMMER MUSIC PROGRAM OF THE ARCHEPARCHY OF PITTSBURGH

*Renewing Our Chant: Melody, Harmony, Prayer*

This year, the Byzantine Catholic Archeparchy of Pittsburgh is inaugurating a regular summer church music program for cantors, choir directors, and section leaders. For 2017, the program will consist of a three-day master class and workshop to be held on July 12-14 at Saints Cyril and Methodius Byzantine Catholic Seminary in Pittsburgh, PA.

The program is open to experienced cantors and choir directors in the Byzantine Catholic Church; some experience with reading music is required. The program will show church singers:

- How to improve the flow, pacing, and effectiveness of liturgical singing
- How to use extemporized natural harmony to enhance plain chant
- How to renew liturgical music in the parish, and increase participation

In addition to classroom instruction, students will receive individualized vocal coaching and the opportunity to lead services, with credit toward cantor certification.

The program is directed by Deacon Jeffrey Mierzejewski, with additional instructors from the Archeparchy of Pittsburgh and the Eparchy of Parma. Our goal is to enable cantors to develop and perfect their craft, and take home tools and expertise to benefit their parishes and eparchies.

A registration fee of \$200, due by July 1, covers all materials, meals, and instruction for the three day course. Lodging at the seminary is available for an additional \$100; both men and women can be accommodated, on separate floors of the seminary.

The course is limited to 24 students, and we ask that each parish send no more than one person to the workshop unless additional spaces become available.

For more information, or to register, please contact:

Deacon Jeffrey Mierzejewski mci@archpitt.org (412) 735-1676



## Let Your Soul Rejoice in the Lord

### 2017 Altar Server Congress

### Aug 5th – Aug 9th 2017

Carpathian Village Canadensis, PA

Come and experience a wonderful fun filled event with fellow altar servers from across the Eparchy of Passaic.



Have fun while learning more about your important role as an Altar Server!

This event is underwritten by the Eparchy

Registration by July 31st

<http://www.eparchyofpassaic.com>

For questions and details contact Deacon Stephen Russo

DcnStephen@gmail.com

## “HONORING OUR ANCESTORS”

SATURDAY, JUNE 3, 2017 AT 8:30 A.M. (REGISTRATION)

Place: Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church, 1900 Brooks Blvd, Hillsborough NJ 08844

St. Mary Byzantine Catholic Church in Hillsborough, New Jersey, is pleased to announce that it is sponsoring a genealogy and history conference as a part of its centennial celebration!

Do you have ancestors who migrated from the Old Austro-Hungarian Empire? Want to know more about the people clothed in secrecy who came from the mountain regions of Eastern Europe? Are you not sure what to call yourselves when people ask, "What are you?" Do you say that you're Slovak, Ukrainian, Polish, Austrian? Are you not sure what nationality your ancestors were? You may say that your ancestors came from the "old country". Which one is that "old country"? This conference may be the answer to your prayers. Come learn how to begin doing your genealogy from experts. Come learn about your unique ancestry. Come and learn how to begin to search for your own personal history. This is one stop shopping. The price is eminently modest to attend. Just \$40 will get you some coffee and light refreshments and a light lunch as well as a potpourri of knowledge to share with the rest of your family. Join us for a fun day of learning. Bring your baptismal documents from the old country. We can assist you in translating them. Bring in copies of your family charts and show us where you have hit your brick wall. Maybe we can help you break through it. Write down what you know and what you wish to know. What great opportunities await! There will be time during breaks, after lunch, and after 3 p.m. to consult with us. Come celebrate your heritage, whatever it is. You will be among people who share your enthusiasm.

The speakers' bios and a summary of their proposed lectures is attached. If you wish to attend, you must pre-register as seating will be very limited. Fill out the bottom portion of this sheet of paper and send it with your check in the required amount of \$40 per person to: Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church, 1900 Brooks Blvd, Hillsborough NJ 08844. Please register before and remember it is first come, first served. The seats will be filled quickly!

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ \* Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount Enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Number of people attending: \_\_\_\_\_

\*Needed to email an ancestor chart to you to complete and bring to the conference for help (if you wish).

Contact Info: Kathryn and Tom Peters: 908-253-8147

## 2018 SYNOD OF BISHOPS ON YOUNG PEOPLE, THE FAITH AND VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT

from *Archbishop William C. Skurla*

**W**hen I have visited our parishes across the country and met with the bishops, clergy, and people of our Byzantine Catholic Church in the United States, the number one concern shared is the addressing of the need to reach out to our children, youth, and young adults in our churches. We are not alone in this concern. At meetings for the Catholic and other Christian churches, all churches mention looking for ways to speak to and teach the next generation.

The October 2018 Synod of Bishops will focus upon the topic, "Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment." Cardinal Lorenzo Baldasseri has presented the document, which includes the questions that will be considered, the procedures which will guide the process of preparation, and the ways in which the Synod will proceed.

The Ruthenian Byzantine Catholic Church will participate and be represented at the 2018 Synod of Bishops. All Roman Catholic Episcopal Conferences, all Eastern Catholic Churches, and other ecclesial institutions throughout the world, are required to respond to the questions in order to prepare for this 2018 Ordinary Synod in Rome. The problem of gathering information from over a billion people, discussing it for a month, and then coming up with an action plan is more than a little complicated.

We are asking you what you think. Instead of mailing paper copies of your answers to me, we will collect the information through the website of the Byzantine Catholic Archeparchy and our three Eparchies in the United States. Your responses will be read by me and sorted into categories. You can be anonymous or give your name if you wish.

I personally read several thousands of the responses from the past two Synods which were sent to me from all of our churches in the United States. The responses came from Florida to Alaska, conservative to progressive, old to young, and from faithful to less active members. There were amazing responses. Your actual responses were used as a part of my presentation to the Holy Fathers and members of the Synod of Bishops.

Some people, and even I, ask the question: "What difference will my response make?"

The answer is that one Byzantine Catholic person's comment to find a way to pass on the faith to our young people was the focus of mine and of several other presentations at the Synod on the Family. The response of a few has contributed to redirecting the entire Catholic Church worldwide to turn toward the need of our youth.

What we need now is information on what is working in your family and in parish programs which bring the faith and encourage vocations. If nothing is happening in your parish, what do you think could help bring the faith to the next generation of Byzantine Catholics? Your comments and ideas will be heard and presented to Pope Francis and the Synod Fathers. The voices of the youth are especially powerful. In addition to providing guidance to the Synod, your ideas and successful programs will be shared with the parishes of the Byzantine Catholic Church.

I thank you for your cooperation and for taking the time to respond to the questionnaire when it appears on your episcopal website: **www.EparchyofPassaic.com**



JUNE 19-22, 2017  
WASHINGTON RETREAT HOUSE  
WASHINGTON, DC



SPONSORED BY:  
THE ORIENTALE LUMEN FOUNDATION  
THE SOCIETY OF ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM  
EASTERN CHURCHES JOURNAL  
EASTERN CHRISTIAN PUBLICATIONS

Fairfax, Virginia – The theme for the Orientale Lumen XXI Conference on June 19-22, 2017 in Washington, DC will be "Chieti and Crete: Two Historical Events." Speakers and participants will discuss the Chieti Agreed Statement of September 2016 in which the Orthodox-Catholic International Dialogue agreed on the role of the Bishop of Rome during the First Millennium. The second topic will be the Great and Holy Council of the Orthodox Church held on Crete in June 2016 which produced, among other documents, a statement on the ecumenical relationship of the Orthodox Church with other Christian Churches. The conference is a "grass roots" ecumenical movement open to the public that includes laity, clergy, theologians and hierarchs from the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Eastern Catholic and Oriental Orthodox Churches.

Speakers for this year will include:

- Archbishop Job of Telmessos  
Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, Chambesy, Switzerland  
Professor and Orthodox Co-Chair of the International Theological Dialogue

- Metropolitan Kallistos of Diokleia (by pre-recorded video)  
Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, Oxford, England

- Msgr. Paul McPartlan  
Carl J. Peter Professor of Systematic Theology and Ecumenism The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC

- Fr. Thomas FitzGerald  
Holy Cross Orthodox Theological Seminary, Boston, MA

- Fr. Hyacinthe Destivelle, OP  
Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, The Vatican

- Mr. Michael Haldas  
Author, Educator, Catechist, St. George Greek Orthodox Church, Bethesda, MD

- Father Ron Roberson, CSP (Moderator)  
Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs  
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, DC

The agenda will include plenary lectures and panel discussions, a variety of prayer services, and opportunities for fellowship among all participants. The conference will begin Monday afternoon and conclude with lunch on Thursday. Early registration is due by May 1st with full registration in advance due by June 1st. Meals are included and overnight accommodations can be arranged through the conference office. Call 703-691-8862 or register online at <http://olfoundation.net/conferences/ol-xxi-june-19-22-2017/>.

## POPE, PRESIDENT TRUMP SPEAK OF HOPES FOR PEACE

*Continued from page 1*

gration, economic policy and climate change, the pope told reporters 11 days before the meeting that he would look first for common ground with the U.S. leader.

"There are always doors that are not closed," the pope told reporters May 13. "We have to find doors that are at least a little open in order to go in and speak about things we have in common and go forward."

After leaving the Vatican, the president was driven across Rome for meetings with Italian President Sergio Mattarella and Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni.

Asked by reporters there how his meeting with the pope went, Trump responded, "Great."

"He is something," Trump said. "We had a fantastic meeting."

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six months the Temporary Protected Status program for Haitian citizens in the United States.

The second article was about the budget plan the Trump White House released May 23. L'Osservatore Romano, the Vatican newspaper, noted that it contained cuts in subsidies "for the poorest segments of the population" and "a drastic -- 10 percent -- increase for military spending."

What is more, the newspaper said, "the budget also includes financing for the construction of the wall along the border with Mexico. We are talking about more than \$1.6 billion."

The border wall is an issue where Pope Francis and President Trump have a very clear and public difference of opinion.

In February 2016, shortly after celebrating a Mass in Mexico just yards from the border, Pope Francis was asked by reporters about then-candidate Trump's promise to build a wall the entire length of the border.

"A person who thinks only of building walls, wherever it may be, and not of building bridges, is not Christian," the pope said.

Trump, asked by reporters to comment on that, said Mexico was "using the pope as a pawn," and he said it was "disgraceful" for a religious leader to question someone's faith.

On the eve of the pope's meeting with Trump, Jesuit Father Antonio Spadaro, editor of an influential Italian Jesuit journal, noted that the differences between the two were drawing a lot of attention. However, he wrote, "Francis, the pope of bridges, wants to speak with any head of state who asks him to because he knows that in crises" like the world faces today "there are not only absolute 'good guys' and absolute 'bad guys.'"

"The history of the world is not a Hollywood film," Father Spadaro wrote on his blog May 23.

The pope's approach, he said, is "to meet the major players in the field in order to reason together and to propose to everyone the greatest good, exercising the soft power that seems to me to be the specific trait of his international policy."

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# Saint Nicholas Pilgrimage

**July 9, 2017**

Carpathian Village / Saint Nicholas Shrine  
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11:00 AM	Welcome and Blessing of Pilgrims Begins (Picnic Pavilion)
11:15 AM	Devotion to Saint Nicholas (Shrine Altar)
11:30 AM	Food Service Begins (Picnic Pavilion & Upper Tent)
12:30 PM	Confessions Begin (Shrine Gazebo)
1:00 PM	Healing Service with Anointing (Shrine Altar) Children's Program (Lower Tent)
2:50 PM	Procession from Lower Tent to Shrine Altar
3:00 PM	Hierarchical Divine Liturgy w/Tonsure & Minor Orders (Shrine Altar) Blessing of Distribution of Special Saint Nicholas Medallions Anointing with Oil of Saint Nicholas from Bari, Italy
6:00 PM	Panachida For Deceased Clergy and Pilgrims (in Church Slavonic)

Golf Club Car Service available for those with difficulty walking. Restroom Facilities for those with physical disabilities also available. Let's pray that God blesses us with great weather and a beautiful day, through the intercession of the Most Holy Theotokos and Our Holy Father Nicholas, of course!

## SPIRITUAL REFLECTIONS

*Father Lewis Rabayda*



### BEING SONS OF LIGHT IN A DARK WORLD

When the Trinity created the world and existence out of nothing, there was first a void of darkness. We know this from physics as well, that darkness is the absence of light. So too, in every generation and in every person, there is a darkness and a void until they are filled with the light of Christ and formed into "sons of light" by learning the Catechism set down first by Christ, then by His Apostles, and then through the Church, who is guided by the Holy Spirit. We experience this darkness all around us: our culture, our entertainment, our government, our work and school environments, in our communities, and even in our families. Unless we are constantly learning, praying, and practicing God's commandments in our lives, we will not remain in the light but will drift into the darkness of error and deceit.

These are lofty and spiritual words yes, but they are the appropriate allusion to our reality. We have seen the darkness taking over the world through our lives. Indeed the darkness of temptation and rejection of God's Will and commandments has gone on since Adam and Eve, but we have experienced a greater turning away from what recently was a generally faithful Western Culture. These

dark seeds have been growing and producing bad fruit which, when eaten, has been further poisoning our culture and societies. We experience this darkness even in our own families, which has the possibility to lead us to despair and lamentations to God for our troubles. But we should not despair; all is not lost, because it is in this darkness that Jesus Christ wants to shine so that He can conquer it again.

Again. Jesus Christ by His death and resurrection has once and for all conquered the death of sin and the power of the Devil over us. It is in this post-resurrection and post-ascension world that Christ wants to now spread His Good News of salvation through those whom He saved. It is through the faithful who make up His One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church that Jesus Christ will spread the news of salvation to the whole world. Salvation is accomplished, but the work of spreading the news of this salvation and the news of this accomplishment is left to us mere humans.

"While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light" (Jn 12:36). We have been given the light of Christ at our Baptism, we now glory in the light of Christ after His

Resurrection and Ascension, and if we keep our faith in that light, in that salvation already accomplished, then we will indeed become sons of light and shine in the darkness of this world.

We may find it difficult to shed light on the modern errors and lapses of morality because it will cause us great pain and uncomfortable social situations. But with the help of Christ we will have the courage to expose these errors and to share the healing of Christ that accompanies those who are "sons of light." When we are living as "sons of light," we will not be afraid of the darkness, we will not be afraid to stand up for the laws of God and to expose sin for what it is. Because as sons and daughters of God, we practice the example of love that Jesus has shown us. It is through this love, compassion, and refusal to accept sin, that we will be doing the work Jesus has commissioned us to do, we will be spreading the Good News of salvation and the forgiveness of sins to all. It is by these actions of each one of us that will change the darkness we live in, it is by our sharing of the light we have been given to each person we meet, that, one by one, the darkness will turn into light, and will no longer overcome us. **ECL**

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# FAITH AND COMMUNITY ISSUES

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

## DOUBT: THOMAS' GIFT, THE CHRISTIAN'S LIFE CHALLENGE

Does "Doubt" have a place in Christian Life? If so, what is its role? What is the relationship if any, between Doubt and Faith, merely antithetical or is there a place where the two seemingly disparate qualities have a moment of communality, and does Joy find a place to live in the midst of all this controversy? In this Chapter of *God and Man*, Metropolitan Anthony presents points more for discussion and further thought than dogmatic answers to the mysteries of Doubt and Faith and the role, if any of Joy in this consideration.

Metropolitan Anthony takes on the concept of bewilderment and perplexity as the foundation of doubt. For Metropolitan Anthony, bewilderment and/or perplexity comes about when one takes a single dynamic moment and generalizes all experience from the example of that one moment. This activity is tantamount to acting out the old adage of *putting the cart before the horse*. The hope Metropolitan Anthony envisions is that through the process of entering into more profound thought and conceptualization of the concepts of doubt, perplexity and bewilderment a deeper understanding and appreciation could be had in the areas of "faith, doubt, reality and truth" (1971, *God and Man*, A. Bloom, p. 32).

Metropolitan Anthony, while admitting his academic background, is more scientific than theological ("I am a scientist by training and a physician so you will not find any depth of philosophical probing into things ..." p. 32.) He defends his position as a human among humans attempting to make some kind of sense out of the human experience. Metropolitan Anthony then launches out into an understanding of faith from the perspective of the intellect to rationalize an answer to a question, when the answer to the particular question eludes discovery the vacuum is filled with a statement or thought that expresses an acceptance of the situation *in faith*, the mind having been darkened in the pursuit of the reality. While this may be the pragmatic response to a knotty issue for Metropolitan Anthony this kind

of response mimics but is not actual faith.

For Metropolitan Anthony, faith as understood and expressed by the great men of faith of religion in general, Christianity in particular is encapsulated in chapter 11 of the Letter to the Hebrews. For Metropolitan Anthony, faith is the "certainty of things unseen" (1971, *God and Man*, p.32). The issue in Metropolitan Anthony's understanding is that a greater emphasis is laid upon the unseen aspects and little to no acceptance of the certainty aspect of the moment.

For the men (and women) of faith, the basis rests upon an experience of the unseen issue. Arriving at the moment when the person has stilled all movement of thought, imagination, emotion, any distraction by which the individual can objectify the experience, the experience becoming a part of pre-cognitive knowledge the individual becomes totally absorbed into the experience; there is nothing else in reality only the fullness of the experience. At this point objectification for the purposes of analysis is no longer possible since the experience *per se* is the only reality at this moment there is no past, no future, only the present *now*.

When such an experience has God as its focal point, the one who experiences the moment is content to let it be as a moment of utter fulfillment even though there is no tangible evidence of such a phenomenon occurring. One becomes a "witness of things unseen and yet experienced" (1971, *Man and God* p. 33). When the moment passes and the person is now in the present, what remains to address the now past experience is faith according to Metropolitan Anthony.

At this point, Metropolitan Anthony presents a *monitum*, a warning concerning the acceptance of the experiences of another on a faith basis without testing the witnessing for its veracity. For Metropolitan Anthony, it is the absolute acceptance of another's experience testimony that when revealed as false becomes perplexity in the one who accepted the testimony as truth. It is

in the process of discerning testing the evidence presented as to the veracity or fallacy of the information presented that the truth is revealed; for Metropolitan Anthony, this process, scientific investigation, at least for the scientist, is a cause for joy, for through the destruction of the hypothesis by the scientific method of research the reality, the truth at first hidden, is revealed.

Metropolitan Anthony makes another distinction in the process the scientist in his investigating methodology seeks to find in as objective a manner as possible the reality that exists beyond the scenarios that are being tested for their accuracy and veracity by the scientist. The reaction to a successful discovery of the reality in question by the Scientist is joy. This discovery of the previously unknown is spread and by so doing it invites further investigation and testing which in its own time reveals more of the truth that has yet to be revealed.

An important application of this knowledge is found in the quest for God. When confronted by tragic events in life the question, *where is God in all this?* is begged and, for Metropolitan Anthony, the answer lies in the nexus of the chaos in the events at question. It is in the stillness of the hurricane's eye that the presence of God can be found. The recognition of that Sacred Presence in the midst of the roiling waves of life, the experience of that Presence unseen yet real grants an assurance that can call forth actions of great courage and performed with serenity and calm assurance. In such experience is found not only faith, not only courage or witness but indeed, Joy in the midst of all chaos there is Joy, for there, according to Metropolitan Anthony, is the throne of God.

In the next installment, an investigation of the "Light Invisible—Satisfying the Thirst for Happiness" by Mitrofan Vasil'evich Lodyzhenskii will be undertaken, part of which will reveal his investigation of the lives of both Seraphim of Sagarov and Francis of Assisi revealing both the asceticism and the joy therein as discovered by these two recognized mystics. **ECL**



# LIFE, LOVE, AND THE HUMAN PERSON

*By Ann M. Koshute, MTS*

## WELCOME, AS YOU ARE WELCOMED

The summer sun has finally made its appearance and the winter blues give way to a more relaxed attitude. Longer days mean more time for working in the yard, sitting on the porch with neighbors and friends, and much needed time away from work and responsibilities at home. On vacation we discover new places, meet new people, encounter different cultures; or, just lounge and relax. Wherever summer vacation takes you, one activity to add to your itinerary is going to church. There's no vacation from worshiping and thanking God, and it shouldn't feel like a chore or an interruption of the day's a fun and relaxation. It's a privilege – and a miracle –

that we can find Christ in His Temple virtually anywhere in the world. Meeting Him in places and communities away from our own can be an enriching experience for us, and for the people we meet there.

Over the years, I've visited a lot of churches, both here and abroad, and worshipped with all kinds of people. I've also lived in several different cities throughout my life, which means I've been a "new parishioner" a half dozen or so times. From the parish I was raised in, to those I attended in college and grad school, through a few moves in my professional life, God has always provided a

Byzantine Catholic Church for me – even if it meant travelling some distance. There's lots of stress in pulling up stakes and moving to a new town, starting a "new life," and getting acquainted with new people. It's a blessing to have a Greek Catholic community to offer familiar, and familial, comfort in an unfamiliar place. The feeling of being an "outsider" when you get to town floats away with the incense. We lift our hands together in communal sacrifice and praise – not just Greek Catholics, but brothers and sisters loving God and being loved by Him. This is how it should be. Whether visiting a parish while on vacation or moving to a new town and this has been my

experience over the years – but not always.

Too often we're so wrapped up in our own heads on Sunday morning to take much notice of the people around us. We're thinking about the week ahead, what we'll make for dinner, or that we're tired and would rather still be in bed. But I'd submit that all of us should start thinking more about the people around us at Liturgy, especially those who aren't parishioners. The Church is God's home, and by extension it's our home, too. It's our home because God has invited us there; He has welcomed us as His own, invited us to make ourselves comfortable and to feel safe and loved. It is with this same sense of genuine care that we should also welcome others into our parish community.

Years ago, I was joined a parish in a new town. The first couple of Sundays I slipped into the pew before Liturgy, and back out at end, largely unnoticed. With a new job came another move, and the realization that over the course of a year at that parish no one had ever welcomed or spoken

an unprompted word to me. Not one person. I'd smile and say hello to people, and receive a polite "Hello" in return, but nothing more. There was never a feeling of animosity, and I would never presume to judge their hearts. Perhaps it was complacency, the sameness of a routine performed every week for a lifetime, causing a forgetfulness that isn't mean-spirited, just unaware. But this is a forgetfulness we can't afford, and it's not how we wish to be treated when we're "on the outside." We certainly don't want to be "forgotten" by God, either.

Perhaps not being welcomed by my brothers and sisters in Christ is particularly stinging because it reminds me of the times and the ways in which I am thoughtless, unwelcoming, and just too lazy to think about anyone but myself. How often have I seen a "stranger" in church and had a fleeting thought about who they are and where they're from, and then retreated into my own thoughts once again? I'm too embarrassed to answer – and maybe you are, too. Let's put that aside, and think about we can be more mindful of

others the next time – and every time – we gather for Divine Liturgy. Whether at the parish to worship during their vacation, joining the parish, or perhaps coming to church for the first time, let's be attentive to new people in our midst, and greet them with a smile and a kind word. It's significant that when we receive the Holy Mysteries we are called by name. The Mysteries are our personal encounters with Christ, in which He welcomes us into His life, and sends us into the world to welcome others. Likewise, we should offer our name to visitors and ask for theirs. It takes time and effort to extend ourselves to others, but it's who we are and the mission to which we're called.

A welcoming smile and a kind word makes all the difference in the world to the "outsider" entering our community. In God's Temple, there are no "strangers." This Sunday, when you see someone new in the pews, resist the urge to sink back into comfortable obliviousness. Reach out instead, and welcome the "stranger" as a friend – just as you're welcomed again and again by God. **ECL**



## SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

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

### THE UPPER ROOM: THE ORIGINAL CHURCH

**S**peaking of Himself, Jesus said, "Foxes have lairs and birds have nests but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head" (Luke 9:58). Jesus was born in a borrowed stable and buried in a borrowed tomb. He also borrowed the place where the Last Supper took place, which the Gospels simply call "the Upper Room."

As pilgrims to Jerusalem from Galilee, Jesus and his disciples needed some place to celebrate the Passover. It is widely believed that this second-story room belonged to the mother of Saint Mark. Mark 14:12-16 details how the Apostles were led to the Upper Room. Mark himself may well be the "man carrying a water jar" (Mark 14:13). They seem to have used this room from Holy Thursday until sometime after Pentecost. This is where the hid in the confused hours after Jesus' arrest and death and where they were still gathered in the days after His Resurrection.

In course of the Passover meal in the Upper Room, Jesus took bread, said the Jewish blessing, broke the bread and gave it to His disciples saying, "Take, eat: this is my body." Then He took a chalice, gave thanks (again, the Jewish prayer over wine), and gave it to them saying, "Drink of this, all of you: This is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26: 26-28). Note carefully that Jesus said certain words and performed certain gestures over bread and wine, identified them as His Body and Blood, and commanded His Apostles to do the same "in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). In technical terms, we say that this is how Jesus *instituted* the Eucharist as a sacrament and *ordained* His Apostles to be its ministers.

We may forget that the same Upper Room was the scene for most of the events surrounding our Lord's Resurrection. The Gospels record at least two times when the risen Lord appeared to His Apostles there (John 20: 19-23 and 24-29). On at least one occasion, He took food with them there (Mark 16:14; Luke 24:36-43). In His first

appearance in the Upper Room (John 20:19-23), Jesus gave his Apostles the gift of the Holy Spirit and empowered them to forgive sins; that is, to share with others the reconciliation that comes from His sacrifice on the Cross.

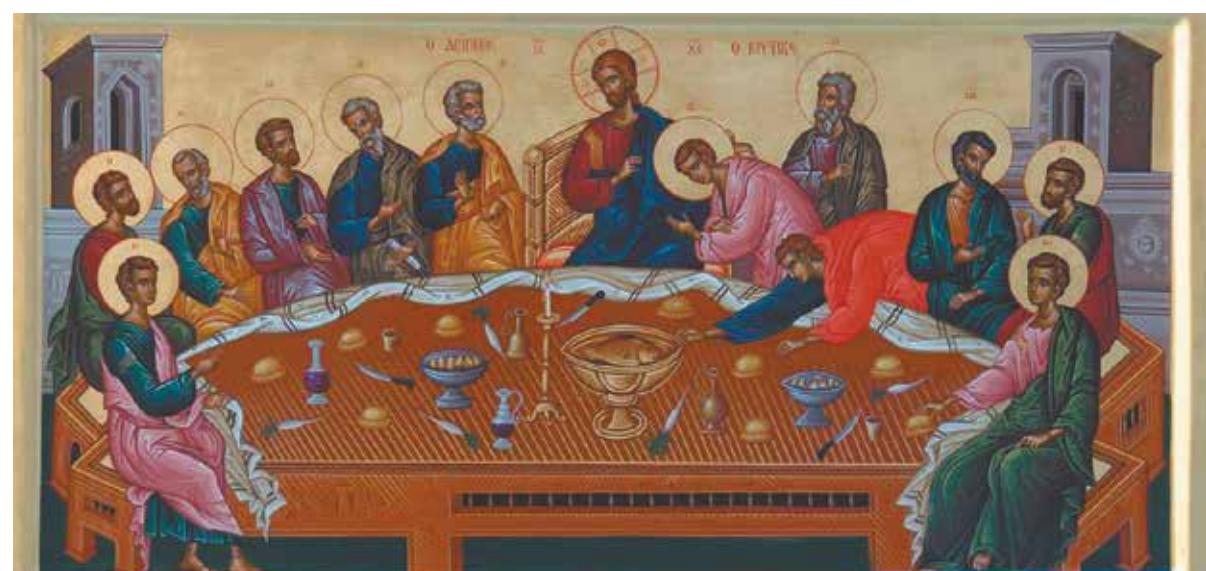
It was in the Upper Room that Jesus first promised to send down the Holy Spirit upon His Apostles (John 14:15-26; John 16:7), and it was there that the promised Spirit came down on the Jewish feast of Pentecost (Acts 2). Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the Apostles began to preach the Gospel to all nations from the Upper Room. The one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church of Jesus Christ was founded in the Upper Room.

St. Luke paints a vivid picture of the first Church in Acts (1:12-26). There are around 120 persons of whom only the Apostles are named. Special notice is also paid to the Mother of Jesus and His blood relatives. The Apostles, whom Jesus singled out to celebrate the Eucharist, to forgive sins, and to preach the Gospel, already occupy a central place. This is a Church with an ordained hierarchy.

But there was already a problem. Judas' betrayal and suicide meant there were only eleven Apostles, not twelve. The choice of Matthias to

replace Judas was made by prayer and by casting lots, the same method by which the Jerusalem priesthood assigned roles (Luke 1:9). The inclusion of Matthias among the Twelve shows that the Apostles were empowered to pass on their authority. This is the first example of the apostolic succession that links every legitimate Catholic and Orthodox bishop personally to one of the Apostles and, ultimately, to Christ.

Preachers of various denominations often contrast the "New Testament Church" to what they see as the "human traditions" "added" by Catholics and Orthodox under "pagan" influence. But what picture do the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostle actually paint of the Church in the Upper Room in the first year of its life? There was teaching, fellowship, communal liturgy (the "breaking of the bread") and formal prayers (Acts 2:42). The Mother of Jesus was recognized. The Apostles and their chosen successors, empowered by the Holy Spirit, preached the Gospel, ministered the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist, and personally shared Christ's forgiveness of sins with others. Sacraments and an ordained priesthood were already to be found in the Church of the Upper Room. **ECL**

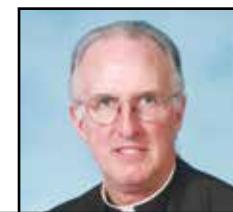


Icon of the Last Supper



# CATECHETICAL REFLECTIONS

Father Robert F. Slesinski, Ph.D.



## MAN BEFORE GOD

*Moments of Selfhood: The Paradox of Incommunicability—Installment 3/6*

If “incommunicability” is the primary mark of the human person that sets his or her being apart from all others, does not this standpoint ineluctably entail “solipsism,” the teaching that only the self exists and that the self is the sole object of real knowledge? Between persons—“incommunicable selves”—only an uncrossable chasm would seem to obtain. Stated more bluntly, are not “incommunicability” and “interpersonal communion” irreconcilable notions?

The key to unravelling this dilemma is to grasp how the “self-presence” of the person to him or herself that renders him or her a “whole” unto him or herself and, thus, in no way a “part” of some overarching reality is not a *closed* presence, but, to the contrary, is one marked by *super-abundance*, the very antithesis to a “closed” world. “Self-presence,” in other words, should not be conceived as being reducible to some sort of centripetal force favoring only self-absorption and detachment from other personal reality, but as something that truly evidences a *centrifugal* force that cannot but motivate the person to move beyond a narrow focusing on self, but rather favor an ecstatic relating

to other persons, whose own self-presences share this very same dynamic. This explains why interpersonal relationships can never ever be static, but essentially must be dynamic in orientation in order not to wither up and die.

This very problematic is one that hounded the revered Russian Orthodox priest-theologian, Pavel Florensky (1882–1937), in his search for the ultimate foundation of truth in a world of both personal and impersonal dimensions. Accounting for the latter in terms of the first logical principle of identity (“A is A and not non-A”) posed no problems for him. But this “lifeless” formula, to his mind, defies any due accounting for *lived* reality, i.e., *personal* reality that lies beyond any concerted reduction to blunt, static, empirical categorization. His proposed principle of dynamic identity was formulated to transcend the restrictiveness of empirical reduction, allowing for a due accounting of the reality of dynamic interrelation between persons. Enigmatically, personalistically speaking, “A is A” only through a dynamic *adoption* of itself as a “non-A”, i.e., a “B” that in turn only receives itself as a “non-B”, i.e., an

“A”—in dynamic interrelation, ultimately only to be overseen by a *third, mediating* reality “C” that serves to assure no mutual absorption of “A” with “B,” thus respecting their integral independence. This reasoning may well serve to leave one’s head swirling, but, cast in personalistic terms, it does—OMG!—seem to make sense. “I,” an unreserved whole, *perceives* myself as a person only in the face of another “whole,” i.e., another person (a “B”), the ensuing relationship between which bears the stamp of an overseeing, approving third other (a “C”). A personal grasping of oneself, in sum, cannot but bear *interpersonal* grounding for grasping this fundamental *truth* in an *essential community* of relationships. Certainly this is the *truth* Florensky in line with perennial Christian philosophical thinking was searching for in his *original* positing of this question-quest.

Personal givenness is no less given than interpersonal givenness—this is the *philosophical* point to be grasped as foundational for all human (interpersonal) understanding. *To be human, OMG!, is to be co-human...* **ECL**



## SCHOOL OF PRAYER

Father G. Scott Boghossian

### THE PRAYER OF MEDITATION

“This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success” (Joshua 1:8).

In the Christian context, the word “meditate” means deliberately to think about, ponder, mull over, ruminate and turn over in the mind. The Holy Bible frequently refers to the practice of meditation. Of the Blessed Man in the first psalm we read: “but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on His law he meditates day and night” (Ps. 1:2). There are other examples from the Psalms: “My mouth shall speak wisdom; the meditation of my heart shall be understanding” (Ps. 49:3). “Oh, how I love Thy law! It is my meditation all the day (Ps. 119:97). “I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Thy testimonies are my meditation” (Ps. 119:99).

The earliest Christian monks, the Desert Fathers, practiced meditation by memorizing and reciting verses from the Bible. Usually, these verses were texts that would assist the monk in resisting temptation. Christians also meditated on truths of the faith as taught by the Church. The chief subjects of meditation eventually centered on the life, passion, and death of Christ, and the four last things: death, judgment, heaven and hell. A favorite form of prayer today is the rosary, wherein one “meditates on” or thinks about the pivotal events in the life of Jesus and Mary, i.e.,

the mysteries, while verbally reciting the Our Father and the Hail Mary.

Using our mental faculties of memory, reason, and imagination we concentrate on a truth of the faith so that truth may take deep root in our hearts and minds. We have all read wonderful spiritual books or pamphlets, or heard an enlightening sermon, but in a short time everything we’ve read or heard is forgotten and the book or sermon has no lasting effect. This is where meditation comes in. If we take time to mull over, think about, and ponder the truths in the book or sermon, they will slowly but surely descend from our head into our heart and change how we think, feel, pray, and behave.

One way to meditate is to use our imagination. We can imagine some event in the life of Our Lord, such as his crucifixion or resurrection. We can see in our mind’s eye the wood of the cross, the body of Jesus covered in blood, His hands and feet pierced by nails, the Roman soldiers all around, and imagine hearing Him cry out, “It is finished,” and dying. Then we can reflect on what we have witnessed, saying to ourselves, “How much God must love me, that He would suffer so much for the forgiveness of my sins. Now I must love Him just as much in return.”

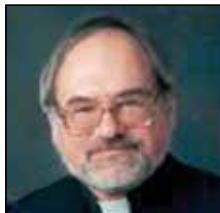
Another way to meditate is to use our voice, that is, to talk to ourselves about some truth of the faith. Perhaps we are tempted to commit a grave sin. We can speak firmly to ourselves and



say, “Is it worth it? A moment of pleasure for an eternity in hell? As Jesus said, ‘What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?’ No, I will not sin.”

Perhaps there is a verse or paragraph from the Bible that appeals to you. Try to memorize the verse. Think carefully and slowly about what each word and phrase in that verse means. This process may be used with the prayers we say so often as Catholics, including the Our Father, the Hail Mary, and the prayers and hymns from the Liturgy.

We’ve grown frustrated at our own efforts at improvement even though we have been praying many prayers and reading many spiritual books. By now, we think, I should be a saint. What am I missing? Set time aside for the hard work of meditation, and see what a difference it will make. **ECL**



# THE BYZANTINE LITURGY

*By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD*

## THE FIFTY DAYS OF PASCHA

The feast of our Lord's Pascha (Greek for "passover") is celebrated for fifty days so that the forty days of repentance is surpassed by the days of rejoicing and salvation. The Pentecostarion is the book of these fifty days. The number fifty is found in the scripture, in the Acts of the Apostles, which tells us that on the fiftieth day after the Resurrection, "(the disciples) were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim. (Acts 2:1-4)" Because of this basis in the New Testament, the fifty day feast is more ancient than the forty day Fast before Pascha.

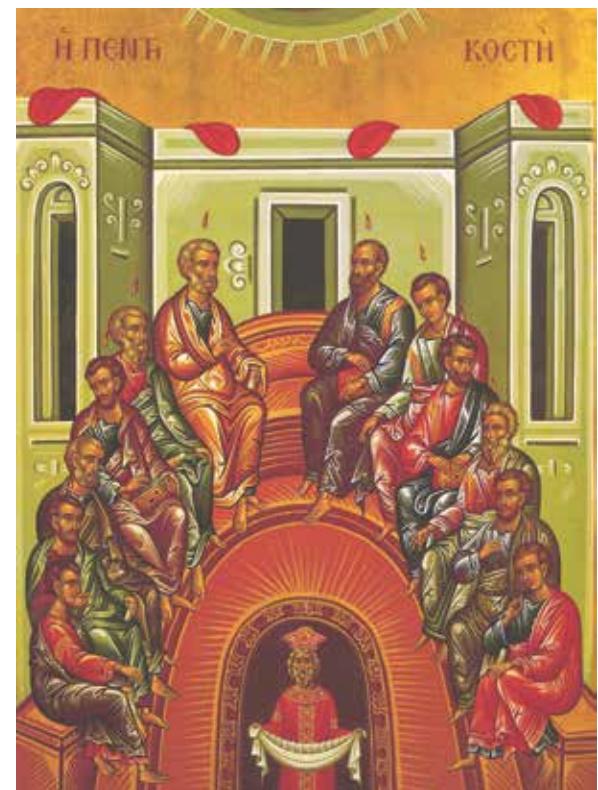
The period of fifty days is marked by a number of feasts. Three are most important. The feast of Mid-Pentecost comes on the twenty-fifth day of the fifty day period. Mid-Pentecost is more than a mathematical indicator of a passage of time. It is really the revelation and manifestation of the reality that Pascha and Pentecost are truly one feast, "God with us." Our Lord promised his apostle in the Last Discourse, "I tell you the truth, it is better for you that I go. For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you ... when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth. He will not speak on his own, but he will speak what he hears, and will declare to you the things that are coming. (John 16:7.13)" Mid-Pentecost is the celebration of a new reality, that the Lord has not left us orphans, that God is now closer to us than ever before. It is a feast of the Eucharist, of the presence of God. All of this is God's wisdom, and so the icon of Mid-Pentecost is our Lord teaching in the Temple as a young boy, revealing the wisdom of God to the elders. We sing in joy today: "The midpoint of the feast has arrived; the days which begin with the Resurrection of the Savior and are fulfilled in the divine Feast of Pentecost. Truly it unites both feasts and draws from their double brightness, giving honor to the ascension of the Lord, which prefigures our glory."

The ascension of our Lord after his resurrection is told in the four gospels and in the Acts of

the Apostles. However, only in the Acts of the Apostles is it recorded that it was on the fortieth day (Acts 1:3). The Ascension gives a deeper dimension to the glorification of our Lord. As St. John records, the lifting up on the Cross was the glory of God, in which his love for the human race was revealed to all. "I am troubled now. Yet what should I say? 'Father, save me from this hour?' But it was for this purpose that I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it and will glorify it again." (John 12:27-28) The glory of his being lifted upon the Cross was sealed and fulfilled by his glory in being lifted up to heaven.

One might ask, "If the resurrection was real, and Christ rose in his glorified human body, why did he not remain to confirm the faith of his followers and to reign over the world. But Jesus had said, "My kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36)" It is for us to fulfill his kingdom by proclaiming and living out his gospel, "Then Jesus approached and said to them, "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. (Matthew 28:20)" His presence in his glorified body would be an obstacle to our perception of the Holy Spirit working in us, "But I tell you the truth, it is better for you that I go. For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. (John 16:7)" The Christian is given a mission in the world, we are not star-gazers, but workers for the kingdom in our world, "The angels said: 'Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will return in the same way as you have seen him going into heaven.' (Acts 1:11)

The ascension is our hope for deification. The Word of God came among us and took on our human nature in all its fullness, except for sin, and in the ascension takes this human nature to glory at the right hand of the Father. Yet for all this, the Lord did not leave us, as he says, "And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age. (Matthew 28:20)" We receive his risen body and blood in Communion, he speaks to us through the Holy Gospel, and he sanctifies us with the



Icon of Pentecost

power of his Holy Spirit. God cannot leave us, for as our Creator, he loves us and brings us to perfection. From this day, therefore, we greet one another, "Christ is among us." "He is and will be."

Pentecost is the fiftieth day, "the last and greatest day of the feast." In the New Testament, this story is told only in the Acts of the Holy Apostles (Acts 2:1-12). On this day, the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples in the form "as of fire" and they were filled with the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:3) From this event, some observations can be made: This fulfills the promise made by the risen Jesus in the Gospel of Luke, "And, behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24:49) They were in the upper room, where the Lord revealed his presence in Holy Communion. There were about one-hundred and twenty people present. Perhaps this was a symbolic number, for ten people were needed for a prayer group, hence, twelve apostles plus ten people for each apostle. The Spirit comes upon this gathering of communities. By the power of the Holy Spirit, the apostles are transformed from frightened followers to fearless witnesses. Can we accept this witness in our lives without fear? **ECL**



## ASK A PRIEST A QUESTION

*Father Vasyl Chepelskyy*

### DOES THE "PROSPERITY GOSPEL" ALIGN WITH BYZANTINE CATHOLIC THEOLOGY?

"*My question: What is this "prosperity gospel" that a number of denominations and televangelists preach on and does it fit in any way into our own theology/tradition?*"

My answer to this question will be mainly based on an excellent article written on the topic by

then Father (now Bishop) Robert Barron, named "The Dangers of the Prosperity Gospel," Word on Fire (February, 2010) and other helpful sources. So, what is the gospel of prosperity and prosperity theology? The gospel of prosperity is considered by many Christians to be a heresy that promises

God's material blessings for the faithful. According to this thought, the children of God ought to receive worldly benefits because of their membership in God's family. This theology states: If I am faithful to God, God will be faithful to me. If I pray enough, serve enough, and give enough,

God will reciprocate. Belief leads to prosperity. The believers hold that financial blessing and physical well-being are always the will of God for them, and that faith, positive speech, and donations to religious causes will increase one's material wealth. So, according to this theology, religion is the key to success. Unfortunately, it considers only worldly success.

Prosperity gospel appears to be a mechanical contract between God and His creatures. If we give so much to God, He will return as much—in material goods and physical health—as if by formula. While the movement encourages the poor to think beyond poverty, its sad, negative side is the glorification of wealth and the amassing of material goods, to the point of forgetting the simplicity of Jesus' life and His commanding those who embrace voluntary poverty for the sake of God's kingdom (cf. Fr. Reginald Martin, *Our Sunday Visitor*).

Another big danger is in how prosperity gospel preachers view the prayer. They often note we "have not because we ask not" (cf. James 4:2). They encourage us to pray for personal success in all areas of life. As Creflo Dollar writes, "When we pray, believing that we have already received what we are praying, God has no choice but to make our prayers come to pass... It is a key to

getting results as a Christian."

Prayers for personal blessing aren't inherently wrong, of course, but the prosperity gospel's overemphasis on man turns prayer into a tool believers can use to force God to grant their desires. Within prosperity theology, man—not God—becomes the focal point of prayer. Curiously, prosperity preachers often ignore the second half of James's teaching on prayer: "You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions" (James 4:3). God does not answer selfish requests that do not honor His name. Certainly, all our requests should be made known to God (e.g., Phil. 4:6), but the prosperity gospel focuses so much on man's desires that it may lead people to pray selfish, shallow, superficial prayers that don't bring God glory. Further, when coupled with the prosperity doctrine of faith, this teaching may lead people to attempt to manipulate God to get what they want—a futile task. This is far removed from praying "Your will be done." (cf. *The Gospel Coalition, 5 Errors of the Prosperity Gospel*).

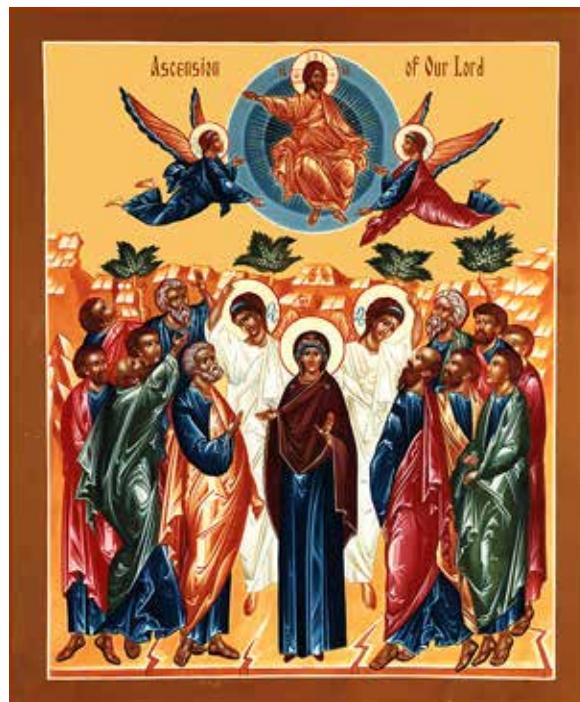
In summary, righteousness cannot be earned. Grace is a gift from God. Obedience and service to God in no way obligate God to give us houses or health or good relationships. This gospel is a calculation method—I give God so much of my

time and He gives me something (power, wealth, health—in exchange, the more I give Him, the more I can expect). This is a wrong approach to having relationships with our loving God. Furthermore, Christ's recurring teaching in the Gospels privileges the poor and suffering in their relationship with God while condemning those rich and powerful who hoard material goods.

The message of the Gospel is full of hope and faith. It gives a new chance and new beginning to every being. But we have to have a balanced view of the Gospel, not to take only part of it out of the context, and to conveniently leave out the rest of it, and we have to follow Christ in our life.

Fr. Robert Barron says, "Following God's will, abandoning yourself to the divine providence, will indeed give you treasure in heaven, but don't expect it necessarily to give you treasure on earth."

*We encourage all the readers to ask any questions you have on subjects such as theology, spirituality, the sacraments, morality, church history, and the lives of the saints. Submit your questions to the email: sjpastor@ptd.net, or on the wall or by private message at the Facebook page: SaintJohntheBaptist-ByzantineCatholicChurch. ECL*



Icon of the Ascension

"And when [Jesus] had said this, as they were looking on, He was lifted up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as He went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, Who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven.' (Acts 1:9-11)

I am reading through all the stichera for Vespers and Matins for the feast of the Ascension of our Lord, and I am overwhelmed at the beauty of these hymns given us. As I read, I am filled with love for our Lord, and His love for Mankind, shown in His Passion, Resurrection, Ascension, and sending down to us the Holy Spirit.

"The Lord ascended into heaven to send the Comforter into this world. The heavens prepared His throne and clouds were His ladder; the angels marveled at the sight of a man more exalted than themselves. Today, the Father receives again in His bosom the One Who was in Him from all eternity, and the Holy Spirit gives a command to all the angels: Lift up your lintels, O you gates!

## SEASONAL REFLECTIONS

Father Ronald Hatton



### BE EXALTED ABOVE THE HEAVENS, O GOD!

O you nations of the earth, clap your hands, for Christ ascends to the place He had been from all eternity!"

"O loving Jesus, while You lived on earth, You were God inseparable from the Father, and You truly shared our humanity. Ascending in glory today from the Mount of Olives, through Your great love You lifted up our fallen nature and enthroned it with the Father on high. Therefore, the bodiless powers were amazed and filled with awe at seeing Your great love for Mankind. Together with them, we who live on earth are glorifying Your condescension to us and Your ascension away from us. Now we implore You, saying: Through Your ascension You have filled Your apostles and Your mother with a joy that surpasses every other joy, and through their intercession make us worthy of the joy of Your elect, for You are rich in mercy." -Stichera for Vespers of the Ascension.

For some, this part of the Paschal season, the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, is very difficult to understand or accept. We believe that Christ physically died and rose in the flesh to conquer sin and death for our salvation. We are caught up in crying out "Christ is risen" for forty days after Easter; most homilies for this time are centered on, or at least refer in some way to, the Resurrection. But, come the Feast of the Ascension, we start to lose that sense of "foregone conclusion." Many years ago, I was in a conversation with a non-Catholic professor who taught seminarians at the theological seminary attached to the college I attended, and at one point he stated, "I can't believe that the last thing the disciples saw of Jesus was the bottoms of His feet." I was so taken aback that someone who was teaching

future ministers did not believe in the physical ascension of our Lord that I had no answer for him. I believe that if we deny that Christ physically "ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father," (cf. the Profession of Faith), we deny His Incarnation as surely as if we denied His physically taking flesh from the Virgin at His birth, or truly and physically rising from the dead on the third day. Yes, our finite minds cannot picture heaven, the throne, His physically being lifted from the sight of the disciples, and taking His seat in heaven, yet we know by faith that it is true. The "how" is beyond our understanding, but we believe it to be true, just as we believe that He was born, taught us, suffered for us, and rose from the dead for us. We see it in His encounter with the two disciples at Emmaus. We see it in His appearance to Mary Magdalene at the Tomb. We see it in His appearance to the Ten and, eight days later, in telling Thomas to touch the nail prints in His hands and to place his hand into His side. "And he [John] who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe." (John 19:35)

Yes, all this has been testified to, so that we may believe. "Remembering, therefore, this saving command and all that has come to pass in our behalf: the cross, the tomb, the resurrection on the third day, the ascension into heaven, the sitting at the right hand, and the second coming in glory..." (Anaphora, Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom), we embrace and hold fast to the fact of His physical ascension into heaven, and to His physical return on the Last Day. Let us rejoice and be glad in it! ECL



# SEMINARIAN REFLECTIONS

Seminarian Timothy Farris

## ROUTINES, RETREATS AND RALLIES

**A**s a seminarian, I have this wonderful opportunity every two weeks to spend with my vocational director, to see how I am doing in my studies, my social life, and my spiritual life. Often these three conflict with each other so we talk about them together. How often can we be enticed to focus solely on our work, or only how we spend our weekends.

Working Monday to Friday, 8am to 4pm, is a wonderful routine to many. It dictates that we can return home and spend evenings with family and friends, we can take care of our shopping lists and chores. My mother, God bless her, found that her routine of working 11pm to 7am allowed for her to take care of her children during the daytime. A constantly changing routine that catches us by surprise can wreak havoc on us. Many know the experience of almost finishing an eight hour shift only to be asked to pull a double. The same can be said when we are about to go to sleep at midnight and an old friend from college calls you for a "White Castle run" to catch up. Earning the overtime and spending time with friends are good things but we become exhausted. It takes from us this drive that is tough to recoup. We need to rally all of our energy, we need a retreat to get away, or we need an unfailing routine to persevere through the drought.

Bad routines can be dangerous. Out of college, my routine was ten cups of coffee a day, a twelve-hour day at work and studying for the CPA Exam. My routine for God was Sunday mornings from 9am to 10am. Bad routines are like ruts of which we struggle to pull ourselves out. I was in and still fall into ruts. What does this mean for my relationship with God? I can make time for my friends, my work, my studies, but not for my God, my Creator, my Savior? This can happen without us even noticing, it is normal but it shouldn't be.

Maybe you are like me and need a new routine. My vocational director told me it is time to set a prayer routine. Time for me and God, time for me to recharge and rest in Him, a time when the world slows down and my worries wilt in the wonder that is God's glory. What is a prayer routine? Paul, in 1 Thessalonians 5:17, says to pray unceasingly as our routine. Yeah, 'cause that is not too difficult, when there is so much to worry about. It is because of these worries that we NEED this time with God all the more. The world will slowly pull us away from God and into itself. We have to start small but be persistent. A two-minute morning prayer while the car warms up, a minute while your bread is toasting, or while you brush your teeth, asking for persistence for God to

remain with you and keep you safe during the day. A minute prayer at dinner with the family thanking God for the ability to be together, for the food prepared, and for a house to live in protected from the elements. A prayer before bed, exhausted from a long day, that God has guided you and kept you, that we may have another day to grow in His love. Five minutes where God permeates our worldly routine in a glorifying routine of communion with Himself.

It is time to retreat. After three weeks of preparing to leave the office, we say "vacation" but we mean "exhaustion." Zip-lining, cruising, driving, dining, late nights, and early morning hikes. Vacations are exciting and awesome but we end our vacations needing another vacation. The word we were looking for was retreat, a refreshment of ourselves with God. A prayer is a mini-retreat, but occasionally we need the full deal retreat. A weekend or a full day with God. Are we who we want to be in God? Can I improve myself as a Christian? Do I feel God's love right... now, in its fullest? These are not one minute questions. A prayer routine is like a steering wheel, guiding us in little increments, almost unnoticeable, keeping us on the road. Retreats are pit-stops, unload the trash from the cup holders, let the kids stretch their legs, refuel the tank, and keep going on the journey

called life. But, it's time to rally. Every Sunday we rally in the pews to witness God's presence on Earth in the mystery of the sacraments. The pre-Liturgy prayer sets the tone and gathering up steam our churches' chant is only maxed out when it is added to the choirs of heaven, singing "Holy, Holy Holy." Last year, I got to witness my first rally at the Pilgrimage in Uniontown PA. Seeing some two thousand faithful praying in unison over a three-day stint, it was a mix of rally of inspiration and a retreat of resting in prayer. As Catholics, we are called to rally together. We have a lot to rally for! God became man, died, and resurrected so that we may live for eternity in heaven. We rally as a Church on Sundays locally but also with our eparchy and all Catholics sacramentally. We are united through Christ's one and final sacrifice.

Is it time for a new life routine, a new prayer routine or a retreat? Have you had trouble rallying a Sunday morning together to pray before our Divine Liturgy or to eparchial events? We can all start writing down our goals when we get a fresh (Byzantine) new year on September 1st or we can throw the cards down and start with today. I pray that we encourage one another to persevere in prayer and continue to grow in the love of God. **ECL**



The Altar Server Camp at Carpathian Village Cresco, PA, will be on  
**August 5-9, 2017**  
**Boys ages 7-17 welcome!**  
**Apply at: [www.EparchyofPassaic.com](http://www.EparchyofPassaic.com)**

## UPCOMING EPARCHIAL AND PARISH EVENTS

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### JUNE

- 4 Pentecost Sunday  
*Holy Day of Obligation*
- GCU & Byzantine Family Day at Knobles Grove, Elysburg, PA
- 5 Pentecost Monday  
*Simple Holy Day, Chancery closed*
- 25 125th Anniversary of Saint John the Baptist Church, Lansford, PA
- 29 Saints Peter and Paul  
*Holy Day of Obligation \**  
*Chancery closed*



### AUGUST

- 5-9 Altar Server Camp  
*at Carpathian Village, Cresco, PA*
- 6 Pilgrimage For Peace  
*at Holy Dormition Franciscan Friary, Sybertsville, PA*
- 12-13 Holy Dormition Pilgrimage  
*Sister Servants of Mary Immaculate, Sloatsburg, New York*

### JULY

- 9 Saint Nicholas Pilgrimage  
*at Carpathian Village, Cresco, PA*