



EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

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FEAST OF THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD

by Father Joseph Bertha, Ph.D.

The scriptural descriptions which serve as a basis for the icon illustration of the feast of the Ascension of Our Lord are rather sparse. The Gospel of Mark 16:19 tersely states that, “The Lord Jesus was taken up into heaven and took His seat at God’s right hand.” In the Gospel of Luke 24:50, we learn that the Ascension took place in Bethany, that Christ has His hands upraised and blessing the disciples. Luke, in the Acts of the Apostles 1:9-12, simply describes the Ascension of Our Lord as taking place on the fortieth day after His Resurrection after appearing and speaking about the reign of God. “He was lifted up before their eyes in a cloud which took Him from their sight.”

Four psalms associated with the Feast of the Ascension and frequently quoted in liturgical hymns provide further features:

Psalm 18:11 describes the presence of an angel: “He mounted a cherub and flew, born on the wings of the wind.”

Psalm 24:7 describes a portal or opening in heaven, and levels God the King of Glory: “Life up, O gates your lintels; reach up, you ancient portals, that the king of glory may come in! Who is the king of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord might in battle.”

Psalm 47:2,6 mentions the throne and the acclaim of people for God: “All you peoples, clap your hands, shout to God with cries of gladness. God mounts His throne amid shouts of joy; the Lord, amid trumpet blasts.”

Psalm 68:19 is a hymn acknowledging God as the only true God as He enters His abode: “You have ascended on high, taken captives, received men as gifts, even rebels; the Lord God enters His dwelling.: Saint



Paul in Ephesians 4:8 interprets the gifts to mean that He gave gifts to men, and refers to Christ bestowing His charismatic grace on the Church after His Ascension into heaven.

In the entire Old Testament, only two people ascend to heaven: Elijah in a fiery chariot and Moses whose grave was never found and is thought to have ascended to heaven. Significantly, these two prophets appear with Our Lord on Mount Tabor at

the Transfiguration in the cloud of heavenly glory. The two prophets and Christ show in a cloud of light their divine mission to those on earth.

Although she is curiously absent from the Scriptural accounts of the Ascension of Christ, the Theotokos appears in virtually every Ascension icon. The Syrian Rabula Gospel (586), an illuminated manuscript page illustrating the Ascension of Our Lord, she stands on the Mount of

Olives in the center of the icon, arms uplifted in the transposition of prayer. To either side of her are haloed angels and groups of disciples. The Prophet Ezekiel’s anthropomorphic chariot symbolizing the four evangelists as an angel (Matthew), a lion (Mark), an ox (Luke), an eagle (John), together with two angels, support the mandorla (body halo) of Christ. In the upper two corners of the icon two tiny figures of Elijah and Moses glance from heaven at the event. As Christ as-

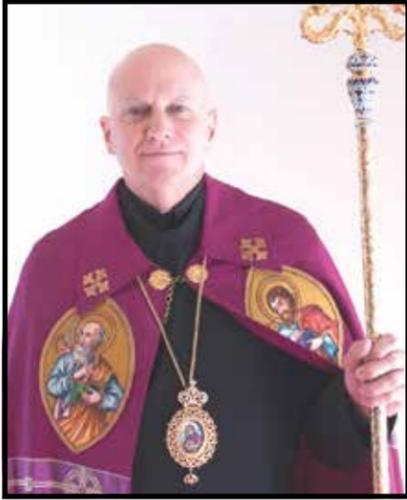
cent amid the clouds, He blesses with His right hand and holds in His left hand an unraveled scroll. Two angels flying beneath carry crowns for the King of Glory. Many of these components are found in subsequent Ascension icons.

A Vespers verse for the feast justifies the presence of the Virgin: “O Lord, most merciful, after fulfilling the mystery hidden from all eternity, You, the Creator and Mater of all, went up the Mount of Ol-

ives with Your disciples and Your Mother. For the one who, at the sight of Your Passion, had suffered more than anyone else in her motherly heart, had more than anyone else the right to share the joy that fills us as we witness Your ascension into heaven. We glorify Your infinite mercy overflowing upon us.”

At San Marco in Venice (c. 1200), The Ascension mosaic is found in the pre-eminent location, the central main dome. Our Lord is seated on a rainbow, and another rainbow serves as His footstool. The rainbow throne evokes the rainbow of Noah after the flood. God promises never to punish the earth by establishing a covenant. In Genesis 9:12, God says, “This is the sign that I am giving for all ages to come, of the covenant between me and you and every living creature with you. I set My bow in the clouds to serve as a sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth, and the bow appears in the clouds, I will recall the covenant I have made between Me and you and living beings, so that the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all mortal beings.” Also the throne of God is described in Revelation 4:3 as surrounded by a rainbow as brilliant as emerald. From the thirteenth century onwards, in Ascension icons, Our Lord is usually depicted enthroned.

The beautiful poetry of the Byzantine liturgical hymn sums up the feast: “You descended from heaven to the earth, O Christ, and by Your Ascension You wondrously raised up the race of Adam which had been lying in the depths of the prisons of Hades. And having taken our nature back to heaven, You seated it with You on the Father’s throne because of Your mercy and love for all.” (Sessional Hymn from Matins)



I LIFT UP MY EYES...

Pastoral Reflections of Bishop Kurt



WHO AM I, O LORD GOD?

“O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable His ways!” Saint Paul exclaimed these words after meditating on God’s plan of salvation. This is the time of year when we can inventory the riches and wisdom of God. After recollecting the passion and sacrifice by which Jesus freed us from our sins, and celebrating His resurrection in which He conquered death and freed the captives in Hades, it is overwhelming to contemplate that generosity of God. Standing between the Resurrection and the Ascension, we look in both directions and are astounded at the things that God has done for us, and the things that He promises for our future. He is like a wealthy suitor who keeps opening one treasure chest after another, and saying, “What does it take to win your heart? No matter what it costs, I will give it to you.” We find ourselves filled with the sweet glow of knowing that we are loved, and humbled that someone so far above our station has chosen us.

There was a point in the life of King David when he was similarly overcome at the knowledge of God’s generosity. David went from tending a flock on a hillside, the least of his brothers, to the slayer of the giant Goliath, to the musician who could cure the king’s depression, to an outlaw, to the anointed king of the chosen people, and the man who established safety and peace in all his realm. Throughout these adventures, David is constantly aware that it is God who gives him every victory. In so many of his songs he sings about how he was lost and beyond hope, and God plucked him up and put him on a rock of safety until the enemies were destroyed. As the kingdom is peaceful now, David determines to build a temple for the Ark of the Tabernacle in which dwells the presence of the most-high God. David calls the prophet Nathan and tells him, “When we were in constant war, I lived in a tent with the other soldiers, but in time of peace I now live in a house of cedar. How is it that the Ark of God still abides in a tent?” Although Nathan tells David to do what is in his heart, Nathan soon receives a revelation from God telling him otherwise. He returns to the King and tells him, “God has ordained that it is David’s son who will build the great temple.” But in doing so, God tells David that he will bless his line forever. King Saul lost the throne without giving it to any heir, but God promises David an eternal throne. (Remember, David did not inherit the throne. In the ancient times of violence, there was no reason to believe the next king would be David’s heir.) As a matter of history, the Davidic

line no longer rules anywhere, but the prophecy was fulfilled in the reign of Jesus Christ, who conquered death and evil, and reigns gloriously forever. When David hears this prophecy, he looks back on all the blessings of his life, and at the same time contemplates the staggering promises for his future, and the scriptures tell us he was overcome with emotion, so much so that he goes into his house to hide his feelings from the public (not something he does very often). And King David breaks into this profound song, “Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that You have brought me thus far? And yet this is small thing in Your eyes, O Lord God.” King David was deeply moved, and it is moving for us to read his prayer. He asks, “Who am I that You do these things for me?” He says that only by trusting in the truth of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, does he have the courage to pray this prayer. He knows that God keeps His promises, and God has promised David a dynasty.

At this point in his life, when King David is secure in his throne and is told that his son will build the temple establishing an everlasting dynasty, he has had many hardships in his past and consequently many things to be grateful for. However, his worst hardships were yet to come. All of the hardships in his past were against outside enemies or at least from outside his family. As a rich, secure, and successful monarch, the King was soon to find out the sorrow of fighting inside his own family. As his sons grew up, the princes became rivals, each one desiring the throne for himself, vaunting themselves above their brothers and, for some, even ready to overthrow their father. So it was in every monarchy before our era of constitutions. In addition to fighting over succession to the throne, there was even a rape inside the family, resulting in bloodshed between the brothers. Rather than fight against his own kin, David leaves the capital, and is pursued by his own son who wants to kill him for the crown. (Nowadays, when I see people rioting or violently protesting in our democracy, and I see the professional agitators who organize such things, I think about how ignorant they are of history. The number of innocent people who are killed or lose all their life’s work during true upheaval cannot be comprehended except by people who have lived through it.) Getting back to King David, rather than fight his own kin, he leaves the capital pursued by his own power-mad son. Have you ever thought you were not a perfect parent? Imagine the things that David must have thought on his dark lonely journey. For the second time in his life, he was fleeing his own nation, the people whom he called “the armies of the living God.” He was fleeing alone, not knowing whom he could trust. Once again, David placed his trust in God’s providence, rather than take any action that was against the law of God.

I know many of you have reared children, and some of you have even reared

your grandchildren in the place of their parents, and you know the joys and sorrows of God’s blessing of posterity. How many of you have experienced the sorrow of rivalry and of bad choices by your own children and grandchildren? In my first parish, there was a virtuous woman whose only son spent his whole adult life in jail or prison. She worked a second job just to pay his phone bill so he could call her on the phone once a week. After his last arrest, I sat in the courtroom with his father as the son was sentenced to 75 years in prison under California’s three-strikes law. I don’t know which was more painful for the father—the lifetime prison sentence or the shameful nature of the crimes. His mother couldn’t come to the sentencing—she said it was too painful for her. How many of you have had your children blame you for their own bad choices? I know many of you can sympathize with the pain that King David felt on his lonely journey away from his own capital—his beloved Jerusalem—the “City of David.” It seems as though the greatest blessings come with the greatest price.

Even after David survived the attack and betrayal of his own son, even after God delivered the life of David one more time, he still felt the intense pain of a father losing his son. When he learned with finality that his vain, greedy, rebellious son was dead, David went into his private chamber and wept bitterly. “O my son, Absalom, my son, my son, Absalom! Would that I had died

instead of you. O Absalom, my son, my son...” Jesus was truly the Son of David, for Jesus offered His own life in exchange for ours, and when He pondered in the garden about all of our crimes that would cost Him His flesh and His life, rather than rage, He prayed to accept the will of the Father and sweated like drops of blood.

At this joyful time of year, standing between the Resurrection and the Ascension, remembering the words of Jesus, “I go ahead of you to prepare a place for you,” remembering the gifts of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, remembering God’s promise of our own eternal inheritance, we also ask, “Who am I, O Lord God, that You should do such things for me?” Like King David, who was so emotional that he prayed in private, we contemplate with awe and wonder the boundless treasures that God gives us freely, the blessings and the hardships that go with them. “Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that You have brought me thus far? And yet this is a small thing in Your eyes, O Lord God. ... And now, O Lord God, You are God, and Your words are true, and You have promised this good thing to Your servant ... For You, O Lord God, have spoken, and with Your blessing shall the house of Your servant be blessed forever.”

+Kurt Burnette

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with
Bishop Kurt Burnette
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FROM THE OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

ON THURSDAY, MAY 2

Reader Paul Varchola West and Reader Timothy Fariss will be ordained to the Subdiaconate by Metropolitan William Skurla at Saint John the Baptist Cathedral in Munhall, Pennsylvania

On Sunday, May 19

Subdeacon Paul Varchola West will be ordained to the Diaconate by Bishop Kurt Burnette at Saint Michael the Archangel Cathedral in Passaic, New Jersey

EASTERN CATHOLIC BISHOPS MEET IN SAINT LOUIS

Photo and article appear courtesy of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Saint Josaphat in Parma, OH

On Wednesday and Thursday, March 27-28, 2019, the Eastern Catholic Bishops in the United States met at the Maronite Pastoral Center in Saint Louis, MO.

Annually, the Eastern Catholic Bishops meet in Saint Louis at the invitation of Bishop Elias Zaidan of the Maronite Catholic Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles to discuss pastoral issues and ministry programs among the Eastern Catholics in the United States of America.

During this year's presentations, the bishops discussed catechetical educa-

tion, priestly formation and upcoming *Ad Limina* visit of the United States Bishops to the Holy See.

This meeting allows for bishops to share pastoral programs in their respective eparchies throughout the USA.



As we went to press, the ECL learned of the passing of
+Father Basil Rakaczky, OSBM.
We will have a full obituary in
an upcoming issue.

Legyen az örök emléke!
Blessed repose and eternal memory!



HOPE FROM THE ASHES: PRESIDENT, ARCHBISHOP VOW TO REBUILD NOTRE DAME

By Cindy Wooden Catholic News Service, Contributing to this story was Carol Glatz at the Vatican.

The president of France and the archbishop of Paris have vowed to rebuild Notre Dame Cathedral after a devastating fire, continuing what a professor of architecture described as the natural life-cycle of a historic building.

Steven W. Semes, a professor and director of graduate studies in the Historic Preservation Program at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana, said he was as shocked and pained as everyone watching on television as the building burned April 15.

"Like all historic monuments," he said,



Notre Dame Cathedral is "the result of hundreds and hundreds of years of development" with an initial idea, a long and labor-intensive construction process, design changes, additions, demolitions and remodeling over and over again as fashions and usages change.

So, from the initial construction, which began in 1160, the cathedral "was transformed multiple times," he told Catholic

News Service in Rome, where he regularly teaches. When one looked at Notre Dame before the fire, "we weren't seeing the cathedral as it was built, we were seeing it through layers of change."

"Buildings and cities do change through time," Semes said. "We wouldn't go see a painting by Rembrandt that four people had painted over, but we look at almost any historic building and we see something that has been restored multiple times -- sometimes restored in a way very faithful to an early state and sometimes not."

"One thing about buildings and cities is that they are more like natural phenomena than other art works. Think of a forest. You can have a fire in a forest, but then it comes to life again," he said. "Buildings are resilient."

"Hope springs from seeing monuments that have endured," even though they almost never remain unchanged, Semes said.

"A lot of people are feeling today, 'We can't do it again' or 'It can't be restored,'" and while that would be true of a painting, the professor said, "we do have the skills to restore this building."

"Obviously, a big fire has a big impact,"

he said, but even for nonbelievers, there is a sensitivity to the fact that Notre Dame Cathedral was not just a treasure of Gothic architecture.

"Notre Dame was truly a work of devotion," he said. "Think about it -- how large the building was compared to everything else in the city, the attention, the loving care that went into making it, ornamenting it and maintaining it. This is truly an act of devotion; it is a kind of sacramental."

The building as a church "speaks to people," whether they are believers, he said, pointing to similar reactions in 2015 when a massive earthquake in Nepal toppled Buddhist statues and monuments. "We feel these things even if we are not personally involved in that particular tradition."

The key to understanding Notre Dame Cathedral was summarized by Paris Archbishop Michel Aupetit in a television interview in the wee hours of April 16: "Why was this beauty built? What jewel was this case meant to contain? Not the crown of thorns (a relic saved from the fire), but a piece of bread that we believe is the body of Christ."

Pope Francis, in a message April 16 to Archbishop Aupetit, expressed his solidarity with the sadness of Parisians, calling Notre Dame "an architectural jewel of a collective memory, the gathering place for many major events, the witness of the faith and prayer of Catholics in the city."

The pope also expressed his confidence that the cathedral would be rebuilt and continue its vocation as "a sign of the faith

of those who built it, the mother church of your diocese, (and) the architectural and spiritual heritage of Paris, France and humanity."

Antoine-Marie Izoard, editor of the French Catholic magazine *Famille Chrétienne*, told CNS, "That this happened at the beginning of Holy Week makes it even more striking and calls us to Christian hope."

"Last night, Catholics, members of other religions and nonbelievers united around this strong symbol in the heart of Paris," he said April 16. "It was very striking to see Catholics praying around the cathedral for the firefighters battling the flames."

Add to that French President Emmanuel Macron's determination to rebuild, he said, and "we realize once again that the Christian roots of the country are still at the heart of France."

Italian Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, president of the Pontifical Council for Culture, told reporters April 16 that while Notre Dame, like other French cathedrals, is state property, "it remains a living creature in which the liturgy is celebrated, encounters of faith occur and even nonbelievers enter to make a tour of beauty."

The prayerful, tearful public vigils that took place as the fire burned, he said, demonstrated how "the great cathedrals and basilicas really are living bodies."

And, the cardinal said, Notre Dame is not just a living sign of religiosity, but is "the heart, the beating heart" of Paris.



PEOPLE YOU KNOW AROUND THE EPARCHY

IN MYRTLE BEACH...

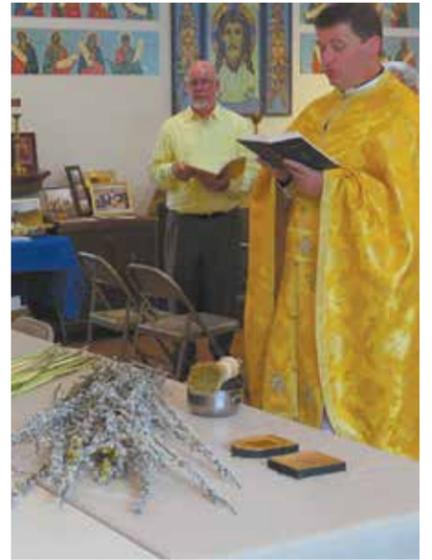
Father Ihor Voronstov, Administrator of Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church, White Plains, NY, and Holy Spirit Byzantine Catholic Church, Mahwah, NJ,



celebrated Divine Liturgies at Blessed Basil Hopko Byzantine Catholic Mission in Conway (Myrtle Beach), SC.

Father celebrated Flowery/Palm Sunday Divine Liturgy on Saturday, April 13, and Resurrection Matins and Divine Liturgy, with blessing of food baskets on Saturday, April 20th. Twenty-four faithful attended the Palm Sunday Divine Liturgy and thirty-four for Pascha.

The parishioners of Blessed Basil Hopko Mission are grateful for the effort Father Ihor made for making two round trips from White Plains to enable us to celebrate Holy Week and Pascha. Father Conan Timoney is the administrator of Blessed Basil Hopko Mission.



IN NEWARK...

On Sunday, March 3, 2019, Saint George Byzantine Catholic Church in Newark, NJ, held its annual Pre-Lenten Celebration or "Fashengi" in the church's social center. Following Divine Liturgy at noon, the parishioners gathered in the parish social center for a delicious buffet including such traditional foods as homemade stuffed cabbage, kielbasa, and sour-cream potatoes, as well as wonderful appetizers, sandwiches, and sweet treats. After the luncheon, the parishioners then attended Forgiveness Vespers in the church. Saint George Parish will be celebrating its 100th Anniversary in 2020. Father David Baratelli serves the liturgical and pastoral needs of the parish and Mr. Ken Dilks is the parish cantor. Father Marcel Szabo is Parish Administrator.





Carpatho-Rusyn Society

25th Anniversary

The Carpatho-Rusyn Society will celebrate its 25th anniversary on the weekend of May 17-19, 2019. Please go to the website: www.c-rs.org and see all the wonderful activities planned for this celebration and plan on visiting our Carpatho-Rusyn Cultural and Educational Center in Munhall, PA, formerly Saint John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Cathedral – the first Byzantine Catholic cathedral in the United States.



IN JERSEY CITY...

Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church in Jersey City, NJ, has been offering a Bible Study series with the focus on the Gospel of Mark. The purpose was to give more time to the reading and understanding of some pages of the New Testament besides of the usual occasions during the Sunday Divine Liturgy readings. It aimed as well to offer a good spiritual practice for living the Great Lent, since the Gospel of Mark is read through the Great Fast on Sunday liturgies. There were six meetings, which took place on Tuesday evenings in March and April. These meetings were of-

fered by Father Jack Custer, rector of Saint Michael Cathedral, and Father Gregory Lozinsky, Parochial Vicar of Saint Mary Parish in Jersey City. The participants were enthusiastic about learning and discovering the hidden gems of the Scriptures and expressed their desire for an ongoing biblical formation in the parish.



MILITARY CHAPLAINCY

by Father Francis Rella



Father Francis Rella, far left, with other Chaplains

Father Rella is a priest of the Eparchy of Passaic, Pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, and Protospesbyter of the Central New Jersey Deanery. He is also the full time Civilian Government Service Catholic Chaplain of Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, and Wing Chaplain of the 108th Air Wing, at McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey. Father Rella is currently serving on overseas deployment in the Air Force as a Catholic chaplain where he ministers to all Catholic military and civilian personnel, as well as counsels and serves military members of all faiths and traditions.

As I left my rectory in Toms River and then my family home in Old Bridge, NJ, six months was inconceivable to be absent from family and friends; to be absent from my parish and parishioners; to be absent from Divine Liturgy and my brother clergy.

It was not the first time away with the military. I had numerous active duty assignments as an Air Force officer. I was deployed as a critical care nurse to the war 13 years ago, just prior to the Surge of 2006-2007, as a second lieutenant. Back then, the Air Force was deploying medical personnel for 60 – 90 days, because after that period, there was a danger we would become oversaturated with the horrors of war and, as a result, become ineffective. Now that the war has become considerably less intense, the average deployment in the Air Force is six months. I was surprised when I found out that my tour was cut from 9 months to 6 months. I was originally supposed to serve 3 months of someone else's deployment tour and 6 months of my own. After my orders changed half a dozen times, my deployment was set at 6 months, but that would change again once I landed. I am not overly concerned if it changes a few more times. I am here for as long as my country, my Air Force, my Bishop, and God in Heaven need me. That's what I signed up for as an Air Force chaplain, and that's what I signed up for as a priest.

Time is something that we are so preoccupied with, especially when deployed. Looking at the past two months made me realize that I am exactly where I am supposed to be for as long as I am here, and time was given to us as gift of Creation. Also, there is no time in Heaven, so I need just to be patient. After two months, I also realize that I have too little time. There is so much ministry here, I couldn't accomplish all I would like to in the span of a year or more - too much to do, so little time. I am reminded "As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work." (John 9:4)

About two months ago, I left my beautiful parish in Toms River, NJ, to be part of an Expeditionary Air Wing on the other side of the world. After a transport flight that took over 24 hours, with multiple stops, I reached my final destination, landing in the country of **ULISWA**. Actually, it's not a country, it's an acronym for **Undisclosed Location In Southwest Asia**. The current Catholic chaplain, was outgoing, finished his deployment, and within a week I was taking care of hundreds of Catholics and non-Catholics in the middle of a war. This is my second deployment to the war, but my first time as a priest. I call it a war, not a conflict, or contingency, because it is a war. Men and women get injured, get wounded, and some die. Most of them are young and not even in the prime of life. Although the locations are very similar to my first deployment, the work is completely different.

As everywhere in our nation, there is a shortage of Catholic priests. The military is no different. Fortunately, we have a bishop who is generous to the Archdiocese for the Military Services and allows us to volunteer for military service as chaplains.

On a military base that was once serviced by two Catholic chaplains (priests), because of shortages and redeployments

is now serviced by one priest - me. Most mornings I wake and visit the various Air Squadrons. Ministering to them is unique. Here are these men and women ranging in age from 17 to 60, most on them in their teens through early 30s, from all different backgrounds, faith groups, geographic regions, and races. I ask myself daily, what does a Catholic priest from New Jersey say to help them get through their day? Help them get through war? Help them get through the monotony of military life, where all of us long to be home with our loved ones in our beloved country. The greatest challenge is bringing Christ to a world that rejects Him. The military is no different. The Senior Base Chaplain once counseled me that although we have successful chapel programs and morale is high amongst the chapel staff, the enemy looks for any way he can to destroy us. We start each day with prayer, not only for the men and women to whom we minister, but for the chaplains and chaplain assistants who do the ministering.

Each day brings a new challenge and new reason to rejoice, and also feel sadness. As a Catholic chaplain, I have an hour set aside each day in the duty schedule for hearing confessions prior to evening Liturgy. Actually, I will hear confessions at any time. That hour is well-known to those who frequent the chapel and the squadrons, and it usually extends to the hour before and the hour after Holy Mass. In my first week, I heard over 100 confessions - what a blessing!

Not only Catholics, but non-Catholics, non-Christians, and atheists come and seek counsel from all chaplains. Many times, men and women of other faith beliefs and those with no belief in God seek a priest. There is something different about priests and the way we are treated. Even the way we are respected by other chaplains. When most chaplains are called by their rank or "chaplain," priests are traditionally called "Father." The deference and respect shown to Catholic priests when generals and high-ranking officers call a Catholic chaplain "Father" is impressive. It is not only at the top of the chain of command, but in a matter of a few weeks, even in uniform, in civilian physical fitness gear, in the mess hall, walking down the road, I am greeted with "Hi, Father," or "How are you, Father?," or

"Great to see you, Father." As a Catholic chaplain, you are not only a chaplain to all, you are a priest to most. In a place where there are 8 chaplains, there is only 1 Catholic priest, the rest are from various Protestant denominations - all good and holy men, all my brothers in Christ, all very respectful of Catholicism, and supportive of Catholic programs. That being said, only a Catholic priest can serve Catholics, which is the largest community. As a Catholic chaplain, I celebrate 8 Liturgies each week, devotional and prayer services, Vespers, daily confessions, and various anointings and blessings. There's not an hour that goes by that someone isn't asking to see a priest. All of that is in addition to the military duties as a chaplain and the squadron support, leadership advisement, and counseling of the military and civilian community at large. I also serve the nearby army base and soldiers who lost their Catholic chaplain before I arrived. The Catholic Community has the largest weekly attendance, more than all other non-Catholic services combined. The Protestant Chaplains certainly do their fair share of the work.

I have been blessed in so many ways. I have danced with the Messianic Jewish Community, prayed with members of all faith groups, blessed and anointed our pilots going into battle or soldiers and marines coming back from missions, read the scriptures at ecumenical services, and celebrated the Holy Mysteries for thousands. Many Protestants, Orthodox, Eastern and Roman Catholics are found worshipping at the four Sunday Liturgies and daily Liturgies. At Pentecost, our community will be receiving into the Catholic Church five adults through the Holy Mysteries of Initiation

God is great. It is indeed an honor serving in our military as a Catholic chaplain. Keeping in the great tradition of the Ruthenian Catholics who served our country in uniform, in peace and war. *Pro Deo Et Patria*. We awaited with anticipation the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Our Savior as we celebrate the sacraments at our deployed chapel and remote locations. Christ is risen! *Christos voskrese!*



Father Francis Rella celebrates a Lenten Devotion

Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom

Choral Divine Liturgy

June 2, 2019 at 6 pm

*St. Mary's Byzantine
Catholic Church*

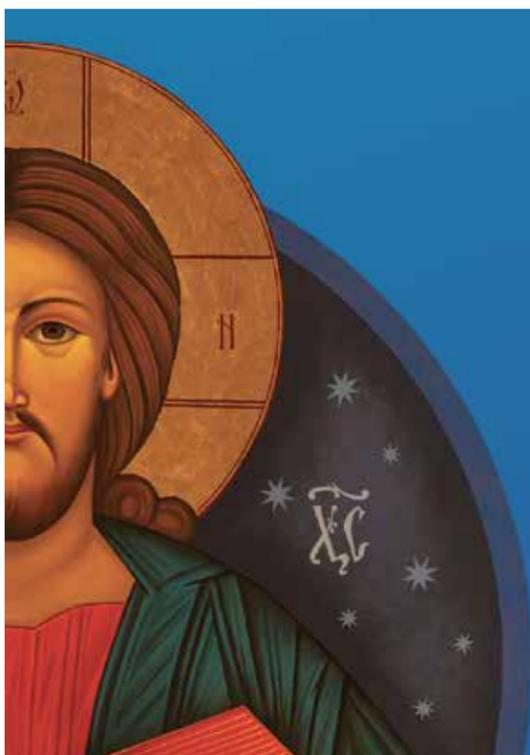
246 E. 15th St.
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Music By Roman Hurko
(in English)

Sung By
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Andrew Skitko,
Artistic Director/Conductor

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Women in the Bible and in the Church Today

Byzantine Woman's Day of Recollection

Saturday, July 13th, 2019

Holy Dormition Byzantine Franciscan Monastery, Sybertsville, PA



Father Jerome Wolbert, OFM
Celebrant and Speaker

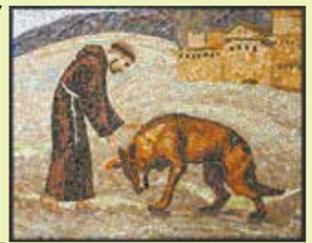
Beginning at 8:30 am with Divine Liturgy
Activities concluding at 3:00 pm
Fee: \$40.00 includes pastry and coffee in AM & a light lunch.
For Information or Reservations call:
Carol Soemer (570) 969-1756 or
Gina Romancheck (570) 956-9272
or email Gina at: gmr7@ptd.net
Deadline: July 6th, 2019

Free Like Francis

St Francis of Assisi is often seen as a man who loved animals and nature. Certainly he was able to pray to God in the wilderness, and somehow was able to connect with the wolf at Gubbio and with other animals. But Saint Francis also found a great freedom in choosing to be poor, to be lesser, to be obedient.

Come learn about the freedom lived by St Francis, a freedom money cannot buy, a freedom hard work alone cannot earn.

Saturday, May 18th, 2019
9:30am — 3:30pm



Holy Dormition Byzantine Franciscan Monastery,
712 Rt 93, Sugarloaf PA 18249 – 570-788-1212
Cost: \$15 • Brown Bag Lunch

Register with Joan at red67@verizon.net, or 570-454-4150
Mr. Luis Rivera, OFS, is Coordinator for Cultural Integration for the Diocese of Scranton. Born in Puerto Rico and having lived in New York and Pennsylvania, Mr. Rivera has been a Secular Franciscan since 1996 and has served in formation in the Secular Franciscan Order and in various roles in parish and diocesan ministry. He will speak on the freedom that St Francis chose in Christ, and how the example of St Francis can help to free us from many of the binding forces in our lives today.

**TOGETHER WE ARE:
CALLED TO
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.

This event will coincide with the feast of the Transfiguration, and will challenge participants to recognize their own call to discipleship. Featured keynote speakers include Fr. Boniface Hicks, OSB; Mother Gabriella Houck of the Sisters of Christ the Bridegroom Monastery; and Katie Prejean McGrady.

Information about registration, events, and lodging options are available at theosisinaction.org

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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



LIFE, LOVE, AND THE HUMAN PERSON

By Ann M. Koshute, MTS

THE FIXER-UPPER

Home improvement shows are certainly not new, but there has been a decided spike in the number and kind of such shows. It's not clear whether they are responding to the need for average homeowners to find new ideas and ways of renovating their living spaces, or if the shows are creating the supposed need. Of course, there's nothing wrong with giving our houses a fresh look with some paint, new furniture, and maybe even an addition. The explosion of home improvement shows gives us more ideas for how to make small changes or make a complete overhaul. We're rarely satisfied with "the way things have always been," but even if we're not that creative ourselves, the designers and carpenters on television have the answers. With each new show comes a more creative twist on home renovation: from having neighbors switch houses and remodel one room (a risky proposition and one that has the potential of making friends into enemies), to gutting homes that are falling apart and transforming them into magazine-worthy abodes. Whether we own our own home or not (and if we have neither the money nor the inclination to renovate) there is something fascinating about the idea of taking a room or an entire house and redesigning it; transforming it so that it doesn't resemble the old place, but looks new, beautiful, and like nothing that had been in that space before.

Another trend that fits well with the interest in home improvement is de-cluttering. The idea is that we should go through our belongings (many of which we don't

even realize we own) and donate, sell, or junk the things that we don't really need. There are books, YouTube tutorials and seminars on how to pare down your possessions and live free from the dependence on "stuff." (As someone who comes from a long line of Rusyns, I can attest that this is easier said than accomplished.) Whether it's fixing up the house or fixing our attitudes about the things we collect and how much we really need them, the focus is on *restoration*. There's a sense that something is out of balance, or that what is old and worn isn't adequate anymore, that structures aren't as strong as they once were, and that familiarity (in the way our homes look or the junk we've accumulated) breeds perhaps not contempt, so much as *complacency*. We become so used to the way things are that we might not realize that what's essential is falling apart, and we're clinging to things that don't really bring us joy. Everything I've described here applies to our homes – the places we live. It also applies to our spiritual homes – the place where we meet God and either invite Him to dwell with us or lose Him in the midst of spiritual clutter and disrepair.

Since the fall of our First Parents, sin and difficulty mastering our appetites are our daily struggle. If we imagine our soul to be a house, it's a "fixer-upper," in need of repair and constant maintenance. The Original Sin so damaged this "house" that it was fit to be condemned. But God, in His infinite goodness and deep love for us sent His Son to restore us, and to teach us how to keep our spiritual homes in good order.

Jesus' sacrifice of Himself wasn't some divine coat of paint to make us look presentable. Jesus became a human person so that our renewal would take place *from the inside out*. Our redemption is not a façade or a veneer, but a true restoration of His *image* in us, and the ability – by His grace – to become *like* Him. Unlike the home improvement shows, however, Jesus doesn't restore us to prove His skill and creativity. He's not on a budget requiring a bargain hunt for materials. On the contrary, He spared no expense – not even His life – to restore us once and for all. He does not need to die again, and we no longer need to fear death, as long as we work with Him to keep our *spiritual home* in good repair. But how do we do that?

Sin is the *rot* that gets into the structure and slowly weakens it. If left unattended, it destroys us from the inside. Confession and the Eucharist protect us from the damage of sin and strengthens the structure. Prayer and time spent in God's presence reinforce the structure and make it less susceptible to damage from outside forces. The Holy Mysteries and time spent with God also keep us from cluttering our spiritual homes with possessions that are unnecessary or are perhaps damaging to us. Gossip, jealousy, anger, and a lack of Christian charity toward others are just a few of the things we tend to cling to that we must recognize as the *junk* we constantly have to remove from ourselves. Just as houses get old and worn and benefit from renovation, our hearts can become weathered by the spiritual, emotional and physical wounds

we've endured. We may become so complacent that we don't even realize how nothing inside of us has changed for a long time. Our hearts need constant *conversion*. This doesn't mean making superficial changes but going deep within and allowing God, the Master Craftsman, to do His work in us, clearing out what is unstable and could cause us serious damage. When we stop clinging to those things that keep Him at a distance, God can work wonderful things in us for our good. Our openness to conversion is essential in maintaining a spiritual home that is strong, healthy, and able to withstand any force that tries to weaken or destroy it.

If we are honest and make a sincere examination of our conscience, and take an honest look at our lives, we'll soon acknowledge that we have a lot of work to do. Our personal weakness, the inclination to sin, wounds we carry from our families and from those who have willfully done us harm all contribute to our spiritual home falling into disrepair, and becoming cluttered with thoughts, attitudes, and behavior that further weakens us. But it is important for us to not fall into despair and to understand that by the blood of Jesus Christ we are not condemned! We may be "spiritual fixer-uppers," but we are works in progress, being renovated, restored and renewed by God. Let's pick up our tools (the Holy Mysteries, prayer, generosity and love) and work alongside Him to make our spiritual homes His permanent dwelling. **ECL**

Spring clean-up event at Carpathian Village

May 3-5, 2019

Come help out our eparchial retreat center and get it ready for the summer season! We have many jobs lined up that need to be completed!

Food will be provided!

Lodging is very limited! The dormitory is being reserved for children and teens as well as adults 18+ who have Safe Environment certification. This is due to the potential for churches to be bringing youth groups that must stay in the dorm together.

There will be evening activities for the children and teens, including a campfire with smores (weather permitting). Please invite everyone you can to come and help out! We have plenty of work to go around!

Please RSVP to Jon Aponick at 717-991-5204 as soon as possible so we can get the best count for food and lodging.

Carpathian Village 802 Snow Hill RD, Canadensis, PA 18326

MEN'S DAY OF RENEWAL

with

Fr. Michael O'Loughlin

**Saturday, June 16,
10am to 4pm**

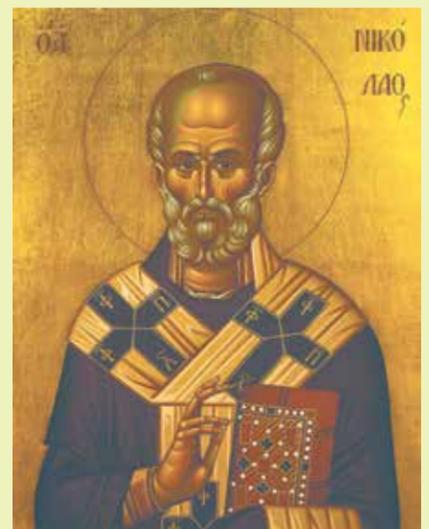
**Saint Michael Cathedral Chapel,
415 Lackawanna Avenue, Woodland Park, NJ
A barbecue lunch will be served. \$20.00 per person
(men and boys 12 and older)**

**RSVP to: 973-777-2553 or
passaicathedral@gmail.com**

Mark Your Calendars!

for
**The Saint
Nicholas
Pilgrimage**

Carpathian
Village
Cresco, PA



August 4, 2019



SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

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

WATER AND THE SPIRIT

Three of the Sunday Gospels you will hear in the next few weeks involve water. On the fourth Sunday of Pascha, we read about the pools of Bethesda (there were actually two), located just inside the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem (John 5:1-15). The story of an angel stirring up the waters may reflect how Jews understood the claim that the waters could heal; the pools were actually dedicated to the pagan god of healing, Asclepius. Those waters had done a paralyzed man no good for 38 years, until Jesus cured him by His word alone.

On the fifth Sunday of Pascha, Jesus encounters the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well (John 4:5-42). Jesus' unusual request for a drink provokes a lively conversation in which Jesus finally identifies Himself as the Messiah who can offer "living water" that becomes "a fountain of water springing up into eternal life." By patiently evangelizing the woman, Jesus showed His desire to reconcile even notorious public sinners and overcame the rift between Jews and Samaritans over questions of worship and ethnic purity. The woman was finally led to recognize Jesus as the Messiah, and she in turn brought her whole town to Him (John 4:28-29, 39-42).

On the sixth Sunday of Pascha, Jesus restores sight to a man born blind. The miracle took place in two steps. First, Jesus made a mud paste with His saliva and rubbed it on the man's eyes. Then He sent the man to wash in the Pool of Siloam, from which he returned able to see (John 9:1-38). The first gesture re-enacts how God created man out of clay by His own hand and by the breath of His mouth (Genesis 2:7; Isaiah 64:8). The washing in Siloam can therefore be seen as a kind of re-creation, the resto-

ration of a man seen to be damaged by sin (John 9:2, 34). His open eyes allowed the man to see God's Son, to believe in Him, and to worship Him (John 9:35-38).

On Pentecost, we hear how, on the last and greatest day of a Jewish feast, Jesus stood up in the Temple and cried: "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the Scripture says, 'out of his heart will flow rivers of living water'" (John 7:37-52 and John 8:12). Saint John notes, "He spoke concerning the Spirit, which those who believed in Him would receive" (John 7:37-39). One of the rituals for this fall feast of Booths required priests to draw water and carry it up to be poured over the altar in the Temple as a prayer for the winter rain that made grain grow. For the second time now, Jesus claims to be the source of a better water, living water. And now, Saint John clearly identifies that water with the Holy Spirit.

The saints who organized our Gospel readings over a thousand years ago inten-

tionally took these four passages are taken out of the order in which Saint John recorded them. Jesus first dismisses superstitious pagan water and then offers a better water than even the Patriarch Jacob had enjoyed. He shows His power to make water the source of a new creation. The source of that water is the Son of God Himself, and God the Holy Spirit is present and active in it.

The Apostolic reading on Pascha helps us see the message. The Risen Lord told His Apostles: "John baptized with water but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now" (Acts 1:5). Early on in His ministry, Jesus had already made the connection in His late night conversation with Nicodemus: "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven" (John 3:5). We celebrate the mystery in our own lives on Pascha and again on Pentecost when we sing: "All you who have been baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ" (Galatians 3:27).

At our Baptism, we turned away from error and turned to Christ. We were adopted into God's own family, where differences of race, gender and ethnicity no longer matter (Galatians 3:28). We were "born again," set free from sin and death and united with Christ's new resurrected and glorified life (Romans 6:3-11). Pascha and Pentecost became personal for each of us at our Baptism, Chrismation and Holy Communion.

Like the paralyzed man (John 5:8-9), we should now "walk in the newness of life" (Romans 6:4). Like the Samaritan woman (John 4:28-29 and 39-42), we should be able to tell others about the difference Jesus Christ has made for us (Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8). Like the man born blind, we should be ready to give a defense of our faith (John 9: 30-33; 1 Timothy 6:12; 1 Peter 3:15). **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

- "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.



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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

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

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 Lozinsky, 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 Lozinsky at 201-333-2975.



Visiting New York City? Come Worship With Us!

Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church

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

246 East 15th Street, Manhattan, New York
212-677-0516

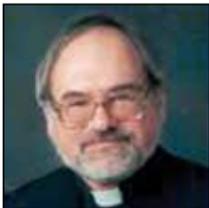
Sunday Divine Liturgy

8:00 AM – Church Slavonic & Homily Ponašemu
(Beginning December 16, 2018)

10:00 AM

6:00 PM

(Beginning January 13, 2019)



THE BYZANTINE LITURGY

By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD

THE HYMN OF VICTORY

The Hymn of Victory is what the Roman Liturgy calls the Sanctus, the Latin word for “Holy...” This hymn begins, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts, heaven and earth are full of Your glory, hosanna in the highest!” This hymn connects our earthly Liturgy with the heavenly worship, where the angels surround the throne of God, “singing, shouting, crying aloud and saying” forever, that God is “Holy, holy, holy.” (Isaiah 6:1-3) The acclamation of the priest introducing the Hymn of Victory “singing, shouting, crying out and saying,” is from the vision of angels that the prophet Ezekiel (1:10) had of four living creatures: the man (saying), the lion (shouting), the ox (crying out), and the eagle (singing).

Whatever their origins, and however think of them today, angels have a key role in the Liturgy. Our Liturgy on earth is mystically a representation of the heavenly angelic liturgy. Angels appear at the beginning of the Liturgy, when the celebrants make the first entrance. The priest prays, “O Lord, our Master and God, who in heaven established orders and armies of angels and archangels for the service of Your glory, make this our entrance to be an entrance of holy angels, con-celebrating with us and with us glorifying Your goodness.” At the Great Entrance, we again sing, “Let us, who mystically represent the Cherubim, and sing the thrice-holy hymn (*trisagion*) to the life-creating Trinity, now set aside all

earthly cares that we may welcome the King of all.”

The difficulty for us today is that we have a hard time connecting symbol and reality. As many other aspects of the liturgy, the angels have both a symbolic and real role. Obviously, our conceptions of the angels are symbolic, and, so we are tempted to conclude that since symbols cannot be real, angels are not really present. However, the symbolism (the Greek word “symbol,” means “what is thrown together, here, the reality and its spiritual meaning) points to something that is very real: the Liturgy unites us with spiritual glorification. If the liturgy were just for this world, it would be a hopeless exercise; it could not possibly deliver what it promises. It would be an empty promise, and meaningless words and gestures. Because it is difficult for people to think in real and symbol together, the liturgy does become meaningless for them. If the liturgy were simply a heavenly reality, with no relationship to our lives on earth and justice among peoples and nations, then it would also be meaningless, a flight from reality, a haven from the turmoil of the world. That is exactly what it is for many members of our congregations. Angels are the connection, or, to put it better, the real symbol of the connection. Our concept of angels may be symbolic, but it makes real, i.e., in concrete experience, the abstract idea of the union of earthly and heavenly

realities that gives the liturgy its force to actually and truly change human life.

The presence of angels may also be a symbol of the presence of God. After the ascension of our Lord, the eternal reality is Jesus at the right hand of the Father interceding for us. Jesus is alone the eternal High Priest. Since, from Scripture, we see that the angels surround the throne of God constantly, proclaiming his holiness, if Christ is truly present among us now, then the angels are truly just as present. The further conclusion is, of course, that our worship is equal in dignity to the heavenly worship. Angels and human commingle, and “we represent the Cherubim.” The conclusion of the real presence of Christ is inescapable. This is why “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord,” is added to the Hymn of Victory. The ascension to Jerusalem by Jesus was an affirmation of his divinity, and it is only fitting that he be accompanied by armies of angels.

The gospels do not mention angels on Palm Sunday, it is the Liturgy which makes this necessary connection. Angels are in the background in Jesus’ passion. When He is arrested, He replies, “Do you think that I cannot call upon My Father and He will not provide Me at this moment with more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matthew 26:53) In an ancient text added to the Gospel of Saint Luke, at the agony in the garden of

Gethsemane, we read, “to strengthen Him an angel from heaven appeared to Him.” (Luke 22:43) And, of course, it is angels who announce the resurrection. If they were present at the cross, and if the Liturgy is the commemoration of the passion, then the angels are present here. This also tells us that the real presence of Christ in the eucharist is not a static, but a dynamic presence of salvation. This is the presence that attracted as an act of piety, the private recitation of a Troparion from the Resurrection Canon 4, to the liturgy preparation:

“When your body was in the tomb, and your soul in hell, when you were in paradise with the thief, you were at the same time – O Christ, as God, upon Your throne with the Father and the Spirit, infinite and filling all things.”

In our now time, the passion is in the past, but Christ is enthroned with the Father and the past is truly as present now as well as the future. The angels, therefore, symbolize eternity and freedom from all temporal and spatial bonds. Perhaps, it can be stated this way: if they did not exist, we would have to invent them to explain the liturgy. The future reality is made more explicit in some Eastern liturgies, which add to the “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord,” the words “who comes and who will come in the name of the Lord.” **ECL**

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/>

May: 4, 11, 18, 25



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 or contact Bonnie at bb@c-rs.org.

Pilgrimage to

ROMANIA & BULGARIA

with
Fr. Ed Cimbala and
Fr. James Spera

12 Days
October 14-25, 2019

For More Information Contact:
Fr. Ed Cimbala fredcimbala@gmail.com 908-872-2928
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When traveling to the South, please visit our churches

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

Saint Anne

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

Epiphany of Our Lord

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

Saint Basil the Great

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

Holy Dormition

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

Saints Cyril and Methodius

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

Our Lady of the Sign

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

Saint Nicholas of Myra

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

Saint Therese

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

At the end of May, we will be celebrating the glorious Ascension of our Lord at the end of His time with His disciples after His Resurrection from the dead. I am reading through all the Stichera for Vespers and Matins for the feast of the Ascension, 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.

"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)

"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! 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.

SEASONAL REFLECTIONS

Father Ronald Hatton



BE EXALTED ABOVE THE HEAVENS, O GOD!

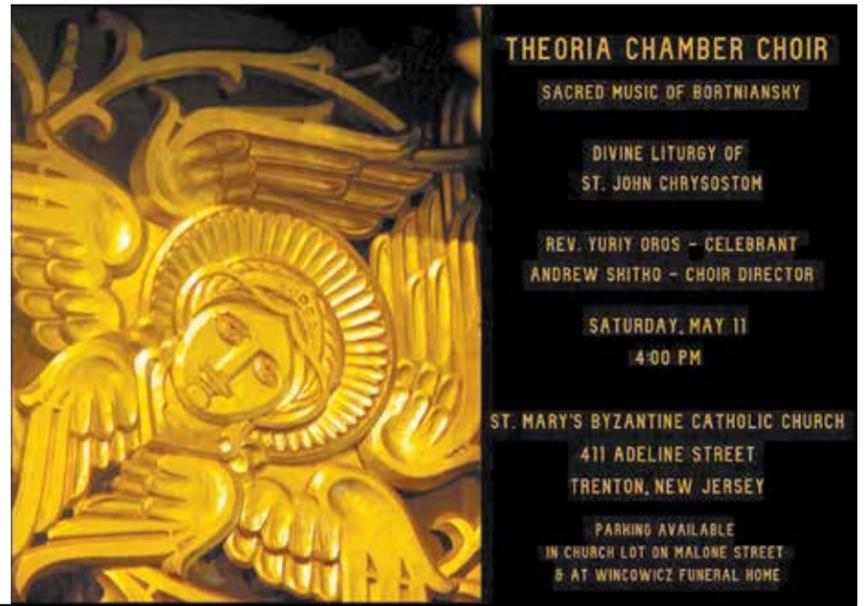
Together with them, we who live on earth are glorifying Your condescension to us and Your ascension away from us. Now we implore You, saying: Through Your ascension You have filled Your apostles and Your mother with a joy that surpasses every other joy, and through their intercession make us worthy of 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 Profes-

sion 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 Saint 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**



THEORIA CHAMBER CHOIR
 SACRED MUSIC OF BORTNIANSKY
 DIVINE LITURGY OF
 ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM
 REV. YURIY OROS - CELEBRANT
 ANDREW SHITKO - CHOIR DIRECTOR
 SATURDAY, MAY 11
 4:00 PM
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 411 ADELIN STREET
 TRENTON, NEW JERSEY
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 & AT WINCOWICZ FUNERAL HOME



SCHOOL OF PRAYER

Father G. Scott Boghossian

PRAY FOR REVIVAL

What happened to our zeal? Is there any enthusiasm for the things of God in our churches? In many cases, Byzantine Catholics drag themselves off to the Divine Liturgy as a chore or drudgery, endure an hour of liturgical prayers, don't participate by singing, and complain if the service seems too long. Multitudes of people on the church rolls cannot be bothered to attend the parish Sunday Divine Liturgy more than once or twice a year. In many parishes, regular attendance is slowly but surely diminishing. Church leaders promote multi-tiered "programs" that are intended to get more parishioners and more donations, but they only provide temporary relief. We think pithy sayings, like "All are welcome," will attract interested newcomers, when, in fact, serious Christians searching for a spiritual home will studiously avoid such saccharine sentimentality.

The Catholic Church as a whole is experiencing a downturn. In the past few years, many parishes in Europe, the United States, and Canada have been closed or merged. Look at what happened to the Church in Ireland. The constant barrage of bad news

keeps vocations to the priesthood and religious life to a minimum. Something needs to change. We must pray and fast for revival.

What is a revival? A revival is a heaven-sent, Holy Spirit inspired renewal of faith in Jesus Christ, characterized by zeal, enthusiasm, and fervor for the things of God. Revival is not something we can drum up. It takes place in response to our fervent prayer, sacrifice, and repentance. In 2 Chronicles 7:14, God says to Israel, "If my people who are called by my name humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land." This verse is a picture of the revival that God wants to send to the Church in our day. In Psalm 85:6 the Psalmist asks the LORD, "Will You not revive us again, that Your people may rejoice in You?"

What would a revival look like? Imagine our pews full. Picture long lines of people waiting to go to confession. See Catholics clamoring for more doctrinal classes, study

groups, prayer services, and spiritual direction. During a revival, candidates for the priesthood are turned away because there is no room in the seminary. Monasteries and convents are filled and growing. All of this is the predictable outcome of a genuinely heaven-sent revival!

The history of the Catholic Church is a history of revivals. Until the fourth century, the Church experienced persecution and martyrdom. During that time, to be a faithful Catholic in any meaningful way meant to be ready to die for Jesus Christ. The persecuted Church was by definition a Church experiencing renewal and revival. After the legalization of Christianity, we see a monastic revival in Egypt and Palestine. All of the great monastic founders and their monastic orders came about as a result of periods of intense spiritual renewal. The evangelization of the nations throughout the history of the Church happened as a result of periods of intensely lived Christianity, periods of revival. The approved appearances of the Mother of God at La Salette, Lourdes, Fatima, etc., effected spiritual renewal throughout the world. The great

saints of the Church lived a revival lifestyle that spread the fire of revival wherever they went.

How can we have revival? In the words of 2 Chronicles 7:14, we must humble ourselves, pray, and turn from our sinful ways. We must cry out to God for revival. We must pray with faith and perseverance, and not give up until the windows of heaven open and the Holy Spirit is poured out on the Church in a New Pentecost. We must pay the price for revival. Will you pay the price? Ask God for a great revival in your parish, in your eparchy, and in the Church worldwide. Add this intention to your regular prayers. Offer some particular penance or sacrificial act for the intention of a mighty heaven-sent revival that will renew and empower the Church for the work of evangelization and the sanctification of the faithful. A few extra prayers will not be enough. A few additional sacrifices won't cut it. We must pray like our life and future as a parish, an eparchy, and as Church depends on it, because it does. Pray for revival. **ECL**

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

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

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SEMINARIAN REFLECTIONS

Reader Timothy Fariss

I FOUND FAITH AND FOUND IT IN ABUNDANCE

No, I am not talking about my own faith but that of others.

Nor did I cultivate it but discovered it.

It has been gifted to me, to experience it.

Last summer, I set out and explored the idea of starting a college community of Byzantine Catholics at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. I knew quite a few Byzantine alumni and had a few contacts among the faculty, but I did not know any students. It felt like I was going to be cold calling, walking down the sidewalk, asking, "Are you Byzantine Catholic?" I was able to attend freshman orientation and immediately found two Byzantine Catholic students and a few Roman Catholics who were interested in experiencing the Christian East. However, one of those students was spending a semester abroad and I had a difficult schedule to navigate. For that semester, we scheduled the Divine Liturgy every other Sunday on campus at 6 PM, with the hope that our one student would be the spiritual beneficiary.

In mid-November, we were preparing for Liturgy wondering if anyone would come. The priest concluded his preparatory prayers five minutes before the hour and we waited... and waited... and decided to pray a different service since no one had come and we all had already received Communion. I got a little insight into Luke 10 at that moment. All the thoughts came to mind of whether I should give up this hope and what more could I have done. In Luke

10, Jesus sends the 70 disciples out two by two. My pairing included a fellow seminarian with a great sense of humor and, at that time, the remaining hope. Community is incredibly important for faith. Community has the power to fortify strengths and minimize weaknesses. With his encouragement, we came back to campus in December with four students praying along side us and suddenly there was a sense of purpose to keep coming back. This was a turning point to finding faith in abundance.

There had to be more than two Byzantine Catholics on campus. We were about to find them. Two Byzantine Catholic students found us on our Facebook page. I sent them private messages to invite them, not just to our scheduled services, but to be a part of the community. I spoke with two pastors who had two students at Carlow University, 10 minutes from Duquesne. I visited a parish on my free Sunday and found another Duquesne student. The student that went abroad came back and invited two more Byzantine Catholics from the University of Pittsburgh and one of those UPitt students invited his friend whose grandmother is Byzantine Catholic. Later, a seminarian went on a retreat and met a Ukrainian Catholic at UPitt. A teacher from Duquesne visited the seminary and wanted to invite his class to experience a Divine Liturgy, luckily there was now a community on campus.

Suddenly, after spending a semester with 1 student, we now have 8 Duquesne

students, 5 U Pitt students, and 2 more Carlow students. Finding students around Pittsburgh also helped me find 3 students at Penn State's main campus that I directed to our Penn State Byzantine Catholic college community. I started talking to the author of a blog, whose daughter attends college in Scranton and now wants to start her own young adult group. (Her audience in Scranton has 12 Byzantine parishes, a Melkite parish and 5 Ukrainian parishes within a 30 minute drive.)

What once had no one show up has exploded into a community of over 60 Byzantine Catholic college students spread across many states. I mailed them all a prayer list, to let them know, 1) that they are not alone and 2) just as I ask you to pray for them, they are praying for you. It has also helped tether communities at Penn State, Pittsburgh, and Franciscan University. Who knows what potential could exist if more of these communities "pop up". Each of our individual parishes, that sees one or two students graduate high school, could rest easy with the hope that their children might find themselves among like-minded individuals seeking the will of God and genuine holiness in the traditions of the Byzantine Catholic Church.

I have seen an abundance of faith and the sharing of faith. In my recent encounters, I can say that our churches have raised holy children; I've seen it. Two of the college students I met, sought holiness among the growing secular society of college cam-

pus. However, there was no Byzantine Catholic community or resources for them when they got to college. In seeking holiness, they latched on to the holy things that the Roman Catholic Church could offer them: holy devotions, catechesis, as well as a strong faith-filled community and social events. These things are holy. But I walked in with the Byzantine Catholic equivalents that sparked a new fire for them to experience all the unique and holy things that the Byzantine Catholic Church has to offer, to help them grow in holiness, to help their soul transcend words, to help them enter prayer with God. There is a cautionary tale in this, if we raise our children in good faith but don't follow up with them, we may lose future "home-grown" leaders of our church. I reminded them of the good things that the Byzantine Catholic Church can offer them in their walk with God. They were always aimed toward the path of holiness, I just got to witness their faith and watch them run the race.

Contact info for these communities

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Franciscan U. in Steubenville - Nicholas R. - ByzantineClub@Franciscan.edu

ECL



Altar Server Camp at the Carpathian Village

July 21-24, 2019

Come join altar servers from around the Eparchy for fun activities, and opportunities to learn about our faith.

Registration forms are on the Eparchy's website at: www.eparchyofpassaic.com

Carpathian Village 802 Snow Hill RD, Canadensis, PA 18326



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UPCOMING EPARCHIAL AND PARISH EVENTS

MAY, 2019

- 15 Mid-Pentecost
- 19 Ordination of Paul Varchola West to the diaconate
*Saint Michael Cathedral * 3 PM*
- 27 Memorial Day
*Civic holiday *Chancery closed*
- 30 Holy Ascension of Our Lord
*Holy Day of Obligation *Chancery closed*

June, 2019

- 9 Pentecost
The Descent of the Holy Spirit
- 10 Pentecost Monday
Simply Holyday Chancery closed*

JULY, 2019

- 4 Independence Day
*Civic holiday *Chancery closed*

21-24 Altar Server Camp

Carpathian Village, Canadensis, PA

28-31 Eparchial Teen Rally

Carpathian Village, Canadensis, PA

AUGUST, 2019

- 1-4 Young Adult Convocation
New York City
- 4 Annual Saint Nicholas Pilgrimage
Carpathian Village, Canadensis, PA
- 15 Holy Dormition of the Theotokos
*Holy Day of Obligation *Chancery closed*