



EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

Official Publication of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic

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AXIOS! AXIOS! AXIOS!

Father Lewis Rabayda Ordained to the Holy Priesthood

Annandale, VA



Father Edward Higgins, Deacon Michael Bezruchka, Mr. Max Mukerjee, Deacon Stephen Casmus, Subdeacon Bryan Scotton, Father Steven Galuschik, Deacon Joseph Warjacki, Monsignor John Sekellick, Bishop Kurt Burnette, Father Lewis Rabayda, Deacon Elmer Pekarik, Father John Basarab, Subdeacon Thomas Moses, Monsignor George Dobes, Father Robert Pipta, Reader Oliver Black, Reader Jack Figel, Mr. Richard Terza, and servers from Epiphany of Our Lord Church

“And one does not take the honor upon himself, but he is called by God, just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not exalt Himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by Him who said to Him, ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You’; as He says also in another place, ‘You are a priest for ever, according to the order of Melchizedek.’ These passag-

es from the Epistle to the Hebrews, which some say can become the guiding principle for one’s priestly ministry, were chosen by the newly-ordained Father Lewis Michael Rabayda for his holy card. This ministry began on Saturday morning, January 30, at 10 a.m., after his Grace, Bishop Kurt, through the imposition of hands and the invocation of the Holy Spirit, ordained the

pious Deacon to the Sacred Order of the Presbyterate at Epiphany of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church in Annandale, VA, where Father John G. Basarab is pastor. Father Lewis moved to the Northern Virginia area for employment after he graduated college, with one of the deciding factors for the move being the presence of a Byzantine Catholic Church. He

attended Epiphany of Our Lord Parish for two and a half years and was an active member of the Slava Men’s Chorus and the Men’s Club until he discerned a vocation to the priesthood in the summer of 2009 and entered seminary in the fall of 2010. Epiphany of Our Lord parish is a very important place for the newly ordained priest because this

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A BROTHERLY EMBRACE BRINGS POPE AND RUSSIAN PATRIARCH TOGETHER

By Cindy Wooden, Catholic News Service
Havana, Cuba

At long last, Pope Francis and Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill of Moscow embraced, kissing each other three times.

“Finally,” the pope told the patriarch Feb. 12 as they met in a lounge at Havana’s Jose Marti International Airport. “We are brothers,” he told the patriarch. Amid the clicking of cameras and multiple flashes, Patriarch Kirill was overheard telling the pope, “Things are easier now.” “It is

clearer that this is God’s will,” Pope Francis told him.

A flight of almost 12 hours capped months of intense negotiations and more than two decades of Vatican overtures to bring a pope and a Russian patriarch together for the first time.

Cuban President Raul Castro played host to the pope and patriarch, who was on a visit to Russian Orthodox communities on the

island-nation. Pope Francis had a pastoral visit to Mexico planned for months; the stop in Havana was announced only a week before the meeting.

Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill signed a joint declaration that emphasized the things the two churches have in common.

Addressing the situation in the Middle East and North Africa, they said that “whole families, villages and cities of our brothers and sisters in Christ are being completely

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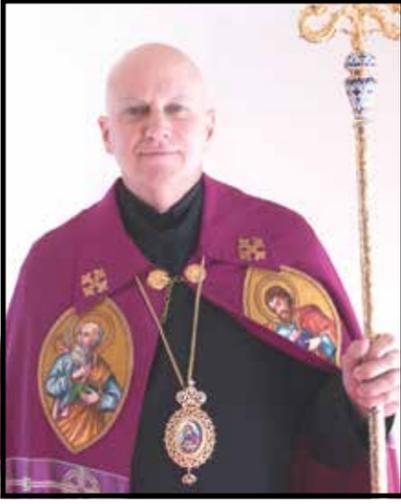


Deacon and a Religious Sister both repose in the Lord—p3

Pastor, assisted by deacons and parishioners, blesses the Raritan River—p5

Sermon and photos from Compline at Pro-Life Rally—pp6-7

Photos of the Ordination of Deacon Lewis Rabayda to the Order of Presbyter—pp8-9



I LIFT UP MY EYES...

Pastoral Reflections of Bishop Kurt



ALL SUCCESS DEPENDS ON GOD

After Christmas this year, I travelled to Los Angeles area to visit my Uncle Bob. He is the last uncle or aunt I have who is still living. He is in a board and care facility. Because it is so far to travel, I also stopped in Phoenix on the way home to spend some time with Bishop Gerald Dino. Bishop Gerald was born on January 11, 1940, and just turned 76. He was ordained a priest on March 21, 1965, and celebrated his 50th anniversary last year with many of his classmates in Pittsburgh. A son of the Eparchy of Passaic, he kindly consented to be interviewed for our newspaper:

Bishop Kurt: Bishop Gerald, many people are interested to hear about what it's like when you get the news that the Pope of Rome has chosen you as a bishop. Tell us about your phone call from the Nuncio.

Bishop Gerald: Well, I had been at the funeral of Father Andor Rakaczki (Father Andor Rakaczki died at the age of 58 and was buried from our parish in White Plains); I was eating an apple about 5 in the afternoon. I never answer while I'm eating, but for some reason, I answered. It was a man with a heavy accent; I thought it was an immigrant looking for a church. Then he mentioned the Pope. He said, "You have been named the bishop of 'vuhnuhs'". I thought "where?" Then I said, "Oh, you mean Van Nuys." He said, "Yes. Do you accept?" So I said, "Oh, OK." He said, "From now on, your life will be totally different." And it sure has been! He said, "You are not to tell your bishop or anyone else. I will inform your bishop and Archbishop Basil." I said, "When will it be announced?" and he said, "On the Feast of Saint Nicholas." A week later, Archbishop Basil called, and asked, "Has Bishop Pataki said anything?" Bishop Pataki didn't know for three weeks. He got a letter but didn't look at it for three weeks. Bishop Skurla and I were announced at the same time. His enthronement was in January. Mine was supposed to be the following week on a Thursday, but Archbishop Basil called and said that weekend was Super Bowl weekend and the hotels were full and high priced. And then Lent began so we had to wait till Bright Week, the last week of March. I was happy because it gave me more time to move.

Bishop Kurt: Was the Nuncio right? Is your life completely different?

Bishop Gerald: Being bishop is totally different from being in a parish. Your pastorate is all the parishes. You have to be concerned about each parish and make sure they are being taken care of properly by the pastor. You have to travel to each parish at least once every five years.

Bishop Kurt: It seems like you didn't change much? (When you became a bishop)

Bishop Gerald: No. I tried not to. I tried not to be any different as a person than when I was a

pastor. I always looked at the priests as my eyes, my feet, my hands. I try to respect them as you respect your own body. Without them, your episcopacy is a failure.

Bishop Kurt: Tell me about when you decided to go to the seminary.

Bishop Gerald: I always wanted to be priest, almost all of my life. As a senior in high school, I started thinking about when to go. At that time in New York, you graduated in January or June depending on when you started, so I was finishing in January of 1958. I had to decide whether to go to work till September, or enter immediately, so I tried to enter in January. Three weeks after I graduated in January, I was in Pittsburgh. Of course in those days, you didn't go through all the vetting you do nowadays.

Bishop Kurt: Which was your parish growing up?

Bishop Gerald: Holy Spirit in Binghamton, NY. My pastor growing up was (Father) Michael Staurovsky, who baptized me. (He was a famous musician among our clergy. He then taught at our seminary, and wrote many compositions that we used to use in the Slavonic Liturgy.) And then as a teenager, it was (Father) Al Maczkov who sent me off to the seminary. Maczkov was an inspiration to me, because he was a good pastor, and he encouraged me. He was good with the people, and he built up the parish. As an altar server, I was answering him, and I was going too fast, he turned to me laughing, and said, "Gerry, if you want to be a priest, you have to pray slower than that." Those were the only two priests I knew until I went to seminary.

I have to say my vocation is due to the Sisters of Saint Basil. They were up in Binghamton and ran the religious education classes (there was no school). Sister Christopher is one of the ones that taught me. Here we are, working together years later.

Bishop Kurt: Who was your rector?

Bishop Gerald: Mostly then-Auxiliary Bishop Stephen Kocisko. He was there six of my seven years. Then Smochko (Rev. Msgr. Basil Smochko) became rector. I liked and respected Bishop Kocisko. He was faithful, and he engrained in the mind of the students that we have to be Byzantine and faithful to our own traditions.

Bishop Kurt: Who inspired you in seminary?

Bishop Gerald: (Father) John Bobak. He taught me, "engage the mind before engaging the mouth". Also (then Father) Andrew Pataki taught chant.

Bishop Kurt: Who ordained you?

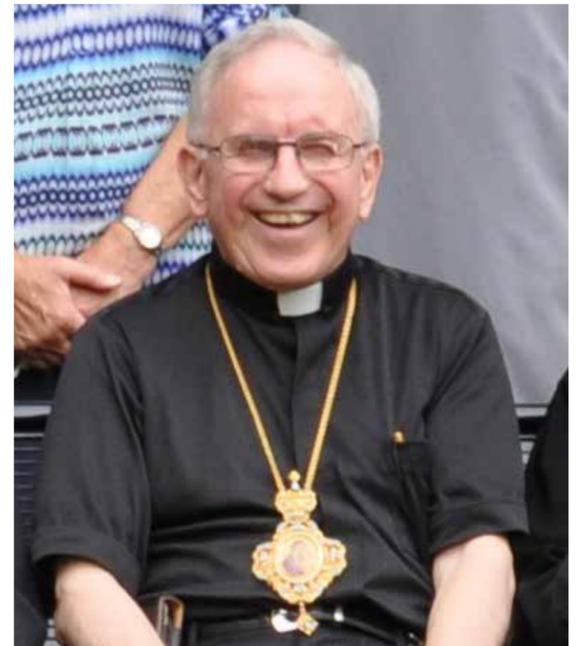
Bishop Gerald: Stephen Kocisko when he became bishop of Passaic. It was the largest ordination class in history. 10 in Passaic and 5 in Pittsburgh.

Bishop Kurt: Tell me about your parishes as a priest.

Bishop Gerald: First, I was assistant in Pottstown under (Father) Paul Bovankovich (and Pan'i) for two years. That's where I met (Father) Michael Mondik. He was 18. I took him to the seminary. He retired before me!

Bishop Kurt: What did you learn in Pottstown?

Bishop Gerald: I learned the need for preaching well. Sister Helen Shott was principal of the school, and she always would say things to me to help me improve and develop a better preaching style. I knew her before I knew her brother, (Metropolitan) Basil. I learned how to run a parish—the ins and outs of pastoral work—the need to accommodate people. I remember George Parvensky cantored the daily Liturgy, and I was slow and he was fast, and finally he told me he had to be at work at 9:00. So I learned you have to accommodate people in their needs as pastor.



Bishop Gerald Dino

Bishop Kurt: What would you tell a newly ordained priest about his first parish?

Bishop Gerald: All success really depends upon God, more than you—and the need for prayer in your life.

Bishop Kurt: What was your next assignment?

Bishop Gerald: Saint Michael Hungarian Byzantine Catholic Church in Perth Amboy, NJ, under (Msgr.) Albert Gaydos. He was a consultor, a "big guy" at the time in the eparchy. He had a house at the beach, and his own boat and plane. He was the one who told (Bishop) Dudick to send me to Europe to study, and eventually he did.

Bishop Kurt: What did you learn there?

Bishop Gerald: I learned a lot—Gaydos was very good to me—just parish work. He was a successful pastor. I learned to be people friendly—if there are any social activities, to be present at all parish functions. To be available, whatever the needs may be: confessions, consultations, counseling, marriage preparations. He gave me all the pre-Cana work to do.

To be continued...

+Kurt Brunette



+ FATHER DEACON MICHAEL I. PATAKI ENTERS ETERNAL REPOSE

Beaver Meadows, PA

The Rev. Deacon Michael I. Pataki, 94, formerly of Conyngham, PA, fell asleep in the Lord on January 22, in Winston-Salem, NC, surrounded by his family.

He was born in Palmerton, PA, son of the late Ignatius and Sophia (Dejak) Pataki. He was a member of Saints Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church, Beaver Meadows, PA. A veteran of World War II, he served in the U.S. Army as a military policeman with the 1st Infantry Division.

He graduated from Saint Procopius Academy and attended Saint Procopius College for three years before going to World War II. After the war he received his bachelor's degree from Seton Hall University, South

Orange, N.J., and his master's degree in public administration from there.

He was a junior high history teacher in Basking Ridge, N.J., and principal at Saint Michael's School in Perth Amboy, NJ.

He was ordained as a deacon for the Eparchy of Passaic in 1979 by Bishop Michael Dudick at Saints Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church, Phillipsburg, NJ.

He was preceded in death by his sisters and brothers, Mary Kern, Ann Roberts, Ignatius Pataki, Jr., Julianna Gamble, Charles Pataki and Bishop Andrew Pataki.

He is survived by his wife of 67 years, Annette (Dunbar) Pataki, to whom he was a loving, kind and

compassionate caregiver the last six years; his daughter, Beverly Morris, Winston-Salem, NC; his sisters, Helen Hahn, Ellicott City, MD; and Margaret Rendish, Hope Mills, NC; two grandchildren, Katherine Doderer and her husband, Brian, and Anne Morris Cerullo and her husband, Michael; three great-grandchildren, Nicholas Cerullo and Fiona

and Isley Rives; and several nieces and nephews. Deacon Michael cherished his time spent with his family and siblings and they were the most happy times in his life.

The funeral was held on January 28 from Saints Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church, Beaver Meadows, PA.



+ SISTER ELEANOR MARY HORVAT, OSBM, WELCOMED INTO NEW LIFE

Mount Macrina, Uniontown, PA

Sister Eleanor Mary (former Sister Vincentia) fell asleep peacefully in the Lord on Tuesday evening, December 8, 2015. As she had attended the Divine Liturgy earlier that day, and although she was having some discomfort, no one expected that this would have been her last day among us.

The daughter of the late John J. and Mary (Petro) Horvath, Sister Eleanor Mary was born in Pottstown, Pa. She entered the Sisters of Saint Basil from Saint John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church in Pottstown, PA, on June 20, 1948. She pronounced her First Vows on August 15, 1950, and made her Perpetual Profession on January 1, 1956, in the presence of the late Father George Bonchonsky.

For many of the 67 years of her religious life, Sister Eleanor Mary served in culinary arts for the community in the missions in New York, New Jersey, Indiana, Illinois, and Pennsylvania; at the Byzantine Catholic Seminary; at Saint Basil's Home for Women; and at the monastery in Uniontown. Her interest

in the culinary arts led her to participate in *Galand's World – A Chef's Perspective to Cooking*, as part of the Continuing Education offered by the Pennsylvania State University for three consecutive years.

Sister Eleanor Mary's ministry underwent a change in 1986 when she became a familiar and pleasant figure in the Card and Prayer Department at the monastery. She would process the incoming mail and take care of keeping the files in order. Sister was assiduous in filling orders, packaging them, and assuring that they would be mailed in good time. She found great joy in doing this, and her dedication often led her to stay longer than was expected of her. As an "extracurricular" activity, Sister Eleanor Mary accompanied Sister Dolores Ann to the regular meetings of the Multiple Sclerosis Social Club of Fayette County. She offered her services in sending greeting cards for various occasions to the members, and she was so cheerful in doing this that she was named an honorary member and the "Sunshine Lady" of the club. She continued her participation even while

she was at Mount Macrina Manor where the meetings were held for some years.

In his homily, Metropolitan William alluded to the Gospel reading about Martha and Mary in speaking about Sister Eleanor Mary's life. She spent a great part of her life being a "Martha" as evidenced by the ministries to which she was assigned. However, as with all those in religious life, there has to be and was time to be "Mary," especially during her final years at Mount Macrina Manor. As we continue to celebrate Consecrated Life, all are called to take the good example of Martha and Mary and do both, do what needs to be done but also take time to pray and sit at the feet of Jesus.

Sister Eleanor Mary was preceded in death by her parents, her brothers Daniel and John, Jr., and her sister, Patricia Hassar. In addition to her Sisters in community, she is survived by her nieces, cousins and their families. The Parastas Service was celebrated by Father Michael Huszti, Monastery chaplain. The Funeral Divine Liturgy was cel-



ebrated by Metropolitan William on Saturday, December 12, 2015, at 10:30 am in the Monastery Chapel with Father Michael Huszti as concelebrant and Deacon Raymond Zadzilko assisting. In attendance were Very Rev. Archbishop John Petro, Father Ronald Larko, and Father Stephen Wahal. Interment followed in the Dormition Section of Mount Macrina Cemetery.

May God grant to his handmaiden, Sister Eleanor Mary, eternal memory and peaceful repose.



PEOPLE YOU KNOW AROUND THE EPARCHY

IN SYBERTSVILLE...

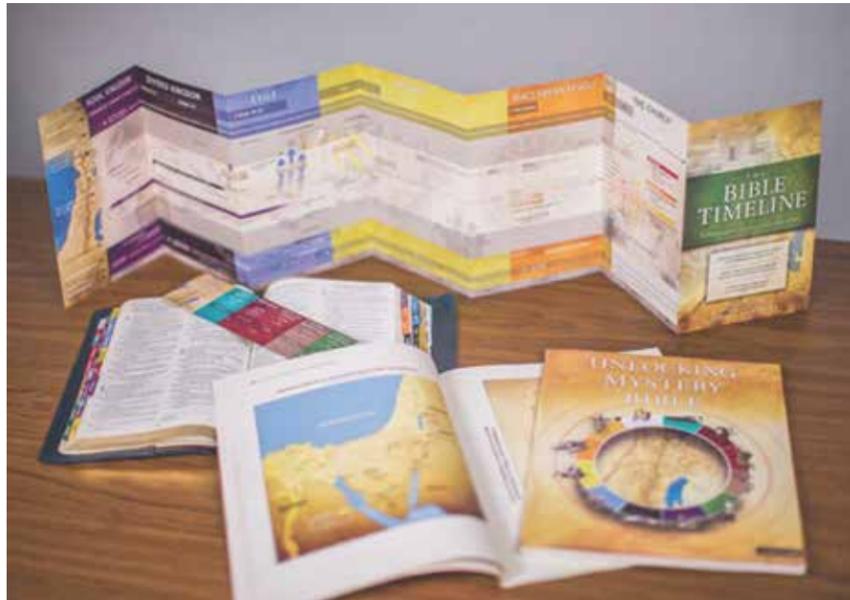
Northeast Pennsylvania Cantors Pray the Emmanuel Moleben

An Emmanuel Moleben, a service of prayer for the Christmas Season, and a concert was held Sunday December 13, 2015, at the Holy Dormition Friary Chapel, Sybertsville, PA.

The concert was presented by the Cantors of NE PA and a reception

followed.

From left to right: Father Leonard Martin, SJ, narrator, with participating Cantors, Paul Komishock, Mike Kopchak, Saint Nicholas (Tristan Richardson), Steve Dougherty, Andrew Barilla, Steven Dean, Director: Andrew Drodzik.



Unlocking the Mystery of the Bible study materials

IN MONT CLARE...

Saint Michael Parish Explores Salvation History

For the last several weeks, nearly thirty parishioners from Saint Michael Byzantine Catholic Church, Mont Clare, PA, have participated in the *Unlocking the Mystery of the Bible* study program by Jeff Cavins and Sarah Christmyer. It was “enlightening and very helpful,” according to Tom and Nancy Yatsko. The study provided an overview of the biblical narrative in eight short sessions. Many parishioners were able to participate at home by watching the study videos online. Others gathered every week to have lively group

discussions. What makes this program unique is the use of *The Great Adventure Bible Timeline*, which makes the complexity of the Bible simple and accessible for everyone by giving them the “big picture” of the Bible. Saint Michael parishioners concluded their study on the First Sunday of the Great Fast, and held a modest Lenten celebration to commemorate the event. Fig Newtons, decorated with the Byzantine Christogram, served as a reminder that the Word of God is “sweeter than honey” (Psalm 18:10).



Decorated fig newtons distributed to participants at end of the program



Father James Badeaux (left), pastor, with Deacon-candidate John Harden (right), study facilitator, and Bible study participants

SCHEDULE OF LENTEN VESPERS AND CONFESSION

WYOMING VALLEY

- Sunday, February 28 Saint Nicholas—Swoyersville
- Sunday, March 6 Saint Michael—Pittston
- Sunday, March 13 Saint Mary—Kingston

All Services begin at 3:00 p.m. followed by opportunity for Confession and Lenten refreshment Social Hour. April 12th followed by dinner at the Knights of Columbus, Luzerne.

SCRANTON AREA

- Sunday, February 28 Saint Michael—Dunmore
- Sunday, March 6 Saint John/Saint Mary—Scranton
- Sunday, March 13 Saint John—Forest City

All Services begin at 3:00 p.m. followed by opportunity for Confession and Lenten refreshment Social Hour.

CHESTER & MONTGOMERY COUNTIES

- Sunday, February 28 Blessed Virgin Mary—Coatesville
- Sunday, March 6 Saints Peter and Paul Ukrainian Greek Catholic—Phoenixville

All Services begin at 3:00 p.m. followed by opportunity for Confession and Lenten refreshment Social Hour. Dates subject to change. Please confirm with parish bulletin or website.

SAINT MARY CHURCH CELEBRATES THE GREAT SANCTIFICATION OF WATER

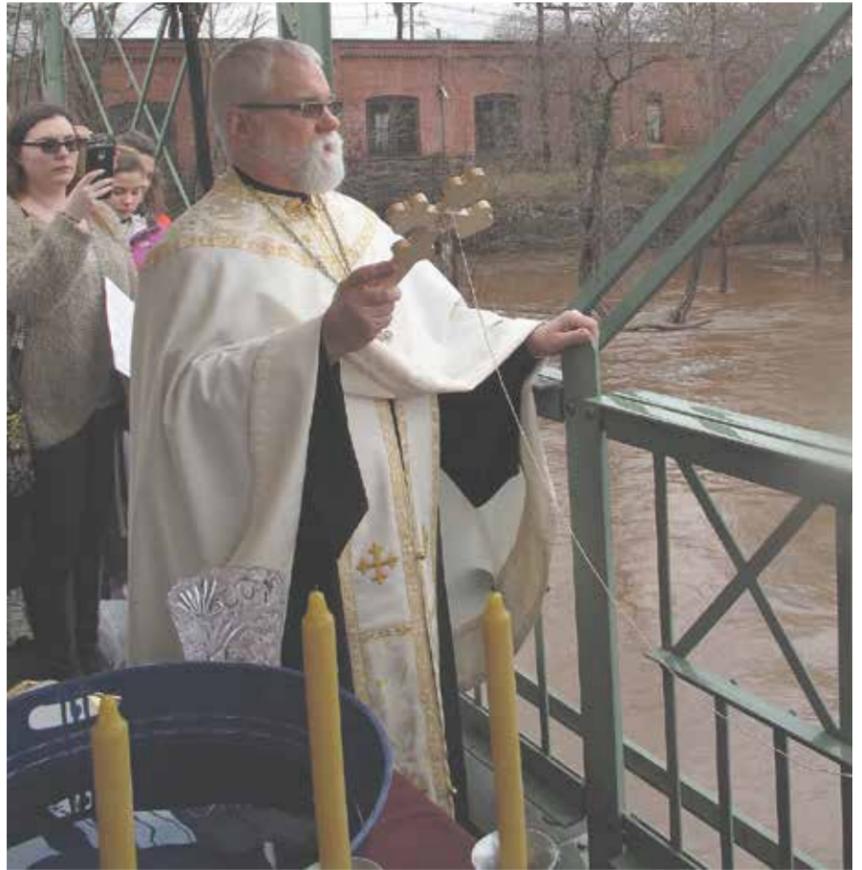
Hillsborough, NJ

Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church, Hillsborough, NJ, celebrated the Great Sanctification of Water on Sunday afternoon, January 10, 2016. Eighty parishioners and twenty people from local Roman Catholic parishes braved the elements to attend the service. Intermittent heavy rain throughout the morning and the early afternoon threatened to cancel the event. Those attending were rewarded with an unexpected break in the weather front. The sky briefly turned bright azure and a brilliant rainbow was seen over the bridge and the river, as Almighty God smiled on the work of His people. The temperature was a balmy 60 degrees and the sun shone brightly during the service. As soon as it ended, the heavy rain started again!

The celebration was held at the Nevius Street Bridge park, an his-

toric bridge over the Raritan River in NJ, now restricted to foot traffic. The bridge offered a very scenic and inspiring view of the river, as it swelled to near overflow. The current was exceedingly swift and flowed directly underfoot. It served to remind the parishioners of the awesome power of nature, and of course, the Almighty. After the service was concluded, the parishioners were treated to lunch back at Saint Mary Parish Center.

Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church is served by Father Edward G. Cimbala, who officiated at the service. He was assisted by Deacons Alexander Kubik and Mark Koscin-ski. The choir was lead by Profes-sor Elias Zareva and Glenn Seder. The parish is particularly thankful to Somerset County, NJ, Raritan Borough, and the Town of Hillsbor-ough, who allowed use of the park.



Father Ed Cimbala blesses the roiling Raritan River



Smiling parishioners shield themselves from the weather



Deacon Alexander Kubik assists



Father Ed blesses the people



Lenten “Munching & Learning”

Fridays * February 12, 19, 26, March 4
Noon and 7:00 PM

(Prayer Service in the church followed by Lenten Meal and presentation in the Parish Center)

St. Mary Byzantine Catholic Church
1900 Brooks Boulevard
Hillsborough, NJ 08844

A Special Lenten Series for the Jubilee of Mercy



*Go and learn the meaning
of the words,
‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’*



Week 1 – Friday, February 12

What is Mercy?

Mercy is not weakness or detached from Justice, but God’s healing salve

Week 2 – Friday, February 19

Who is Mercy?

God is the Fountain of Mercy who pours Himself out for us

Week 3 – Friday, February 26

The Door of Mercy

God’s mercy is free and overflowing but requires our open hearts to receive it

Week 4 – Friday, March 4

Being Mercy

God’s mercy is not to be contained, but flows through us into the world

Our Presenter - Ann M. Koshute, MTS Ann is Adjunct Instructor in Theology at St. Joseph’s College of Maine and DeSales University. She obtained her Master of Theological Studies from the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family at the Catholic University of America. In addition to working on marriage preparation and adult faith formation programs, Ann is a retreat leader and writer. She and her husband Keith are parishioners of St. Ann Byzantine Catholic Church, Harrisburg, PA.



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UKRAINIAN BISHOP ADDRESSES FAITHFUL AT PRO-LIFE COMPLINE

National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, DC

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ!

I would like to, first of all, sincerely thank Bishop Kurt Burnette of the Eparchy of Passaic for his gracious invitation to be present this evening for the celebration of the Compline service and to offer this evening's meditation for all you gathered here in the National Shrine for this vigil on the occasion of the 2016 March for Life. I feel very honored to be here this evening among you.

There was once a well-to-do woman who engaged a well-known artist to paint her portrait. The woman sat for him for many days but once the portrait was finished and revealed to her for the first time, she was very dissatisfied with it. "The portrait does not do my face justice" she said rather haughtily to the artist. "Madame," the artist replied, "Your face doesn't need justice, it needs mercy."

As we all know, this year's March for Life gathering is occurring just as we have entered into the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy, proclaimed by His Holiness Pope Francis last month in Saint Peter Basilica in Rome. Mercy.

Contrary to the approach some might take, I think that in this Jubilee Year, first of all, before we are able show mercy to anyone else, we are called to open our own hearts so that we can accept the gift of mercy freely given to us by the Father. Sounds easy enough in theory, but opening our hearts to God is, at times, not as straightforward as we may think. Because in order to accept this gift of mercy, we must first admit to ourselves and to God that we, abject and sinful human creatures, are indeed, in need of His mercy. We are called to acquire an attitude of sincere penitence and humility, which is not always easy for us who have grown up on a diet, served to us by our modern society, of pride, personal infallibility and self-sufficiency.

Each of us is truly in need of God's mercy. But what does God's mercy consist of? What is it? How can it be described? How can it be experienced in our hearts? What does it feel like? How can we feel it in our skin?

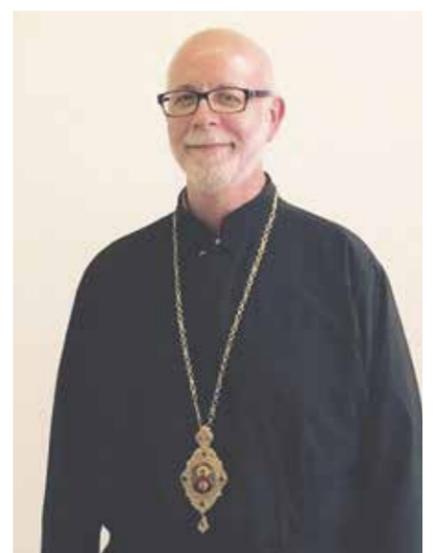
Perhaps we can discover a bit of an answer in the spirituality of

the Eastern churches. The divine services of the Byzantine Church, including the Compline we are celebrating today, and especially the services of Great Lent, which is almost upon us, are replete with references to our personal sinfulness and insufficiency and our need for the mercy of God.

The prayer that the Eastern Church fathers emphasize greatly and the prayer that is most expressive of Byzantine spirituality is exactly a plea for God's mercy. It is a prayer that should be familiar to most of us – the Jesus Prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner". *Kyrie eleison* – Lord, have mercy; in Ukrainian: Господи, помилуй – the plea which we hear so often in the divine services is a contraction, a shortened version of this Jesus Prayer.

Saint Symeon of Thessaloniki writes the following about *Kyrie eleison* – Lord, have mercy: "This expression is appropriate, since we should not ask for anything except for mercy, as we have neither boldness nor access to offer anything as our own. So, as sinners and condemned through sin, we cannot, nor dare not, say anything to our Loving Master except 'have mercy'".

Our limited human intellect cannot, of course, even partially grasp the meaning of the mercy of God. One of the best attempts to explain its meaning in human terms comes from the book entitled *Orthodox Worship* by Benjamin Williams, who writes: "The word 'mercy' in English is the translation of the Greek word *eleos*, which has the same root as the old Greek word for olive oil; a substance which was used in the ancient world as a soothing agent for bruises and minor wounds. The oil was poured onto the wound and gently massaged in, thus soothing,



Bishop Paul Chomnycky of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Stamford, CT

comforting and making whole the injured part. And here we think immediately, of course, of the gospel parable of the Good Samaritan. So when we pray *Kyrie eleison* – Lord, have mercy, we are saying in a very real sense – Lord, soothe me, comfort me, take away my pain, show me your steadfast love. Thus this mercy does not refer so much to justice or acquittal, which is a typically Western juridical interpretation, but to the infinite loving kindness of God, and his compassion for his suffering children, his desire to lift us up from our pain and sorrow and sinfulness. It is in this sense that we pray 'Lord, have mercy' with such great frequency throughout the divine services."

But then, if we are called to embrace the mercy of God with open arms and hearts for ourselves, then how much more are we called to share this gift with others and to witness to this gift in the world? "Be merciful as also your Father is merciful", says the Lord. (Luke 6:36) Like the traveller in the Gospel parable who stumbles upon the beaten man left for dead at the edge of the road, we too are called to be a Good Samaritan to those in our lives, whom we meet, even accidentally, in our daily lives, who have need of the soothing balm of God's mercy



Deacon Peter Turko and Deacon Elmer Pekarik chant the service with Bishop Kurt



Bishop Kurt and Bishop Paul Chomnycky preside at the Compline Service

to be rubbed into their wounds of body and soul, whether or not these wounds come from outside themselves or are self-inflicted.

The question arises, however, especially today as we are commemorating the sad anniversary of the passing into law of that infamous piece of legislation that over 40 years ago, legalized abortion in this country, and in the intervening years, has condemned millions of innocent human beings to death and brought untold physical, psychological, and spiritual suffering upon countless others affected by this ongoing tragedy. How can we show mercy to those who in the past and in the present, through their words and actions, continue to support and justify the scourge of abortion and euthanasia?

Even if the number of the proponents of abortion and euthanasia is not growing in our country, surely their power and influence in the public square of our country is. Can we forgive them? Should we show mercy and forgiveness to those who remain so adamant, unshaken, unmoved steadfast, and hardened in their sin? Of course, we already know the answer. We know that Christ calls on us to forgive always and everywhere, as difficult as that might be. But perhaps the following illustration can make the act of

forgiveness on our part a bit more palatable.

C.S. Lewis once remarked that Saint Peter, the Apostle, in his later life would likely have related to others the story of how he betrayed the Lord – and how he would have done so, not with pained embarrassment, but with a radiant smile upon his face. Why? Because on that night, after having three times betrayed the Lord, he had been drawn into an unimaginable depth of love through a single glance from Jesus. Immediately after denying Christ for the third time, the cock crowed and, as we read in the Gospel according to Luke: “the Lord turned and looked at Peter, and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, and how He had said to him, ‘Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times.’ And he went out and began to weep bitterly.”

What a look, what a glance that must have been! A look that penetrated Peter to his very soul! Only in this light can we grasp the truth that guilt is only felt where there is first forgiveness. Normally we think that guilt comes first, then remorse, and finally forgiveness. This reflects our ordinary human reality, which we experience on a daily basis. But this is not true of God. It is Jesus’ glance of forgiveness, because he was forgiving Peter at that moment,

showing his mercy upon him, that prompts the pain of remorse in Peter and, in turn, brings about an awareness of guilt that enables him to go out and weep for his sin.

So, in the experience of Peter, we see that remorse isn’t the catalyst for forgiveness, but exactly the opposite. Forgiveness and mercy draw out remorse; forgiveness and mercy are the motivation for remorse. And it is in this moment that guilt becomes happy, for it has found its liberator. This is why C.S. Lewis could say that Peter would have smiled to himself in remembering the night of his betrayal of Jesus, because it was then that he experienced the forgiveness and mercy of the Lord in His glance, a glance which opened the door to repentance for him.

Can we then, act any differently? Cannot our forgiveness and mercy for those who celebrate and support so-called abortion ‘rights’ not move them sometime, somewhere to sincere repentance and a conversion of heart?

Jesus did not compromise on His ideals, but He did beautifully describe and embody God’s unconditional love, mercy and forgiveness for everyone: a beggar with leprosy; a Samaritan woman with five failed marriages; a traitor like Peter; a self-righteous human rights abuser like Saul of Tarsus; a prodigal son; an adulteress. The Gospel gives eloquent witness to this on many occasions. The more socially outcast, morally offensive and disreputable the people were, the more attracted they were to Jesus, and the more, it seemed, He was attracted to them. The more upright, respectable, and even “godly” people were, the more challenged they were by Jesus. After all, the righteous, the upright,

the “godly” were the ones who had him arrested. Jesus showed a way of keeping the highest standards, while at the same time offering Living Water – love, forgiveness, mercy, to the least deserving of it. Can we then, act any differently?

I began this reflection with a story of a woman whose face was in need of mercy. I’ll end here with a story of a mother who was pleading with Napoleon Bonaparte for mercy on the life of her son, an army officer, who had been sentenced to death for treason. The emperor called the young officer’s crime an unforgivable betrayal, which undoubtedly it was, and that justice demanded his life. “Not justice”, cried the mother, “but mercy.” “He does not deserve mercy”, was Napoleon’s curt answer. “But”, said the mother, “if he deserved it, it would not be mercy!” This mother’s word softened the heart of Napoleon who spared her son the death penalty.

Saint Isaac the Syrian once said, “Never say that God is just. If He were just, you would be in hell. Rely only on His injustice, which is forgiveness, love and mercy”.

May we take these words of Saint Isaac to heart.



BISHOP KURT GIVES ANNUAL PRIESTS’ RETREAT

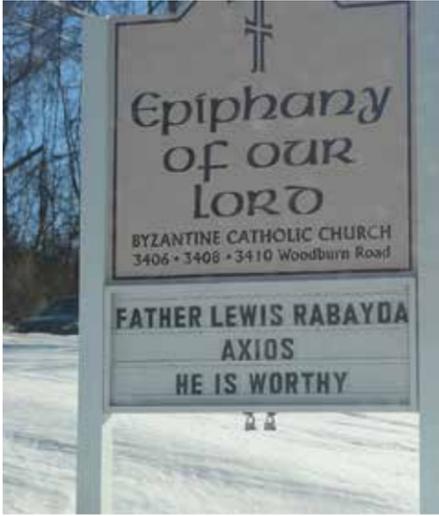
This year, Bishop Kurt was invited by Bishop Paul Chomnycky, Bishop of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Stamford, CT, to give their annual spring priests’ retreat from February 8-11. Bishop Kurt chose as his theme: “CREATION – FALL – REDEMPTION.”

Pictured are Bishop Kurt (front row, center) with Bishop Paul of the Stamford Eparchy (to Bishop Kurt’s left), together with the members of the Presbyterate of the Eparchy of Stamford.

AXIOS! AXIOS!

Father Lewis Rabayda Ordained

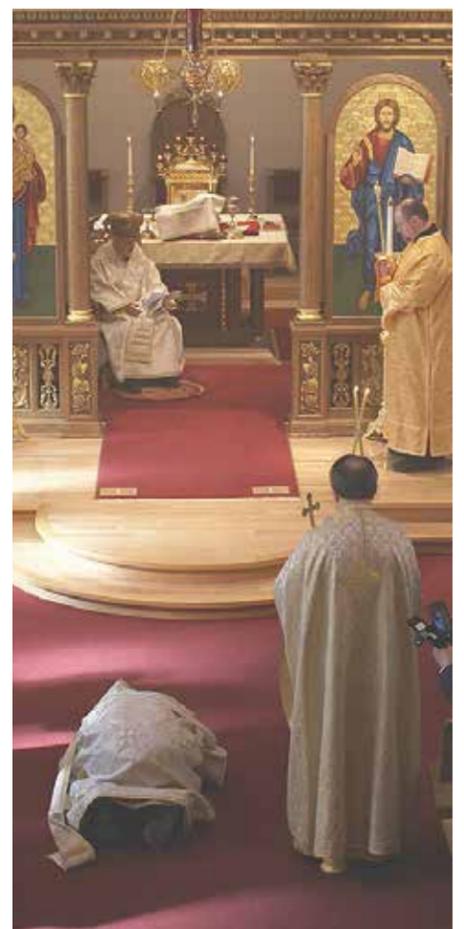
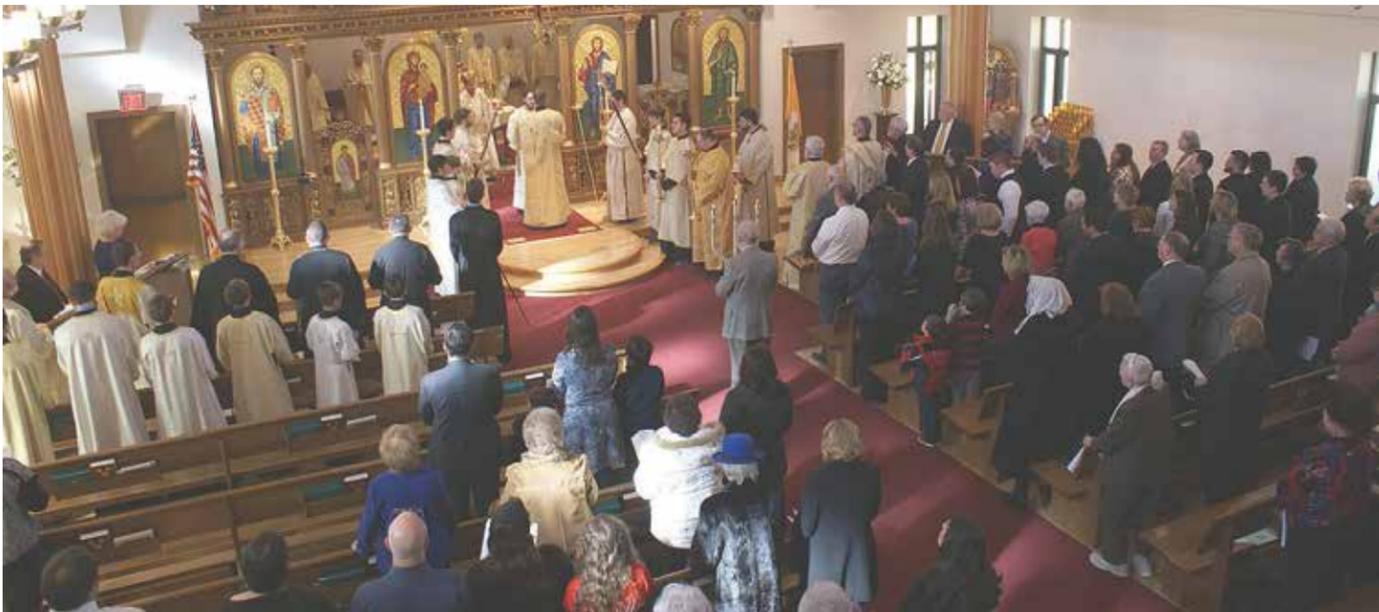
Continued from page 7



is where his vocation was able to mature and come forth, and why the Virginia parish was selected by the bishop to be the place of ordination. The current church building is now the second newest church structure in the eparchy, which was consecrated by then-Bishop William Skurla on Sunday, November 20, 2011, and was recently superseded by the consecration of the rebuilt Saint Nicholas Church in Danbury, CT, on August 16, 2015.

The Hierarchical Divine Liturgy with Ordination was celebrated by Bishop Kurt. The concelebrating clergy were: Father John G. Basarab pastor; Monsignor John Sekellick, pastor of Holy Ghost in Jessup, PA and Saint John's in Forest City, PA; Monsignor George Dobes, retired and assisting in Annandale, VA; Father Robert Pipta, Rector of the Byzantine Catholic Seminary of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Pittsburgh, PA; Father Steven Galuschik, who serves All Saints Church in North Fort Myers, FL; Deacon Elmer Pekarik of Epiphany of Our Lord, Annandale,

VA; Subdeacon Thomas Moses of the Melkite Greek Catholic Eparchy of Newton; Subdeacon Bryan Scotton of the Eparchy of Parma; Reader Oliver Black of the Melkite Greek Catholic Eparchy of Newton; Lector Jack Figel of Epiphany of Our Lord, Annandale, VA; Adult servers, Mr. Maximillian Mukerjee and Mr. Richard Terza of Saint Mary in Wilkes-Barre, PA; and youth servers from Epiphany of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church, Annandale, VA. The Ordination Liturgy was celebrated most beautifully with the guidance and direction of the Eparchy's official Master of Ceremonies, Father Edward Higgins of Holy Ghost Byzantine Catholic Church in Philadelphia, PA. The sanctuary responses were led by Father Michael Kerestes, Pastor of Saint Gregory of Nysa Church in Beltsville, MD, while the liturgy's responses were sung by the parish cantors. The head sacristan and altar server aid was Mr. Joseph Stone. In his homily, Bishop Kurt offered the still-deacon Lewis words of encour-

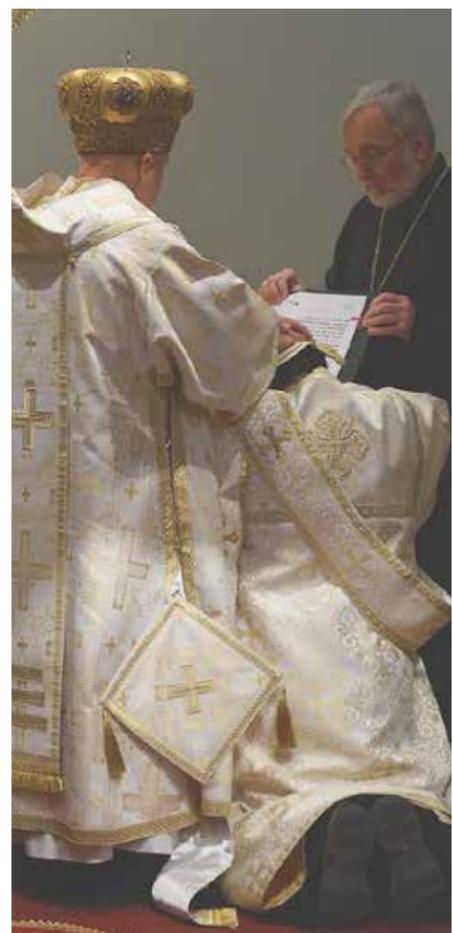


AXIOS! AXIOS! Ordained to the Holy Priesthood

from page 1

agement and advice for the ministry that was about to begin. Then, after the Cherubic Hymn and the Great Entrance, Monsignor John Sekellick—Deacon Lewis’ mentor of ten months—led the deacon towards the bishop for ordination by saying, “By the will of God and by the action of the most holy and life-creating Spirit, by the blessing of our God-loving Bishop Kurt, the pious deacon Lewis Michael Rabayda is being promoted to the presbyterate. Most Reverend Bishop, command him.” The bishop did command him, and the Rite of Ordination began. At the proper moment, Bishop Kurt placed his omophorion on the head of Deacon Lewis and prayed, “Divine Grace, which always heals what is infirm and supplies what is lacking, ordains the pious deacon Lewis Michael to be a presbyter. Therefore, let us pray for him, that the grace of the all-holy Spirit may come upon him.” After more prayers and the singing of the ordination troparia, the newly-ordained Father Lewis was divested of his dia-

conal vestments and, piece by piece, was vested with the vestments proper to the priesthood by Bishop Kurt, each time saying “Axios!” which means, “he is worthy.” After the ordination, Father Lewis was invited to the place of first concelebrant for the remainder of the Divine Liturgy and was given the Am-bon Prayer as his first solo liturgical prayer. When the ordination liturgy is concluded, it is customary for the newly ordained to give his priestly blessing to all present, beginning with the bishop and clergy, moving to his family, and then the faithful. All who attended were invited to a banquet luncheon in the parish center and a small but beautiful program where the present task of the presbyter was discussed and future vocations were encouraged. May God grant his priestly servant, Father Lewis, many blessed years in peace, health, and happiness! **ECL**



A BROTHERLY EMBRACE BRINGS POPE AND RUSSIAN PATRIARCH TOGETHER CONCLUDING CELEBRATIONS

Continued from Page 1

exterminated." They called on the international community "to act urgently in order to prevent the further expulsion" of Christians, to end violence and terrorism and to ensure that large amounts of humanitarian aid reach the victims of violence.

"In raising our voice in defense of persecuted Christians, we wish to express our compassion for the suffering experienced by the faithful of other religious traditions who have also become victims of civil war, chaos and terrorist violence," they said.

"Attempts to justify criminal acts with religious slogans are altogether unacceptable," they said. "No crime may be committed in God's name."

They called those who have died "martyrs of our times" and said they helped unite various churches "by their shared suffering."

They spoke of the need to be vigilant against European integration that is "devoid of respect for religious identities." They also spoke of extreme poverty, the "millions of migrants and refugees knocking on the doors of wealthy nations" and consumerism.

They spoke of life issues: abortion, euthanasia, new reproductive technologies and threats against the churches' view of marriage.

After they signed the document, the two leaders embraced, and each spoke briefly.

Patriarch Kirill said they had a two-hour, "open discussion with full awareness of the responsibility we have for our people, for the

future of Christianity, and for the future of human civilization itself. It was a conversation filled with content that gave us the opportunity to understand and hear the position of the other. And the results of the conversation allow me to assure that currently both churches can cooperate together to defend Christians around the world; with full responsibility to work together so that there may be no war; so that human life can be respected in the entire world; so that the foundations of human, family and social morality may be strengthened through the participation of the church in the life of human modern society."

Pope Francis said: "We spoke as brothers, we share the same baptism, we are bishops, we spoke about our churches. We agreed that unity is done walking (together). We spoke clearly without mincing words. I confess that I felt the consolation of the Spirit in this dialogue. I am grateful for the humility of His Holiness, his fraternal humility and his good wishes for unity. We left with a series of initiatives that I believe are viable and can be done."

He thanked Patriarch Kirill and others involved in arranging the meeting and also thanked Cuba, "the great Cuban people and their president here present. I am grateful for his active availability; if it continues this way, Cuba will be the 'capital of unity.'"

Patriarch Kirill gave Pope Francis a small copy of an icon of Our Lady of Kazan, which itself is a symbol of Vatican-Russian Orthodox detente, but also of failed hopes. The oldest known copy of the icon, an ornate



Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill sign the joint declaration

18th-century piece had been hanging in Saint John Paul II's study for a decade as he hoped to return it to Russia personally. Instead, in 2004, he had Cardinal Walter Kasper take it back to its country of origin as a gesture of goodwill.

The icon is one of the most revered and replicated icons in Russian Orthodoxy.

Pope Francis gave Patriarch Kirill a reliquary with a relic of Saint Cyril, the patriarch's patron saint, and a chalice, which not only is a sign of hopes for full communion between the two churches, but also a sign that the Catholic Church recognizes the validity of the Orthodox sacraments.

The addition of a stopover in Cuba was widely seen as a sign of Pope Francis' willingness to go the extra mile to reach out a hand in friendship. At the same time, observers said, it gave those Russian Orthodox opposed to ecumenism a sense that their church is special and that it bowed to no one in agreeing to the meeting.

In a commentary distributed Feb. 11, Ukrainian Catholic Bishop Borys Gudziak of Paris said: "The pope is demonstrating humility; he is going to the territory of the other. In the eyes of nostalgic Russians, Cuba is almost home territory, a last outpost of a lost Soviet Empire."

For decades, the Russian Orthodox told the Vatican that a meeting between the patriarch and pope was impossible because of the activities of Latin-rite Catholics in Russia and, especially, the Eastern-rite Catholics in Ukraine.

The Moscow Patriarchate had said that while those problems still exist with the Catholic communities, they take a backseat to the urgency of defending together the rights and very existence of persecuted Christians in the Middle East.

The harsh persecution of Christians and other minorities in Syria, Iraq and other parts of the region has been a cause Pope Francis has pleaded before world leaders and for which he has rallied the prayers of Christians across the globe.

He speaks often of the "ecumenism of blood," the fact that Christians are killed for believing in Christ with the persecutors not knowing or caring what denomination or church they belong to. Christians are fully united in that suffering and, the pope has said, those who die for their faith are in full communion with each other and with centuries of martyrs now in the presence of God.

But the fate of persecuted Christians was not the pope's primary motive for meeting Patriarch Kirill. Simply meeting him was the point.

Metropolitan Hilarion Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's external affairs department, told reporters a week earlier that Patriarch Kirill chose Havana in the "New World" because Europe, the "Old World," was the birthplace of Christian division.

Ukrainians, Catholic or not, have expressed concerns about Pope Francis' meeting with Patriarch Kirill given the patriarch's apparently close ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin at a time of ongoing fighting in Eastern Ukraine.

"The topics of discussion will not be explicitly political ones," Bishop Gudziak wrote. "The gist of the rendezvous will be the encounter of church leaders representing very different experiences, agendas, styles and spiritualities of ecclesial leadership. One can hardly expect revolutionary results. Yet, it is through encounter that spiritual change occurs. Let us pray for good spiritual fruit."

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SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

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

CHANGE? ME?

The Epistle for the Second Sunday of Lent begins by quoting words addressed to God in Psalm 102:25-27: "They will be changed, but you are the same and your years will not fail" (Hebrews 1:12). God alone is unchangeable. Every created thing comes into existence at a certain time, lasts for a certain time, and will finally be destroyed. Except human beings. God has offered us an opportunity for eternal life. It is a gift that only He can give.

That offer of a share in God's own life is what the Epistle to the Hebrews calls "salvation": "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed to us by those who heard him" (Hebrews 2:3). It is what telemarketers call a "limited time offer," and the limit is our lifespan. We have to respond to God's offer now. We may not have tomorrow.

Sharing in God's own life isn't something we can just add on to our current lifestyle. Accepting God's offer requires us to change. Jesus said it: "The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the Good News" (Mark 1:15). John the

Baptist said it even earlier (Matthew 3:1-2).

We tend to resist change. We find a comfortable zone for ourselves, a typical pattern for how we spend our time and resources, a limited circle of people that matter, a limited field of interests, a few activities that we will engage in, a few commitments that we will agree to keep. Most people, most of the time, would prefer for things to stay exactly the way they are. We may even pray for God to make sure things stay just as they are, or at least don't get any worse.

We may say we don't need to change, that we are fine just the way we are. But when think we are not changing, we may well be going backwards, getting narrower, more self-centered, less open to God and to others. The Epistle warns us: "We must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away" (Hebrews 2:1). We may be holding steady, but God's plan is passing us by. Like it or not, we're changing, for better or for worse. It's a law of human nature.

Since growth is hard-wired into our nature, we get irritated by the ruts we put ourselves in. We

get bored. We long for a change of pace, a change of scenery, a few new faces, a little variety, something different. But we tend to look for these changes only in superficial, "safe" places. People who want to sell us things tell us that the change we need is more gratification for ourselves. So we take trips, we try new foods, we buy new gadgets, we get new pets, we try new clothes and different hairstyles. All harmless enough, but none of these consumer items can satisfy the desire for real growth that has been built into us by the God who wants us to grow into relationship with Him.

This is why the Great Fast begins with giving up food and drink and entertainment. By choosing not to rely on the very temporary relief these consumer goods provide, we can finally allow ourselves to experience the urge for real change in our lives on a deeper, more meaningful level. The Fast is an invitation to choose renewal over novelty, repentance over ruts, life over stagnation. But this is a limited time offer. "Now is the acceptable time. Now is the hour of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2; Isaiah 49:8). **ECL**



LIFE, LOVE, AND THE HUMAN PERSON

By Ann M. Koshute, MTS

TO BE LIKE A CHILD...AGAIN

In his Gospel account, Saint Matthew describes a moment in which Jesus interrupts His preaching to bring a child before the crowd. He then commands them, "unless you turn and become like children you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." It's easy to gloss over this statement as simply a call to trust in God. After all, children are the epitome of trusting. They look up to us adults who are bigger, stronger, and use lots of words they don't understand – so we must know something! Children place themselves in our hands and believe we'll take care of them. Likewise, we should trust that our heavenly Father knows better than we do, and that He'll take care of us. All of this is true; but there's much more to Jesus' words.

It was during the Divine Liturgy on Cheesefare Sunday that Jesus' words about being children suddenly struck me. Perhaps it was the convergence of hearing the day's Propers (recalling Adam and Eve who were both the Original Children and First Parents), Father Popson's homily on the importance of mercy and forgiveness, and the sound of children crying, cooing, and laughing. It all got me to thinking about how I approach the Fast, and my relationship with God in general. The Fast is not just my chance to repent, but to begin the process of living a converted life. To do this requires not only personal discipline and the guidance of the Church, but child-like wonder. Consider the snow, of which we in the mid-Atlantic states have seen plenty. For us, snow is a back-breaking commute spoiler. But a



child sees in the snowflake a wonder of the world. Put many flakes together and new possibilities open up. Children make angels, snowmen, forts, and projectiles with which to torment friends and siblings. The point is that where adults first see obstacles and nuisance, the child sees novelty, beauty and creative opportunities. After playing in the snow, the child comes inside to get warm and sees colorful flames dance in the fireplace. We're obliged to protect them from "wondering" what the fire feels like. We have responsibilities,

and things like snowstorms do require our attention. Our maturity and experience are necessary to protect children and ourselves; but it can also wear away at our own sense of wonder. Why is this a problem, and what does it have to do with Jesus' words?

We've all experienced a child's meltdown. Either as a parent or an observer, we've seen that sometimes a child needs a moment (or an hour) away to calm down. Yet, when I heard the sounds and watched the movements of children on that Cheesefare Sunday, I thought of my own proper and oh-so-mature disposition before God that often becomes mechanical. I know when to sit, when to bow, and when to bless myself. Children aren't as well-disciplined because they're still learning (and we have a duty to teach them), but the wonder they possess – even if it is only in fleeting moments throughout the hour – are moments of praising God I can only hope to achieve. Children look at the icons (really look – not just stare straight ahead at Father's back). They point up to the ceiling at the larger-than-life *Bozhe* watching them, and they point – or wave – at Father when he emerges from behind the mysterious screen to bless. They turn up their little faces and open their mouths to receive Jesus just the way they receive their nourishment at breakfast or dinner. Children aren't always still or quiet, but they are often engaged in the Liturgy in a way I am not. The child wonders what's going on, while I take it for granted – and check my watch a few times. Sure, the child doesn't understand all,

perhaps even most, of what's going on. But when the priest brings out the chalice and we say to a child, "There's Jesus," he actually looks for Him.

A child replays favorite songs and videos again and again, singing, dancing and delighting in what is familiar to her, yet (inexplicably to adults) ever-surprising. In my mind's eye, I replay hurtful words and memories of old wounds. My "twisted delight" in these reruns offers no song of surprise, no dance of joy, and no room for God. Instead, as the Lenten hymn intones, "Sorrow, now, is

all I feel." The Fast is interminably "slow" when I mistake rigid adherence to the law (leaving no room for the "surprise" of encountering the living God), with authentic spiritual maturity. No, I shouldn't get up in the middle of Father's homily, babbling and waving. And, no, I shouldn't throw a tantrum on a Lenten Friday and demand a burger and piece of chocolate cake. To act in such childish ways is not proper to who I am as an adult, or a person striving in the Faith. Adults must be adults; children are counting on it. But as I make my way through the Fast, seeking God's mercy –

and learning to love Him and others more intimately – I won't be successful unless I heed Jesus' words. If I squash the wonder and pure delight found in seeking and meeting Christ, then I will never grow up to be God's own precious child.

"To be a child means to owe one's existence to another, and even in our adult life we never quite reach the point where we no longer have to give thanks for being the person we are." Hans Urs von Balthasar **ECL**



UNDERSTANDING ICONS

Father Joseph Bertha, Ph.D.

THREE ICONS OF CHRIST

Give drink to the thirsty

Installment 6 of 12

There are two instances in the life of Our Lord which illustrate this work of mercy: giving drink to the thirsty. The first occurs as Jesus rests at the well in Samaria, and asks a woman to give him a drink – in other words, He is thirsty. But our Lord's thirst is not only on the physical level, but resonates in the spiritual dimension as His taking the place of a sinner. God, who stands in the place of sinners, thirsts for their repentance, who do not fully understand the reason for their aridity. In the Byzantine Church, this encounter is commemorated as the fifth Paschal Sunday, when the Gospel of Saint John 4: 5-26 is proclaimed. The woman resists at first, but then accedes to our Lord's request when she perceives that He is the Holy One of God, the Messiah. At this moment, the Lord offers her a drink which will quench her thirst forever. She without hesitation requests this miraculous water, which Our Lord states: "whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (John 4:13)

This work of mercy is vividly portrayed in the icon which illustrates the encounter between the woman (whom the Byzantines have come to call Photini) and the Lord at the Samaritan well. In this particular contemporary icon, Jesus is seated at the very edge of the well, which is swirling actively and portrayed in the same manner in the twists and turns found in His blue himation (garment). All of these lines in the water and in our Lord's garments have no beginning nor end, and denote the fathomless depths of God's Mercy for

sinners. These are the waters of repentance, also signifying the Jordan waters solemnly blessed on Theophany, and ultimately the sanctifying waters of redemption through the sacrament of Baptism. These waters are also refreshed and invigorated throughout our lives through shedding tears of repentance in the sacrament of reconciliation. God the Father's infinite mercy permeates even through the contours of the very garment that our Lord shows through the intricate, never ending lines and aqua blue color which is a visualization of the quenching of repentant sinners' souls.

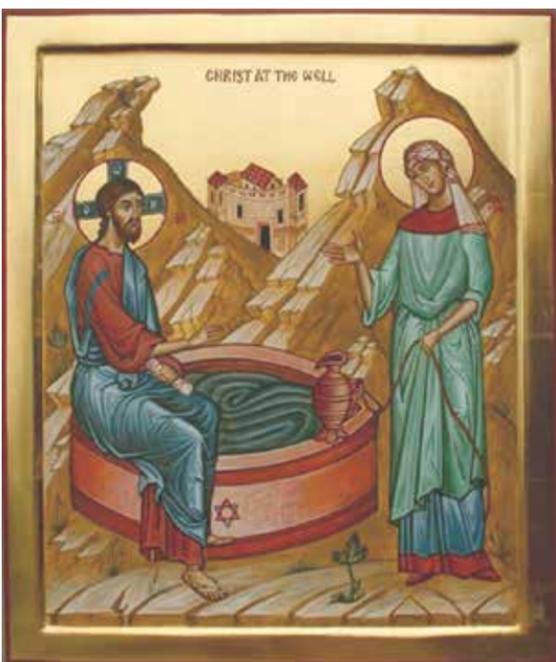
The second incident which describes thirst is perhaps the most dramatic final moments on the face of the earth of our Lord as He is speaking His final words from the cross: "I thirst." Bystanders, misinterpreting these words spoken on behalf of sinners, actually try to quench Jesus' physical need by dipping a sop in vinegar and offering it to Him to moisten His lips. However, at the very end of His earthly life and sojourn, our Savior cries out in the anguish of the sinner with words of abandonment of the unrepentant sinner, I am thirsty. Our Lord's final words are then spoken from this poignant moment: It is finished, and He bows His head and dies. A lance is then inserted into His chest and out gushes forth blood and water, baptism and Eucharist, Saint Faustina's vision of light and red rays flowing from His Divine Heart. Our thirst is the desire deep inside of the desire for sinners to expiate and atone for sins.

This is most poignantly illustrated in the Byzantine depiction of Our Lord on the cross. From the very beginning, Byzantine iconographers have shown Jesus in the same manner in His Crucifixion, the very instant of His death. Our Lord is shown with head bowed to His right, eyes closed, still fastened to the cross at His hands and feet. However, a very important characteristic, frequently overlooked by viewers, is the fact that Our Lord is shown peacefully, obediently, almost floating in the air on the cross. The horrible details of this gruesome manner of death are not shown. Our Lord is shown to be in control, even in His last moments as He dies on the cross. He willingly gives Himself over to the Father: Into Your hands I commend my spirit. He bows his head and dies. Perfect obedience, even unto death, is portrayed for all to see in the Savior's unassailable gesture.

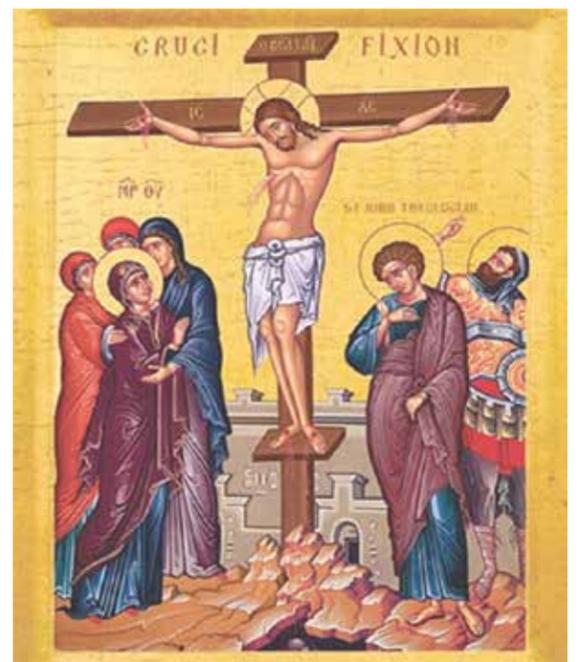
Within the majesty of this peaceful gesture, another amazing detail portrays the ineffable Mercy of God, the cross which located in his abdomen and grounded in His navel. The Greek word used to describe God's love and mercy for us is: *splachni zomai*, literally meaning compassion from the inner guts, innards, deepest part of being. This trait of God, His Mercy, is deeply rooted to His inner being. This is stunningly portrayed by this detail shown in the icon of the Crucifixion.

Our navel or belly button is our connection, our grounding, with being born into this life. Our Lord's cross is planted directly into this area of His anatomy in order to show us how we are to live as His followers. In an interesting development in monasticism, a group of navel gazers were formed in the fourteenth century. Monks who focused on this very contact point, conjunction with the physical and spiritual point in our anatomies.

In this supreme moment of sacrifice in the life of our Lord, the ultimate work of mercy, the quenching of the sinner's thirst with baptism, remission of sin, and precious blood, the Eucharist, are accomplished as Jesus Christ hands Himself over to the Father in perfect obedience in death. As we will see in future episodes of scenes of Mercy, this transition moment of death is only a passage into another reality and dimension of mercy, which is visualized in our precious icons populating our churches. **ECL**



Icon of the Samaritan Woman



Icon of the Crucifixion

GUEST EDITORIAL

Father Robert F. Slesinski, Ph.D.

POPE FRANCIS' JUBILEE YEAR OF MERCY:
A LIFE SO ENVELOPED

In his Bull of Indiction, *Misericordiae Vultus* (The Face of Mercy), inaugurating an Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, His Holiness, Pope Francis, begins with a very blunt and direct affirmation: "Jesus Christ is the face of the Father's mercy... Mercy has become living and visible in Jesus of Nazareth, reaching its culmination in him" (no.1). This truth of the Christian faith bears further explication, as the pontiff himself does forthwith, stressing that mercy itself is "the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness" (no. 2).

But this consoling-sounding message, is it something our contemporaries—even in our very troubled times—are open to hearing? Pope Francis himself acknowledges this point (see no. 11), directly citing one of his predecessors, Pope Saint John Paul II, who posed this very question in his own second encyclical, *Dives in Misericordiae* (Rich in Mercy) on 30 November 1980, where he notes that "the present day mentality, more perhaps than that of people in the past, seems opposed to a God of mercy, and in fact tends to exclude from life and to remove from the human heart the very idea of mercy" (no. 2) precisely because the very ascendancy of science and technology in our own time implies a human mastery of the earth beyond any need for the intervention of divine mercy in our lives.

This is, indeed, the exact religious point that is at stake. The virtue of mercy is of divine origin that if not acknowledged as such cannot enter into our lives and envelop us with God's tender, caring, and—yes!—merciful love that embraces us notwithstanding our patent unworthiness as sinful beings devoid, to greater or lesser degrees, of God's love due to our rejection of it or indifference to it. Pope Saint John Paul II is underscoring this matter when he wrote in his encyclical that "mercy in itself, as a perfection of the infinite God, is also infinite" (no. 13). As such it directly refers to the essential condescension of Almighty God toward his beloved creation. Mercy, in other words, is an act of a superior toward an inferior. As finite creatures, we have no claim proper to God's beneficence toward us; it is something gratuitously given to us even—especially—in our manifest unworthiness. On the other hand, when we accept God's mercy, we not only acknowledge our creaturehood and, thus, essential dependency on God, but also, and more

importantly, allow ourselves to be enveloped in God's ever-surpassing love. God's condescension is an act that uplifts his beloved creation. We enter into the heavenly kingdom of divine love, even right here on earth.

There is no greater testimony to his fundamental reality of faith than the Byzantine Divine Liturgy. During the course of its celebration, surely the most frequently encountered prayer is the plaintiff cry of the congregation "Lord, have mercy" in response to the multifold petitions of the celebrant. On this subject the esteemed Byzantine theologian Nicholas Kabasilas (ca. 1332 – after 1391) cogently remarks in his Commentary on the Divine Liturgy in answering this question why mercy is the sole cry the faithful place before God that "to beg God's mercy is to ask for his kingdom, that kingdom which Christ promised to give to those who seek it, assuring them that all things else of which they have need will be added unto them," adding "because of this, this prayer is sufficient for the faithful, since its application is general" (no. 13).

Entering into and partaking of the glory of the Divine Kingdom, which is the Divine Liturgy, we benefit at the same time from the mercy of the Kingdom, the two actually being coterminous, i.e., mercy and the Kingdom are one and the same. We glean something of the majesty of this truth praying along with the celebrant as he chants the Prayer of the First Antiphon:

Lord our God, mighty beyond description, glorious above all understanding, *merciful without limits*, loving us all beyond expression, look with compassion on us and on this holy church, O Master, and show us, and those who pray with us, *the riches of your tender mercy* (emphasis added).

The prayer that concludes the Litany of Fervent Supplication after the reading of the Holy Gospel only reiterates this message of mercy:

Lord our God, accept this fervent supplication from your servants and have mercy on us *according to your abundant mercies*. Be compassionate to us and to all your people *who expect rich mercies from you* (emphasis added).

For his part, Pope Francis expounds upon the theme of Divine Mercy breaking through the di-

mensions of space and time, thereby extending to the whole of creation and inserting it into the eternal mystery of divine love, by drawing attention (no. 7) to Psalm 136, an extraordinary hymn of thanksgiving, the Great Hallel (Praise) of Jewish prayer, to each verse of which is appended the refrain: "for his mercy endures forever." The Holy Father next points to three parables of mercy in particular, those of the Parable of the Lost Sheep (Lk 15:3-7), the Parable of the Lost Coin (Lk 15:8-10), and the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Lk 15:11-32), to make one overriding point, namely, that "mercy is presented as a force that overcomes everything, filling the heart with love and bringing consolation through pardon" (no. 9).

But if mercy is first and foremost a divine virtue, that does not mean it must thus lie beyond the ken (range of sight) of the average person. In this Jubilee Year of Mercy, Pope Francis is insistent that we all partake of God's mercy so that we ourselves can share it with others. On a negative note, he draws attention to the Parable of the Ruthless—the Merciless—Servant (Mt 18:21-35), in which the head servant who was forgiven his great debt in turn refused to forgive the minor debt of an underling servant, immediately casting its message in a positive light, citing (no. 13) St. Luke, "Be merciful just as your Father is merciful" (Lk 6:36), further fashioning this scriptural counsel as the motto of this Jubilee Year: "Merciful like the Father" (no. 14).

Admittedly, the pope may be placing a tall order before us, but he holds out to us the classical corporal (feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, visit the sick and imprisoned) and spiritual (counsel the doubtful, instruct the ignorant, admonish sinners, comfort the afflicted, forgive offences, be patient with those who do us ill, pray for the living and the dead) works of mercy as the place where to begin our own personal apostolates of mercy (no. 15).

For nourishment in this regard we need only make a concerted effort for a more fervent participation in the worship of the Church, herself an epiphany of mercy—a "field hospital in battle" to use Pope Francis' own descriptive imagery—taking to heart and heeding the blessing of the priest at the Divine Liturgy as we begin to prepare for Holy Communion: "May the mercies of our great God and Savior be with all of you." **ECL**

THE BYZANTINE CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF PASSAIC subscribes to the

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Icon of the Annunciation of the Theotokos

March 25 marks the solemn observance of that mysterious moment in time when divine Timelessness itself stooped from the heights of heaven into the pace of history by taking on human nature as the Archangel Gabriel announced to the Virgin Mary that she would become God's mother. It was the official declaration that God the Father would send His Son to become a man and be born of a virgin mother. Within nine months, we will joyously celebrate that holy birth on Christmas.

The Annunciation marks an end to a very long wait by God's chosen people for His promise to them of a Messiah to be fulfilled. Mary is invited to be part of that promise although she was at a loss to understand how it could all happen since she was only engaged to be married and was still a

SEASONAL REFLECTIONS

Monsignor John. T. Sekellick, JCL



THE ANNUNCIATION/INCARNATION

virgin and had promised God her virginity. More likely than not, Mary was concerned about the reaction first of all of Joseph to whom she was betrothed as well as what others would say about an unmarried young woman with child.

The archangel explained to her that she would conceive by the power of the Holy Spirit which removed her anxiety and allowed her to reply to the archangel, "Let it be done according to your word." The archangel gave Mary the name for her Child – Jesus – which means "God saves." That name tells us what His mission would be, namely to save people – you and me – from their sins. Through Jesus, God summarizes all of His history and His plan for us.

God became man in the Person of His Son, Jesus so that we might know God's love; He became flesh to be our model of holiness. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, "Belief in the true incarnation of the Son of God is the distinctive sign of Christian faith: 'By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God.' Such is the joyous conviction of the Church from her beginning..." (No. 463)

Through Mary at the moment of the Annunciation, Jesus began His humanity. He became a member of the human race. Through Mary, Jesus was given to the world for our salvation. Through

Mary, an immaculate Virgin, Jesus received His human form to become the perfect sacrifice and an offering according to the divine will of God, the Father. Through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus came an end to the imperfect sacrifices of bulls and goats which, although offered according to the Jewish Law, were imperfect in nature.

Jesus now begins His earthly existence and will abolish the ancient Law of animal sacrifices by giving us a new and perfect sacrifice through the offering of His very holy Body and precious Blood on the Cross, the same sacrifice which is perpetuated at every Divine Liturgy in an unbloody manner as bread becomes His Body and wine becomes His Blood through the power of the Holy Spirit and the ministry of His priest on the altar.

The feast of the Annunciation has us remember when the Word of God the Father became incarnate (took on human flesh). We are reminded that although Jesus died on the cross, was buried and rose from His grave, ascended back into heaven and is there at the right of the Father, He remains present with us in the Holy Eucharist and the Blessed Sacrament kept on our altars. All of this became possible when a young woman said "yes" to that archangel, doing her part to bring Christ to the world. May we always do our part to bring Christ to others. **ECL**



SCHOOL OF PRAYER

Father G. Scott Boghossian

THE POWER OF INTERCESSORY PRAYER

Intercessory prayer is petitioning God on behalf of another person. Anytime we pray for someone else – for their physical healing, their success in some project, their reconciliation with God – we are praying the prayer of intercession. Praying for other people, intercessory prayer, is an essential part of our prayer life. There are certain things that God had decided to do only if we ask Him. We are commanded to love our neighbor, and one of the best ways to demonstrate this love for our neighbor is by praying for them. In the catechetical tradition of the Church, we are taught the Seven Spiritual Works of Mercy, one of which is to "pray for the living and the dead," that is, to pray for others. During this Year of Mercy, enthusiastically take up the merciful practice of praying for others.

During the Great Fast, the liturgical readings at the Divine Liturgy of Pre-Sanctified Gifts take us through the book of Genesis. We read about the life of the Patriarch Abraham who is an example of intercessory prayer. God was about to pour out His righteous judgement on Sodom and Gomorrah and Abraham prays the prayer of intercession to try to avert the divine Justice (Genesis 18:22-33).

God tells the Prophet Ezekiel that He was looking for intercessors, but couldn't find any. "I have

searched among them for someone who would stand in the gap before me to keep me from destroying the land; but I found no one" (Ezekiel 22:30). Let us be the intercessors that God is looking for, who will "stand in the gap" and pray.

Abraham, like Moses, Samuel, and others, were great intercessors for the People of God in the Old Testament. In many ways they foreshadowed the greatest of all intercessors, our Lord Jesus Christ, whom Saint Paul says, "always lives to make intercession for us" (Hebrews 7:25). The Lord Jesus "stood in the gap" for sinful humanity when He died on the Cross as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world. Our whole Christian faith and spirituality is centered on the supreme act of intercession accomplished by Jesus, that is, His death on the Cross. The great intercessory prayer of Jesus on the Cross is made present and applied at every Divine Liturgy.

Our Lady, the Theotokos, is, after the Lord Jesus Christ, the greatest intercessor in God's plan of salvation. After her bodily Assumption and entrance into heaven, she devotes herself to pray for her children who are in danger of spiritual shipwreck and eternal loss. The saints and angels in heavenly glory also intercede for us here on earth.

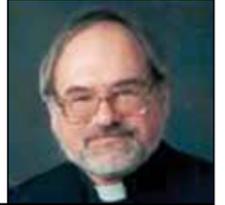
Now God asks us to become intercessors. Perhaps we don't see the favor of God poured out on

our Church, our nation, our families, friends and loved ones, because God is waiting for us pray. We must imitate Jesus, our Lady, the Angels and the Saints, and embrace the ministry of intercession. Parents see their children going astray, losing their faith, and leaving the Church. We may have friends and family who are enslaved to sin, who have lost their faith, who are angry at God. Why does God allow these things? Perhaps because the Heavenly Father is looking for someone to "stand in the gap," to intercede, but He finds no one. Are we not praying and interceding? Let us begin to pray for others. As an additional benefit, when we pray for others, we forget about our own personal concerns and problems. Happiness begins when we forget about ourselves!

Decide to pray for your friends and enemies at the Divine Liturgy and the other Divine Services. Remember them when you pray your morning and evening prayers. Pray the Psalms on their behalf. Why not pray the Jesus prayer or the Rosary on behalf of the people who have asked you to pray for them? We can be confident that God will hear and answer our prayers because He has promised many times that He would do so. Resolve today to give more time to praying for others and see how prayer changes things. **ECL**

THE BYZANTINE LITURGY

By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD



THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION

As human beings, the inner life of God is beyond our understanding. The Anaphora of Saint John Chrysostom in the Divine Liturgy prays, "For you are God ineffable, inconceivable, invisible, incomprehensible, ever existing, yet ever the same." What we know of God is what He has told us about Himself. We have seen in previous articles that there is one God and as the commandments tell us, "You shall not have other gods beside me. (Exodus 20:3)" The one God has revealed Himself as Father, as Son and as Holy Spirit, "three in one ... three persons, and yet a single power and essence and Godhead. (Doxasticheron, Psalm 140, Pentecost)" As human beings, in our pride we foolishly try to imagine the divine life, and inevitably make mistakes, as the dogmatic history of theological error clearly reveals.

The second great mystery is the Incarnation. We profess this in the Creed at every Divine Liturgy. "For us and for our salvation, [the Son of God one in essence with the Father] came down from heaven, and was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and became man." "Incarnate" means literally "in flesh," but it means more than that the Son of God took on human flesh, but that he became in human being in every way, with a human body, a human mind, a human will, a human soul, yet he remained one person in two natures, perfect God and perfect man. God remains God and humanity remains humanity, but in Jesus the eternal enters into time, and God is revealed to us in human form, as proclaimed by the Letter to the Hebrews, "in these last days, he spoke to us through a son, whom he made heir of all things and through whom he created the universe, who is the refulgence of His glory, the very imprint of His being, and who sustains all things by His mighty word. (Hebrews 1:2-3)"

As is the case with the Trinity, we cannot understand how one person can at one and the same time be God and yet exist as a created man. Theologians have given this mystery the term "hypostatic union," that is, that Christ's humanity and divinity are united in one person, one individual existence. Yet again, as human beings, we feel we must try to understand, and again inevitably fall into misconceptions. Today, those who are more conservative tend to imagine the inner life

of Jesus as a kind of "apollinarianism." They are certainly not heretics, as Apollinaris was, for he thought that Jesus did not have a rational human soul, but was the divine spirit functioning in a human body. Nobody would now believe that, but in our imagination we see the divinity of Jesus completely overpowering His humanity. Those less conservative may tend to the opposite extreme, emphasizing the practical ways in which Jesus is entirely like us, some even denying that He really is the Son of God. The correction to these is the vision of the apostles. They lived with Jesus, and experienced the reality of God's love in Him as he interacted with us and drew us to the Father. Jesus revealed this to Phillip, "whoever has seen me has seen the Father," that is, has seen God. (John 14:9)," and as Peter confessed, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God. (Matthew 16:16)"



Icon of the Akathist to the Theotokos

This mystery is important for us. Because Jesus is a human being, like us in every way except sin, He can give us a model of how to live a full human life. This is why the goal of the first seven ecumenical councils was to define who Jesus the Messiah (Greek, Christ, "the anointed one") is so that we could imitate Him. The main message of the councils was that Jesus is truly God, the Son and Word of God, and that He is truly a human being, as the Council of Chalcedon (451) said, "one in essence with the Father and one in essence with us." The seventh council was the high point and conclusion of this process, and

said that we could depict Christ in icons, because He had taken human form and that in some way we come to the Father, as Jesus taught Phillip, "whoever has seen me has seen the Father (John 14:9)" As He is a human being, we, in our human nature, can imitate Him, as He taught, "whoever would be my disciple must take up his cross and follow me. (Mark 8:34)" In this way, since Jesus is the express image of the Father, (Hebrews 1:2) by imitating Him we can be, as He commanded, "perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matthew 5:48)"

If it is important that we, as human beings, imitate Christ, it is equally important that we know that He has a complete human nature, with a human body, a human mind, a human will, a human soul, which the councils insisted on over and over again. Since we are "only human," however, we tend to speculate on what the inner life of Jesus was like. This speculation is useless, unnecessary and impossible, just as we are unable to comprehend the inner life of God, one in the Holy Trinity. What we do know is from revelation. Jesus lived a full human life from infancy to adulthood. As a child, we was obedient to Mary and Joseph, and grew in wisdom and stature (Luke 2:51-52). As God, He knew what we do not know, "no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son (Matthew 11:27). As a human being, His knowledge was limited, as for the last days, "But of that day or hour, no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. (Mark 13:32)" As God, He has the power to heal the sick and to raise the dead, and to see what is hidden, but as a human being asks, "Who touched me? ... Someone has touched me; for I know that power has gone out from me. (Luke 8:45-46)" As a human being, He is tempted by the devil (Matthew 4:1-11), but He was completely without sin. The fathers and teachers of the Church often speculated about these revelations, but have always come up with the same answer: Jesus is perfect God and perfect man. As a human being, He had to suffer the pain of death, as do we all, but as God, He was not subject to corruption, and trampled upon death by His death. As for us today, it is necessary to open ourselves up to Christ as He is revealed in the gospels, and to love Him and follow Him without reservation. **BCL**

SAVE THE DATE



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A Women's Retreat based upon the Spirituality of
Blessed Miriam Teresa Demjanovich

The Shrine of Our Lady of Consolation

Retreat Center

Carey, Ohio

March 4th, 5th and 6th, 2016

Retreat Master

Father Thomas J. Loya

Contact Joan Washburn for further information

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Further details will follow

Sponsored by Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church

The first person to be beatified on American soil, Blessed Miriam Teresa Demjanovich was a Byzantine Catholic from St. John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic parish in Bayonne, New Jersey. As a young lady she became a member of the Sisters of Charity and died on May 8, 1927 at the age of 26. She took her final vows on her death bed. While she was just a young novice Sr. Miriam's spiritual director noticed her special gifts and holiness. He asked her to secretly write conferences which he delivered each week to the novices. Only after Sr. Miriam's death was the true author of the conferences revealed.

Blessed Miriam Teresa stands as a model of unity within the Catholic Church. Although she joined a Latin Rite order her writings clearly reveal the influence of her Eastern Christian mystical spirituality. Her conferences have been collected into a book known as "Greater Perfection." To anyone reading her work it is immediately evident that this young lady was a mystic who had a knowledge of God, Scripture and the matters of the spiritual life that could have only been known through the infusion of the Holy Spirit. Blessed Miriam taught that holiness, whereby we experience the indwelling of the Holy Trinity, is open to all as long as we strive at all times and in all ways with all our might to match our own personal will with the will of God. This involves the ongoing process of dying to the tyranny of our own egos and embracing the prayer and sacramental life of the Church. Blessed Miriam was beatified on October 4, 2014 at the Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Newark, New Jersey.



SPIRITUAL REFLECTIONS

Father Lewis Rabayda

CONFESSION: BEING VULNERABLE TO GOD

We don't often welcome the concept of vulnerability and much less put it into practice in our lives. It is an act of the will, or a response of circumstance, that shows weakness in ourselves with the understanding that we have let ourselves become unsafe. To be vulnerable is to welcome assaults, to be powerless to an invading force. Usually, we do everything within our power to appear strong, in control of ourselves, and give the impression that we can handle any situation. It is against our natural responses to be vulnerable to everyone, except for a few select people through out lives.

When we first learn how to be a close friend, we share most things about ourselves in order to have honest relationships based on the truth of who we are. And when we progress to dating, we begin to let our guard down more and more until we tell this other person all of our hopes, dreams, fears, and everything that makes us tick. Hopefully we also allow our parents to see us as we are and allow them to make comments and suggestions as to how we should continue. It is in this type of vulnerability that real intimacy between two or more people can flourish, and without it, these relationships may never form, or may fall apart.

Our level of vulnerability with God is not different. There are some who build such a large wall around themselves to not let anything in that they vehemently reject a possible relationship with God. There

are others who have difficulty in allowing themselves to be fully open towards God because they fear what that openness will bring. Too often we can fear to change ourselves because we have become too comfortable with who we are and how we act, regardless of whether or not we are healthy. And then, there are those who have no fear. There are people who, just like they do with their earthly relationships, they open all the doors, all the windows, and they allow themselves to be completely vulnerable to God.

This level of vulnerability and trust can and should be greater than any of our earthly relationships. No one can know us better than God—He created us. No one can help us more than God can, because He knows what we need; He knows what is best for us even if we cannot see it; and He has the ability to place anything into our lives and to produce any effect He wants. So why is it that so many people have difficulty being vulnerable to God, and letting Him see them as they are? God does see us as we are, but it is necessary for us to acknowledge this before God.

Shame is often thought of as a bad emotion and skirted to the side as something we do not want to feel. However, shame is a natural response to certain actions. We inherently know that this or that is shameful and can cause the feeling of guilt. In the world today, the new response to shame and guilt has been to negate these emotions as “old,” and no

longer necessary because anything we do or want to do is ok and good. But just as the body feels pain and tells us we are hurt—to signal that corrective action or healing needs to take place—so too, shame and guilt are signals to us that we need to take corrective action towards spiritual healing.

It is interesting that the Devil gets us both ways: when he tempts us to sin and we fall, and then after we fall he urges us to feel so bad about ourselves that we think we couldn't possibly deserve the forgiveness that God will give us. The Devil does not want us to be spiritually healed, he does not want us to receive the signal that we need healing, he does not want us to be vulnerable to God, because he wants to break down that relationship so that he can have more and more influence over us. In reality, we allow ourselves to be vulnerable; but are we vulnerable to the living God, or to the powers of death? When we are strong in our faith and in our practice of the faith, we are less and less likely to allow temptation to have power over us.

When we experience a pain, we allow the doctor intimate access to our whole body—both inside and out. Likewise, when we experience shame and guilt for doing things that we know are wrong and harmful to both ourselves and to others, then we need to voluntarily show all to God. We need to allow ourselves to be vulnerable to God's unconditional love, to the forgiveness of Jesus

Christ His Son, and to the healing power of the Holy Spirit. For us, as Byzantine Catholics, we are blessed to have not just a spiritual relationship with the Trinity by ourselves, but as Christ commanded, we have a real living community that we are a part of—the Body of Christ. In this Body, Jesus gave us ministers, the Apostles and their successors, real people to whom we can interact with, and who God uses to interact with us in a real human way. Jesus said to their chief, the one whom Jesus Himself placed in charge, “I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Peter was given keys to bind and loose, to forgive or hold accountable and these keys have been passed on to his successors. It is to those successors, in the Sacrament of Penance, that we can and should be fully vulnerable to God, and bear all of our sins to Him for His spiritual healing. When we do make a worthy confession, we allow God to erase all shame and guilt, and we again experience a great joy, a joy that comes with great intimacy. Christ also said that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church, and indeed, we should not fear the temptations of the Devil or his dark angels, because they have no power over Christ or His Church, and if we are in the good grace of both, they will have no power over us. **ECL**

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UPCOMING EVENTS FOR MARCH

Eparchial and Parish Events

- | | | | |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 6 | Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast *Sunday of the Ladder of Divine Ascent | 26 | Great and Holy Saturday |
| 13 | Fifth Sunday of the Great Fast *Sunday of Saint Mary of Egypt | 27 | Pascha *The Great Day *The Resurrection of our Lord, God, and Savior, Jesus Christ
<i>Christ is risen! Indeed He is Risen!</i> |
| 20 | Flowery Sunday | 28 | Bright Monday
<i>Solemn holyday *Chancery closed
No fasting this week</i> |
| 21 | Great and Holy Monday | 29 | Bright Tuesday
<i>Simple Holyday</i> |
| 22 | Great and Holy Tuesday | | |
| 23 | Great and Holy Wednesday | | |
| 24 | Great and Holy Thursday
<i>Chancery closed</i> | | |
| 25 | Great and Holy Friday and the Annunciation of the Theotokos
<i>Chancery closed</i> | | |