



EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

Official Publication of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic

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EPARCHIAL PRIEST RETREAT 2016

San Alfonso Retreat House, Long Branch, NJ

On Monday, September 26th, the priests of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic began to gather with their Chief Shepherd, Bishop Kurt, for the annual Clergy Retreat at San Alfonso Retreat House in Long Branch, NJ. Bishop Paul Chomnycky, OSBM, of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Stamford, CT, served as the retreat master this year.

Prior to the beginning of the retreat, Bishop Kurt welcomed everyone and made some introductory remarks and announcements. Father David Barattelli, coordinator of the Eparchial Safe Environment Program, conducted a training workshop and update for the priests on the Safe Environment Program for Children and Young People. Following that, Father Gregory Noga, who organized the retreat, made some housekeeping announcements and introduced Bishop Paul, who dedicated the retreat helping the priests with their daily life and ministry.

Bishop Paul gave very interesting, humorous, and concise presentations, reflecting quite often on travels and personal experiences he had

had, which really made the retreat more intimate and something to which the priests could easily relate. In one of his homilies at the Divine Liturgy, Bishop Paul preached very beautifully about the arrival of au-

tion, meditation, and prayer, is often interrupted by distractions. This, he said, a common “occupational hazard” for clergy today.

His uplifting and encouraging words – both at the conferences and

Paul, Mitred Archbishop James Hayer, Eparchial Protosyncellus, and Father Edward Cimbala administered the sacramental Mystery of Holy Anointing to each priest for the healing of soul and body. As the priests were anointed, the Bishop prayed that they would be spiritually and physically healthy for the great demands of the priestly life.

A great highlight of the retreat was the visit of the Auxiliary Bishop of the Eparchy of Mukachevo,

Ukraine, Bishop Nil, together with the rector and a priest from the staff of the seminary in Uzhorod. They accompanied the choir of the seminary, which was on a tour of the United States to raise money for the seminary. On Wednesday morning, the seminarian choir members sang at the Divine Liturgy, which was celebrated in Church Slavonic, with Bishop Nil as the main celebrant and Bishop Kurt and Bishop Paul as concelebrants, along with the rector of the seminary in Uzhorod, and European priests serving in the Eparchy of Passaic, and Father John Zeyack, a retired priest of our Eparchy. The seminarians also offered a brief

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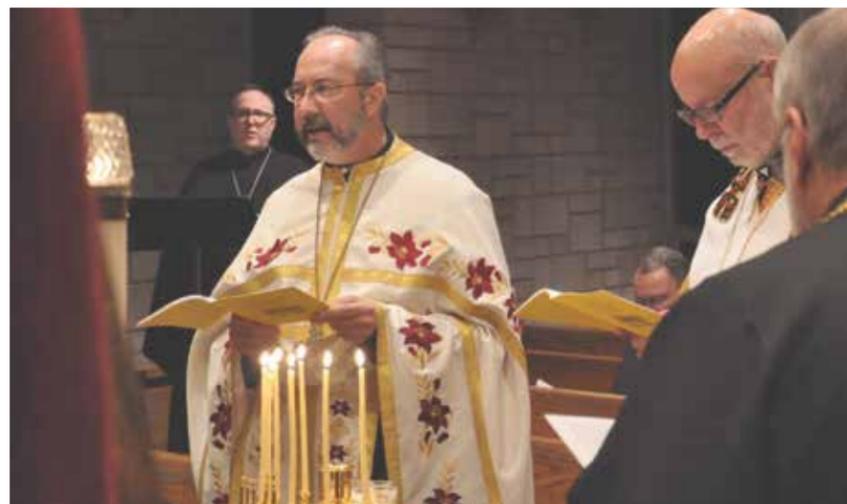
tumn and how the leaves are falling from the trees. He pointed out that the bare trees reveal their true nature, i.e., how the tree really looks, with gnarled branches, absent its luxuriant green spring and summer foliage. He said this is the same for our souls: we wear masks, which he compared to the leaves, and it is in repentance and confession that we remove those masks and show our souls as they really are. He then connected all of that to the arrival of spring and the death and resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ. He told the priests that they must take the time each day to be attentive to the voice of God. Yet, most priests find that their quiet time, which should be filled with reflec-

at the Divine Liturgy – were well received by the clergy, who acknowledged him with a hearty round of applause and the singing of “Many years!” at the conclusion of the retreat. Bishop Kurt thanked Bishop Paul for his words to the presbyterate. Bishop Kurt also acknowledged those who organized the retreat, celebrated the services, and assisted with the cantoring responsibilities.

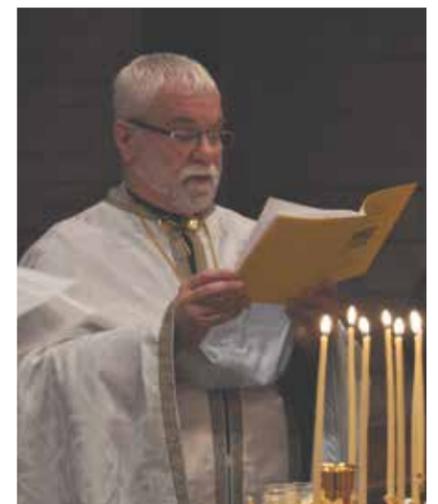
The San Alfonso Chapel was used for the daily services of Morning Prayer, Divine Liturgy, the Service of Holy Anointing, and the Parastas for all departed clergy. A particularly moving event each year is the celebration of the Office of Holy Anointing. At this service, Bishop



Father Jerome Wolbert, OFM, chants



Right Reverend James G. Hayer prays a prayer of healing for the service of Holy Anointing



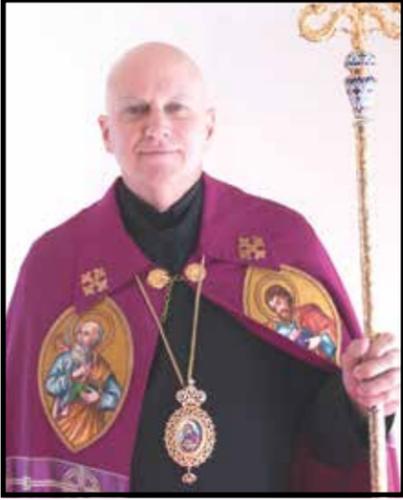
Father Ed Cimbala prays the prayer of healing

Long-serving Eparchial priest retires—p5

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I LIFT UP MY EYES...

Pastoral Reflections of Bishop Kurt



“IF SUCH THINGS ARE DONE IN THE GREEN, WHAT WILL BE DONE IN THE DRY?”

One of the wonderful things about American culture is that in every period, we are always trying to improve things, to make things better, to make ourselves better. People all over the world watch us with fascination, both anticipation and trepidation, especially the young people. Trying to change everything, to always move forward, are good urges, but when we try to improve things by breaking the laws of God, it always makes things worse, hurting us and hurting others as well, and sometimes destroying our immortal souls.

One of the things I love about our country is that we decided at the revolution to have no aristocracy. I remember how angry I felt when they (recently) made special crimes if someone kills or tries to kill the President. Before that it was simply murder—it

“The family is more sacred than the State and men are begotten not for the earth and for time, but for Heaven and eternity.” —Pope Pius XI

was the same crime to kill the President and the same crime to kill a homeless man who sleeps under a bridge. In God’s eyes, the homeless man is as valuable as the President, and I believe that was also what we decided at the time of our revolution. Despite our cultural dictum that we have no aristocracy, in every time there are people who consider themselves elite and superior. At the beginning of the last century, a group of elite looked around our country and didn’t like what they saw: they saw people that they considered inferior and unacceptable, and they began a “scientific” program to exterminate them from the country. As is so often the case, they claimed to be doing it out of compassion. They claimed to feel sorry for these people, but they really felt sorry for themselves. After all, most of their victims lived in rural areas so they weren’t hurting anyone, but these elites felt sorry for themselves for having to share their country with them, and they began to exterminate them like cockroaches. They didn’t kill the living, but they sterilized these people against their will, so that they couldn’t reproduce. This program called “eugenics” was breathtaking in its scope and just as breathtaking in its secrecy. The roots go way back, but the history begins when Charles Davenport, evolutionary biology professor at Harvard and a Connecticut native, asked the Carnegie foundation for a grant for a eugenics program at Cold Springs Harbor. With funding from the wealthiest Americans, this laboratory collected vast libraries of personal records, “from family trees to idle gossip”, and these “scientists” made plans for who in America should be sterilized. In 1909, Connecticut became the 4th state to pass a law for forcible sterilization. In 1936, the government of Connecticut in an official report called on the 2400 physicians to perform “selection of an individual under the state statutes...preventing future degeneracy...elimina-

tion of human defects.” Even those with the slightest vision problems were marked for sterilization to cut off their blood line. At that time organizations of ophthalmologists had lobbied for laws to register even the relatives of anyone with vision problems. If they had their way, even the relatives of anyone with vision problems would be forcefully sterilized. The Connecticut survey says in its preamble that it is similar to surveys of “useful plant and animal life”. It was in this period that Margaret Sanger, the founder of Planned Parenthood and also a eugenicist, popularized the term “human weeds”, who should be eradicated just as garden weeds.

Harry Laughlin, superintendent of records at Cold Springs Harbor, was made “federal eugenics agent” by Congress. His plan for ethnic cleansing America included concentration camps, de-citizenization, and then killing. In 1937 he was given an honorary degree by the University of Heidelberg for his contributions to the German program of cleansing. The plan of the State of Connecticut was to begin with the sterilization of 11,962 citizens in prison, but then extended to 175,000 people, 10% of the population. By the grace of God, the governor lost the 1938 election and the plan died. In 1939, the Carnegie Institute got a new president who defunded the eugenics program at Cold Springs. However, as part of the program, the Carnegie Institute funded a pilot program in 1928 in which IBM tried out its racial data program in Jamaica. IBM then provided the technology that the Nazis used for identifying and tracking Jews and their assets. In 1927, the US Supreme Court approved of the forced sterilization of the mentally retarded, and that was the beginning of the forced sterilization of 60,000 “undesirable” Americans up until the 1960’s. That Supreme Court decision was written by Oliver Wendell Holmes and was quoted by some of those who were prosecuted at Nuremberg. If you go to law school, you will learn that Oliver Wendell Holmes is still considered one of the shining lights and intellectual giants of American Law.

Meanwhile, across the Atlantic, many countries were studying the American eugenics program and planning or even implementing their own. Around 1910, Winston Churchill and others enthusiastically promoted eugenics laws in England. Catholics, labor, and libertarians fought fiercely against these programs. In 1914, Britain passed legislation to institutionalize idiots, imbeciles, feeble-minded, and moral defectives. A leader throughout the British movement was the son of Charles Darwin who said, “The first step to be taken ought to be to establish some sys-

“If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that man. For God’s temple is sacred, and you are that temple.”
—1st Corinthians

tem by which all children at school reported by their instructors to be specially stupid, all juvenile offenders awaiting trials, all ins-and-outs at workhouses, and all convicted prisoners should be examined by trained experts in mental defects in order to place on a register the names of all those thus ascertained to be definitely abnormal.”

By 1930, Britain was near to enacting sweeping laws with eugenic marriage restrictions and sterilization. On December 31, 1930, Pope Pius XI issued his famous encyclical on marriage, *Casti Connubi*. Although people sneer at this encyclical nowadays, because it reaffirmed the Christian tradition regarding artificial contraception, it was a prophetic vision of the chasm of hell opening up in Europe at the time. Pius XI condemned eugenics as follows, “Finally, that pernicious practice must be condemned which closely touches upon the natural right of man to enter matrimony but affects also in a real way the welfare of the offspring. For there are some who, over solicitous for the cause of eugenics, not only give salutary counsel for more certainly procuring the strength and health of the future child—which, indeed, is not contrary to right reason—but put eugenics before aims of a higher order, and by public authority wish to prevent from marrying all those whom, even though naturally fit for marriage, they consider, according to the norms and conjectures of their investigations, would, through hereditary transmission, bring forth defective offspring. And more, they wish to legislate to deprive these of that natural faculty by medical action despite their unwillingness; and this they do not propose as an infliction of grave punishment under the authority of the state for a crime committed, not to prevent future crimes by guilty persons, but against every right and good they wish the civil authority to arrogate to itself a power over a faculty which it never had and can never legitimately possess.”

After that passage, the Holy Father continues with these sublime words, “Those who act in this way are at fault in losing sight of the fact that the family is more sacred than the State and that men are begotten not for the earth and for time, but for Heaven and eternity.” Indeed, none of the issues facing us today would arise if everyone took to heart these inspired words.

One might hope that eugenics was rejected by the western mind after the Nazi death camps were exposed, yet forcible sterilization of “undesireables” continued in the United States for quite awhile.

Pope Saint John Paul, who lived through both Nazism and Communism, described a whole field of ideas in the modern world as the Culture of Death. In the United States, most people proudly rejected the Culture of Death after defeating the Nazis, but soon the highest levels of the American elites would begin new tactics. In 1964, one might say that the sexual revolution was launched by the US Supreme Court when it overturned an Ohio obscenity conviction and in subsequent decisions opened the floodgates of pornography on our country and on the whole world. And thus began the fifty year journey in which this small group of unelected elitists took it upon themselves to rewrite all the laws in the country with regard to sex and marriage. All the English Common Law, and all the statutes of the English Parliament, the United States Congress, and the Fifty State legislatures, not to mention plebiscites, were rewritten by these nine unelected jurists. The 1964 decision was followed by the 1965 Griswold decision in which the contraception laws of all the states were rewritten by the Supreme Court. Lay Catholics soon joined in the new Freudian culture, insisting that sins of the flesh are virtues, and chastity is a mental illness. Then in 1973, the Supreme Court announced its infamous *Roe v.*



"Train the young in the way they should go; even when old, they will not swerve from it." — Proverbs 22:6

Wade decision and close to 59,000,000 American lives have been snuffed out since then. Anyone who complains about immigration must face the fact that one sixth of our population was wiped out since 1973, not counting their offspring.

When I refer to the Supreme Court as a small group of elitists, the fact is that every member of the Court today attended either Harvard or Yale law school. In fact, I read in a law newspaper that every justice except Clarence Thomas only has law clerks from these elite schools. I actually wrote a letter to Justice Alito asking him if it was true that he would only hire someone from Harvard (because my parishioner in law school said so). I told him I thought someone from New Mexico who worked in Indian law would broaden the court. He wrote me a polite letter in return, but he didn't answer my question.

What do the Holy Scriptures have to say to judges? In the Psalms of David, God says, "God stands in the midst of gods, and as a god, he judges gods. I have said to you 'You are gods, all of you, but like men, you will die.'" This passage is a warning to judges that even though they have the power of gods in this lifetime, they will die as all men do, and be judged themselves by the most high God. The psalm goes on to say that they will be judged according to whether or not they defended the weak.

Pope Saint John Paul referred to eugenics, genocide, artificial contraception, divorce, abortion, and the pervasive disfigurement of our sexuality as the Culture of Death. Indeed sexuality is how life is created, and its debasement is an attack on life itself. And today we see the final stage. California, in a fraudulent special legislature, has legalized the poisoning of sick people in our largest state, and the governor who was educated in Catholic schools signed the law saying that he plans to have himself poisoned when he is in pain. Since the law was written by the Father of Lies, it even orders government officials to falsify the records. When a sick person is killed with poison under this law, the cause of death must be recorded as

*"Now choose life, so that you and your children may live."
—Deuteronomy*

something else!!! It also allows someone who will inherit the estate to participate in the murder. Already a woman in California had a suicide party for herself—glitterati flew in from around the country. A man from New York who attended the "fun" weekend said, "For me and everyone who was invited, it was very challenging to consider, but there was no question that we would be there for her. The idea to go and spend a beautiful weekend with someone that culminates in their suicide—that is not a normal thing, not a normal, everyday occurrence. In the background of the lovely fun, smiles, and laughter that we had that weekend was the knowledge of what was coming." According to the news story, "More than 30 people came to

the party at a home with a wrap around porch in the picturesque Southern California mountain town of Ojai." What do the Sacred Scriptures say about this? They are crystal clear. Saint Paul says in First Corinthians, "Do you not know that you are God's temple? And the Holy Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that man. For God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple."

In Oregon, the Catholic and Adventist hospitals have refused to kill people under the euthanasia laws. The pro-death activists are planning legal actions to force them to participate. Right now, the Archbishop Primate of Belgium is fighting a legal battle over this very challenge. Euthanasia, even of minors, is legal in Belgium. A doctor arrived at a facility for the elderly run by nuns in order to kill one of the patients. The nuns refused him admission. The patient was moved out of their care and then executed. The government fined the home, and is fighting a legal battle with the Archbishop over this. His predecessor was prosecuted by the government in 2007 for encouraging chastity.

Bishops in Canada are facing these issues for the first time. With the legalization of poisoning sick people, people are asking for the sacraments just before committing this terrible sin. One Canadian bishop told me of a case in which a family asked to have their grandmother killed by the doctor because otherwise they would have to cancel a pre-paid vacation. The "euthanasia" did not take place only because one of the grandchildren explained it to the victim in Ukrainian and she said she didn't want it. Imagine Eastern European Catholics killing their grandmother so as not to cancel a vacation! When Jesus was carrying His cross and met the women of Jerusalem He said to them, "Weep not for me, but for yourselves and for your children's children. For if such things are done in the green, what will be done in the dry?"

Speaking of prosecuting bishops for being Catholic, that brings us around to our remarkable election this coming November. Wikileaks revealed that the head of one of the presidential campaigns (and former chief of staff to a President) was involved in forming groups to change Catholic teachings and turn Catholics against their bishops. This partisan political operative bragged that he had already helped create groups that masqueraded as lay Catholics to destroy their clergy in the same way that civil war is being fought in north Africa and Syria. The last eight years have seen a Cabinet Secretary who claims to be Catholic with the support of a Vice-President who claims to be Catholic using the full force of the mightiest government on earth to destroy the Little Sisters of the Poor. The last eight years has seen a Cabinet Secretary who claims to be Catholic who worked tirelessly to prevent the conception of children, and for the barbaric destruction of those already conceived. In the Scriptures, Saint Jude talks about Catholics like these: "For admission has been secretly gained by some who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly persons who pervert the grace of our God into licentiousness... These are blemishes on your love feasts, as they boldly carouse together, looking after themselves... fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted... wandering stars for whom the deepest darkness has been reserved for ever."

There is no doubt in my mind that the next election, like all elections, is very important. There is no

doubt that whoever is President will choose a number of very influential judges who will be in office for life. However, I think it's more important to ask how we got here. How did so many Catholics come to reject the Gospel of Life? When God says to us, "This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live." How did so many Catholics come to choose death over life and sterility over children? Is it because the Culture of Death is overwhelmingly in the wealthier countries? In the poor countries, people live with hardship everyday just to survive, and they love life. Meanwhile in Belgium there were 45 year old twins who asked to be killed because their eyesight was failing, and they were poisoned by a physician. It reminds us of Jesus' words about the demon, "This kind can only be driven out by prayer and fasting." Voting is important, but prayer and fasting are more important.

However, this column is not about telling anyone how to vote, but rather a call to repentance. Jesus began his ministry by saying, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." In the Book of Leviticus, God

"God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more." —The Book of the Apocalypse

warns us of the consequences of turning our society away from His law. "But if you will not listen to Me and will not perform all these commandments; if you consider My decrees loathsome, and if your being rejects My ordinances, so as not to perform all My commandments, so that you annul My covenant—then I will do the same to you." The Jewish rabbis interpret this verse as follows: "The Admonition has begun with a chain reaction of sin, composed of seven steps, each one leading to the next: you will 1) not dedicate yourselves to the study of God's law, 2) eventually stop performing the commandments, 3) be revolted by others who are loyal to God's Law, 4) hate the Sages who expound the ordinances, 5) prevent others from being observant, 6) deny that God gave the commandments, and finally 7) deny the existence of the God who made the covenant." (Artsroll Chumash) It's as though the rabbis were watching our own culture descend.

Perhaps some or many of us will be arrested or imprisoned or put in camps in the future for defending the truth. Many people in our church know someone who went to Siberia for the faith in recent times. But as Christians we know that the suffering of the Christ is His glory. If we are privileged to suffer for the Faith with Christ, then we also share in His glory. In the end, God is more powerful than our sins. Saint John who lived through the persecution of the Roman emperors tells us, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city of Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a great voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.'"

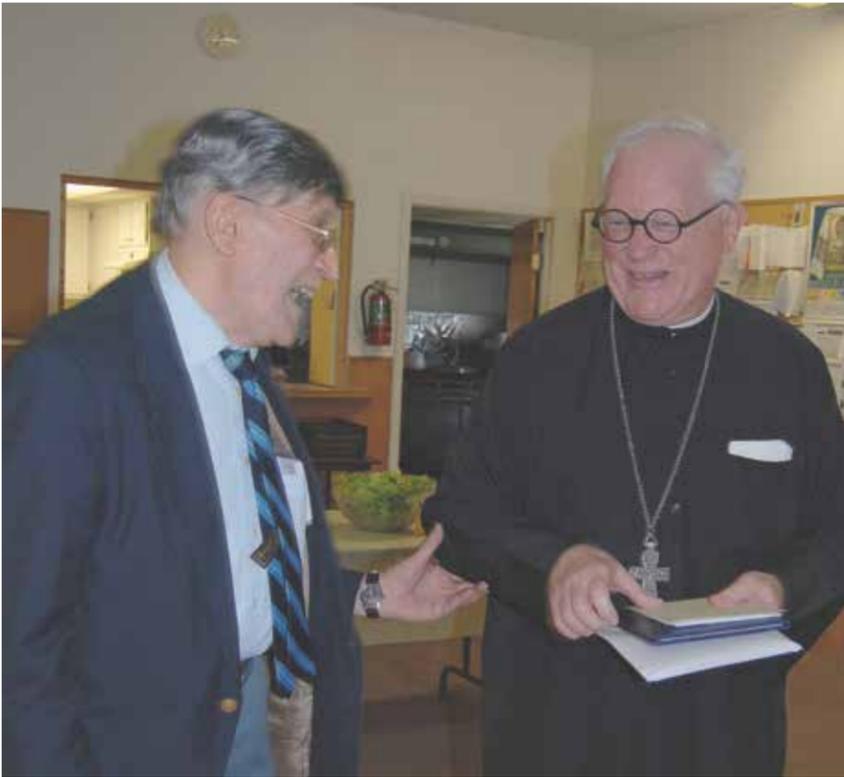
+Kurt Burnett



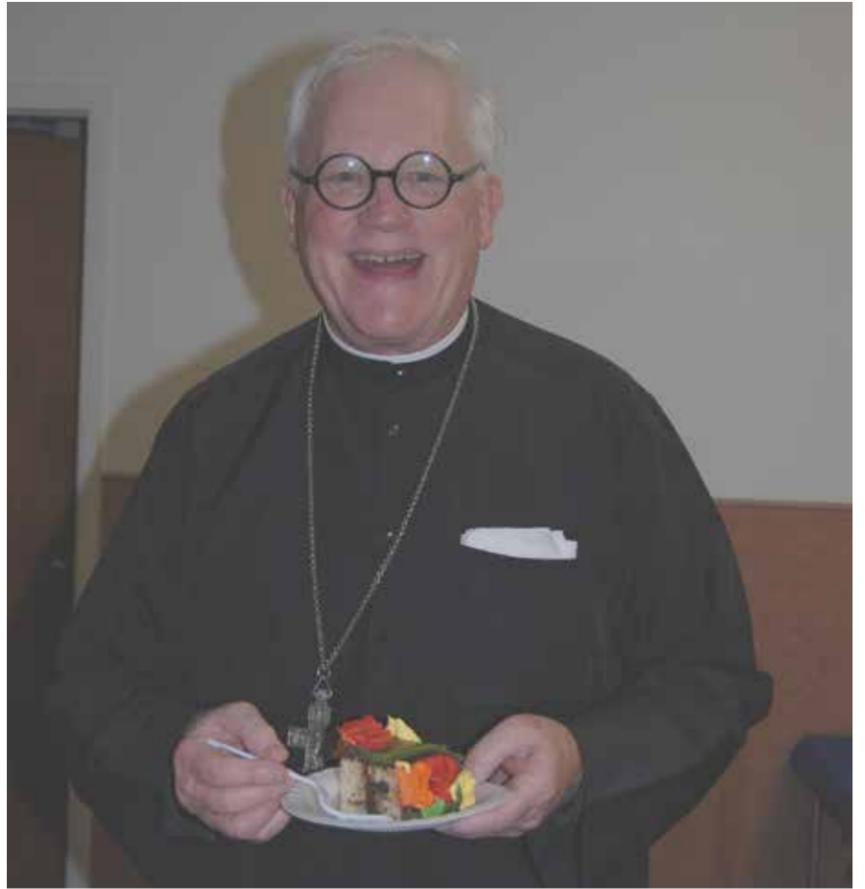
PEOPLE YOU KNOW AROUND THE EPARCHY

IN NEW PORT RICHEY...

On Sunday, September 25, the parishioners of Saint Anne Parish threw a surprise birthday luncheon for Father Timothy Clegg, Administrator of the Parish, who was celebrating his 70th birthday on that day. Father was presented with a spiritual bouquet of Divine Liturgies for the year, along with a perpetual enrollment in which he will be remembered in the Divine Liturgies at Uniontown, PA., by the Sisters of Saint Basil the Great. Following a lovely meal of chicken marsala, all enjoyed a delicious cake with chocolate frosting... Father's favorite! May God grant to Father Timothy many happy and blessed years!



Parish Advisor, John Petras, jokes with Father Timothy Clegg following the gift presentation at Father's surprise birthday luncheon.



Father Timothy smiles with surprise.

IN LANSFORD...

The Eastern Christian Formation Program of Saint John the Baptist Church, Lansford, PA, resumed classes on Sunday, September 18, 2016. The school year began with a children's Liturgy that included a blessing of the students and their teachers. During his blessing, Father Vasyl Chepelskyy encouraged the students to practice and share their faith in their homes, schools, and community. After the Liturgy, the ECF program welcomed parishioners to a coffee social to celebrate the start of the new school year.



Father Timothy Clegg blesses the food.



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IN DANBURY...

On September 17 and 18, 2016, Saint Nicholas Parish, Danbury, CT, where Father Ron Hatton is pastor, held its Fall Festival. The theme for the Festival was "Out of the Ashes: Blending the Old With the New." The theme was appropriate, as this was the first festival since the devastating fire of 2013 and the subsequent rebuilding, but also because we celebrated two significant items that survived the fire: the crucifix and corpus which is used by the parish as part of its Good Friday services, and also the Tabernacle where the Blessed Sacrament which was untouched by flame nor by jostling, even though the tabernacle was heavily damaged by the fire. The

crucifix has been adorned by commissioning an icon based on the Cross of San Damiano, from which our Lord commanded Saint Francis of Assisi to "Go and Rebuild My Church." The crucifix was placed in the center of the icon, and was mounted on the North Wall of the Nave, where it hung during the fire. Bishop Kurt Burnette was present on Saturday afternoon, and blessed the crucifix during the singing of the Akathist to the Precious and Life-giving Cross.

The festival offered a variety of foods and crafts made by parishioners. In addition, there were church tours, including a video documenting the church fire, rebuilding, and the story of the Crucifix, which was produced by one of our teens, Stephen Fanning. Raffles were held, and everyone, parishioners and visitors alike, had a blessed weekend.



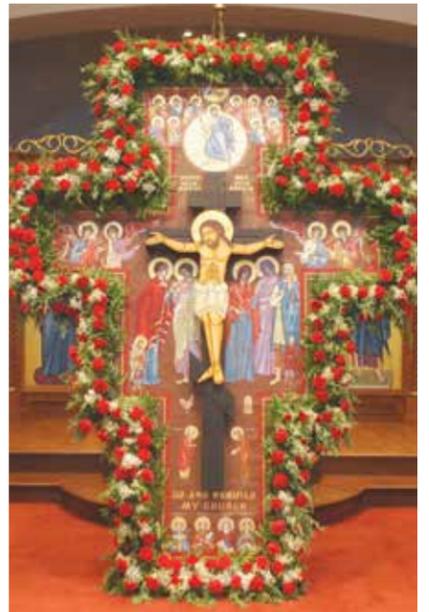
Anna Liner (center) and her late husband had donated the Crucifix which survived the fire



Micky Vira and young parishioner dance a Polka!



Bishop Kurt with Florence Zotyak. She and her late husband, Edward, donated the icon and frame for the Crucifix



The original Crucifix is mounted and surrounded by the icon



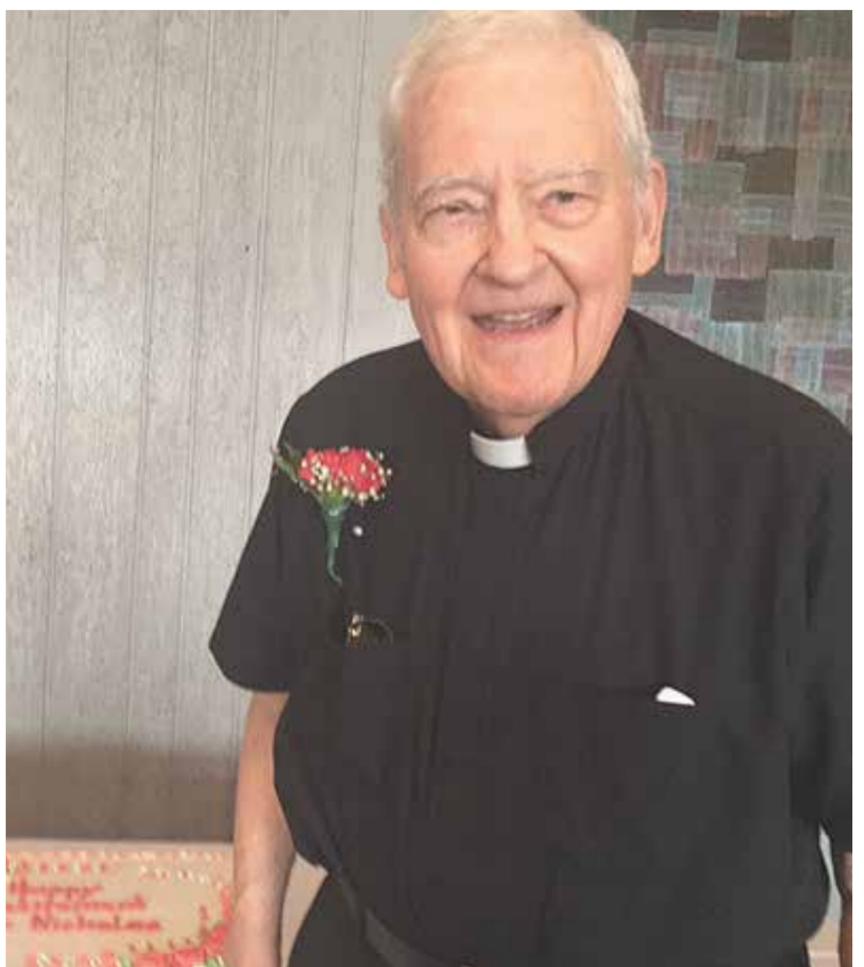
The kitchen was staffed by a dedicated group of workers



Michelle James, Anna Petro and Darina Jakubcak in the Craft Room

MSGR. PUHAK RETIRES AFTER MANY YEARS OF SERVICE IN THE EPARCHY

Msgr. Nicholas I. Puhak, who had retired August 24, 2016, as pastor at Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church, Freeland, PA, was honored at a dinner at the Lookout House, Route 93, Drums, PA, on August 28, 2016. The event was arranged by the Rosary Society of Saint Mary Parish. In attendance were Msgr. Nicholas Puhak, Father Peter Donish, Father Gary Mensinger and the new pastor, Father Scott Boghossian, members of the Rosary Society, members of the parish, and the family of Msgr. Puhak. Gifts were presented to Msgr. Puhak by the Rosary Society, the Saint Nicholas Apostolate, and other friends and family. A family style dinner was served, followed by a beautiful decorated cake congratulating him. Msgr. Puhak was very appreciative and thanked everyone for their thoughtfulness and kindness to him for the 17 years he was the pastor at Saint Mary Parish. Msgr. Puhak was ordained a priest in May, 1957, and served in many parishes throughout the eparchy, including as an assistant at Saint Mary Parish, Freeland, and as pastor of Saints Peter and Paul, Somerset, NJ; Saint Mary, Hillsborough/Manville, NJ; Saint Mary, Trenton, NJ; and finally, Saint Mary, Freeland, PA, among others.



Msgr. Nicholas Puhak smiles for the camera.



Father Peter Donish, Father G. Scott Boghossian, current pastor, Msgr. Nicholas Puhak, pastor emeritus, and parish vocation, Father Gary Mensinger



THE SEMINARIANS' CHOIR FROM UZHOROD VISITS SAINT MARY PARISH IN HILLSBOROUGH, NJ

by Susan Hornak

The Choir of the Blessed Theodore Romzha Seminary in Uzhorod, Ukraine, performed at Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church in Hillsborough New Jersey, on September 24, 2016. This was one of many stops for the sixteen-member choir on their tour of the eastern United States. They sang the responses at the 11 a.m. Divine Liturgy, with Bishop + Nil (Luschak), Auxiliary Bishop of Mukachevo as the principal celebrant of the Divine Liturgy.

Archimandrite Petro Beresh, Chancellor of the Mukachevo Eparchy and Rector of the seminary, Father James Badeaux, Pastor of Saint Mary Parish, Father John Zeyack, and Father Myroslav Ryabinchak, director of the choir concelebrated. The Gospel and the Epistle were proclaimed in both English and Church Slavonic. Father Zeyack graciously translated Bishop Nil's sermon for the congregation of approximately 100 parishioners. The congregation enjoyed singing the responses with the choir during the Divine Liturgy, as the 11:00 a.m. service is normally celebrated in Church Slavonic throughout the year.

At 1 p.m., the choir sang a selection of traditional sacred music under the direction of Father Myroslav in the church. The first grouping of songs were Marian hymns followed by Christmas hymns. A short intermission took place where Mr. Jack Figel, President of the Orientale Lumen Foundation, spoke about the tour and its mission. He shared with the audience how plain chant offers an opportunity for parishioners in the United States to come closer to their roots in the Eparchy of Mukachevo, the Mother Church. After the intermission, the choir continued with Lent and Pascha hymns and concluded with various choral arrangements.

A reception was held after both the Divine Liturgy and the performance, where parishioners were encouraged to get to know the young seminarians. This also gave the young men a chance to practice their English and learn about life in the United States. Audio and video recordings were available for sale and donations were accepted to support the seminary and defray the cost of the trip. After travel expenses are paid, donations will be sent to the seminary to help with seminarian

education and formation.

The choir returned to Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church on Monday, September 25th, and Tuesday, September 26th, to again lead the responses to the Divine Liturgy. Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church of Hillsborough, New Jersey is served by its pastor, Father James Badeaux, assisted by Deacon Nicholas Sotack, and Deacon Alex Kubik.



Bishop Nil addresses the crowd

SUNDAY EVENING DIVINE LITURGY TO BEGIN IN BAYONNE PARISH

SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST

15 EAST 26TH STREET, BAYONNE, NJ

All Welcome to Attend!

For the convenience of the area faithful, Bishop Kurt has introduced the celebration of a Sunday evening Divine Liturgy at St. John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church, beginning Sunday, October 2nd at 7pm.

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

- The Holy Mystery of Reconciliation prior to services
- 6:30 PM - Prayer Service (Moleben) to Blessed Miriam Teresa
- 7:00 PM - Celebration of the Sunday Divine Liturgy.

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

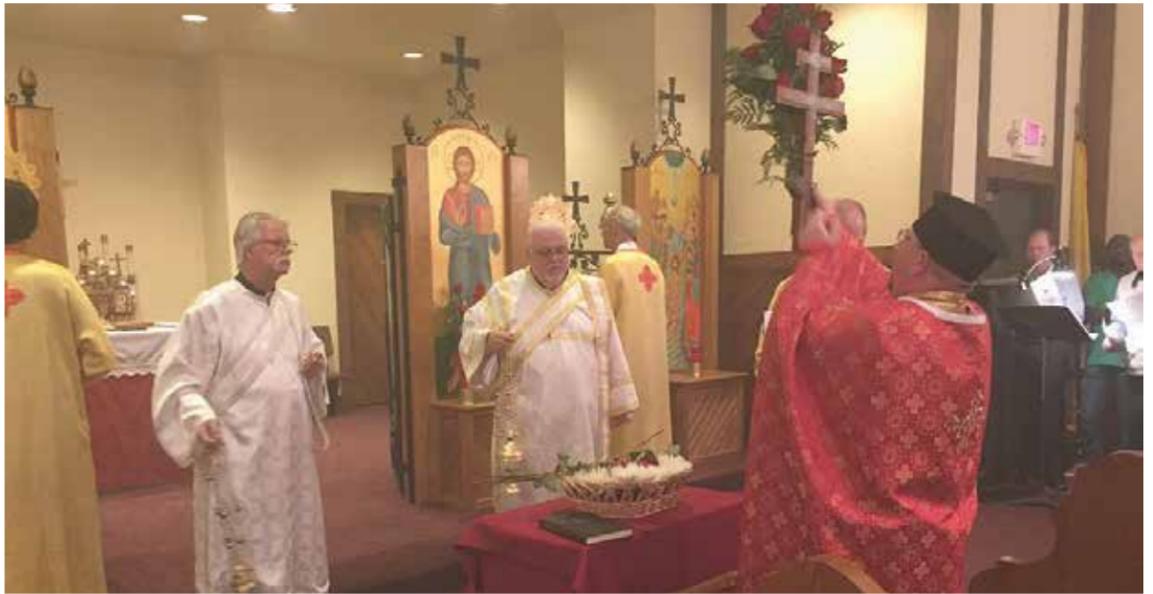
SPECIAL CELEBRATIONS AT EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD

Roswell, GA

An overflowing parish was in attendance on Sunday, September 18, 2016, to witness the special celebration of the Holy Mysteries of Christian Initiation. Epiphany Byzantine Catholic Church has experienced a significant increase with young families and there are now more than 30 children under the age of 16.

Fiona Marie Madrigal, daughter of Karen and Michael Madrigal, was welcomed as a child of God into the Byzantine Catholic Church with her Baptism, Chrismation and Holy Communion performed by Father Steven Galuschik and assisted by Deacons Michael Tisma and James Smith. Following the initiation of Fiona Marie, her brothers, Liam, Brendan, and Padraig received the Holy Mysteries of Chrismation and Holy Communion. A reception followed for the Madrigal family.

At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy and Life-Giving Cross was commemorated in a very special way for the first time at Epiphany. Children bearing flowers processed with Father Steven and the clergy throughout the church with the Holy Cross. The procession ended at the Tetrapod where the children placed their flowers and Father Steven placed the rose-adorned Cross. In keeping with tradition, Father Steven incensed and circled the Tetrapod and exalted the Cross



Father Steven elevates the cross as Deacons James and Michael incense

five times. A mirovanije followed with parish members receiving a rose after venerating the Cross.

On Monday, Father Steven with celebrated the Divine Liturgy with Deacon James for approximately 100 Roman Catholic students at Regina Caeli Academy. It was a special experience for Epiphany to return to Regina Caeli since the academy offered its chapel to the parish after the tragic December 2014 fire. Overall, the weekend was a wonderful manifestation of the Byzantine Rite.



Children's procession with roses



Godparents Keith and Jennifer Madrigal hold Fiona Marie Madrigal as Father Steven prays over the child



Madrigal family and their nephews, Jack and Luke Madrigal

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November 4-5th, 2016

St. John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Cathedral - Munhall, PA

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WORD of LIFE

INSTITUTE FOR EASTERN CHRISTIAN FORMATION

A Holy Nation

The Church in God's Plan of Salvation

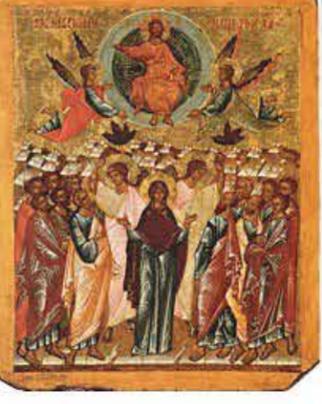
The Church as God's Holy People is at the heart of His unfolding plan of salvation that is ultimately fulfilled in Christ. The Bible relates how this plan for a universal covenant kingdom and a temple made of living stones for all the nations unfolds through particular stages in the history of God's People.

Talks Include:

- Are Eastern Catholics "Bible Christians"?
- Reading the Bible in the Heart of the Church
- The Seven Ages of the Kingdom in the Bible
- Biblical Images of the Church
- Sacred Reading: How to Pray the Scriptures
- The Bible and the Domestic Church
- The Bible and the New Evangelization

"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." - 1 Peter 2:9

Friday 6:30-9pm and Saturday 8:30am-4:30pm (\$30 per participant)



Speakers

Father Hezekias Carnazzo
 Father Alexander Wroblecky
 Father Deacon Daniel Dozier
 Catherine Alexander

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BISHOP'S APPEAL 2016

BYZANTINE CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF PASSAIC
 445 LACKAWANNA AVENUE, WOODLAND PARK, NEW JERSEY

"For to us a Child is born,

wonderful
COUNSELOR

The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father
THE PRINCE OF PEACE"

Isaiah 9:6-7

PLEDGE NOW THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2016

BYZANTINE CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF PASSAIC

BISHOP'S APPEAL 2016

In gratitude to God and to honor my commitment to the Church, I have prayerfully considered My gift to the Eparchy of Passaic this year and faithfully pledge:

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| <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 5,000.00 | or: | <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 1,000.00 per month |
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Please make check payable and mail to:

EPARCHY OF PASSAIC, 445 Lackawanna Avenue, Woodland Park, NJ 07424

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PRAYERFULLY PLEDGE & RETURN THIS FORM TO THE EPARCHY BY DEC. 31. All Money received after Dec. 31 will be credited to your 2017 tax year



My dear Friends,

Glory to Jesus Christ!

“Gentlemen may cry, Peace, Peace – but there is no peace.” These stirring words were spoken by Patrick Henry in his famous speech at the beginning of our American republic. Most people don’t know that he was quoting from the Prophet Jeremiah! Indeed, it seems as though everywhere we turn, people are longing for peace, as they were 27 centuries ago when Jeremiah and Isaiah were writing. For those of us who believe in Jesus Christ, St. Paul promises us “the peace of God that surpasses all understanding”. At the Last Supper, Our Lord said to us, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I give to you not as the world gives. Do not let your heart be troubled or afraid.” As Christians, we turn to our faith and our churches to find the peace of God that surpasses all understanding, and we in turn carry that peace into the world.

The theme of this year’s Bishop Appeal is the Prince of Peace. Isaiah described the Messiah as “Wonderful”, that is, filled with wonders and miracles. Our church is filled with wonders and miracles. Wherever I visit, so many people tell me about the wonders and consolations that God has worked in their lives. Our Church in Ukraine too is a miracle. Our Eparchy is so generous to help them financially while they help us spiritually and with new priests. Then Isaiah describes the Messiah as “Counselor”. Some of our clergy began the Word of Life Institute in our own Eparchy. They have provided rich resources for our pastors and parishes to understand and love the Word of God as it is read in our parishes. This year they are sponsoring a bible conference in Pittsburgh for our whole Church. Isaiah describes the Messiah as “The Mighty God”. A man who joined

our church a year ago said that he loves the fact that we call Jesus “Christ our true God” so many times in our Liturgy. Nowadays many people see Jesus as a great teacher, but are afraid to come out and say that He is Divine. In our church we proclaim Him as God, even in every Icon of Christ. Ever since the Resurrection, the devil has worked tirelessly to convince people that God did not take on flesh and that He does not love us. But our Church teaches us the true faith fearlessly for anyone who comes to our Divine Liturgy. Isaiah calls the Messiah “The Everlasting Father”. Saint John Chrysostom tells us that Christ says ‘I am Father, I am brother, I am bridegroom. I am friend. I am all things.’ And finally, Isaiah reveals that Jesus Christ is the “Prince of Peace”. When people around the world ask for peace, we point them to the Prince of Peace, who is Jesus Christ.

When we started the American republic, we tried a new experiment, life without kings and aristocrats, and with freedom of religion. Part of that experiment is that we don’t have aristocrats to pay for our churches, and we have to do it ourselves. Our people are the most generous in all the Catholic Church, and I thank you for all your generosity in the past. Once a year we ask you to help the Bishop and Eparchy as well as your local parish. Our seminarians cost money, bringing in new priests costs money, bringing in new priests from Europe costs money, travelling costs money, taking care of priests who can’t work costs money. I ask you once again to be generous.

May God grant peace to you and your loved ones.

+Kurt Brunette

YOUR BISHOP’S APPEAL GIFTS SUPPORT OUR EPARCHIAL PROGRAMS

OUR GOAL: \$650,000

PARISH REVITALIZATION

Capital improvements and renovations in specific parishes
\$165,000

ASSISTANCE TO

BLESSED THEODORE ROMZHA SEMINARY

Starting with Bishop Dudick, our Eparchy has fed the seminarians of the Uzhorod Seminary of the Eparchy of Mukachevo since it was reopened after communism. Bishop Šašik has ordained over 150 priests in 13 years, some of whom serve in the Eparchy of Passaic.
\$50,000

DEACON FORMATION

The present class has completed year two of the Deacon Formation Program and looks forward to serve the faithful of the Eparchy in the near future.
\$15,000

EDUCATION OF SEMINARIANS AND PRIESTS

Seminary studies and formation; pastoral training programs; and graduate studies. Tuition and room & board for one seminarian is \$25,000 for one year at Saints Cyril and Methodius Seminary in Pittsburgh
\$50,000

EASTERN CHRISTIAN FORMATION

Publications, Youth Ministry, Family Enrichment, Catechist and Coordinator Formation
\$45,000

HERITAGE MUSEUM AND LIBRARY

Preserving our beautiful heritage for future generations to enjoy and learn about their ancestors and Church history
\$25,000

PAROCHIAL FAMILY EVENTS

Regional events to help educate, support and build up the spiritual strength of our Eparchial families
\$20,000

DIGITAL OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATIONS

Maintenance of the Eparchial website and media coverage of special events
\$15,000

YOUTH EVENTS

Eparchial Summer Youth Camp, the Altar Server Congress, Eparchial and Intereparchial ByzanTEEN Rallies and other regional events to foster spirituality in Community
\$40,000

RETREAT & EDUCATIONAL CENTERS:

CARPATHIAN VILLAGE
- and -
THE BISHOP MICHAEL DUDICK
EVANGELIZATION CENTER, SYBERTSVILLE, PA
Improvements and renovations to these faith facilities
\$100,000

PAROCHIAL SUPPORT

Grants to individual parishes for support, renovation and maintenance
\$125,000

give online

www.eparchyofpassaic.com

EPARCHIAL PRIEST RETREAT 2016

Continued from page 1

concert for the priests of the Eparchy of Passaic on the retreat. After that, they delighted everyone present by singing traditional folk songs and were asked to make a recording of their folks songs to be made into CD's, as well.

Another highlight of the retreat was a presentation by Bishop Kurt on an icon entitled, "Mary, Helper of Mothers," an icon to which many miracles concerning expectant mothers have been attributed. He asked for devotion be fostered to the Theotokos under this title.

The facilities of San Alfonso not only provide a place for the divine services to be celebrated in a gracious atmosphere, but also promote camaraderie and fellowship. The tranquility of the ocean breeze, the sounds of the breaking waves, and the solitude of a private boardwalk with gazebo and benches were more than conducive for quiet meditation, prayer, and reflection. The priests often took advantage of the scenic solitude to sit quietly at sunrise or sunset gazing upon the majesty of God's creation. Likewise, the boardwalk also served as a valuable place to walk and chat after meals, in between sessions, or at the end of the

day. There is nothing like the seascape to remind us of the beauty and majesty of God's grandeur as found in creation. Each afternoon, there was free time to relax in the sun, walk on the beach or visit a local religious institution to further one's retreat from the cares and concerns of parochial life.

The clergy left for home on Thursday following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Filled with a spirit of relaxation, inspiration, and anticipation, the priests departed knowing that what they took home in their hearts would be demonstrated in their celebration of the Holy Mysteries and experienced in their daily ministries with parishioners and neighbors alike.





EPARCHIAL DEACON RETREAT 2016

by Deacon Elmer Pekarik, Mount Pocono, PA

The Deacons of the Eparchy of Passaic met for their annual retreat at the Villa of Our Lady, Mount Pocono, PA from September 23 – 25, 2016. The retreat included deacon candidates along with the wives of deacons and candidates.

The deacons look forward to this time of spirituality, reflection and fellowship. The retreat weekend provides a welcome opportunity to renew friendships, share their experiences as servants of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and exchange thoughts and ideas to better serve our Church.

On Friday evening, the deacons and candidates met with Father David Baratelli to discuss the policy and procedures of the Office for a Safe Environment in Ministry of the Eparchy of Passaic. He reviewed the requirement for ongoing training for clergy and those performing the work of the Eparchy involving children. He also discussed the compliance audit which is an annual report to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the specific requirements for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. After a review



Divine Liturgy with Bishop Kurt, Father Robert Pipta, Deacon Jim Smith

of the Safe Environment training and background check process, Father Dave showed a video from the Diocese of Ft. Wayne and South Bend which detailed specifics of the Safe Environment requirements for all dioceses and eparchies of the United States.

The deacons, candidates and wives prayed Evening Prayer in the chapel.

Saturday morning began with Morning Prayer in the Chapel, followed by a Panachida for the departed deacons, and the blessing of Koliva.

The retreat master was Father Robert M. Pipta, the Rector of the Byzantine Seminary of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Pittsburgh, PA. Father Robert's topic for the weekend was the Liturgical Praxis of the Deacon. He gave the deacons an overview of what we do as deacons, and the practical or spiritual reason why we do it. He discussed how deacons serve as the link between the laity and the hierarchy as the deacon leads the laity in prayer and guides the bishop and priest in instruction. As we leave our "earthly cares" in the narthex, we transition into the holy place of prayer and "heaven on earth".

Just before lunch the Seminary Choir of the Blessed Theodore Romzha Theological Academy in Uzgorod, Ukraine arrived to give a short concert. This event was not scheduled on their tour of Eastern churches, but became available and made a deep spiritual impression for the deacons, candidates and wives. The seminarians joined us for lunch before continuing on their tour.

Father Robert continued his conference in the afternoon, stating that when the deacon says "Let us stand aright", there is an external and an internal disposition. We must stand in faith in our lives and how we present ourselves to the faithful and to the world. As we "Approach with the fear of God", with respect and reverence, that is fear in the healthy sense, that of reverence, wisdom and humility. The ablutions, the consuming of the gifts, then allow the transfer from the sacred back into the world, but with the sacred remaining with us as we take Christ with us into the world.

We are most grateful that Bishop Kurt joined us Friday evening and stayed with us through our Sunday departure. It was most edifying that our Eparch made himself available to the deacons. Bishop Kurt celebrated the Divine Liturgy with Father Robert concelebrating. At a round table discussion with deacons, Bishop Kurt told us to "learn the Scriptures, very very well. And share that with others". His guidance to us also stressed that if we preach Scripture, we will have something to say and that our homilies will be rich and full for the faithful.

The liturgical activities concluded on Sunday with the Mystery of Holy Anointing. We left with a renewed sense of the spiritual and the world wrapped together in our lives.



Father Robert Pipta at conference session



HOLY SPIRIT PARISH CELEBRATES 75TH ANNIVERSARY

Binghamton, NY

On Sunday, September 18, 2016, parishioners and friends gathered to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of Holy Spirit Byzantine Catholic Church in Binghamton, NY. Holy Spirit Church was especially honored to have two bishops present for this happy occasion: the main celebrant, His Grace, Bishop Kurt, Bishop of Passaic, and as concelebrant, parish vocation, His Grace, Bishop Gerald (Dino), Bishop Emeritus of Phoenix. The other concelebrants included Rev. Msgr. John Sekellick, Pastor of Holy Ghost Church in Jessup, PA, and local proto-presbyter; Father John Cigan, Pastor of Saint Michael Church in Mont Clare, PA, and former pastor of Holy Spirit Church; and Father Peter Tomas, current pastor of Holy Spirit Church. Serving as Master of Ceremonies was Father Edward Higgins, Pastor of Holy Ghost Church in Philadelphia, PA. Altar servers were Mr. Edmund Pinger, Peter Alex Tomas, and Stephen Koban.

Before he entered the church, Bishop Kurt was presented with the traditional bread and salt by one of the oldest members of Holy Spirit Church, Mr. Andrew Balog. Representing the younger generation, Sarah Kumpon greeted Bishop Kurt with a bouquet of flowers, and Isabelle Bedrin presented Bishop Gerald with a bouquet of flowers. As the bishops and clergy processed down the center aisle, the church was filled with the voices of the Holy Spirit Choir singing "Vosel Jesi Archijereju," meaning, "You have entered, O Archpriest."

During the Liturgy, the choir, directed by Cantor and Choir Director Robert Sufita, sang the responses to the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy for The Sunday After The Exaltation Of The Holy Cross. Throughout the Liturgy, the faithful, with heartfelt enthusiasm for Bishop Kurt, raised their voices and sang, "God Grant You Many Years." Fondly remembering and honoring generations of dedicated Holy Spirit Choir members, those present during the Divine Liturgy heard the choir also sing: "Ize Cheruvimy" by Muziceskaho, "Otce Nas" by Kedroff, "Praise Ye The Name Of The Lord" by Arkhangelsky, "Your Good Spirit" by Solovjeva, and the Marian Hymn "O Vsepitaja Mati." Truly, the singing of the Holy Spirit Choir seemed to bring a little bit of the heavenly choir into the church on this special day.

Since the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross occurred just one week prior, Bishop Kurt



Bishop Kurt and concelebrating clergy and servers during the Great Entrance

offered reflections of the meaning of the Cross in our lives. His homily included both biblical references and personal anecdotes. He reminded us of the redemptive suffering of the Cross, and that without the Cross, there would be no Resurrection in our lives.

When the choir and faithful sang the final "God Grant You Many Years," everyone proceeded next door to the Holy Spirit Church Center for a festive banquet. With nearly 180 people in attendance, and with quiet dinner music in the background, those present enjoyed cocktails and a delicious full-course meal prepared by Holy Spirit's own caterer (and cantor) Bill Koban. Thanks to the work of parishioner Peter Simkulet, a pictorial history of Holy Spirit Church could be seen in a beautiful photographic display, with some photos dating back to the early 1940s. After dinner, a special guest at the banquet, Father James Dutko, pastor of Saint Michael Orthodox Church, offered reflections on the storied relationship of Saint Michael Church and Holy Spirit, and noted that today our two churches enjoy a neighborhood and fraternal bond. Father John Cigan reminisced about the twenty-three years he spent as pastor of Holy Spirit, recalling that he was pastor for the 50th Anniversary of the church. Father Peter Tomas, pastor of Holy Spirit since 2011, brought the guests into the present day, thanking the parishioners for their support of the church and his family, Pani Michelle and son, Peter Alex. A special "thank-you" was extended to the parishioners of Saints Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church in nearby Endicott, NY, for their con-

tinued support of Holy Spirit's various projects.

During the day, one could hear many of the older parishioners and their children recall the early days of the parish. The 1930's were a difficult time for Holy Spirit, and many of the founding members found themselves without a church. Until a new church could be built, the faithful, under the spiritual guidance of Father Michael Staurovsky, worshiped at Saint Joseph Lithuanian Catholic Church. In 1941, Holy Spirit Ruthenian Catholic Church was canonically established. Ground breaking for the current church occurred in 1950, and on Palm Sunday, 1952, Father Staurovsky and his faithful flock walked several city blocks in joyful celebration from Saint Joseph Lithuanian Church to their own church, Holy Spirit Ruthenian Catholic Church.

On October 12, 1952, the new church was solemnly dedicated by His Grace, Bishop +Daniel (Ivancho), Bishop of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Pittsburgh.

Like so many other churches of our diocese, Holy Spirit Byzantine Catholic Church stands on the dedication of time, talent, hard work and perseverance of the generations of parishioners who came before us. Somehow the first, second, and third generation parishioners who worked in local shoe factories and other industries found the time and energy to find ways to fund a new church building, cemetery, church center, and rectory. It was an expression of their love of God, and hope for the future, a legacy for their children. Over the years these parishioners worked at numerous



Father Peter Tomas presents Bishop Kurt with a Panagia



Father Peter Tomas presents Bishop Gerald with a gift



Bishop Kurt and Bishop Gerald distribute the Holy Eucharist

church picnics, bazaars, and bake sales. They sold raffle tickets and generously donated their time and talent for their church.

As the reflections in the 75th Anniversary Banquet Program state, “Not many of us may work in factories anymore, but we are still here. We stand on the history of the hard-working, dedicated parishioners of the past, and offer this anniversary celebration in grateful acknowledgement of their

work. Their Byzantine Catholic Faith was transmitted from generation to generation. From the hills of the Carpathian Mountains to the hills of the Susquehanna Valley, and beyond, we thank them for protecting our spiritual heritage. Firmly rooted in our Byzantine Catholic faith, we remember and honor them today. Thanking God for all of the blessings He has bestowed on us, let us pray that we, too, continue to appreciate and protect this treasure of faith.”

At the end of the Liturgy, the priest prays, “sanctify those who love the beauty of your house...and do not forsake us who hope in you.” That was the prayer of our founding parishioners, and it continues to be our prayer today. “Save your people, O Lord, and bless your inheritance.” (Troparion of the Cross)



Father Peter Tomas with his wife, Pani Michelle, and son, Peter Alex



Bob Suflit, Cantor and Choir Director of Holy Spirit Parish, also served as Master of Ceremonies for the banquet



Presenting gifts of bread, salt, and flowers to both bishops were Sarah K, Andrew Balog, and Isabelle B.



Bishop Kurt greets parishioners and guests at the banquet



FAITH AND COMMUNITY ISSUES

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

A PASTORAL APPROACH TO HOMOSEXUALITY

Caring Pastorally for the Homosexual

Can there be a way of achieving healing, reconciliation, an integration of one’s life? Is there a way pastorally speaking to address the issues of homosexuality in a healing, compassionate manner? What options are there for authentic pastoral care to be given and received simultaneously?

Pastoral Care has been a part of Church and Christian ministry beginning with Jesus Christ Himself. The apostles were commissioned to continue this healing ministry when Jesus left time and entered eternity. The twelve were to carry on Christ’s mission of bringing the good news to the captives. That mission continues to

this very day and will continue until Jesus comes in glory, again.

In the Bishops’ document of 14 November 2006, *Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination* (MPHI), The Bishops state as a general principle within the pastoral care template the necessity of Church participation in the ministry to the homosexual community. Believers seek to find a home within a faith community of being welcomed and accepted as well as lovingly challenged in their faith life.

For the homosexual, as for all members, “Participation in a worshipping Catholic community is a support for living a life of chastity and integrity

and an encouragement to an ongoing personal conversion” (MPHI, USCCB, 2007, p.16); it is understood that ministry does not occur in a vacuum but rather a corporate effort on a multi-level interdisciplinary organization. It is therefore necessary for Church leadership to have a supportive role in the ministry effort. The Document (MPHI, 2006 from USCCB) makes it clear: “A welcoming stance of Christian love by the leadership and the community as a whole is essential for this important work” (MPHI, USCCB, 2006, p 17).

The supportive and loving stance is crucial owing to the fact that many people of Homosexual orientation feel alienated and unwelcomed. The

Document supports the belief and practice that persons who are homosexually oriented yet who live according to Church teaching should be allowed, in fact encouraged to take on an active role within the Church's faith community.

Concomitantly, the Church has to obligation to deny roles of service to those who in behavior violate the moral teachings of the Church for such allowance would appear to condone the violations and may even foment scandal within the believing community. Along with this teaching, the bishops in their writing of MPHI caution those in leadership not to abuse their position in advocating perspectives or activities incompatible with the doctrines of the Church. Neither is it an acceptable practice for the leadership to adapt a neutral, distant position regarding questions of lifestyle vs. Church teaching.

The Bishops suggest caution when revealing the individual's sexual orientation in public. Close friendships, family membership, personal confessor, spiritual director or a support group can and often do provide the kind of support and help to aid their growth in the embracing of Christianity; coming out publicly in the context of the entire Christian Community as such public self-disclosures are found to be not helpful and should not be encouraged to do so.

For those who do feel alienated by church communities, the utilization of outreach programs and evangelization groups welcoming homosexual members and sensitizing the rest of the community to mindfulness and welcome should be an integral part of the Church's evangelical missions and efforts. Conversely, any policies which discriminate against or harass the homosexual population or any population, for that matter, should be summarily rejected by the church. Procedural policies should be in place to handle any complaints that may arise.

The Catechetical Role

The position and role of catechesis in the

Church should reflect the teaching of the Church in its fullness particularly in this circumstance, the teachings on human sexuality and in particular, homosexuality. Quoting from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons, no. 5 as quoted by the USCCB in their Document, MPHI, 2006), "Moral conscience requires that, in every occasion, Christians give witness to the whole moral truth, which is contradicted both by approval of homosexual acts and unjust discrimination against homosexual persons" (p. 18). Ad finem, the catechetical tone of presentation should be one of welcome yet challenge, loving and wise, yet firm in standing for the truth.

According to MPHI (2008), catechetical work is initiated within the family network, the parents of the children being the primary educational source. The role of the Church is to assist the parents in the fulfillment of the obligation as proto-educators of their children as regards sexual and affective education and comprehension of the laws, Divine and Natural regarding matters human and sexual.

Firm basis of Catechetical Education

Catechesis, according to the Document MPHI (2006, USCCB), the beginnings of catechesis is found within the formation of the Catechists themselves. Selection, training and commissioning need to be carefully supervised; those who do not abide with Church doctrine should not be allowed service in this ministry. Days of Reflection and In-Service days should be conducted by "Theologically sound and pastorally wise ministers is an important component of this formation" (MPHI, USCCB, 2006, p. 19).

Moral choice finds its freedom in moral teaching and sound teaching, backed by doctrinal research. The proper formation of conscience and on-going catechesis for all people in general and the homosexual in particular needs to be considered as an important component of Church

ministry educating the faithful in responsible decision-making in the face of contradictory and oftentimes confusing public policy statements. The document clearly states: "Ignorance of the fullness of Church teaching is often the greatest barrier to an effective ministry to persons with a homosexual inclination. Catechesis in the parish should also teach the virtues that are needed to live out the call to chastity, e.g. selfless, love, fortitude, temperance, etc." (MPHI, USCCB, 2006, p.19).

Discrimination and violence against the homosexual person is to be denounced in the catechesis given to the community according to the document, with the monitum of seeking to correct the misinformation and consequent misunderstanding that leads to the acting out of the behaviors. At the same time the information provided by the Church needs to be consistent in its accuracy that nothing contrary to the Church Doctrine is presented.

The overseeing of the material for the catechetical presentations should be done by the Local Ordinaries, the bishops of the church so that nothing is presented to the body of believers that is contrary to Church dogma. Young people therefore, should be taught the "true nature and purpose of human sexuality and should promote the virtue of chastity..." (MPHI, USCCB, 2006, p. 20).

The final presentation to this discussion will touch upon the roles of Sacraments and Worship, pastoral support to those suffering HIV/AIDS complications, and concluding remarks to tie this together and bring our discussion to a close at this level. **ECL**



SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

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

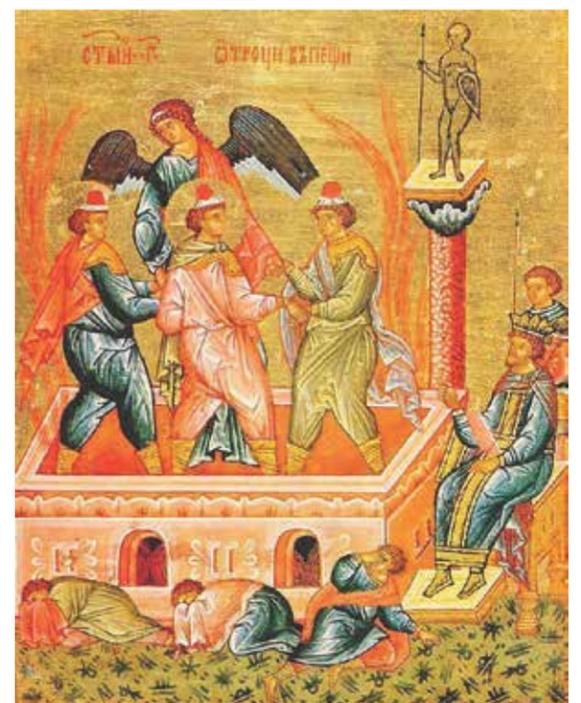
WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM FOUR TEENAGE BOYS

Your home town has been reduced to rubble and ruin. Most of your friends and neighbors are dead. The Temple where you worshipped is destroyed. You're a teenager from a prominent family. You and three of your friends have been carried off by the conquerors to a distant country. They tell you you're lucky. You're not going to be killed or enslaved like the others. In fact, they're offering you a free education with a guaranteed government job.

This is the situation that four young men, Daniel, Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael, found themselves in after the Babylonians invaded and destroyed Jerusalem (598-587 BC). Their adventures are described in the book of Daniel and they are remembered on December 17 and in the liturgical hymns for the two Sundays before Christmas.

The four young men are taken to the palace to

be educated for the king's service (Daniel 1:3-4). First, they get new Babylonian names, erasing the "-el" and "-iah" in their Hebrew names that marked them as belonging to God the Lord (Daniel 1:7). They are offered rich food and wine from the king's own table (Daniel 1:5). Surprisingly, the boys refuse. They have been raised as faithful Jews, keeping the dietary laws revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai as part of the covenant between the Lord and His people. They refuse to be disloyal to that relationship. And so, they make a bold counter offer: feed us only vegetables and water (which are naturally kosher) for ten days and see how we thrive. At the end of the test, Daniel and his three companions are the strongest, healthiest and most handsome of all their classmates (Daniel 1:8-16; good news for those of us who will be keeping the Filipovka Fast!). When the king interviews the young men, Daniel, Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael outdo all



Icon of the Three Holy Youths

the others: “and in all matters of wisdom and understanding, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm” (Daniel 1:20). And so, the young men outwit their supposed masters again and again.

The next test comes when the king erects a giant idol and enacts a foolish law that everyone must fall down and worship it on cue. The tongue-twisting lists of officials (Daniel 3:2-3) and musical instruments (Daniel 3:5,7 and 10), want to make us laugh at the pretend sophistication of this vulgar tyrant and his lackeys. Only the three young men (Daniel is not mentioned) refuse and are threatened with death in a fiery furnace. They reply calmly: “the God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods nor will we worship the gold image you have set up” (Daniel 3:17-18). The three are saved, and the appearance of a fourth figure in the furnace along with them is read in our Tradition as an image of the virginal birth of Christ.

Daniel faces a similar challenge later when jealous colleagues set a trap for him by making it illegal to pray to anyone except the king (Daniel 6:1-9). Daniel continues to say his daily prayers

(Daniel 6:10) and is sentenced to death in a lion’s den. Once again, he is miraculously saved, vindicating both his own innocence and the power of the one and only God. The troparion sung on the Sunday before Christmas recalls these events: “Great are the accomplishment of faith: the three holy youths rejoiced in the streams of fire as if in refreshing waters and Daniel the prophet shepherded lions like sheep...”

Two qualities shine through these teenagers: wisdom and faith. By the time the Babylonians try to re-educate them, the four boys have already received a solid education in God’s Law (so they know how to keep their side of the Covenant) and the Prophets (so they know and have hope in God’s promises). The view of reality their biblical education has given them enables them to see God’s plan beyond any carrots and sticks the Babylonians may momentarily wave at them. They embody the practical and spiritual wisdom taught above all in the book of Proverbs.

Secondly, they demonstrate faith. They remain loyal to their relationship with the Lord whether they are being enticed by the passing pleasures and powers of Babylon or threatened with dire punishments. Their loyalty to each other exemplifies especially for young people how to be

good friends and encourage others to be faithful to God.

The good example of these four teenagers also challenges us. Their refusal to give conform to Babylon’s ways, even when it was convenient, even at the risk of their lives, dramatizes St. Paul’s warning: “Do not conform yourself to the world” (Romans 12:2). Sunday worship and rest, daily prayer, the feasts and fasts, and a distinctive morality all ask us to stand apart from the culture around us. How often do we simply cave in and conform? Daniel and the Three Youths drew their wisdom from God’s word. Is our viewpoint formed by anything more than network news, cable TV and the loudest opinion makers and trend setters of the moment? “By faith,” the Epistle for the Sunday before Christmas teaches, the righteous men and women of the Old Testament did things, risked things, suffered and achieved things (Hebrews 11). How does our relationship to the Lord reveal itself in the choices we make? **ECL**

THE BYZANTINE CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF PASSAIC subscribes to the

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LIFE, LOVE, AND THE HUMAN PERSON

By Ann M. Koshute, MTS

GRACIAS, MERCI, D’AKUJEM... THANKS

As we prepare for the Thanksgiving food fest, let’s take a moment to step away from thoughts of turkey, stuffing, and pumpkin everything, to reflect on the meaning of “thanks” and how we give and receive it. Although we may not realize it, gratitude is part of our nature, built in to who we are. Our whole being is oriented toward gratitude, because we owe it to God. Why else did God, “in the beginning,” give us the whole world, even at the risk that we’d reject Him in favor of our own desires? Why else would Jesus gift Himself to us in the Eucharist? Eucharist means “thanksgiving,” and it’s telling that His gift of Self to us can be seen as His “thanks” for the gift He finds in us. (I mean this analogously of course, since God doesn’t “need us” to be who He is.) God made us for “thanks” so that He can “welcome” us.

On my wedding day, my cousin Cynthia looked intently at my new husband and me as she gave this marriage advice: “Be sure to say ‘thank you’ for little and big things every day. Be thankful for each other and say so.” Five years later, it’s still the

best advice we received, and we try to practice it each day. Sometimes my husband kisses me and says, “Thank you!” out of the blue. When I ask why he smiles and says, “Just for you.”

Imagine this kind of simple yet mindful gratitude informing every aspect of life. Sure, it’s easy (most of the time) to approach your spouse or child or best friend with a grateful heart. But what about your neighbors, or the person sitting next to you in the pew (and her cranky baby or fidgety teenager). What about the co-worker who gets on your nerves, or the stranger at the grocery store? What about the people on social media who argue with your every post or comment? What about that scruffy guy holding a sign that says, “Hungry”? Do you have a grateful heart in your encounter with any of them?

“Wait – you’re saying that I should be ‘grateful’ for the kid distracting me during Liturgy, or the guy at work who asks a thousand dumb questions? Why should I be grateful for the homeless person trying to guilt me into throwing him a dollar? How about the lady who butts in front

of me at the check-out? You want me to be ‘grateful’ for all that?” Yes, I do. I want you – and so much, me – to be thankful for the gift of all these people, especially when their “wrapping” isn’t all that pretty. I want us to be thankful for the opportunity to love them in ways that cost a lot, or cost very little. I’m calling for the kind of gratitude that draws out love from deep within us, the kind of love that informs our speech, our actions, and our prayer.

This list reveals how ungrateful I often am; how I expect to be loved, honored, admired, (or left alone), as if it were my right. I toss off a “Thanks” as more of a duty than the privilege of “receiving the gift” of another, and not just what they did for me. Yes, receiving them in their challenge to my comfort or patience, trying to better love them. At the same time, when I do things for others it has to be with real “awareness” of them as persons, without expectation of something in return. How different my interactions – and yours – would be if they were infused with the recognition of how good it is that this “other” exists for

me to love.

I'm also well aware of how bad I am at "receiving thanks" in my daily life (even from my kind and sincere husband). For instance, I hold the door for someone at the bank. She says, "Thank you!" and I say... "No problem." Really? That's kind of like saying, "This actually inconvenienced me, so you should thank me!" Of course that's not what I'm thinking, or what I mean. But my words matter and they shape my attitude and behavior. Instead of tossing off, "No problem," or "Sure," I should sincerely say, "You're welcome." I looked up the origin of the word "welcome" and found

it's associated with pleasure or delight, "especially in response to a need." What a beautiful way to receive the gratitude of another: as my delight in them, and my delight in their need. Now "your welcome" becomes my own thanks for their allowing me to love them, even in little ways. How different the world would be if we approached each other with such "welcome." How differently we'd live our lives if we experienced God's gifts as His delight in our very being.

As you gather around the Thanksgiving table to indulge in Baba's sweet potato surprise and fight over the wishbone, remember to be grate-

ful. Thank those who prepared the meal (even if it's the cooks in a restaurant who sacrificed their holiday so you can enjoy yours). Thank those with whom you're sharing the meal, and those who are no longer here to celebrate. Most importantly, thank almighty God on this day, and every day. Thank Him for the good things and the challenges. Thank Him when it's easy and when it's hard. Thank God for loving you into being at the risk of your rejecting Him – and for the "gratitude" with which He gives His life for you. Thank Him – because He always says, "You're welcome" in the fullest sense of the word. **ECL**



UNDERSTANDING ICONS

Father Joseph Bertha, Ph.D.

RANSOM THE CAPTIVES: CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY

Installment 14 of 14

Ransoming those held captive, a corporal work of mercy, refers to physically removing those imprisoned, but it also implies a spiritual dimension as the works of mercy usually entail. Rescuing/paying the debt for those who are imprisoned in the darkness of their own delusions and fantasies counts just as much as freeing those who are in a physical prison.

In 1 Timothy 2: 5-6 we read: "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, Who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony to which was borne at the proper time." Saint Paul employs the weighty word *ransom*; literally paying the debt, usually an exorbitant over priced sum, which Our Lord pays for the freedom of souls.

Two icons of Our Blessed Lord illustrates this corporal work of mercy, the icon of *Christ the*

Bridegroom and the *Descent into Hades*. The Bridegroom icon depicts the Lord as the victim of sinners. He silently bears the blasphemies, calumnies, spittle, crowning with thorns, all the while His gaze averts the viewer, accusing no one of sin. His suffering is His free will assent to pay the debt for sinners. He is literally shown in the icon as the Ransom bearer!

In the second icon, the descent into Hades, Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, corporally descends into the underworld to free the captive righteous and lead them into paradise. He frees them by paying the ransom for sins by His Death on the Cross, which He usually carries in His right hand. Our Lord literally stoops, to freely pay the price for transgressions.

Our Lord physically shows us in this icon the posture of deification. Becoming Christ-like means serving others, enduring wrongs patiently, forbearing, by crucifying ourselves and our selfishness. When we imitate Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ we manifest ransoming the captives.

In a position of servitude, He humbly bows and then forcefully pulls Adam and Eve – symbolic of all humanity – out of the clutches of the evil one who had enticed them in paradise at the tree and beguiled them through deceit. Together with the righteous who had died since the Fall of Man, Jesus pays the price; thus He carries the cross in his right hand, the symbol of his victory over death.

He is clothed in white garments signifying a new baptism, and being enrobed with the baptismal garment which sig-

nifies the ransoming of sinners and the forgiveness of sins. He paid the price!

How can we ransom and pay the price for sin? We are usually self-centered and retain the ransom money for our own self interests. Joseph's brothers prove to be a poor example of the misuse of ransom. Immediately after receiving 20 pieces of silver as the price for the sale of Joseph into slavery, the brothers dine sumptuously with the blood money, and show no remorse for the fate of their brother. It is not until some fourteen years later, when they pay the ransom for their transgression by traveling back and forth twice to Egypt and owning up to their betrayal, that they pay the ransom price for their transgressions. As Joseph accuses Benjamin of stealing the silver cup, they admit their sins and receive through Joseph's intercession the liberality of God's mercies. Joseph patiently filled the grain bins and paid the debt of his family's sins and received God's mercy during his captivity in Egypt. His pyramids of mercy paid for the transgressions against him and freed his family from the famine of God.

So too with Jesus Our Lord, Who lavishes His mercy upon all those held captives for so long in Hades. This mercy of God bursts asunder all the false bounds, traps, locks, chains of the evil one. The bright light of His glorious resurrection rips apart the closed gates of punishment and open the doors to paradise.

By freeing captives, we too can pay the ransom not only for ourselves but also for those in our lives. So too with us, we can offer up our daily prayers for the unchurched in our lives. These are those who do not attend weekly liturgy, nor practice the sacrament of penance. Through our persistent prayers, attendance at Liturgy, and frequent confessions, we imitate Joseph. Our forbearing of wrongs patiently and suffering for Christ allows us to store treasures which cannot be corrupted, ransom for those held captive by clutches of sin.

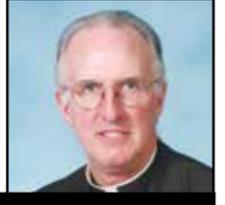
We do not know the date of their/our redemption/resurrection, but the continual visitation of those in the darkness of the prisons of sin remind them that the Messiah is coming like Saint John the Baptist did immediately before Our Lord's resurrection; calling them to repentance, paying the debt/ransom for captives, and provides a wonderful practice of this work of mercy. **ECL**



Icon of the Descent into Hades

CATECHETICAL REFLECTIONS

Father Robert F. Slesinski, Ph.D.



MAN BEFORE GOD

The Incorporeal Nature of the Soul and Mind and Their Assured Existence. Installment 16

As we have seen, what obtains in the body-soul relation is not an intermingling of two bodies, but a mysterious union of a corporeal body with an incorporeal soul. Ever at one with this mystery is the fact that the presence of the soul is found in all the part of the body at the very same moment. The soul, in other words, feels the parts of the body not by a part of itself, but as a whole. Whereas a needle may be pricking a spot of skin, it is felt by the whole soul and is processed by the whole mind. This fact bespeaks the very incorporeal nature of the human soul and mind.

The human soul's incorporeality is also confirmed by the fact that a human being enjoys an immediate insight into him or herself that is not based on any sense perception. Again there is a self-presence of the mind to itself. As Saint Augustine puts it in *The Trinity* (X, 9, 12),

Let the mind then not go looking for a look at itself as if it were absent [in the mode of sense perception], but rather take pains to tell itself as present [by intellectual cognition]. Let it not try to learn itself as if it did not know itself, but rather to discern itself from what it knows to be other. How will it see to act on the command it hears, Know thyself [*Cognosce te ipsum*], if it does not know what "know" is or what "thyself" is? If however it knows both, then it knows itself. The mind you see is not told Know thyself in the same way as it might be told "Know the cherubim and seraphim;" of them, as absent beings, we believe what they are declared to be, that they are certain heavenly powers...

But when the mind is told Know thyself, it knows itself the very moment it understands what "thyself" is and for no other reason than that it is present to itself.

In sum, according to Augustine, there is a unique immediacy of the mind's self-presence that can only bespeak its spiritual nature. The mind cannot but be in constant cognitive relation to itself; it must always "know" itself in other words. Significantly a mind's self-presence is exclusively its own. No other minds can, let us say, penetrate into my own mind. Put otherwise, we cannot escape from ourselves; our minds enjoy an ineluctable self-presence. In Augustine's own plaintive words,

For where could my heart fly from my heart? Where could I fly from my own self? Where would I not follow myself (*Confessions*, IV, VII, 12)?

What is understood in the mind's unique knowledge of itself is that there is no ontological distance (i.e., distance in being) between the mind and itself. This is not the case in sense perception where there is always an ontological distance between a knowing self and a known object. And whereas there is an immediate intuition of self in self-reflection, there is no possibility of the physical senses reflecting upon themselves as they need the mediation of sense organs. In self-reflection, on the other hand, there is a total lack of spatial extension. Once again we can appeal to the judgment of Saint Augustine:

Let it [the mind] therefore avoid joining anything else to its knowing of itself when

it hears the command to know itself. It knows for certain the command is being given to itself, the self which is and lives and understands... But all these minds have known that they understand, and are, and live; though of course they have related understanding to what they understand, being and living to themselves. And none of them have doubted that no one understands who does not live, and no one lives who does not be. The consequence is that whatever understands also is and lives, not as a carcass is which does not live, nor as a [n animal] soul lives which does not understand, but in its own proper and more excellent way (*The Trinity*, X, 3, 13).

This thought is repeated in another passage from the same work:

What is it then that the mind loves when it ardently seeks to know itself while still unknown to itself?...But where in this case does it know its knowing, if it does not know itself? Well, it knows it knows other things, but does not know itself; thus it also knows what knowing is... And then when it seeks to know itself, it already knows itself seeking. So it already knows itself. It follows then that it simply cannot not know itself, since by the very fact of knowing itself not knowing, it knows itself. If it did not know itself not knowing, it would not seek to know itself. For it knows itself seeking and not knowing, while it seeks to know itself (X, 3, 5). **ECL**



ASK A PRIEST A QUESTION

Father Vasyl Chepelsky

INTRODUCTION

As human beings, we are constantly searching, our minds always wondering about things, trying to find explanations and understanding. The quest for integral human fulfillment, our own destiny, and other more or less important matters, can leave us with many questions. In our lives, it is very important to find the right answers to all the questions we have. It is especially important when it concerns our faith and our spiritual journey. Finding the truth and getting a right answer is always liberating and helps us to make better choices; it brings us inner peace. It can be life-changing.

With the blessing of the Bishop Kurt, we are starting a new project: "Ask a Priest a Question." This project will be directed by Father Vasyl Chepelsky, Parish Administrator of Saint John Church in Lansford, PA, and Saint Mary Church

in Nesquehoning, PA, who has a Pontifical Doctorate in Moral Theology, and who, depending on the type of question, will answer your inquiries or will involve the clergy of our Eparchy or other experts to provide you with the best answer.

We will respond to your questions on subjects such as theology, spirituality, the sacraments, morality, Church history, and the lives of the saints. You may submit your questions to the email: sjpastor@ptd.net or on the wall or by private message at the Facebook page: **SaintJohntheBaptistByzantineCatholicChurch**.

Answers to some of your questions may also be published in the ECL.

If you have ever wondered what Catholics really believe or just questioned "why is that?" about

a certain topic, you now have the opportunity to find out.

This is also another attempt to reach out to our youth who are studying, working or are away from our parishes for a longer time, which will give them an opportunity to ask the questions they may have and to help them in strengthening their faith and growing closer to God.

We look forward to your many questions....so ask away! **ECL**

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SEASONAL REFLECTIONS

Monsignor John. T. Sekellick, JCL



THANKSGIVING

During November, the month when the bright scarlet and orange tree leaves fade to a lifeless sienna, when morning frosts give way to snow flurries, and thoughts of winter, and the sun hides its bright, warm rays, giving us long dark nights, we pause to observe a day of Thanksgiving with the traditional turkey dinner and all the trimmings we will enjoy with family and friends. There will be memories of Thanksgiving celebrations passed and fond thoughts of those who no longer are with us and a warm and loving welcome to someone away for a while or new among us.

Father Solanus Casey, an American Capuchin priest whose cause for canonization has reached the “Venerable” stage, would often remark to visitors, “Thank God ahead of time.” Saying “Thank You” is a lesson we learn and practice from our youngest years. For us as Catholic or Orthodox, Thanksgiving also has a beautiful and meaningful image in our Eucharist, the ages-old memorial repetition of a ritual our Lord performed for the first time the night before He died at the Holy and Mystical Supper with His 12 apostles in obedience to His request to do the same in His memory.

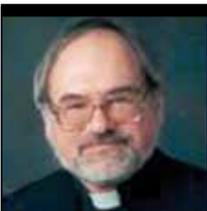
“Thanksgiving” is an action word, an action of giving thanks to someone, expressing gratitude to another. It comes across quite vividly in Saint Luke’s account of the healing of ten men from the dread disease of leprosy in which only one, that a sort of reject in Jewish society, took the time and made the effort to say “Thank You” to Jesus (Luke 17:11ff). Saint Paul urges the Christians at Philippi to let their petitions be made known

to God in every prayer and supplication with thanksgiving (4:6). His advice is still certainly valid today! The psalmist proclaims, “It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to Your Name, O Most High, to declare Your merciful love in the morning and your Faithfulness by night (92:1-2).

Thanksgiving Day, then, is special on our calendar because it is a pause in our normal routine as a nation to give fitting thanks to God. Moreover, it is special because it our national holy day. Regardless of how an unbeliever may try to conceal the fact, it is a day when our great nation formally acknowledges the existence of God.

As we participate during the Divine Liturgy, our Eucharistic celebration of thanksgiving, may we prayerfully reflect upon the many blessings God has bestowed on each of us. In 1894, a poet in Massachusetts, Katherine Lee Bates, wrote the lyrics to the well-known patriotic song “America the Beautiful.” It is a most meaningful composition which merits due reflection as we count the many blessings God has graciously bestowed upon us as we fervently thank Him:

O beautiful for spacious skies
For amber waves of grain
For purple mountain majesties
That see beyond the plain.
America! America!
God shed His grace on thee
And crown Thy good
With brotherhood
From sea to shining sea. **ECL**



THE BYZANTINE LITURGY

By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD

MIRACLES

Do miracles still happen? Some are certainly recognized by the Church as a sign of the holiness of saints. I have personally talked with people who have witnessed verifiable miracles in their lives. Miracles do not happen with a lot of theatrical fanfare, however. There is not a brilliant spotlight and celestial music. They are not magic. They happen quietly, almost unseen, and sometimes even unnoticed, even though a real change takes place. God does work miracles, but out of love for His people, and not to prove or display His power. Our Lord worked many cures for the blind, the lame, the deaf, the ill, and even for the dead, but He told the people, “An evil and unfaithful generation seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it except the sign of Jonah the prophet. (Matthew 12:39 and also 16:4).” The sign of Jonah was His resurrection from the dead. Just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale for three days, so our Lord was buried in the tomb for three days. In fact, Jesus “ordered them (the people) not to tell anyone (of the cure),” an order that was ignored, for “the more He ordered them not

to, the more they proclaimed it. (Mark 7:36).” When John’s disciples come to Jesus to ask if He is the Messiah, the Lord nonetheless answers them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them. (Matthew 11:4-5).” The greatest miracle is that the poor hear God’s good news.

We must first ask what a miracle is. It comes from the Latin word “miraculum,” which means “an object of wonder.” It may, then, be any event which amazes us and causes us to question how this could happen. It is something good yet unexpected. To be more precise, we now usually add a technical provision: it is something that somehow goes beyond the laws of nature as we know them. For an atheist, miracles are impossible. The natural laws of the universe simply exist. No one can oppose them. If you drop a rock, by the law of gravity, it will fall to the ground. If a person dies, life is extinguished and that person cannot rise. Believers sometimes, too, also affirm the ab-

solute character of natural laws. God has created the universe to be as it is, he does not violate his own laws. On the other hand, we might ask what a “law of nature” really is. It is our formulation in words of the way that we observe the way the universe works. In fact, we are constantly revising the laws of nature as we discover other principles. The universe is not bound by the laws and theories that we compose in our human words. We express this by saying that the laws of nature are “descriptive,” that is, they tell us how things act, but they are not “prescriptive,” that is they do not tell us how things must be.

This does not answer our problem, however. Materialists will insist that our observations are real and authentic. Nature does not deviate from the ways which we observe and formulate into laws. Miracles are beyond our power, they cannot happen, and that we are deluded if we think that they happen. Yet the reality is that the Gospels tell stories of miracles. The Gospels tell us of the story of the Resurrection. The non-believer then takes a stand “before the facts,” and says that



Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead

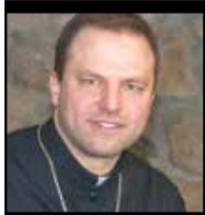
miracles cannot happen, therefore they did not happen and that the gospels are a fiction. In this way, we are still making the universe follow laws that we have made up. Father John Meier, who

wrote about the life of Jesus, said: "The proper stance of a historian is, 'I neither claim beforehand that miracles are possible, nor do I claim beforehand they are not possible.'" Father Meier goes on to explain that we cannot understand the life of Jesus without His miracles. The truth is that we cannot say that miracles are impossible because "the universe has to follow our laws." We still see wondrous happenings today that seem impossible.

What does this tell us about God? Those who deny the existence of God would have to deny that miracles are possible in any way. But do miracles prove that there is a God? Jesus taught that those who demand a sign are "evil and unfaithful." When miracles happen, they come about through God's infinite love. Like Elijah on the mountain, they are not found in the storm, the earthquake or the fire, but in the soft and quiet breeze. (1 Kings 19) God does not set aside the "laws of nature," for they are the word by which He created the universe, but in His love He may act directly in His creation for the sake of mercy. The scientist and theologian and priest, William R. Stoeger said, "God might be working through

all of the unknown or partly known possibilities of the natural world that far surpass what we already know and model."

Do miracles, then, prove the existence of God? We may say that, for the faithful, they confirm that God may act directly in our behalf. The reality is that God intervenes in the lives of each one of us. The Gospel says that there is one sure miracle: the sign of Jonas, that is, the resurrection of Jesus. Our Lord did not rise, however, to prove that He is God, but to give us all the hope of life. For that reason, the resurrection goes beyond the limitations of our material existence. It is truly an event in our physical world, but also an event which lifts us beyond the boundaries of that world through faith and through hope and through love. In 1 Corinthians 15, Saint Paul tells us that if there is no resurrection, our faith is useless, and then he says, "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown corruptible; it is raised incorruptible. It is sown dishonorable; it is raised glorious. It is sown weak; it is raised powerful. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." This is the miracle for which we all hope. **ECL**



SCHOOL OF PRAYER

Father G. Scott Boghossian

PRAY FOR OUR NATION

Desperate times require urgent prayer! In the current election season, when so much seems to be at stake, at some point, we must stop arguing, worrying, or campaigning, and start praying. This election will have a huge impact on the future of our nation.

One presidential candidate supports a ban on late-term abortions, while the other presidential candidate voted against banning barbaric late-term partial-birth abortion. One candidate supports a ban on taxpayer funding of abortions, while other wants to take your tax dollars to pay for the murder of the unborn. One candidate believes that Roe v. Wade should be reversed, allowing the states to pass laws protecting pre-born children, while the other candidate supports Roe v. Wade, allowing abortion for any reason at any stage of pregnancy. One candidate wants to appoint justices to the Supreme Court who have pro-life records, while the other will only appoint pro-abortion justices.

Sadly, many Catholics will abandon the unborn child, the most vulnerable among us, and vote for the pro-abortion candidate because of party affiliation, simple lack of knowledge, or other factors that pale in comparison to the dignity of unborn innocent human life. By the time you read this, we will be on the eve of the election, or perhaps election will already be over. Either way, it is time for urgent prayer for our future, our nation, for the pre-born.

The people of God have always resorted to intense, prolonged, concerted prayer in desperate situations. Please take time to pray, and to fast, for the good of our nation and the Church. There are other areas of concern, besides the all-important "life issues", including religious liberty for Catholics, the condition of Christians in Syria and the Arab world, the influx of immigrants, radical Islamic terrorism, economic insecurity, racial violence, and the possibility of another world war.

"When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, if My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:13-14). In its immediate context, this promise was given by God to King Solomon at the completion of the Temple in Jerusalem. God promises to forgive and bless His people if they would repent and pray. Christians have long taken this promise to Old Testament Israel and applied it to themselves. If we humble ourselves and pray and turn from our sins, God will heal our nation as well. At Fatima, our Lady revealed that at the root of all the troubles, war, and suffering in the world is sin. She also urged repentance, prayer, and sacrifice. The promise of God to Solomon found in 2 Chronicles 7 applies to us today.

Perhaps up until now, you have never really poured out your heart before God for the sake of your own people, for the sake of your Church, for the future of your children. Your prayers have been primarily about your own personal needs and concerns. God is waking us up in these difficult times to have a heart for others, our own coun-

try and our children, including the pre-born. We can't put off our duty to pray any longer. The situation is too grave to procrastinate. Decide today to spend some extra time and effort praying that God touches the heart of his people who are going to vote, and for the leaders who are elected. Pray that the election would result in victory for the most vulnerable among us, the pre-born children. Fast and sacrifice by giving up some favorite food, or fast on bread and water for a day, if your health allows it. Get together with fellow Catholic Christians in churches or homes to cry out to God for our nation. Desperate times require urgent prayer! **ECL**



Jesus with the Cananite Woman



SPIRITUAL REFLECTIONS

Father Lewis Rabayda

THE REALITY OF SYMBOLS

As we enter into the beautiful season of autumn with the relief of the summer heat—in the northern states anyway—we also encounter a popular commercial holiday known as Halloween. Most readers may brush aside the importance of this holiday for the forces of evil as being too serious of a response. But what this holiday brings to us is a constant barrage of evil and death. Our intent is not to go into the historical beginnings of the holiday, but rather to focus on the present form that we experience in the United States.

The barrage of evil and death is a reality of what this holiday has come to glorify. To contrast with our own Feast Days of the Church, we celebrate them to commemorate Christ's Nativity, or His Transfiguration, or our patron saint. We set these days aside to pray to God and to thank Him for this great gift of salvation that He has given His people and for the great examples of living out that faith which we see in the saints. We also worship God in a special way on these days because it is proper and just. So too, in the civil sphere, a civic holiday is set up to remember our veterans, or Martin Luther King, or our na-

tion's Independence. But what we encounter with the current experience of Halloween in our culture is a commemoration of evil, deformation of the body and soul, suffering, and torment. This day celebrates the death of the body, and worse, the final death of the soul absent of God's Grace which is damned to eternal punishment.

However, things are not always as they seem. The reality of this evil is disguised in less than abrupt language with words like, horror, ghouls, spooky, fright, etc. What has happened is that a holiday has been deformed into commemorating evil and the torments of hell. The reality of hell and the Devil who presides over it is disguised as something cartoonish and fun to participate in, to mimic, and to play like a child's game.

This annual commemoration is one aspect of our culture which confuses the reality of the object. This is also present in other parts of our culture. I recently went to a movie theater in a large upscale suburban area. If you are familiar with these places, they are usually designed very large with a lot of atmosphere to make you think you are some-

where special. The particular theme of this theater was ancient Egypt; and outside the entrance to the theater is a large statue of an Egyptian man who looks like a hieroglyphic. At first sight, this seems to just fit in with the theme as if it were an amusement park. But I had a notion about what type of statue it is and I researched when I arrived home, only to confirm my assumption. The statue is of an Egyptian god named Anubis, who was the god of death, embalming, afterlife, and judgment, whose father was Seth, the god of darkness, chaos, and confusion. The average person would find no issue with this statue of an ancient god of death, conceived by darkness, being displayed in a place of entertainment because the average person does not believe in God, let alone in the deceiving power of the Devil, whom Christ conquered.

But as Christians, we know the reality of this spiritual battle that we engage in everyday. We know that we are being tempted by evil spirits and demons to live our lives contrary to God's commandments in small and large ways. Sin itself is the absence of God's Grace and is not the work of God. If Jesus came to free us from our sins, then it must

mean that sin and evil are indeed in the world affecting us so severely that we needed His gift of salvation. If evil is in the world, then it is present in all things that do not glorify God. This evil is present in all things that distract us from our primary devotion, and our primary commemoration due properly to the Holy Trinity. Therefore, when we encounter evil masquerading as something good or fun, we are being lied to by the ruler of this world, the father of lies, the Devil himself. And in these moments, we can turn towards God for His assistance and protection, so that we and those we love do not fall into the snares of the Devil. **ECL**



Do you know someone involved in an adoption in New Jersey in the past? They've changed the laws about privacy and information can now be obtained.

Redaction request, contact preference, and social/cultural/medical history forms can be submitted via mail or electronically. They are available online at AdoptionRecords.nj.gov. The New Jersey Catholic Conference has instituted a helpline that anyone can call to get more information about the changes to the law: 609-989-4809. More information is also available on the group's website: www.njcathconf.com.

UPCOMING EVENTS FOR NOVEMBER

Eparchial and Parish Events

Slava Isusu Christu! Slava na v'iki!

Eastern Catholic Life

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4-5 Eastern Catholic Bible Conference

Munhall, PA

6 Patronal Feast Day Celebration

Cathedral of Saint Michael, Passaic. Liturgy 11 a.m., followed by banquet. Adults \$20, students \$10, children under 12 free.

8 Holy Archangel Michael and All Holy Bodiless Powers of Heaven

Solemn HolyDay

12 Wedding Jubilarians Celebration

Epiphany Parish, Annandale, VA Hierarchical Divine Liturgy 4 p.m. followed by banquet*

14-17 USCCB General Assembly

Bishop Kurt in attendance

15 Beginning of the Christmas Fast at sundown

21 Entrance of the Theotokos
Solemn HolyDay

24-25 Thanksgiving holiday
Chancery closed.