



EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

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A New Shepherd Most Reverend Kurt Richard Burnette Ordained and Enthroned as Fifth Bishop of Passaic

This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad! (Psalm 118:24). Wednesday, December 4, 2013 was indeed a day of rejoicing as the Church of Passaic welcomed their new Chief Shepherd, Bishop Kurt Burnette.

Until recently, a priest of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Phoenix and Rector of the Byzantine Catholic Seminary of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Pittsburgh, PA, Bishop Kurt was ordained to the episcopacy by Metropolitan William, together with Bishop John (Kudrick) of Parma and Bishop Gerald (Dino) of Phoenix who also served as homilist. Following the reading of the letter of appointment by a representative of the office of the Papal Nunciature, he was then enthroned as the fifth Bishop of Passaic.

Close to thirty hierarchs - Archbishops, and Bishops of both the Eastern and Western Churches were in attendance together with over 100 clergy and religious. The cathedral was filled beyond capacity with the presence of the clergy and hierarchs and hundreds of faithful from the Eparchy of Passaic, and beyond, who came to prayerfully greet their new Chief Shepherd.

Among those concelebrating the Divine Liturgy with the new Bishop and the other hierarchs were several of the Eparchial Consultors, including Fathers Robert Hospodar, Ronald Barusefski, and John Basarab; also concelebrating were Deacons Steve Russo and Charles Leskowski. Fathers Michael Mondik, Edward Higgins and Michael Popson served as Liturgical Masters of Ceremony. Fathers John Zeyack and Robert Karl served as chaplains.

As Bishop Kurt most recently served as Rector of Saint Cyril and Methodius Seminary, the seminarians offered full liturgical assistance during the Divine Liturgy. In Attendance were Seminarian Deacon Kenneth Malley (Parma), Seminarian Subdeacon Steven Galuscik (Passaic); Seminarian Subdeacon John Russell (Parma); Seminarian Subdeacon Michael Bezruchka (Phoenix); Seminarian Lewis Rabayda (Passaic); Seminarian Bryan Scott (Parma), and Seminarian Thomas Moses (Melkite Eparchy of Newton.) Subdeacon Steven Galuscik also chanted the Epistle. Also, congregational responses were led by Cathedral and eparchial cantors under the direction of Cantor Elias Zareva.

Following the Ordination Liturgy and Enthronement, a gala reception was held for the faithful and clergy at the Hilton Meadowlands in East

Rutherford, NJ, numerous presentations and well wishes were made by civil officials. And several endearing presentations of flowers, bread, and heartfelt expressions were made by the children and young adults of the Cathedral Eastern Christian formation (EFC) and Byzantine Catholic Youth group (BCY). These were arranged by ECF and BCY coordinators, Kim Fedor and Elizabeth Duch. The students and young adults participating included

were Lena Edwards, Tessa Braum, Sarah Marositz, Lindsey Fedor, Stephen Duch, Nicholas Fedor, Nicholas Panzano, Gregory Duch, Alexander Panzano, and Kim Braum who made the bread and decorated it with several symbolic items on it, such as cross, leaves, and flowers. The following morning, Bishop Kurt celebrated the Divine Liturgy for the priests at Saint Michael Cathedral, followed by a brief meeting and a luncheon.

Bishop Kurt Burnette born at Sculthorpe Royal Air Force Base, Norfolk, England, in 1955, and grew up in Corpus Christi, Texas, and Houston, Texas. He was ordained a priest at Saint Mary Cathedral in Sherman Oaks, CA, for the Eparchy of the Holy Protection of Mary in Phoenix on April 26, 1989 by the late Bishop John M. Bilock. He served as pastor in several parishes including Saint Nicholas of Myra, Fontana, CA; Saint Irene the Virgin and Great Martyr, Portland, OR; Saint Gabriel the Archangel, Las Vegas, NV; and Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Albuquerque, NM.

He also served as Chaplain for the Fontana (CA) Police Department and regularly visited jails and prisons in California, Oregon, Washington, and New Mexico. He served his eparchy as Economist and Consultor from 1991 till 1994. He also served as tribunal official for his own eparchy, and also for the Archdiocese

of Santa Fe, the Diocese of Phoenix, and the Diocese of Gallup. His appointment as Rector of Saints Cyril and Methodius Seminary was made in October, 2012.

Bishop Kurt received a doctorate in mathematics from the University of Utah and taught mathematics, engineering, physics, and computer science from 1978 until 2004 at University of Utah, University of California at Irvine, California State University at San Bernardino, and University of Portland. He is a member of the California Bar Association and has a licentiate in Canon Law from the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome.

May God grant him many blessed years! Axios!



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A Message from Bishop Kurt

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned.

With these words, the Prophet Isaiah announced a new era in relations between God and His people.

I believe that we are entering a new era in the history of the church. The Holy Father has challenged us to stop concentrating on telling people what is wrong with them, and tell them what is right about God, to talk about God's infinite mercy and love.

In my experience as a pastor, most people already know when they have something wrong with them; they don't have to be told that. What

they don't know is that there is a way out - that God already has the answer to their problems and is ready to help them.

I believe that no religion places a higher value on the human race than the Christian religion.

And I believe that no church expresses our dignity more clearly, more beautifully, and more profoundly than our church.

When Pelagia, the courtesan, desired to become a Christian, she spoke to Bishop Nonnus and said, "I have heard of this God of yours, who although he holds up the arc of the heavens, yet condescended to come to earth, not for the sake of the righteous, but for sinners. He whom the Cherubim dare not gaze upon humbled himself to be a friend to tax collectors and talked with sinners."



Such are the ineffable treasures of our Byzantine Church.

God did not entrust us with these treasures for ourselves! God demands that we give these treasures freely to anyone who will accept them.



The Coat of Arms of Bishop Kurt



The Bishops Throne at St. Michael's Cathedral

Explanation of Symbolism of the Coat of Arms of Bishop Burnette

The main feature on the coat of arms is a hunting horn. It is fashioned after the Horn of Leys which is an ivory horn presented to Alexander Burnette in 1363 by King Robert the Bruce of Scotland. It symbolized the office of royal forester. This musical instrument is mentioned numerous times in the scriptures. St. Paul says in the first letter to the Corinthians, "If the trumpet does not sound clearly, who will prepare for battle?" From the Book of Exodus to the Apocalypse, the horn or trumpet makes over one hundred appearances in the Bible, from announcing the Divine Presence to calling the people to action. The motto of Bishop Kurt is taken from Psalm 150, "Praise him with the sound of trumpet." In the book of Exodus, the trumpets announce the arrival of God on Mount Sinai. At Jericho, the priests blew their trumpets on the seventh circuit of the city. In the Apocalypse, seven angels with seven trumpets bring the eschaton. The seventh trumpet precedes the chorus in heaven, "The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ: and He shall reign for ever and ever." These words were set to music by George Frideric Handel in the Hallelujah Chorus. The Burnette family is mentioned as early as the 11th century in Anglo-Saxon records. The bishop's ancestor Robert Burnet moved from Kincardineshire to New Jersey around 1700, and five Burnett brothers were in the Continental Army; one of them went blind at Valley Forge.

The coat of arms also includes the Cross of St. Andrew. There is extensive evidence from the early Church that St. Andrew, the brother of St. Peter, was the first to bring the Good News to the Slavic people. The cross of St. Andrew was taken to France during the Crusades and was in Marseille until 1980 when it was returned to Greece and is in the Basilica of St. Andrew in Pappas. It was Andrew who followed Jesus when St. John the Baptizer pointed him out and said, "Behold the Lamb of God." After Andrew spoke to Jesus, Jesus said to him, "Come and you will see." Andrew then found his brother Simon Peter and said to him, "We have found the Messiah." St. Andrew was probably in the boat with his brother during the miraculous catches, first in St. Luke's Gospel and then after the Resurrection in St. John's Gospel. In the Gospel of John, St. Andrew is constantly bringing people to Jesus. First his own brother Peter, then the boy with five barley loaves and two fish with which Jesus fed thousands, and also a group of Greeks at the Passover prompting Jesus to say, "Now the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified."

Many people ask why the bishop staff in the East has snakes on it. In the Book of Numbers, Moses held up a bronze serpent on a staff to cure people of snake bites. After the meeting with Nicodemus, Jesus said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so also must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in Him." Jesus also warned his followers to be as wise as serpents and as innocent as doves.

The coat of arms was designed and the colors chosen by Seminarian Lewis Rabayda, a trained graphics artist.



Ordination and Enthronement of Most Reverend Bishop Kurt Burnette

December 4, 2013



Text of the Letter of Appointment

FRANCIS
BISHOP
SERVANT OF THE SERVANTS OF GOD

To Our beloved Son Kurt R. Burnette, from the clergy of the Holy Protection of Mary Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Phoenix and also, until now, Rector of Saints Cyril and Methodius Seminary in Pittsburgh, appointed Bishop of the Eparchy of Passaic of the Ruthenians, greetings and Apostolic Blessing.

We, Who, like Blessed Peter, have undertaken the truly important care of the Lord's entire Flock, strive, as attentively as possible, to provide, with God's help, for the spiritual good of the Local Churches. At this time, provision must be made for the Eparchy of Passaic of the Ruthenians, which is currently vacant owing to the transfer of Our Venerable Brother William Charles Skurla to the Metropolitan See of Pittsburgh of the Byzantine Rite. Accordingly, after consultation with Our Venerable Brother, the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, We have judged you, beloved Son, endowed as you are with outstanding qualities of mind and heart, to be suitable for governing it.

Therefore, by the Supreme Apostolic authority, We appoint you Bishop of the Eparchy of Passaic of the Ruthenians, together with all the rights and obligations which are connected to this same Office according to the norm of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches. Concerning your Ordination as well as your Profession of Faith and Promise of Obedience toward Us and Our Successors, you will observe the norms of the aforementioned Code. In addition, We mandate that this Letter come to the attention of your clergy and your people, and We exhort them to give you a warm welcome and to remain in communion with you.

Finally, beloved Son, together with the protection of the Virgin Mary, We beseech for you the gifts of the Paraclete Spirit, so that aided by them you may nourish the faithful entrusted to your care, making use especially of charity, the chief virtue of Shepherds, which makes us close to people and pleasing to God.

May the peace of Christ be always with you and with your ecclesial community that We hold so dear.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, on the twenty-ninth day of the month of October, in the year of the Lord two thousand thirteen, the first of Our Pontificate.

+FRANCIS

Marcello Rossetti, Protonotary Apostolic

December 4, 2013



Ordination and Enthronement of Most Reverend Bishop Kurt Burnette



Hierarchs in Attendance

Archbishops

Most Reverend William C. Skurla
Metropolitan Archbishop of Pittsburgh

Most Reverend John Myers
Archbishop of Newark

Most Reverend Peter Gerety
Retired Archbishop of Newark

Bishops

Most Reverend Jacob Angadaith
Diocese of St. Thomas (Syro-Malabar)

Most Reverend Paul Bootkoski
Diocese of Metuchen

Most Reverend Robert Deeley
Auxiliary Bishop of Boston

Most Reverend Thomas Donato
Auxiliary Bishop of New York

Most Reverend Gerald Dino

Eparchy of Phoenix (Byzantine)

Most Reverend Thomas Mar Eusebius
Syro-Malankara Apostolic Exarchate

Most Reverend John Flesey
Auxiliary Bishop of Newark

Most Reverend Thomas Donato
Auxiliary Bishop of Newark

Most Reverend John Flesey
Auxiliary Bishop of Newark

Most Reverend Yousif Habash
Our Lady of Deliverance Eparchy (Syrian)

Most Reverend Fulup Kocis
Eparchy of Hajdudorog (Hungary)

Most Reverend John Kudrick
Eparchy of Parma (Byzantine)

Most Reverend Peter Libasci
Diocese of Manchester

Most Reverend Milan Lach
Auxiliary Bishop of Preshov (Slovakia)

Most Reverend Gregory Mansour
Eparchy of St. Maron (Maronite)

Most Reverend John Pazak
Eparchy of Sts Cyril and Methodius in Toronto (Slovak)

Most Reverend Frank Rodimer
Retired Bishop of Paterson

Most Reverend Nicholas Samra
Eparchy of Newton (Melkite)

Most Reverend Arthur Serratelli
Bishop of Paterson

Most Reverend Milan Sasik
Eparchy of Mukachevo (Ukraine)

Most Reverend James Wall
Diocese of Gallup

Reverend Dr. Anthony Steinbronn
NJ District of the Missouri Synod of the Lutheran Church



Fifth Bishop of Passaic

**Banquet and Celebration
Most Reverend Bishop Kurt Burnette**



Hilton Meadowlands · East Rutherford, NJ



Programme

Master of Ceremonies for the Evening
Reverend John J. Cigan, Co-Chairperson of the Ordination and Enthronement Committee

Invocation
Most Reverend John Kudrick, Bishop of Parma

Pledge of Allegiance
John P. Paulich Jr., Co-Chairperson of the Ordination and Enthronement Committee

Presentations

ECF/BCY - The Children and Youth of St. Michael's Cathedral
Elizabeth Duch and Kim Fedor, ECF/BCY Co-Directors

Rosary Society and Mother's Club
Patricia Ditzig

Saint Michael's Cathedral Holy Name Society
John P. Paulich Jr., President

The Greek Catholic Union of the U.S.A.
George N. Juba, President/CEO

Dinner

Civic Presentations from Public Officials
Thomas J. Duch, Esq.

Remarks
Most Reverend Kurt Burnette, Bishop of Passaic

Benediction
*Most Reverend John S. Pazak, CSsR
Bishop of Saints Cyril and Methodius of Toronto, Canada*

Music by Pajtasi



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Very Rev. James G. Hayer, *Editor*
Mrs. Diane Rabiej, *Associate Editor*

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Mother of Priest Reposes in the Lord

Eternal Memory, +Dolores Hanincik

HARRISBURG, PA – Dolores Ann (Komishock) Hanincik, 77, mother of Father Frank Hanincik, fell asleep in the Lord on Tuesday, December 10, 2013 at the Hershey Medical Center, Hershey, PA. She was born Friday, May 22, 1936 in Elmira, NY to the late Michael and Anna Rose (Murman) Komishock. She grew up in Lebanon and raised her family in Hazleton. She is survived by her loving husband of 52 years, Frank Hanincik, Jr.

She was a faithful member of Saint Ann Byzantine Catholic Church and enjoyed traveling. Dolores was warm, kind, and generous. She was selfless with a warm sense of hospitality stemming from a heart filled with service for others. Most importantly, she was a loving and compassionate wife and mother.

She is survived by a son, Father Frank A. Hanincik; a daughter, Ann M. Koshute and husband Keith; and 4 sisters, Elizabeth Henniger, Tina Sviben, Ann Marie Springborn, and Cora Krause.

Office of Christian Burial with Divine Liturgy was celebrated on

Monday, December 16th at Saint Ann Byzantine Catholic Church in Harrisburg, PA. Bishop Kurt presided at the Divine Liturgy, which was concelebrated by Father Michael G. Popson, Pastor; Father Frank A Hanincik; and Father Scott Boghosian.

Father Frank preached the homily and reflected on his mother's love of life and love of people. He noted this was a time of "happy sadness" where we bid farewell to the ones we love while awaiting the reality of the Resurrection. Bishop Kurt offered condolences in behalf of the Eparchy of Passaic and reflected on the

heavenly banquet of Isaiah, "On this mountain the LORD of hosts will provide for all peoples a feast of rich food and choice wines, juicy, rich food and pure, choice wines." +Dolores is now reposing and enjoying the heavenly banquet.

Also in attendance were numerous eparchial and local clergy. A Panachida was celebrated on Sunday evening at the Rothermel Funeral Home by Bishop Kurt, Father Michael Popson and Father Frank, her priest-son. Interment was at the Hershey Cemetery. *May her memory be eternal!*

2014 March for Life · Washington, DC January 22, 2014 at 12 noon · National Mall at 4th Street



- Byzantine Catholic Prayer Service
- "Compline for Life"
- Celebrated by Bishop Kurt Burnette



- Crypt Church of the National Basilica
- Tuesday, January 21st at 11 PM

Responses by Slava Men's Chorus · Everyone welcome and encouraged to attend!

BYZANTINE CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF PASSAIC · STEWARDSHIP APPEAL 2013



BYZANTINE CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF PASSAIC
STEWARDSHIP APPEAL 2013

Name: _____
Address: _____
City/State/Zip: _____
Parish: _____

ADDRESS CORRECTIONS ONLY:

Name: _____
Address: _____
Parish: _____

Please remember the Church in your will and estate plans.

Please send me more information.

I have already included the Church in my will.

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:

PLEDGE AMOUNT		6 MONTHLY PAYMENTS		
<input type="checkbox"/>	\$ 60.00	or:	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$ 10.00 per month
<input type="checkbox"/>	\$ 120.00	or:	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$ 20.00 per month
<input type="checkbox"/>	\$ 150.00	or:	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$ 25.00 per month
<input type="checkbox"/>	\$ 200.00	or:	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$ 33.33 per month
<input type="checkbox"/>	\$ 500.00	or:	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$ 83.33 per month
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other _____			

CHECK ONE: Single payment or Monthly Statements
Please make check payable to "Eparchy of Passaic" - Thank you!

Pledge Amount: \$ _____
Enclosed Payment: \$ _____
Pledge Balance: \$ _____

PLEASE COMPLETE & RETURN TO YOUR PARISH AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

If you have not received a PLEDGE CARD, you may use the one above, and return to your parish or to 445 Lackawanna Ave., Woodland Park, NJ 07424.

Eparchial Priest Retreat 2013

Bishop Peter Libasci Serves as Retreat Master



2013 Eparchial Clergy Retreat. Seated (left to right): Fathers Vasyl Chepelskyy, Conan Timoney, Joseph Erdei, Msgr. John Sekellick, Father Michael Mondik, Bishop Peter Libasci (Retreat Master), Father Edward Cimbala, Msgrs. Robert Senetsky, Nicholas Pubak, Fathers James Spera, and J. Michael Venditti. Standing (middle row, l. to r.): Fathers James Hayer, Peter Tomas, Frank Twardzik, Vincent Brady, John Cigan, Edward Semko, Michael Yurista, Michael Kerestes, Leonard Martin, Harry Untereiner, David Baratelli, Sal Pigato, James Badeaux, Edward Higgins, Michael Salnick, James Carroll, Charles Yastishock, Scott Boghossian, Robert Lozinski, Joseph Bertha, James Demko, Nicholas Kraynak, Carmen Scuderi, John Basarab, Gregory Noga, Peter Donish, Martin Vavrak, Richard Rohrer, and Ronald Hatton. Top row (left of icon): Fathers John Zeyack, Marcel Szabo, Eduard Shestak, Nicholas DeProspero; Top row (right of icon): Fathers Mykhaylo Prodanets, Jack Custer, Robert Slesinski, and Jerome Wolbert.

LONG BRANCH, NJ – The clergy of the Eparchy of Passaic once again packed their cassocks and prayer books and journeyed to the Jersey Shore for the annual Eparchial Priest Retreat at Saint Alphonso Retreat House in Long Branch, New Jersey. The retreat house is run by the Redemptorist Fathers and has long been a favorite retreat location for the eparchial priests.

Following arrival, dinner, and prayer, Father Ed Cimbala welcomed the priests to annual retreat and introduced the Retreat Master for this year, the Most Reverend Bishop Peter Libasci of the Diocese of Manchester. Bishop Peter, a familiar face to many of the clergy, enthusiastically greeted the priests and outlined his presentation for the days ahead.

The Bishop began his reflections with an explanation of some of the faith symbols on his episcopal coat of arms. Although the symbols have particular meaning to the Bishop, they can also offer inspiration and reflection to all clergy. For instance, raven is inspired by the story of Saint Elias who received nourishment and consolation from God through the raven. The Bishop went on to say that this is a reminder for him, and for each of us, that oftentimes something that may seem insignificant to others may be important to us in our faith journey. We need to watch with

the eyes of Faith for the workings of God in our life.

There is also a symbol of wheat, which reminds us of the centrality and importance of Holy Communion in our lives, as well as the pinecone which reminds us of the family and hospitality. His motto, “Arise and Walk,” is inspired from



the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 3, where Saint Peter the Apostle tells a crippled man, “I have neither silver nor gold, but what I do have I give you: in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean, arise walk.” (Acts 3:6). This emphasizes the importance of the “small but significant” we are called to do for one another.

Over the next few days of the retreat, the Bishop offered reflections during the Divine Liturgy and during the conferences to assist the

priests in the pastoral ministry as well as their personal journey of living the faith and following Christ. He reminded the priests to not be encumbered by the distractions that pull us away from freely following Our Lord. Distractions are part of life and ministry, but they turn into burdens when the cause is to turn away from effectively and joyfully following Christ. He reminded the priests that even a camel must unload its burden from time to time in order to continue to carry a heavy load. The same analogy holds true for priests, deacons and all who follow Christ. Distractions in life and ministry can become burdensome, but it is Christ Who helps carry the burden, especially through the Eucharist.

The Bishop also focused on the practical aspects of priestly ministry for the clergy and reminded them of the significance of their role at the Divine Liturgy. He pointed out the “resplendent” Vesting Prayers that the priests and bishops pray before celebrating the Divine Liturgy. Each article of vesture, he noted, is a new grace going to a deeper meaning in Christ. We put on everything of Christ and must identify ourselves totally with Christ. The vesting prayers prepare us for the “time for The Lord to act.”

His uplifting and encouraging words - both at the conferences and

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. Father Cimbala thanked Bishop Peter for his words to the presbyterate. He also acknowledged those who organized the retreat, celebrated the services, and assisted with the cantoring responsibilities.

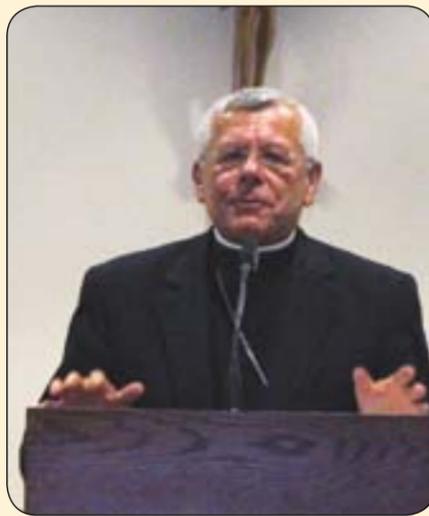
The Saint Alphonsus Chapel was used for the daily services of Morning Prayer, Divine Liturgy, the Service of Holy Anointing, and the Parastas for all departed clergy. A particularly moving event each year is the celebration of the Office of Holy Anointing. At this service, Bishop Peter, Father Edward Cimbala, Father Gregory Noga administered the sacramental Mystery of Holy Anointing to each priest for the healing of soul and body. As the priests were anointed, the celebrants prayed that all would be spiritually and physically healthy for the great demands of the priestly life.

The facilities of Saint Alphonso not only provide a place for the divine services to be celebrated in a gracious atmosphere, but also promote camaraderie and fellowship. Overlooking the vast Atlantic Ocean and featuring outdoor shrines, a

Continued on next page.



**Bishop Peter Libasci
Retreat Master**



Eparchial Priest

Photo Highlights by Father R

Retreat - Continued from previous page

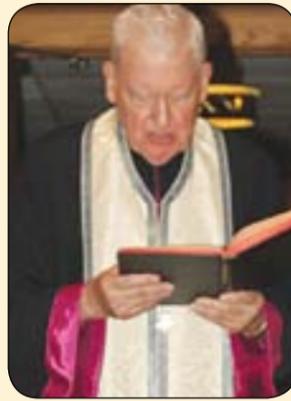
prayer garden, expansive green lawn, serene and beautifully appointed chapel and comfortable accommodations, Saint Alfonso has been a place “where God and sea come together” for our eparchial clergy, as well as for countless others over the years. The tranquility of the ocean breeze, the sounds of the breaking waves, and the quiet solitude of the atmosphere 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 ocean view and nearby 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 institutions to further one’s retreat from the cares and concerns of parochial life.

The clergy left for home on Thursday morning 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!



Father Jack Custer leads the responses.



Msgr. Nicholas Pubak



*Bishop Peter with Franciscan Friars
(l. to r): Fathers Carmen Scuderi, James Carroll, and Jerome Wolbert.*



Retreat 2013

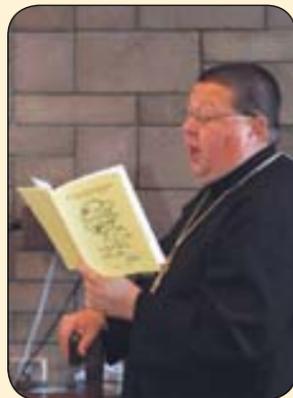
Con Hatton



Bishop Peter, Father Ed Cimbala, and Father Gregory Noga concelebrate the Office of Holy Anointing. Father Michael Mondik (at left) served as Master of Ceremonies.



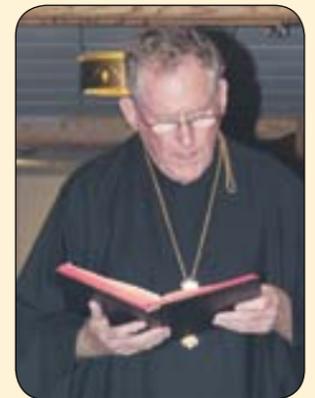
Bishop Peter at the Divine Liturgy.



Father Michael Salnicky



Father James Badeaux



Father Conan Timoney



Bishop Peter with (l. to r.): Father Ed Cimbala, Father Frank Twardzik, and Father John Basarab.



† Chaldean † Malankara † Malabar † Maronite † Melkite † Romanian † Russian † Ruthenian † Syriac † Ukrainian † Armenian †

EASTERN CATHOLIC CHURCHES



ENCOUNTER

2014 EASTERN CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF THE USA INVITE YOU TO ATTEND

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- ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS**
ENCOUNTERING CHRIST IN THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
- COME, FOLLOW ME**
ENCOUNTERING THE CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP
- WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?**
CONFESSING CHRIST IN OUR DAILY LIFE
- GO AND TEACH ALL NATIONS**
PROCLAIMING CHRIST IN OUR SOCIETY
- CASTING OUR NETS**
PREPARING OUR PARISHES FOR THE NEXT GENERATION



CLERGY DAYS: THURSDAY – FRIDAY, JAN. 30 – 31
MAIN CONFERENCE: FRIDAY – SUNDAY, JAN. 31 – FEB. 2
ORLANDO, FLORIDA

FOR MORE DETAILS AND TO REGISTER GO TO THE **ENCOUNTER 2014** WEBSITE
ENCOUNTER2014EASTERNCATHOLICCHURCHES.ORG

QUESTIONS: CONTACT@ENCOUNTER2014EASTERNCATHOLICCHURCHES.ORG

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ROOM RESERVATION:(toll free) 1.800.545.1985 • USE PROMO CODE **ENCOUNTER**

ENCOUNTER IS A UNIQUE CONFERENCE EMBRACING THE ENTIRE CHURCH FAMILY — CLERGY AND LAITY — WHO, THROUGH BAPTISM, 'SHARE IN THE PRIESTLY, PROPHETIC AND ROYAL OFFICE OF CHRIST.'



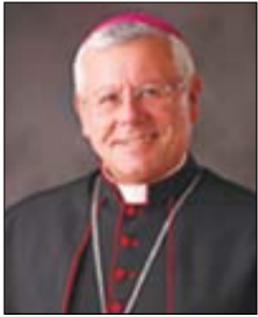
EVERYONE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE

www.Encounter2014@EasternCatholicChurches.org
Contact Person: Dr. Barbara Lutz 570-294-2910

NOTE: Hotel Reservation DEADLINE: January 6, 2014
Conference registrations will be accepted until January 17th.
After that date, please call for availability.

ENCOUNTER 2014

Speakers and Schedule



Go and Teach All Nations:

Proclaiming Christ in Our Society

Speaker: Bishop Peter Anthony Libasci

Bishop Peter was born in Queens, NY. In his youth, Bishop attended St. Margaret School and the Cathedral Preparatory Seminary, Elmhurst, NY. Bishop's higher education includes a Bachelor's degree in Philosophy from St. John's University, Jamaica, N.Y., and a Master of Divinity degree from St. Meinrad Seminary, St. Meinrad, Indiana. Ordained a priest in 1978 by

Bishop John McGann of the Diocese of Rockville Centre, he served the parish of Our Lady of Good Counsel, Inwood, NY from the time of ordination until 1999 when he named pastor of St. Therese of Lisieux parish in Montauk, NY and served until 2004. Pope John Paul II named Fr. Libasci an Honorary Prelate with the title of Monsignor in 2004. In 2007, Pope Benedict XVI appointed Msgr. Libasci auxiliary Bishop of Rockville, NY and in 2011, Pope Benedict XVI named Bishop Libasci as the tenth Bishop of Manchester, New Hampshire where he presently serves. Bishop Libasci is bi-ritual with faculties in the Ruthenian Catholic Eparchy of Passaic.

Casting Our Nets:

Preparing Our Parishes for the Next Generation

Speaker: Deacon Sabatino Carnazzo

Deacon Carnazzo graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Theology from Christendom College in 2004 and a Master's degree in Systematic Theology with an Advanced Apostolic Catechetical Diploma in 2009 from the Notre Dame Graduate School of Christendom College. He continued his studies at the Pontifical Faculty of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, DC, 2009-2010. His professional experience includes Director of Religious Education, St. Catherine of Sienna Catholic Church, VA 2005-2006 and Director of Evangelization at St. John the Beloved Catholic Church, McLean, Va 2006-2009. In 2009 he founded the Institute of Catholic Culture, a non-profit Catholic adult faith formation organization dedicated to the Church's call for a new evangelization, and has since served as the Executive Director. He has presented and coordinated numerous faith-based lectures in conjunction with the Institute. He was ordained to the Diaconate in 2011 and serves as deacon at Holy Transfiguration Melkite Greek Catholic Church. He was recently appointed as Director of Faith Formation for the Melkite Greek Catholic Eparchy of Newton. Deacon Sabatino and his wife, Linda, have four children and reside in Front Royal, Virginia.



On the Road to Emmaus:

Encountering Christ in the Sacred Scriptures

Speaker: Father Jack Custer

Father Jack Custer is a priest of the Byzantine Catholic Ruthenian Eparchy of Passaic. He is a native of Jersey City, New Jersey and a Byzantine Catholic by choice. Father earned degrees in Biblical Studies and Theology in Rome and was ordained to the priesthood in 1983. For 13 years, Father Jack served as Dean and Professor of Scripture at the Byzantine Catholic Seminary in Pittsburgh. He has written three books on

Scripture from the Byzantine Perspective, "The Old Testament," "The Holy Gospel," and "The Apostolic Writings," all published by God With Us Publications. Father also has published a book on Liturgy. Many teens and young adults fondly remember Father Jack as he has been especially active in ministry to teens in the Ruthenian Metropolia. As a pastor, Father Jack has served parishes in Connecticut and Pennsylvania and currently serves as pastor of the Byzantine Catholic communities of Long Island, St. Andrew the Apostle parish in Westbury and Resurrection parish in Smithtown.



CLERGY DAYS

Thursday, January 30

1-3 PM Registration
3:30 Prayer Service and Welcome Session I and Session III
Vespers; Dinner

Friday, January 31

7:30 AM Divine Liturgy
Breakfast
Session IV and Session V
Vendor Visits
Lunch
1:30 PM Closing

MAIN CONFERENCE

Friday, January 31

3-5 PM Registration, Vendor Visits
5:30 Prayer Service and Welcome Dinner
Session I
Compline / Confessions

Saturday, February 1

8:00 AM Morning Prayer Service
Breakfast
Session II and III
Lunch
Vendor Visits
Sessions IV and V
Dinner
Hospitality / Vendor Visits

Sunday, February 2

8:00 AM Holy Quarbarana (Liturgy) Syro-Malabar
Breakfast
Closing Session
11:30 AM Departure

Come, Follow Me:

Encountering the Call to Discipleship

Speaker: Sister Michele Yakymovich, SSMI

Sister Michele Yakymovich is a 42 year member of the Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate, a Byzantine Ukrainian Catholic Congregation. A native of Rochester, NY, Sister is a graduate of St. Josaphat's Ukrainian Catholic School and St. Joseph's Business High School. She pursued higher education and earned a Bachelor's Degree in Religious Studies and an Advanced Certificate in Religious Formation from St. Louis University. Sister was an educator in the parochial schools of the Ukrainian Metropolia, but her primary service has been in leadership and administration having served as the Provincial Superior of the American Province for 15 years from 1996 to 2011 and presently holding the position of Administrator of St. Joseph's Adult Care Home in Sloatsburg, NY. Sister Michele has served on the Executive Committee for the Stamford Eparchial Sobor in 2013 and Planning Committee for the Women's Days of Prayer for the Ukrainian Archeparchy of Philadelphia. Sister served as the keynote speaker for the national conference of the League of Ukrainian Catholics and presenter at Pilgrimage and numerous parish events.



Who Do You Say I Am?

Confessing Christ in Our Daily Life

Speaker: Father Deacon Alexander Wroblecky



Father Deacon Alexander C. Wroblecky was born in Chicago, Illinois and raised in Sacramento, California. He completed an undergraduate degree in Philosophy and in 2002 entered Holy Spirit Ukrainian Catholic Major Seminary in Ottawa, Ontario to begin formation for the eparchial priesthood. In 2006 he completed formation and graduated from the Sheptytsky Institute at St. Paul University, Ottawa, with a Master's degree in Theology. In 2009, he was ordained a deacon by Most Rev. Richard Seminack in St. Nicholas Ukrainian Cathedral in Chicago. Deacon Wroblecky served on the staff of Francis Cardinal George in the Archdiocese of Chicago in the Office for Catechesis and Youth Ministry. He has had articles published in the Pittsburgh Catholic and newspapers of the various Ukrainian Eparchies in the U.S. Presently, Deacon Alex holds the position of Secretary for Evangelization and Social Concerns for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh. He serves as deacon at St. John the Baptist Ukrainian Catholic Church on Pittsburgh's South Side. He and his wife, Jessica, have two children, Estella and Isaac, and reside in Bethel Park, PA.

ORLANDO • FLORIDA

CLERGY DAYS • JAN 30 - 31

MAIN CONFERENCE • JAN 31 - FEB 2



FAITH AND COMMUNITY ISSUES

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

The Christian Family in Today's World

THE "SENSUS FIDELIUM" - THE SUPERNATURAL SENSE OF FAITH

How does the family remain faithful in the Church? How does the family give credible witness to the teachings of the Church in its daily living out of the day-to-day issues that arise within the family structures? The answer is by carefully following the lead of the Holy Spirit in decision making. This is not as easy as it sounds. The realm of authentic teaching regarding the supernatural sense of faith is independent of the rule of majority or consensus of the faithful. The decision of the faithful must be grounded solidly in the truth. It is a known fact that, at times, the truth may be at variance with the general opinion of the public. The ear of the Church is tuned to conscience and not earthly power or gain. This is so that those most in need of justice as well as steadfast fidelity to the Gospel Message will find that lived-out Gospel message available, ready and willing to help.

Within the context of married life and the family, by virtue of their steadfast fidelity to their marriage and family commitment, they contribute uniquely and pricelessly to the discussion and understanding of what is an authentic evangelical expression of the faith. This lived-out expression is examined and judged as authentic and genuine by the authority of the pastors who simultaneously educate the faithful into a maturity in faith that promotes "mature evangelical discernment" (*Familiaris Consortio*, 1981 § 5).

An issue that arises is one of context. What is meant by *context* is the situation in which the married couple and subsequent family find themselves. According to Blessed John Paul II, the situation presents both positive and negative aspects for consideration. From the positive aspect, familial interaction among themselves and the world reveals Christ's signal operations in the world; the negative, the total refusal humanity shows toward the love God endlessly bestows.

In the same breath, John Paul II finds value in research to back the validity of the Lay observations. In his own words: "the Church values so-

ciological and statistical research, when it proves helpful in understanding the historical context in which pastoral action has to be developed and when it leads to a better understanding of the truth" (1981, Blessed John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* § 5). At the same time, His Holiness makes clear that, in and of itself, research data does not equal an expression of the sense of faith spoken of herein.

How then is the sense of faith on the part of the laity to be understood and validated? The sense of Blessed John Paul II regarding this question is answered in his understanding of the apostolic ministry. His Holiness of Blessed Memory sees the apostolic ministry as one of keeping the Church true to the authentic teachings of Jesus Christ His Truth, His Way and His Life. This authenticity is manifested in Pastoral education of the laity through the work of the Pastors. These Pastors in their instruction develop in the faithful the sense of faith and "examine and authoritatively judge the genuineness of its expressions, and educate the faithful in an ever more mature evangelical discernment" (*Familiaris Consortio* 1981 §5).

Similarly, spouses and parents of Christianity have the obligation to present to the world their experience, understanding of evangelical options toward the living out of daily life, options that are unique and irreplaceable. Their qualification in presenting these options as authentic, credible and viable witness is rooted in their unique charism to the Church namely, the Mystery of Matrimony. The context in which these options are presented becomes focal and problematic.

Familial situations will often present aspects both positive and negative to the observer. From the positive standpoint, a good marriage is "a sign of the salvation of Christ operating in the world" (*Familiaris Consortio* §6); from the negative standpoint the "bad" marriage is "a sign of the refusal that man gives to the love of God" (*Familiaris Consortio* §6).

At the time *Familiaris Consortio* was composed there was a general awareness that personal freedom and a more focused attention to the quality of interpersonal relationships within the marital state were rising in importance. Along with personal freedoms and interpersonal relationships the issues of feminine dignity and rights, responsible sexual relations and quality education for the children born from those relations were beginning to claim pride of place in the existing social value system.

No less important in the vision of Blessed John Paul II are the need for meaningful and dynamic interfamilial relationships. There is also the need for a balanced reciprocal response to the spiritual and material legitimate needs of the family; as well as the need for "the rediscovery of the ecclesial mission proper to the family and its responsibility for the building of a more just society." (1981, *Familiaris Consortio* §6)

There are, notwithstanding, signs of a negative nature, signs that point to a decaying of fundamental values, namely, a skewed concept of spousal independence to the degradation of the spousal relationship in both theory and practice. Additionally, there are misconceptions of a most grave nature with respect to the appropriate functioning of authority between parents and children. There are also the multi-faceted and very real difficulties faced by the family itself as values are taught and passed on. Add to these issues the radical increase in the number of divorce cases, abortions sterilizations, and the "appearance of a truly contraceptive mentality." (*Familiaris Consortio* §6) These issues reveal both a light and dark side to daily family experience.

What is the root of these experiences? Where does one look to find an appropriate and healing response to these radical experiences? Most importantly, where does God fit into all of this? These questions will be addressed in the next installment.

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UNDERSTANDING ICONS

Father Joseph Bertha, Ph.D.

Saints Athanasius and Cyril - Archbishops of Alexandria in Egypt Feast Day January 18th

Background

According to church history, the patriarchate of Alexandria was founded by Saint Mark the Evangelist in the year 42 AD. Ranked as one of the three ancient patriarchates together with Rome and Antioch, later Jerusalem and Constantinople were added to create a pentarchy, the five patriarchates. In the fourth century, Alexandria, because of its strategic port location on the Mediterranean, second only to Rome in size and population.

Iconography

These two early archbishops and teachers of the True Faith are alternately portrayed as monks vested in the grand schema, or as archbishops wearing the many crossed (polystaurion) sakkos. Both are shown with prominent foreheads, and indirect reference to their wisdom in theological doctrines and spirituality.

Frequently, the icons of the Archbishops are placed in the sanctuary amid other Holy Bishops surrounding the Eucharist Altar table.

They hold scrolls inscribed with their liturgical texts in the Holy of Holies, portrayed as the fullness of the priesthood of Jesus Christ.

Hagiography

Athanasius (296-373 AD) wrote *On the Incarnation* and served forty-seven years as Archbishop of Alexandria, with seventeen years being spent in five separate exiles. He proclaimed the truth of church doctrine in opposition to the heretic Arius.

Cyril from Alexandria (376 – 444 AD) began his ecclesiastical life as a monk in the Egyptian desert community of Nitra. He served 32 years as Archbishop and corrected the heretic Nestorius at the Third Ecumenical Council held in Ephesus in 431, where the title: Theotokos was solemnly conferred on the Holy Virgin Mother of God.

The theological teachings of the two archbishops Athanasius' text, *On the Incarnation* and Cyril's scripture commentaries are readily available in English on the internet. These texts reveal the profound insight the two



authors, and still inspire readers to this day.

In the Divine Liturgy we chant the following two hymns in honor of these great Churchmen:

Troparion tone 3

Shining with works of the true faith, you quenched every heresy. You were conquerors in victory and enriched everyone by your holiness. You adorned the Church with regal glory, and you justly found Christ who shows us mercy.

Kontakion tone 4

O archbishops, remarkable for your piety and devotion, heroic defenders of the Church of Christ, protect all those who beg of you: O merciful ones, through your intercession save those who honor you with fervor.

During the Divine Liturgy, the following scripture from the psalms is prayed (Prokimenon Tone 1) *My lips will speak words of wisdom, understanding will be the theme of my heart.*

Alleluia verses Psalm 36: 30, 31 *The mouth of the just utters wisdom, and his tongue will pronounce judgment and The law of his God is in his heart: his steps shall be saved from stumbling.*

In an appeal to our spirituality, as we behold these two holy men in their icon let us recall their many sufferings, witnessing and testimonies by the depiction of their many crossed vestments. Let us petition them for their heavenly intercession in our daily struggles to live the authentic Christian life in this day and age!



RESPECT LIFE FORUM

By Anna McGuire

Human Masterpieces

As I watched in shock, the same questions kept coming back to me: How can these soldiers do this? How can they act so brutally against their fellow man? I was watching a movie about Pope John Paul II before he became pope, and the scenes playing out before me were of the Nazi soldiers' actions during that horrific period in history.

Throughout the movie, I kept coming back to this conclusion: What it means to be human had been forgotten. How could one person act with such cold-hearted, inhumane cruelty towards another person? Could it be that they no longer thought of the recipients of their violence as people, but were viewing them in a detached manner as something less-than-human, thus undeserving of respect?

At one point, Karol (who later became Pope John Paul II) learns the fundamental lesson that the response to evil must be love. It would be tempting to be blinded by anger towards those responsible for such atrocities, but this would only continue the cycle of destruction. Only love can triumph over evil. Only Truth can win the victory.

And the truth is that even those who have committed the worst crimes were created in the image and likeness of God.

Each and every person possesses intrinsic dignity that demands our reverence. Yet how often are we inclined to view the people placed before us as irrelevant and in no way connected to us? Do we get caught up in how they might look different from us, or that they hold an opposing view? Do we forget the marvel that is each person?

By now, we are quite familiar with Pope Francis' expressions of love towards those so often marginalized by society. Yet we continue to be moved by images and stories of his simple embrace of them. Why does it resonate so clearly in our hearts? Could it be that we recognize the truth in his actions – a truth that speaks to us of each person's beauty, including our own?

Each of the people whose faces have become familiar to us in recent months has a story in which they play the leading role. Each has a name. Dominic Gondreau, the American boy with cerebral palsy, and Vinicio Riva, who has neurofibromatosis, are two of those through whom Pope

Francis has taught us the tender compassion due to our fellow man. What it means to be human is not defined by our abilities, age or condition of dependency. We are each "wonderfully made" (Ps 139:14). We are each held in existence by God, who is Love.

Let us ask for the grace to be aware that "even the weakest and most vulnerable, the sick, the old, the unborn and the poor, are masterpieces of God's creation, made in his own image, destined to live for ever, and deserving of the utmost reverence and respect."

For a visual reminder of the lessons in love our Holy Father is teaching us, join me in viewing a one-minute video based on this quote from Pope Francis' Day for Life Greeting. Please search for "Open Your Hearts to Life" on the usccb YouTube channel.

[Anne McGuire is Special Projects Coordinator for the Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. For more information on the bishops' pro-life activities, please visit www.usccb.org/prolife.]





SEASONAL REFLECTIONS

Msgr. John T. Sekellick, JCL

TIME • A New Year's Reflection

"Happy New Year!" As 2013 passes and the New Year of 2014 on the civil calendar begins, we hear and exchange this cheerful greeting extending best wishes for good health, happiness and prosperity to one and all. The passing of one year into the next is an unavoidable, interminable cycle of transition marking what we know as "time." Time as we understand and experience it is a measure of movement forward marked by seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months and years which become centuries and millennia. Time only goes forward; we cannot turn back the pages of a calendar or return to the day before.

Time began with the creation of our world marked in six days as recorded in the Book of Genesis with God resting on the seventh day. At the time of the Fall of our first parents, Adam and Eve, God promised that in time He would send a Redeemer to restore the state of our human nature to its pristine glory. That moment came after many centuries of expectation on the part of the Chosen People with the birth of God's Son and our Lord, Jesus.

From the Book of Ecclesiastes in the Hebrew Scriptures, we gain an understanding of time in

a uniquely spiritual dimension.: "There is an appointed time for everything and a time for every affair under the heavens." (Ecclesiastes 3:1) Its author has us look forward to the lasting reward of a life lived in conformity with God's precepts. This becomes meaningful in the light of Christ's teaching concerning life in eternity where there is no time: "This is the will of My Father Who sent Me, that whoever beholds the Son and believes in Him shall have *everlasting* life, and I will raise him up on the last day." (John 6:40)

"No better use of time can be made than our focus on gaining that everlasting life..."

No better use of time can be made than our focus on gaining that everlasting life: "I recognized that there is nothing better than to be glad and to do well during life." (Ecclesiastes 3:12) Our Lord emphasizes this when he asks that soul-stirring question, "What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world, but suffer the loss of his own soul? Or, what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26)

From our human perspective in the words of an unknown author: "Time is an equal opportunity employer. Each human being has exactly the same number of hours and minutes every day. Rich people can't buy more time. Scientists can't invent new minutes. You can't save time to spend on another day. Even so, time is amazingly fair and forgiving. No matter how much time you've wasted in the past, you still have an entire tomorrow."

All the same, sooner or later, our time, known only to God, comes to an end in this existence. As we begin this New Year, may our use of time be to our spiritual benefit always striving towards the goal of everlasting life in heaven forever.



Eparchial Priest Speaks at ASEES

Father Slesinski at 45th Annual Convention in Boston

BOSTON, MA – The Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies recently held its 45th Annual Convention at the Marriott Copley Place Hotel in Boston, Massachusetts, over November 21–24, 2013.

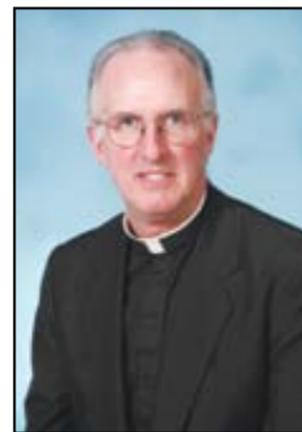
The general theme of this year's convention was "Revolution." With this topic in mind, Father Robert F. Slesinski, Ph.D., a priest and independent scholar of the Eparchy of Passaic, organized a panel under the title of "Revolution of the Spirit in

Russian Émigré Thought."

Participants on the panel included Bernice Rosenthal, Ph.D., of Fordham University, who served as the chair of the panel; Kristi Groberg, Ph.D., of North Dakota State University, who presented a paper on "Skobtsova's Revolution of the Spirit: Monasticism in the World;" Father Johannes M. Oravec, OSB, Ph.D., of Saints Cyril and Methodius Byzantine Catholic Seminary, whose paper was entitled "A Quiet Revolution: A Shift in the Trinitar-

ian Ontological Perspective at the Hands of P. Florensky, S. Bulgakov, and L. Karsavin;" Father Slesinski himself, who gave a paper entitled "Words of Fire: Bulgakov's Daring Pneumatology;" and finally Judith Kornblatt, Ph.D., of the University of Wisconsin, who served as the discussant of the panelists' papers.

An engaged, interactive discussion of the contributions ensued with the general public attending the panel.



Reverend Father Robert Slesinski, PhD



LETTERS FROM THE EDITOR

Compiled by Father James Hayer, Editor

A New Year Resolution for Everyday

I got up early one morning and rushed right into the day. *I had so much to accomplish that I didn't have time to pray.*

Problems just tumbled about me, and heavier came each task. *"Why doesn't God help me?" I wondered. He answered, "Because you didn't ask."*

I wanted to see joy and beauty, but the day became grey and bleak. *I wondered, "Why didn't God show me?" He said, "Because you didn't seek."*

I woke up early this morning, and paused before entering the day. *I had so much to accomplish that I HAD to take time to pray!*

This year, make it your New Year's resolution to spend more time in prayer. "Ask and you shall receive, seek and you will find, know and it will be opened to you." (Matthew 7)

Many thanks to an Unknown Author for sharing this insightful poem!

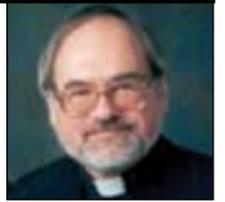


If you have an inspiring story or article you wish to share you may send it to Father James at:
"Letters from the Editor"
c/o: Saint Mary Church,
695 N. Main St., Wilkes-Barre, PA
18705. or E-Mail him at
EasternCatholicLife@verizon.net.



THE BYZANTINE LITURGY

By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD



The Future of Communion

Saint Maximus the Confessor calls Communion, “the climax of everything ... which transforms into itself and renders similar to the causal good by grace and participation those who worthily share in it.” (*The Church's Mystagogy* 21) I have written many articles now on Communion because it is the “climax” of the Liturgy, the mystery of common union with God and through God, with all the people. It is the reason why we go to church. At the same time, it is the aspect of the Liturgy that now deserves our fullest attention as a priority. It is center of our faith, but sometimes it seems we just consider it a token reward for making the effort to attend the Liturgy and listen to the sermon.

Because we are a minority Church dwelling in a sea of churches different from us and in a culture that is often hostile to faith, we sometimes feel we have to make accommodations to keep people coming, and to give money to support the institution. This is important, of course, because we need an undergirding and supportive organization, which requires worldly resources, but so often it leads to a spirit of “minimalism.” “Let’s do just enough to keep people from leaving,” we say, and if we pursue such a policy, we receive what we aim for - the minimum.

To build a strong Church, we need a solid spirituality established on life in Christ. In order to achieve this, we have a great treasure, the millennial tradition of faith as expressed through Eastern theology based on Christ, the Savior and Redeemer and God of all. This tradition speaks of Holy Communion, “So perfect is this mystery, so far does it excel every other sacred rite that it leads to the very summit of good things. Here is the final goal of every human endeavor. For in it we obtain God himself, and God is united with us in the most perfect union.” (Nicholas Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ IV*, 10.26) Yet it is Communion that is so often the target of minimalism and mere practicality. How can we restore its priority?

Any liturgical action should signify what it means. The meaning of Communion is “common union.” It brings us into a real unity with God in the sharing of His Body and Blood. It also brings us into unity with all those who partake of the same mystery. That is why the disunity that exists between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches is espe-

cially tragic. How we celebrate the Eucharist, then, should express unity as much as possible.

The custom in the Byzantine tradition is to receive Communion at one Liturgy from one altar from one loaf of bread called a Lamb (in Slavonic “ahnec.”) This is actually an apostolic tradition, going back to the Bible itself, where Saint Paul instructed us, “The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because the loaf of bread is one, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.” (1 Corinthians 10:16-17) Because it is a tradition from the be-

ginning of the Church, the Western Church also used to use one loaf for one Liturgy, and broke the one loaf into as many portions as needed for Communion to the people. This tradition has been maintained in the Orthodox Church, but because the Western Church used unleavened bread, it eventually became more “practical” to bake individual wafers for distribution. It was also the loss of an ideal, as the Liturgy became more and more an individual and personal share in a sacrament, rather than a community action.

When we Byzantine Catholics made a union with the See of Rome, some priests saw the convenience of individual wafers, and some, a very small number, even wanted to introduce the use of unleavened bread. This did not happen, but the custom of using one loaf for Communion was compromised, and individual squares of bread were prepared ahead of time. It would certainly be more authentic to restore the ancient practice, so that Communion could better signify unity, but to cut the Lamb (ahnec) for Communion might be seen as taking too much time. Communion at one Liturgy, though, should at least be from one loaf for the sake of the sign value.

There are other ways in which Communion signifies unity. Communion also brings about a unity and an equality among all those who receive. Truly, if each of us becomes a temple for the Bread of Life, for the Body and Blood of the Lord within us, how can anyone, rich or poor, strong or weak, old or young, even little children, man or woman, cleric or lay person, be of more dignity than another. Saint John Chrys-

ostom understood this very well and he preached, “All things are equal between us and you, even to the very chief of our blessings. I (as bishop) do not partake of the holy Table with greater abundance and you with less, but both equally participate of the same The saving life that sustains our souls is given with equal honor to both. I do not indeed partake of one Lamb and you of another, but we partake of the same We are all alike brethren of Christ, we have all things in common.” (Homily 4 on 2 Thessalonians)

Today Holy Communion has become somewhat clericalized.

“It is center of our faith, but sometimes it seems we just consider it a token reward...”

Priests and deacons receive it differently from the rest of the faithful. Many follow the principle that the altar area is reserved for clergy, and even those that are not ordained but serve at the Holy Table are chased from the altar at the time of Communion. In the churches there has always been a division between the altar area and the nave, where the people attend.

There was a kind of fence or wall between the two. The original purpose of this was practical, to keep order within the service, so that the priests and deacons had space to perform their ministry. In the early part of the second millennium, some Old Testament ideas were re-introduced,

and the altar area became a “Holy of Holies,” which only the priest, deacons, and sub-deacons, for the sake of serving, were allowed to enter. Everyone else, then, received Communion outside the altar. However, as we see from Saint John Chrysostom, in Communion, everyone is equal, for we all have Christ dwelling within us. The Orthodox Church keeps a memory of this principle, for the faithful receive Communion right at the Royal Doors of the icon screen, as if they had the right to enter.

Our Lord prayed at the Last Supper, “may all be one, as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.” (John 17:21) This should not be heard as referring only to the union of churches, but to the union of all believers among themselves. Communion is the moment of the Divine Liturgy when unity is proclaimed. We may not be able to restore all the ancient practices, but we should at least try, as much as possible, to practice that unity. We should, at least, not ask those who are considered worthy to serve at the altar, to leave for Communion. Young children who are baptized should not be held back from Communion. All the faithful, from the priest to the cantors and choir should receive together. It would be the beginning to make Holy Communion signify what it means.

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SEMINARIAN REFLECTIONS

Seminararian Lewis Rabayda

A New Year is a New Chance to Become a Dedicated Disciple

Many people find that a new year can bring a fresh start to different aspects of their lives. They choose to lose weight, become more organized, or start that project they have been waiting years to accomplish. But what project or what goal is more important than to better understand our relationship with God and how our actions or inactions affect that relationship? What better project to undertake, than to rebuild the structures of our mind and heart with the Word and Grace of God?

The seminary experience is a microcosm of the Christian life. In the absence of the physical Christ, it is a way to teach and form disciples—a disciple being one who completely gives their life and personal will to follow the way that Jesus has given us. Our parishes, too, are places where one can learn how to follow Jesus. They are certainly the communities where the Christian life should be lived to its fullest.

But, in following Jesus and in becoming His disciples, several earth-shattering processes need to take place. We need to realize the gravity of our decisions, how they really affect the lives of others and our self. We need to accept how much God is calling us to give of ourselves. We need to see our self as others see us, notice how we affect them, and then realize how much God loves us and wants to use us to touch the lives of others. Depending on our personality and our upbringing, as well as the events of our lives and our level of devotion, these processes may be very uncomfortable. And by very uncomfortable, I mean that if we strive to allow God to replace our will with His

will, then we may not even recognize ourselves. We may realize that our perception of our actions is not the objective truth of how our actions affect others. We may even find that our whole life has been a maze of turmoil and confusion. We may find that we are not the Christians that we thought we were.

But, to live the Christian life is to live against the grain; to confound the social norms of society. This has been an important struggle for the people of God throughout all of history: not to live as the world suggests, but to live as Christ commands.

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Saint John the Evangelist has an ongoing theme throughout his New Testament works, which says that we are to live *in* the world, but not be *of* the world.

The world forms us to its liking, and if we are not vigilant, then we may find that our lives, even though we may seem to be “good Christians,” in no real way conforms to the deep conversion that Jesus is asking us to make. We may find that true sacrifice of self is not just some romantic and dramatic story in a book, but that sacrifice takes real sweat, pain, anguish, day-by-day and moment-by-moment struggle. And ultimately, this sacrifice will produce a real joy, far greater than those written about in the greatest books or seen in the

greatest films. This is the joy of winning the greatest prize ever attainable—to be one with God.

During our daily lives, we may not always be thinking about every action before we do it—who can live like this? We probably don’t stop and ask ourselves how an action we perform may or may not be in line with the teachings of the Church. We often act based on our emotional responses to the situations of our lives without giving it much thought or “premeditation.” But by reading Scripture and reflecting on every action of our day, we may find that the things we did, the things we said, and the thoughts we had in no way were done with the example of love, forgiveness, and patience that Christ showed to us. If we continue in this act of personal reflection, then slowly, but surely, the grace of God will allow us to recognize our shortcomings, correct our deficiencies, and live joyful lives characterized by doing the will of God.

We are each called to a deep conversion. Jesus is not asking us to spray air freshener on the stench of sin, or to put on a new coat of paint on a decayed façade, rather, He asks us to rebuild the structure of our mind and heart into something that is much more glorious, much more holy, and worthy of the kingdom of heaven. Now that we have experienced the joy of Christmas, let us strive to continue to live in this state of grace. Through reflection and a meditative reading of Scripture, let us continue to allow God to rebuild, reshape, and reform who we are into who God wants us to be—disciples of Jesus Christ.

Upcoming Events for January

Eparchial and Parish Events

*Christ is Baptized!
In the Jordan!*

JANUARY

1 Happy New Year!
Grant us, O Lord, a year of Grace!

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| 1 | Solemn Holy Day
<i>Circumcision of Our Lord
Feast of St. Basil the Great
CHANCERY CLOSED</i> |
| 5 | Sunday Before Theophany |
| 6 | Theophany of Our Lord
Holy day of Obligation
Great Sanctification of Water
<i>CHANCERY CLOSED</i> |
| 12 | Sunday of After Theophany
River Blessing - Wyoming Valley |
| 20 | Martin Luther Kind Day
<i>CHANCERY CLOSED</i> |
| 21-22 | March for Life activities
Washington, DC |
| 30 | Simple Holy Day
Three Holy Hierarchs |