



EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

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The Power of the Word of God

PRESBYTERAL DAYS 2014 FOCUSES ON SCRIPTURE



Bishop Kurt with the clergy following the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy at Patronage Church in Baltimore at Presbyteral Days 2014.

Front row (l. to r.) are: Fathers Peter Tomas, Nicholas DeProspero, Alex Shuter, Gary Mensinger, Michael Salnicky, Charles Yastishock, Francis Gera (retired), Carmen Scuderi. Middle rows (l. to r.): Fathers Michael Kerestes, Peter Donish, Richard Rohrer, Mykhaylo Prodanets, Michael Krulak, John Cigan, James Badeaux, Michael Yurista, Robert Wisniewski, Joseph Bertha, Marcel Szabo, Vasyl Chepelskyy, Edward Semko, Martin Vavrak, Jerome Wolbert, Eduard Shestak, Ronald Hatton, Vincent Brady, Msgr. Robert Senetsky, Father Sal Pignato, Deacon Steven Galuschik, and Father James Carroll, Bishop Kurt, Fathers Robert Hospodar, Michael Mondik, Conan Timoney, Msgr. John Sekellick, Fathers Robert Lozinski, John Zeyack, James Spera, Gregory Noga, Harry Untereiner, Jody Baran, Edward Cimbala, Peter Hosak, Gregory Hosler, Nicholas Kraynak, and Robert Evancho. Back row (l. to r.): Fathers Scott Boghossian, Jack Custer, Edward Higgins, John Basarab, Frank Twardzik, Archpriest James Hayer, and Altar Servers Samuel Crouch, Theodore Guba, and Andrew Wood.

Following a hiatus of one year, the annual Presbyteral Day gathering resumed this year at a new location, with a new agenda, and under the guidance of a new bishop. In the company of their new Chief Shepherd, Bishop Kurt, the presbyters of the Eparchy of Passaic traveled to the *Retreat and Conference Center at Bon Secours* in Marriottsville, MD from Monday, April 28 through Thursday, May 1, 2014, for a time of prayer and reflection on parish ministry.

The *Retreat and Conference Center at Bon Secours* is a ministry of the Sisters of Bon Secours. Since their religious order officially formed in 1824, the Sisters have strived to provide “good help” (*bon secours*) to those in need, and compassionate care and concern for all people. This was an appropriate setting for the Presbyteral Days gathering of 2014.

The focus, this year, was on pastoral ministry with an emphasis on Scripture. Bishop Kurt noted that, “this gathering will be pastoral in nature. We were all ordained to be pastors, but find ourselves administrators, fundraisers, and repairmen instead. This meeting is not our retreat, which focuses on individual spirituality, but I hope it will be a time to recommit to pastoral work and to hear fresh ideas to reinvigorate our ministry.” With this vision in mind, the Bishop asked several eparchial clergy to offer insights and reflections on Sacred Scripture and the transformation power of the Word of God as proclaimed in the parish and preached from the pulpit.

Father Scott Boghossian began the series of conferences with a presentation entitled, “Top Dead Center” at which he gave an overview of the power of scripture in the personal and parish life of a priest. Citing the teachings of Church Fathers such as Saint Augustine, Saint Jerome, and Saint Ambrose,

Father Scott emphasized how the Early Church understood the transforming power of the Word of God. For them, reading the Holy Scriptures was not just a source of knowledge, but also a source of grace. There was an understanding of the presence of God in Sacred Scripture. That is why, Father Scott said, the Holy Scriptures are a powerful source in combating the power of evil in the spiritual warfare in which we find ourselves, both as priests and as faithful Christians.

Next, Father Jim Badeaux spoke on the Books of Leviticus, Hebrews and Apocalypse in a conference entitled, “Sacrifice – Moses to the End of Time.” In his presentation, Father Badeaux explained the temple worship practices of the early Christians and how rubrics and rules found in the Book of Leviticus can apply to modern liturgy and the priesthood. He also noted how the liturgy of the Temple experienced a continuity and replacement by the liturgical practices of the early Church.

Father Pete Hosak offered pastoral insights in a presentation entitled, “Obsessed with the Good News; The Letters of Saint Paul.” Father Hosak expanded on St. Paul’s frequent use of athletic metaphors in his preaching of the Good News. In this same spirit, Father Hosak also cited similar motivational examples of football legend, Coach Vince Lombardi. Like Saint Paul, Coach Lombardi helped his players understand the defining moments in their lives, and act upon them. This, Father Hosak explained, is the role of the parish priest, as well, especially through the Sunday homily. He then went on to explain the importance of preaching, and outlined the main components of a homily as it relates to spreading the Word of God.

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I Lift up My Eyes...

The Pastoral Reflections of Bishop Kurt



Loving Kindness Surrounds the Man

In one of his very personal psalms, King David describes the “loving kindness” that surrounds those who hope in the Lord. How can you experience this “loving kindness”? This psalm lays out a complete program for peace of mind and success in life. He starts by saying, “Blessed are those whose sins are forgiven.” He starts by telling us to clean up our own relationship with God. “Blessed is he to whom the Lord imputes no evil, and in whose speech there is no guile.” How can we have our sins forgiven? There is already a clue in these opening verses, forgiveness is available to people who tell the truth, “in whose speech there is no guile.” Some say that every sin contains a lie. As long as we nurture the lie, like a house pet, the sin cannot leave; forgiveness is unavailable. The lie is like a guard dog that keeps forgiveness and peace from entering our soul.

David always opens up his soul to us; he never hides anything about himself. He goes on to describe his own life when he clung to sin, and fed the lie: “As long as I kept silent, my body wasted away from my groaning all the day. Day and night, your hand was heavy upon me. I twisted in pain as if a thorn were thrust in me.” Was there ever a writer more honest with us, more revealing of his own faults? What a great blessing for all of us that King David told us his inmost secrets. After describing the misery of living with sin, he goes on to tell us how he found release: “Then I confessed my sin and hid not my wickedness. I said, ‘I will confess my sin to the Lord against myself,’ and you forgave my heart’s impiety.” Anyone who tries to maintain a friendship with God knows the misery of unconfessed sin. It really is like a thorn thrust into us. We are adaptable creatures; we can live with a thorn in us for many years; but it is still a constant irritation until it is removed.

I promised a program not only for peace of mind, but also success in life. Only after King David cleans up his own friendship with God does he begin to talk about his problems with other people. And he did have problems with other people! He was homeless for a long time while his enemies hunted for him with a plan to kill him. And again, he was homeless as an old man when his own son was trying to kill him. We might complain about what other people are doing to us, but we don’t often have problems of that magnitude. David colorfully describes his problems like being caught “in the rush of flood waters.” What is his solution? Well, after first confessing his own sins, he then relies on God to deal with his enemies. “You are my shelter from the trouble that presses in on me, my joy, to save me from those who besiege me.”

David knows from his own life experience that when he maintains his own friendship with God, that God will deal with the evil of others. David kept himself free from sin; he never attacked the anointed king even though the king was attacking him. Furthermore, David did not spend his time searching for sin in other people, or confessing other people’s sins—what the Holy Father calls “the dark joy of gossip”. Is there any sin more common in our churches, and more destructive than gossip? What a blessing to have a pastoral pope who reminds us about the sin of gossip. No vice does more to keep us in our sins than searching out the faults of others. It was a key ingredient of original sin—neither Adam nor Eve would confess sin, but they both tried to distract God himself with gossip about someone else’s sin.

David goes on to answer a question we all ask, if God is protecting us, why does he let these things happen in the first place? God himself answers this question—although he promises us ultimate protection from our enemies, he doesn’t promise us a life without hardship. In fact, he goes on to tell us that hardship is a school of virtue, and God is the schoolmaster. “I will instruct you and teach you where to go; I will keep my eye on you.” When we learn virtue from hardship—patience, self-control, charity, courage—hardship is a blessing. But sometimes we make hardship an occasion for anger, revenge, impiety, drunkenness, drug abuse, swearing, gossip, unfaithfulness, cynicism, and finally bitterness. God has words for that too, “Be not like a horse or a mule that lack understanding: whose jaw must be curbed with bit and rein, else they will not follow you.” When we accept correction, life is easier. When we reject it, the pain continues or gets worse.

Finally, King David sums up his program for happiness in a single proverb, a proverb that I used to include at the end of all my emails, “Many are the ills that befall the sinner; but loving kindness surrounds the man who hopes in the Lord.” Don’t you want more from life than just survival? Don’t you want to say to God, “You are my joy!” The plan is simple: maintain your friendship with the best friend of all. Confess your own sins and not someone else’s, trust God with your problems, and accept correction. You will find yourself telling God, “You are my shelter...my joy!”

[The quotes from Psalm 31(32) are from “The Septuagint Psalms” published by Alleluia Press.]



Ever Thought about being a Deacon?

New Deacon Class to begin in June, 2015

Deacons represent a great and visible sign of the working of the Holy Spirit through a life of service in the Church.

A new Deacon Formation Class will be forming in June, 2015.

If you want to explore the possibility of serving God and your Eparchy as a Byzantine Catholic Deacon, contact:

*Deacon Nicholas Daddona at
516-457-5617 or
deaconnick88@gmail.com*

Byzantine Catholic Family Day · Jackson, New Jersey

GO BIG GO
Six Flags
GREAT ADVENTURE & SAFARI

SixFlags HURRICANE HARBOR

WORLD RECORD DROP!

BIG WAVE COASTER

GREEN LANTERN

SAFARI OFF ROAD ADVENTURE

GCU

**SCHEDULE OF EVENTS FOR
BYZANTINE CATHOLIC FAMILY DAY**
Six Flags Great Adventure, Jackson, NJ
Sunday, June 22, 2014

GCU is offering **prepaid**, discounted tickets for our group outing. **Deadline to purchase discounted tickets is Monday, June 2, 2014.** To order, please complete the order form and remit with payment prior to the due date.

Prices are as follows:

| | |
|----------------------------------------|------|
| Ride-All-Day Tickets (ages 3+) | \$30 |
| Lunch Buffet (ages 3+) | \$14 |
| Pre-paid, Discounted Parking Pass..... | \$15 |

(Parking is \$25 at the gate.)

The tentative schedule for the day is as follows:

| | |
|-----------------|------------------------------------------------|
| 10:30 a.m. | Park Opens |
| 12:00-2:00 p.m. | 2 hour Catered Lunch (optional) |
| 3:00 p.m. | Bingo/Games for Adults with Prizes |
| 4:00 p.m. | Prayer Service <i>(Celebrant: Bishop KURT)</i> |
| 9:00 p.m. | Park Closes |

Finalized schedule of events will be sent with your tickets 2 weeks prior to the event.

We look forward to seeing you there!

sixflags.com

Due to maintenance circumstances, certain rides, shows and attractions (including new rides, shows and attractions) may not be open to the public. SIX FLAGS: TM & © 2014 Six Flags Theme Parks Inc. GREEN LANTERN: TM & © DC Comics. (s14)

Sunday, June 22, 2014 · Six Flags Great Adventure

DEADLINE FOR TICKET ORDERS IS MONDAY, June 2, 2014

| | | <i>Tickets</i> | <i>Amount</i> | <i>Check</i> |
|----------------------------------------------------|----------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| | | <i>Ordered</i> | <i>Enclosed</i> | <i>Number(s)</i> |
| RIDE ALL DAY TICKETS | \$30 ea. | | | |
| (Ages 3+) | | | | |
| Ages 2 & under do not require an admission ticket. | | | | |
| LUNCHEON BUFFET (Ages 3+) | \$14 ea. | | | |
| PRE-PAID, DISCOUNTED PARKING | \$15 ea. | | | |
| Regular price parking is \$25 at the gate. | | | | |

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED: _____

MAIL TO: Name _____ Address _____
Phone: _____ email: _____

Make Checks Payable to: GCU Six Flags, and remit to : 5400 Tuscarawas Road, Beaver, PA 15009

*No tickets without prepayment; no exchanges or refunds at the park; no discounted tickets available at the park.
Questions? Call Christie Petty at 1-724-495-3400 x209*

PEOPLE YOU KNOW

AROUND THE EPARCHY



OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP PARISH VIRGINIA BEACH, VA YOUNG PARISHIONERS HONORED

The ladies of the Our Lady of Perpetual Help Byzantine Catholic Church, Virginia Beach, Virginia, held a tea party in honor of the young ladies of the parish for all the help they provide throughout the year. Everyone gathered at the home of Kathleen Rausch.

The festivities were hosted by Kathleen Rausch, Kathryn Reiter, and Patricia Norman. Those enjoying an afternoon of traditional tea

party cuisine and fellowship as pictured above were Francesca Reimer, Sonya Lewis, Lucia Reimer, Kira Lewis, Katherine Reiter, Maureen Bernard, Adria Lewis, and Kathleen Rausch. Honorees unable to attend were Eileen Pak, Mary Pak, Megan Sass, and Sarah Sass. Also in attendance but not pictured were Kathleen Zavada, Jacqueline Bassalla, Patricia Norman, and Celeste Lewis. OLPH is served by Father Alex Shuter.

SAINT ANDREW THE APOSTLE CHURCH WESTBURY, NY

PARISHIONER ASSIST FOOD BANK

As part of the Lenten parish outreach, parishioners of Saint Andrew the Apostle, Byzantine Catholic Church in Westbury, NY participated in a Meal in a Bag Project.

Before the celebration of Vespers on Forgiveness Sunday, empty gift bags were made available for willing volunteers. Each bag contained a list of the requested food items: a pasta, jar of sauce, grated cheese and a box of cookies to be

returned to the parish for distribution.

Within two weeks Deacon Nicholas Daddona had collected enough meal bags to feed almost four dozen families. The amount of food donated helped to restock the food bank of a local Roman Catholic Church which was in serious need of supplies. Saint Andrew Parish is served by Father Jack Custer with the assistance of Deacon Nicholas Daddona.



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50
Years
an
Eparchy

Anniversary Book Notice

The publication of our commemorative book, “*50 Years an Eparchy: Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic 1963-2013*” is still in progress.

We kindly ask patience for all those anticipating a copy of this publication.



Let Your Soul Rejoice In The Lord



2014 Altar Server Congress



July 27th - July 30th

Carpathian Village • Canadensis, PA

Come and experience a wonderful fun-filled event with fellow altar servers (ages 7-17) from across the Eparchy of Passaic.

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

Register by July 1st

www.eparchyofpassaic.com

For questions Contact Deacon Stephen Russo

DcnStephen@gmail.com



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ByzanTeen

July 10-13
Rally
2014

Mount St. Mary's University,
Emmitsburg, MD

ages
13-18

Cost per
participant
is \$300.00

Nationally Recognized Speakers:

Leah Darrow
Rick Soldinie

Featuring the Band:

L'Angélu

Renew your mind and soul to tackle
the challenges of today's world. Share
your experience and faith with people
just like you. Rally for the Transfigu-
ration of yourself into the Life of
Christ!

Registration Deadline is June 16, 2014
To register, or for additional information, visit

www.Byzanteen.com

Bishop Kurt Makes Whirlwind Tour of Florida Parishes

by Father Michael J Sopoliga



Bishop Kurt addresses the members of Our Lady of the Sign Church in Coconut Creek, where Father Michael Kane is Pastor.



Bishop Kurt blessed the Transcarpathia Icon newly-installed in Saints Cyril and Methodius Church where Father Michael Sopoliga is Pastor. Servers Alexander Faline, Alexander Stiegler, Nicolas Faline and Caleb Noelke look on.



Bishop Kurt with Father Sal Pignato (L), and Father Vincent Brady(R) at Holy Dormition Byzantine Catholic Church, Ormond Beach, FL.

Fresh from his Episcopal Ordination on December 4, 2013, the new Eparch of Passaic, Bishop Kurt Burnette, attended the Eastern Catholic Church Encounter Weekend in Orlando, FL from January 30th thru February 2, 2014. In the lobby of the Renaissance Air-

West Coast and on Wednesday visited the northern most parish in the state Saint Ann in New Port Richey where he celebrated the Divine Liturgy with enthusiastic parishioners. The pastor, Father Michael Krulak, and past administrator Father Timothy Clegg, concelebrating.

the parishioners of Our Lady of the Sign church in Coconut Creek FL near Fort Lauderdale, where Father Michael Kane is pastor.

Bishop Kurt completed his Florida parish visitations at Saint Basil Byzantine Catholic Church in Miami FL, where the late Father +Peter Lickman served as pastor for over four decades. He departed the

state Sunday afternoon returning to the snowy Northeast. The Florida parishes were thrilled that the new Bishop was able to visit all the parishes in Florida only a month into his episcopacy, and were honored that they were some of the first parishes of the eparchy to have the Chief Shepherd in their midst.



Bishop Kurt greets Anna May Kraynyak, the sister of the late Father +Basil Kraynyak.

port Hotel, Bishop Kurt got together with the priests of the Southern Syncellate to make his plans for the parish visitations. Bishop Kurt was not surprised when he found out that most parishes are at least 150 miles apart from one another and commented: "That's OK, parishes in the Phoenix Eparchy are 250 miles apart!" The bishop had to also get used to the geography of the East Coast reminding himself that the ocean was to the East, not to the West as it is in California!

On Sunday, February 2, 2014, Bishop Kurt first visited the Orlando parish of Saint Nicholas in Central Florida, where Father Sal Pignato is pastor.

The bishop then headed to the

Having previously visited St. Petersburg's parish of St. Therese where Father Robert Evancho is pastor, Bishop Kurt headed south to the parish of All Saints about 75 miles south of St. Petersburg in North Fort Myers. It was then back to the East Coast on Thursday, February 6th where Bishop Kurt's tour continued as he visited Holy Dormition parish in Ormond Beach, just north of Daytona Beach, which is served by Father Sal Pignato with the assistance of Father Vincent Brady. There, the Bishop celebrated the Paraklesis Service with the faithful who met afterwards for coffee and cake, and provided snacks for his trip south. Bishop Kurt remarked to Father Vincent as he departed: "I really enjoyed myself with your people!"

Next, Bishop Kurt made the 175-mile trip to the parish of Saints Cyril and Methodius Parish in Fort Pierce, where Father Michael J. Sopoliga is pastor. The Bishop celebrated the Divine Liturgy on Friday at 7PM, the highlight being the blessing of the Transcarpathia Theotokos Icon which was a gift to the parish by the Bishop. An informal *greet and meet* followed in the parish hall. Bishop Kurt was duly impressed with the responses at the Divine Liturgy and remarked that he had not heard such joyful singing since he visited the old country!

After a restful night on Saturday February 8th, Bishop Kurt made his way south once again to celebrate the 5:00PM Divine Liturgy with

Oriente Lumen XVIII Conference
 "Ecumenical Dimensions of Marriage"
 June 23-26, 2014
 Washington, DC



The speakers who will discuss the conference theme, covering canonical and pastoral issues, mixed couples and the married priesthood, will include:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Metropolitan Kallistos of Diokleia | Archimandrite Robert Taft, SJ |
| Archpriest Peter Galadza | Fr. Patrick Viscuso |
| Fr. John Beal | Sr. Vassa Larin |
| Mr. & Mrs. Solon Patterson | Fr. Ron Roberson, Moderator |

For more information and to register, go to www.olconference.com and select Future Conferences. Or call 703-691-8862.

Eparchial Presbyteral Days

Continued from Page One.

“Where Eagles Dare: The Gospel of Saint John” was the topic presented by Father James Spera. As a priest involved in campus ministry for many years, Father Spera recommended the Gospel of Saint John as a source of reading for new Christians, as well as a source of sound theology for all pastors. The Gospel of Saint John does not dwell on miracles and parables to the same degree as do the other Evangelists, he noted. Instead, it emphasizes the personal encounter with Our Lord that we are each invited to have. That is why this Saint John’s Gospel has a universal appeal and is a “Gospel for all readers.”

Father Jerome Wolbert, OFM enlightened the presbyters on the Books of Isaiah, Joel, Jeremiah and others in a presentation entitled, “Love Letters from God – the Prophets.” In his conference, Father Jerome reminded the presbyters that the prophetic books of the Bible demonstrate that “God yearns to be with us” and that the prophets speak on God’s behalf “a message of loving kindness that culminates in the life and presence of Jesus Christ.” He went on to speak on the relationship of love that God has with His people. This is seen in terms of fidelity, grief over a broken relationship, forgiveness, and salvation. All of which is the great story of God’s love as reflected in the prophetic writings. “God entices us” he said, “appealing to our wayward hearts.” He went on to say that, as priests, many of us find great benefit in reflecting on and praying with the passages where the Lord calls His prophets.”

In a presentation entitled, “A Life-giving and Transforming Church - the Acts of the Apostles,” Father John Zeyack enthusiastically reflected in the origins of the Early Church. “If you want to know what Church is,” he said, “go back to the beginning.” In the Acts of the Apostles, we see the development of the Church through the preaching of the apostles and the descent of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost Sunday, the transforming effects of which are still ongoing today. As an example, he cited the recent resurgence of the Church in Ukraine, which has been “reborn” after 60 years of oppression. In time of persecution, people held on to their faith. That same is true for us today, as well. Because, he said, when we do our primary work, “God will bless us.”

Finally, Father Jack Custer offered a conference entitled, “The Lifting Up of My Hands – the Psalms of Vespers.” Appropriately, the presentation was delivered in the *Bon Secours* Chapel immediately following the celebration of Vespers. Father Jack guided the priests through a re-appreciation of the liturgical Psalms of the Church. He reminded the clergy that the nature of psalmody is “conversation with God.” There is “speaking and listening” – that is the reason for the development of antiphonal psalmody so prevalent in our tradition. When Psalms are prayed, certain negative emotions are revealed and poured out to the Lord. There is then a movement to hope and optimism as the presence of the Lord is rediscovered. He then offered suggestions and examples of Psalms to be prayed at various occasions and encouraged

the priests to “see the possibility in prayer” through the Psalms.

In between conferences, the priests had a full schedule of liturgical services. Morning Prayers and the celebration of the Divine Liturgy began each day; and the celebration of Ninth Hour or Vespers at the concluded each day. A large variety of priests had the opportunity to celebrate the services, cantor, and preach the homily. Enhancing the liturgical celebrations was the presence of Deacon Steven Galuschik, a presbyteral candidate for the Eparchy of Passaic. Before retiring each evening, there was a fellowship social to allow the priests the opportunity to reflect on the events of their busy day.

One of the highlights of Presbyteral Days 2014 was the celebration of the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy at patronage of the Mother of God Church in Baltimore, where Father Conan Timoney is Pastor. Quite a few parishioners were on hand to welcome the Bishop and the clergy and to participate in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. In his homily, Bishop Kurt again emphasized the power of Holy Scriptures and encouraged the priests to preach frequently on the Gospel and Epistles. In doing so, the Bishop said, the transforming power of the Word of God will draw people closer to Christ and His church. Also at this Hierarchical Divine Liturgy celebration, was the elevation of Father James Hayer, Protosyncellus of the Eparchy of Passaic, to the rank of Archpriest. The new Archpriest was then presented with an Epignation, Pectoral Cross, and Mitre as the



Bishop Kurt welcomes the priests and reviews the schedule.

Bishop proclaimed, *Axios*, and the clergy echoed their assent.

In bidding farewell to the clergy, the Bishop expressed his gratitude to Father Conan Timoney, Father Michael Kerestes, and Father John Basarab, for finding such an inspiring location for Presbyteral Days and addressing many of the organizational details on the local level. The priests, in turn, surprised their new Chief Shepherd with a special cake for his 25th Anniversary of Ordination to the Priesthood.

Presbyteral Days 2014 was a time of bonding between the Bishop and presbyters; renewing old friendships, reflecting on pastoral insights, but most importantly reigniting the transforming power of Word of God in the hearts of all present and in the parishes they serve. May we, like the disciples who encountered the Risen Lord on the road to Emmaus, also say, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?” (Luke 24:32)

The Conference Presenters



Father Scott Boghossian
“Top Dead Center”



Father James Badeaux
“Sacrifice - Moses to the End of Time”



Father Peter Hosak
“Obsessed with the Good News - Letters of St. Paul”



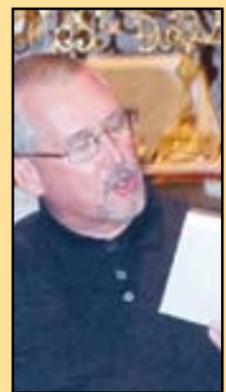
Father James Spera
“Where Eagles Dare - The Gospel of St. John”



Father Jerome Wolbert
“Love Letters from God - The Prophets”

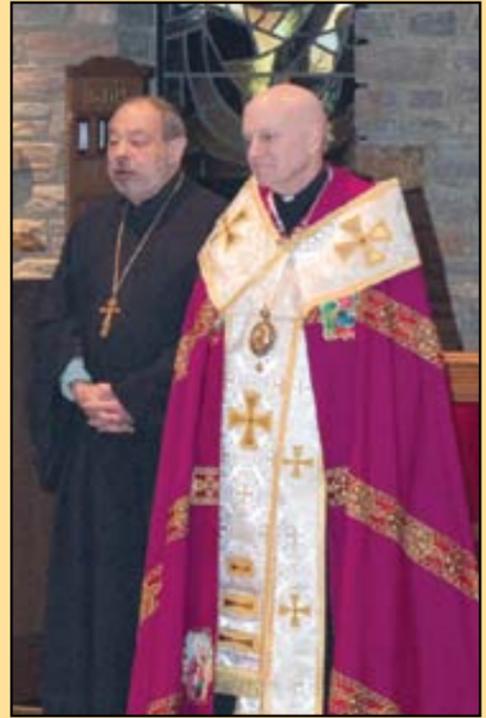


Father John Zeyack
“A Life-giving and Transforming Church - The Acts of the Apostles”

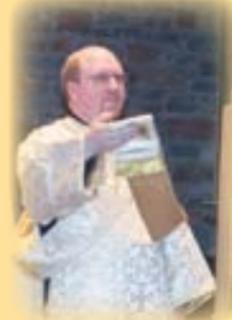


Father Jack Custer
“The Lifting up of My Hands - The Psalms of Vespers”

Eparchial Presbyteral Days · Photo Highlights



Bishop Kurt at prayer with the clergy.



Bishop Kurt elevates Father James Hayer, Eparchial Protosyncellus, to the rank of Archbishop.

25th Anniversary of Ordination to the Priesthood

Father James Hayer Celebrates Liturgy of Thanksgiving



Father Jim offers words of gratitude following the Divine Liturgy.



Father Jim with his mother, Dorothy, Bishop Kurt, concelebrating priests, deacons, and other clergy, religious, and servers in attendance following the Divine Liturgy of Thanksgiving.

Father James Hayer, Pastor of Saint Mary Church in Wilkes-Barre, PA, Editor of the Eastern Catholic Life, and Eparchial Protosyncellus, celebrated his 25th Anniversary of Ordination to the Priesthood of Jesus Christ on May 4, 2014. The day was marked with a Divine Liturgy of Thanksgiving at Saint Mary Church in Wilkes-Barre – the same church in which he was ordained, and the same parish at which he now serves as Pastor.

Joining him for the celebration, in addition to his mother, Dorothy, and other family members, were Bishop Kurt; local and eparchial clergy, and many parishioners and friends. Concelebrating the Divine Liturgy with Father Jim were Msgr. John Sekellick, Father Ed Cimbala, who also served as homilist, Deacon Edward Frey and Deacon Basil Soroka. Father Edward Higgins and Father Michael Mondik served as Liturgical Masters

of Ceremony. Deacon Steven Galuschik served as chaplain to the Bishop, who presided during the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Responses were led by Cantor Raymond Mastroberte, Cantor Jenn Terza, and other area cantors, including Cantor Paul Dzurisin, who cantored the Ordination Liturgy 25 years ago. Richard Terza chanted the epistle and the parish Altar Servers provided liturgical assistance.

In his homily, Father Ed Cimbala spoke about the way a priest evolves through ordination and ministry. He spoke of the style of ministry the priest is called to share in as leader, motivator, as well as shepherd and father. A good shepherd, who spends time with his sheep, he said, will naturally have the odor of the sheep upon him. Then, he turned to Father Jim and said, “you stink!” This drew a hearty laugh from all in attendance, but the point was well-taken - priests are called to be

shepherds and to tend their sheep.

Following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, all were invited to the Parish Social Hall for an Anniversary Dinner. There was no formal program, but presentations were made by representatives of parish organizations. Deacon Ed Frey served as Master of Ceremonies and Sister Regina Adams, Father Jim’s 3rd grade teacher, offered humorous comments and recollections from Father Jim’s elementary school years as a student at St. Mary’s Byzantine Catholic School, in Freeland, PA.

Following the remarks and presentations, Father Jim expressed his gratitude to all present and invited everyone to relax and enjoy the evening with DJ music, dancing, and plenty of food and desserts.

May God grant him many blessed years!

25th Anniversary of Ordination Memories



Collecting Rusyn Church Histories a 30-Year Passion

JOHN SCHWEICH CHRONICLED OVER 1700 CHURCH HISTORY VOLUMES

The challenges and achievements of Rusyns and their parish communities - both Catholic and Orthodox - are wonderfully chronicled in a surprisingly substantial corpus of local parish histories, sometimes written by scholars, clergy and educators, but mostly by a largely anonymous body of lay persons.

I grew up in Frackville, a coal mining town in Northeastern Pennsylvania in the midst of some of the oldest Carpatho-Rusyn settlements (St. Clair, Minersville, Shenandoah, Mahanoy City) in North America. The local Rusyns had all of the fine qualities that are their trademarks, i.e. a fierce sense of loyalty to family and spirituality, a world class work ethic, a supreme ability to adapt to changing environments, that unparalleled cuisine, etc.. Ethnic self-awareness, however, was not one of them. Queries about their ethnicity produced responses like: "Slavonic," "Slavish," "Rooshin", "Greek," "Our People," "Austrian," "Hungarian," "Uhorsky," "Uhorshchane," "Rusnaks," "Ruthenian," "Carpo-Rus," "Carpatho-Russian," "Russian,"

"Byzzantyne, (a pharmaceutical perhaps?)" etc. Never once did I hear the term "Rusyn." The people I queried about the terms "Greek" and "Byzantine," seemed to be more than clueless about the land of Homer or the history of Constantinople. The language used by those Carpatho-Russians was not Russian. Since I was studying Russian at Penn State at the time, it seemed closer to Ukrainian, although, strangely, the locals did not seem to appreciate hearing that.

To sort out the confusion and because Magocsi's works had not yet appeared, I consulted a few available books, which turned out to be the largely unhelpful works of polemicists. It began to occur to me that there may be a "lost tribe" of Slavs that the mainstream scholars had failed or were otherwise unmoved to catalogue.

The solution seemed to be to collect all of the written histories available produced by a largely anonymous corps of parishioner chroniclers, which dealt not only with specific Byzantine Catholic and Or-

thodox parishes, but, ultimately, with the local Rusyn community itself.

While this was promising, it was also frustrating: the answer to one question might be found, only to have five more queries appear. If there had been an Orthodox-Greek Catholic split in the town, say in Taylor PA or Binghamton NY, how did each side chronicle the separation? Did persistent Old Country village loyalties play a role, as they may have in Farrell/Sharon PA? Oftentimes, the local historians ignored the fact that the parish represented a separation from another (unmentioned) church or that a given parish had suffered a loss of half or more of its members.

After 30 years of effort, the result has been a collection of 1700 volumes pertaining to the histories of about 600 parish communities founded predominately by Rusyns or in partnership with other ethnic groups and representing half a dozen ecclesiastical jurisdictions. Along the way, I have collected a fair number of histories of other communities, including Romanians, Melkites, Russians, Hungarians, Ukrainians, Serbs,



John Schweich is a collector of Greek Catholic and Orthodox histories. He may be contacted at jtschweich@gmail.com

Greeks, Macedonians, Bulgarians, Poles, Slovaks, and Croatians.

This is, I believe, is the largest such collection in the US. Many of the works are triumphs of historiography ...others are less so. Although I am regularly asked to provide information on individuals, these histories are not particularly useful for genealogical purposes. Unless the relative in question was a clergyman, a founding member, a cantor or choir director, a trustee (kurator), a major donor, or a "first" (baptism, marriage or funeral), there will likely be no mention of him/her.

Continued on page 15



SYBERTSVILLE, PA – In the spirit of hospitality, the Byzantine Franciscans of Holy Dormition Friary in Sybertsville, PA hosted Bishop Kurt and the local Byzantine Catholic and Roman Catholic Clergy for a Pre-Lenten Dinner on February 10, 2014. There was no formal schedule or program for the meal, just an op-

portunity to break bread, share conversation, and renew friendships in the Emmaus Hall of the Franciscan Friary.

Prior to the Dinner, Bishop Kurt attended the monthly Emmaus meeting of Byzantine Catholic clergy held in the Friary Chapel. The clergy gather once a month to share thoughts and concerns in the spirit of presbyteral fraternity and prayer. The speaker for the month was Msgr. John Sekellick, who offered reflections on the "Office of Bishop." Bishop Kurt also addressed the clergy, offering his reflections on the topic, as well as providing scriptural insights.

Bishop Kurt Visits Franciscan Friary

EMMAUS AND PRE-LENTEN CLERGY DINNER



The Bishop blesses the food as Father Laurian, OFM (center), Friary Guardian, and Brother Augustine (left) look on.



Msgr. John Sekellick offers reflections.



The clergy gather in conversation before the meal.



Breaking bread and sharing food for thought.



FAITH AND COMMUNITY ISSUES

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

Mystery of Marriage: Symbol and Witness to the World

SYMBOL AND WITNESS

How is such a relationship manifested spiritually and practically in today's world? What consequences are derived from such a witness? What credible witness value does the married state offer to world of today? To begin to answer these questions a starting place would be the perspective of purpose. In the visioning of John Paul II by the very fact of Marriage's place among the Seven Mysteries the bond of marriage between the spouses is radically indissoluble, death being the ordinary means of dissolution of the bond. The intimate union of husband to wife and vice versa through the sign of the Mystery of Marriage directly represents the union Christ has with his Spouse, the Church.

Pope John Paul II envisioned the love borne out in the life of the family, particularly the relationship between the spouses, serves as a prophetic and permanent reminder of the consequences of the Cross. The witness given by the couple to their children and indeed to the entire world is the gift of salvation which is the fruit of the Cross and in which, through the Mystery of Marriage they share. There is a three-fold consequence to this: in the words of *Familiaris Consortio*: (1981)

"As a memorial, the sacrament gives them the grace and duty of commemorating the great works of God and of bearing witness to them before their children. As actuation, it gives them the grace and duty of putting into practice in the present, towards each other and their children, the

demands of a love which forgives and redeems. As prophecy, it gives the grace and duty of living and bearing witness to the hope of the future encounter with Christ." (§13)

Each of the seven Mysteries is a sign (effecting what it signifies) and a symbol (something that represents something else) making present to the recipient a radical experience of the saving Christ at work (*ex opere operato Christi*), yet each is a unique representation of the salvific experience/event. In the mystery of marriage, the experience

"...parenting is a gift from God, it is a new responsibility that God entrusts to the couple which radically alters their purpose and relationship."

is expressed in terms of a couple acting as one; the immediate consequence of such activity is the nurturing and deepening of the marital bond between the two. This deeply intimate relationship reveals within the human context the mystery of Christ in his incarnation and the covenant sealed in his blood. As Christ gave His all for the sake of His spouse, the Church, so conjugal love reflects in its day-to-day living experience a total giving of both spouses for the sake of the family, as the documents states, "a totality, in which all the elements of the person enter—appeal of the

body and instinct, power of feeling and affectivity, aspiration of the spirit and of will" (*Familiaris Consortio*, 1981, §13).

According to the vision of John Paul II the unity achieved is a deeply personal one it permeates beyond the body and finds its ultimate fulfillment in the total union of heart and soul. This depth demands an indissolubility in its union, and fidelity that is radical and fundamental in its giving, mutual and unstinted. This radically generous giving extends especially in the area of fertility and total openness to it within the couples' married state. This kind of depth elevates the marriage covenant to a new level of existence, "it is a question of the normal characteristics of all natural conjugal love, but with a new significance which not only purifies and strengthens them, but raises them to the extent of making them the expression of specifically Christian values" (*Familiaris Consortio*, 1981, §13).

In the perspective of John Paul II, God's plan for marriage reaches far beyond the couple and their interpersonal relationship. The foundational purpose of marriage is the family, the procreation and rearing of children. It is in the children and the proper raising of children into responsible, sensitive, faith-filled adults that crowns the life of the married couple. The development of family life is based upon the gift of Love, specifically conju-

Continued on next page.



GUEST CONTRIBUTION

OUR INHERITANCE

By Sister Elaine Kisinko, OSBM

While praying the prayers for the pre-fast Sundays of the Prodigal Son and the Last Judgment, I was struck with the theme of *squandering our inheritance*. It occurred to me that in terms of what we have received, we American Byzantine Catholics are the richest people on earth.

Through baptism we have been given the gift of faith and have become the children of God. Our European immigrant ancestors valued their belief and Eastern Catholic traditions so much that they scraped, saved and sacrificed to bring that faith to the new homeland by building their beloved Churches. Their parish histories tell us that at times homes were mortgaged for the payments needed so these places for worship would not be lost. Their legacy to us includes many of those original churches in addition to the erection of others through the years. The unique beauty of the architecture, interior design and art work

found in our churches from coast to coast is a treasure beyond compare.

As a Sister of Saint Basil I must thank God and his providence which brought beautiful Mount Saint Macrina, not only to us Sisters but to also to our entire Church. Again it was only through the faithful generosity of the early Byzantine Catholics whose nickels, dimes and quarters rescued our foundress Mother Macrina and enabled her to buy the property after the Sisters lost what little they had in a bank failure so common in those days. Though we Sisters have been the good stewards for this magnificent piece of land which has increased and which continues to be beautified, in a sense it truly belongs to "our people," and we hope they think of it that way.

It is a place of spiritual peace, refreshment and renewal of which we can all be proud. The annual Pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Perpetual Help is unique in ways

beyond counting. As so many pilgrims keep coming from throughout the country and beyond, it has been said that this Pilgrimage has held our Church together through the years and through times both good and bad. I have always believed that the Pilgrimage is a great gift and a phenomenon of God's grace.

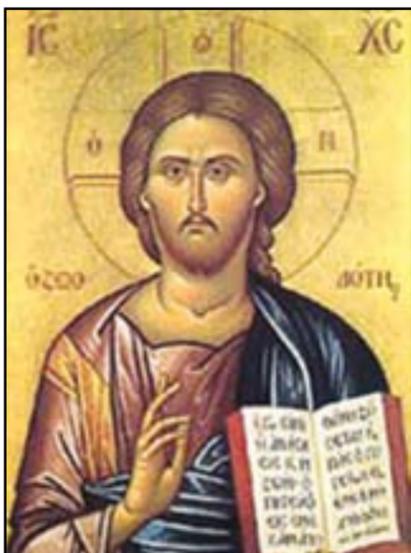
But our inheritance is much more than just buildings and property. It is a legacy of what people have offered, contributed and sacrificed so that we have what we have today. It is their spirit that endures in us. It is the mark that our bishops and priests have created by their ministry of leadership. Their foresight in making needed changes and adaptations are intended for the good and growth of our Church. Our parish families that strive in prayer and activities together greatly contribute to this good and growth. We are grateful to everyone who ever served as priest, deacon, sister, cantor, catechist, altar server, secretary, bookkeeper, teacher, ush-

er, volunteer, choir member, reader, fund raiser, kitchen worker, janitor, grounds keeper, helper in maintenance, cemetery care, etc. etc. etc.

Our legacy then is from all those who have gone before – those who have kept the faith and generously shared it – who loved being Byzantine or Greek Catholic and who were proud that they were – who prayed and who gave of themselves and of their gifts and talents – and who built this wondrous and beautiful Church of people bound by faith, tradition and history.

I pray that we continue to appreciate the inheritance that is ours. May it never be squandered, and may we too share this treasure with gratitude, pride and openness so that others may come to know the great gift of being an American Byzantine Catholic today.





UNDERSTANDING ICONS

Father Joseph Bertha, Ph.D.



Christ the Teacher Icons

Typically found on the right side of the Royal Doors of the iconostasis, the icon of Christ the Teacher is perhaps one of the most reproduced icons of our Savior. Several characteristics common to this type of icon highlight the role of Jesus as Rabbi.

These include:

- Christ holds an open gospel book with legible text.
- There is a clavus on the right shoulder of our Lord indicating His role as orator/educator.
- Jesus wears the himation and chiton Roman/Byzantine garb appropriate for Roman citizens and philosophers.

Our Lord is referred to as Teacher over 90 times in sacred scripture. This word arises from his followers who were accustomed by referring to their holy men as

Rabbi, which means teacher. One of the more dramatic uses is when Mary Magdalene calls Jesus Rabboni (which means teacher)(John 20:16) as she recognizes our Lord after his resurrection. Her reference teaches us that her tears are those of reconciliation of sinners with God's mercy and not just mere emotional expression of grief.

The location of this type of icon indirectly lends significantly to its meaning. The icon screen is to be viewed from the perspective of the congregant. The icon of Christ the Teacher is always placed on the right side, because He is enthroned at the right side of the Father, as described in the sacred scripture. He is usually depicted in bust or half figured, as if he were standing there with His feet, usually not shown, firmly on the ground. Actually, He is literally standing on the threshold of eternity, the line of demarcation of the iconostasis serves as the delineation of the entrance to the kingdom of splendors (eternity), so accurately described by Father Pavel Florensky in his work *Iconostasis*.

Since Christ is always shown in this location, He is approachable by believers. He typically holds an open gospel book with a teachable quotation from sacred scripture. Interestingly, careful study of these

texts reveal several common quotes. Primary among them are the seven or eight great "I am's," found in the Gospel of John. Most significantly these include: I am the bread of life, (John 6:35), I am the Light of the world, (John 8:12), and I am the Resurrection and the Life (John 11:25). Therefore, Our Lord who is the Word of God is teaching by pointing with His fingers to the actual text of the Gospel.

Our Lord also serves as teacher in the manner of His representation in icons. Curiously, He is not dressed as a Jewish Rabbi, but in Roman attire used by the Byzantines, he wears a himation, the outer cloak, and chiton or toga, with an inscribed clavus, or ribbon over his shoulder. This apparel indirectly manifests the imperial dignity of the Byzantine court which iconographers deemed suitable to be worn by Our Lord.

The color choice selected for the himation and chiton on the other hand refer back to the Mosaic description of the priestly vestments found in Exodus 39, that they are to be made of purplish blue, scarlet finely wrought garments. These colors emphasize the priestly ministry of Christ, who seeks to give God's mercy to all who approach Him.

Then there is the matter of the folds or creases in His garments

which do not seem to emphasize His bodily form as much as bend and twist in almost an infinite pattern. These designs describe the unfathomable mercy streams flowing from the heart of God visible in the garments of Jesus Christ.

The countenance of Jesus Christ shows God's mercy and compassion as well. The inscribed cruciform halo contains the Greek letters o wv, literally I am who am or YHWH. Our Lord is present with us always, and teaching us with His Word. The pupils of His eyes are refulgent with the light of God, opened to the max as He gazes upon His creation seeking the return of sinners. His right eye focuses directly at the viewer peering into our souls in justice. The left eye on the other hand looks off into the distance seeking the return of the prodigal son from far away. However, both eyes form the sight lines of the Savior which focus inside the believer standing before His icon.

The next time you visit church, feel welcome to proceed up to the icon of Christ the Teacher in the iconostasis. Ask the Lord to educate you in His everlasting mercy. Allow Him to peer into your soul and fill you with the Father's everlasting Mercy. Allow God's mercy to flow into your life and everyone that you encounter!

Faith and Community Issues

Continued from previous page

gal love which has the two-fold purpose of uniting the couple into "one flesh" (Genesis, 2:24) and also empowering the two made one to become co-operators with the Creator in the bringing about of a new human person. The fruits of the total giving of the couple to one another overflow into the children and their lives; the children being a reflection of the love of the couple to each other, become in the document's words "a living and inseparable synthesis of their being a father and a mother" (*Familiaris Consortio*, 1981, §14).

The responsibility of parenting is a grave one. The concept conveyed through the document directly states that parenting is a gift from God, it is a new responsibility that God entrusts to the couple which radically alters their purpose and relationship. From the moment they are entrusted with children the love the couple has for one another, and now overflowing toward the children, becomes a teaching instrument for the young, revealing by experience the very love that God has for each of us "from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named" (Ephesians 3: 15, as quoted in *Familiaris Consortio*, §14).

At the same time, the document makes clear that this aspect of family life does not diminish or

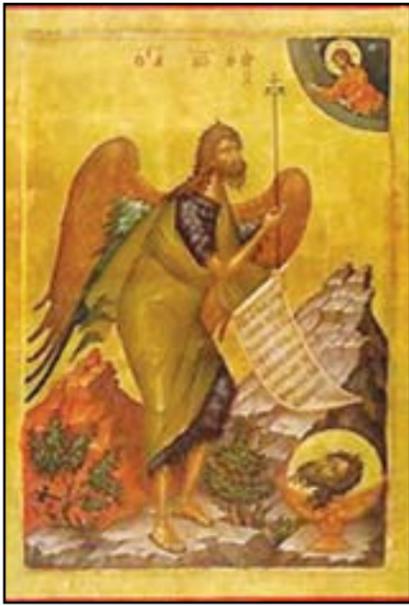
disappear should procreation not be a possibility for the couple, whatever the reason. Point of fact, the document emphasizes that there are other avenues through which service can be given to the world by the couple: "for example, adoption, various forms of educational work and assistance to other families and to the poor or handicapped children" (*Familiaris Consortio*, 1981, §14).

What the specifics of living this lifestyle out in today's world entails, how the complex of relationships within the familial constellations occur (the roles of "father" "mother" "children" within the family model) will be examined in the next installment.

Byzantine Women's Weekend Retreat Villa of our Lady Retreat House Mt. Pocono, PA • June 6 - June 8

The retreat will begin on Friday June 6 at 6:00 PM and ends at 2:00 PM on Sunday, June 8. Cost is \$135 Shared room and \$150 a private room. A \$40 deposit is required with no refund. For additional information or to make reservations, please call (570) 453-3163, (570) 454-7062 or (717) 642-1544.





HOLIDAY REFLECTIONS

Msgr. John. T. Sekellick, JCL



SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST

birth are found in the lengthy account of Saint Luke's Gospel (1:5-80). The liturgical feast of his birth dates to the third century. Saint Augustine who lived in the mid-fourth century states that it is based upon an ancient oral tradition.

Saint Luke tells us (1:7) that his parents were advanced in years similar to the aged Abraham and Sarah. Although the circumstances of his youth are unknown, some Scripture scholars suggest that John's elderly parents died while he was a young boy and may have been adopted by the strict and ascetical sect known as the *Essenes* since Saint Luke in his account writes, "The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he dwelt in the deserts until the day came when he was made manifest to Israel." (1:80)

The Essenes were a Jewish religious group living and sharing in common a highly organized and structured life devoted to ritual purity. They emphasized the sinfulness of man as evidenced by their practice of ritual baths – baptism. At the same time, much was made of the mercy of God and His forgiveness

through repentance. Their origins can be traced to the second century B.C. and to have continued through the second century A.D.

They were known for a peculiar way of life, abstaining from marriage but adopting children. They practiced communal sharing of goods and began their day with worship at sunrise, turning then to manual tasks. Among their beliefs was the immortality of the soul. They had a profound interest in the Torah or Law of Moses. They emphasized the complete supremacy of God. Many details about them were found in the Spring of 1947 when a shepherd boy discovered by accident jars containing scrolls in a cave of the cliffs near the site where the Wadi Qumran descends into the Dead Sea.

John, as an Essene, would have been a strict legalist and would not eat with those who failed to observe the Mosaic laws of ritual cleanliness. The chief offenders of this were the tax collectors who gained financially without scruple by extorting overpayment of the taxes due to Rome. Many of them went to hear John preach, repented and were baptized

by him. John's preaching reached the ears of the wicked King Herod who had unlawfully married Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. Even the pious Pharisees did not dare to condemn this incestuous union. Nonetheless, Saint John courageously denounced Herod publicly. Herod instigated by Herodias had John arrested and imprisoned. The dramatic story of John's fate is recounted in Saint Mark's Gospel chapter 6, verses 14-30.

May the sentiments of this Vesper hymn echo in us as we observe the birth of Saint John the Baptist: "With psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, let us praise the glorious desert-dweller John, since he is the prophet of prophets and the fruit of a barren womb, greater than all born of woman. Let us cry out to him: O Baptist and Forerunner of the Savior, by your holy birth you may implore Christ with confidence to grant peace to the world and great mercy to our souls." *Aposticha of Vespers*

Of all the individuals associated with the life and ministry of Jesus, His cousin, Saint John the Baptist, features prominently. He is accorded several commemorations throughout the liturgical year: his Conception (September 23), his birth (June 24) and his death as a martyr (August 29) and the findings of his head (February 24 and May 25). His name is a variation of the Hebrew *Johanan* which means God is gracious. Because of the dynamics of his relation to Jesus, he is known as the last and greatest of the Old Testament *prophets* foretelling Jesus as the promised Messiah, the *Forerunner* of Christ and the one who *baptizes* the Lord.

We know him as the son of Zachary and Elizabeth (Matthew 11:11). The circumstances of his

RESPECT LIFE FORUM

By Audra Nakas, Guest Columnist

A Crib for Her Baby

"Hey, whatcha doin'?" I clutched my rosary a little tighter.

"Um... I'm just praying for everyone inside," I replied, nodding toward the Planned Parenthood building. I was participating in 40 Days for Life, and every Friday afternoon I prayed in front of the abortion facility. On this particular autumn day, a woman and her friend were standing on the sidewalk outside, talking boisterously. I felt a little intimidated when they approached me and asked what I was up to, because before then I'd never sidewalk-counseled anybody. I will never forget the conversation that followed.

The woman explained that she was considering an abortion because she was worried about being able to provide for another daughter. From what the woman continued to tell me, it was clear that her entire life, she'd been surrounded by poverty and the suffering that often accompanies it in the form of violence, drugs, and a broken family. Now she felt that she had no other choice but to have an abortion—she teared up as she told me, to my alarm, "I just have to give my baby back to God."

I had previously heard of the connection between abortion and poverty. A pregnancy help center director once related a story about a woman who had an abortion because she didn't have a crib for her baby. In its February 2014 fact sheet on "Induced Abortion in the United States," the Guttmacher Institute, a research organization historically associated with Planned Parenthood, indicates that forty-two percent of women who obtain abortions have incomes below the federal poverty level (in 2014, \$11,670/year) and an additional twenty-seven percent have incomes up to twice the official poverty level (under \$24,000). Seventy-three percent of women cite the inability to afford a child as a reason for their decision.

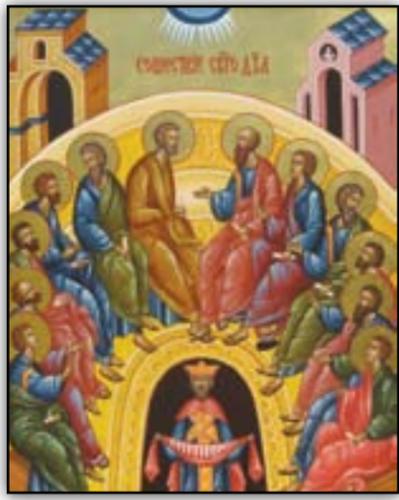
Yet I had never encountered this desperation face-to-face. This woman believed in God and understood that she was carrying a baby. But even with that knowledge and the desire to have her child, she didn't think there was any realistic option besides abortion. I realized that day that in the battle to save lives and souls, philosophizing about personhood and the right to life isn't enough; it doesn't give a scared mother a crib for her baby.

Of course, the life-saving charity work that pregnancy help centers provide is crucial. We also have a responsibility to help prevent and alleviate the poverty that leads to this kind of situation in the first place. As the wisdom of Catholic social teaching demonstrates, if we want to establish a true culture of life, our work to promote the dignity of human life must include every aspect of social justice, especially concern for the poor.

Although I may never know what the woman ultimately decided, I felt hopeful; with a new cheerfulness, she and her friend thanked me for my prayers and left with the phone number I gave them for a pregnancy help center. I prayed that this woman found the compassion and material support she needed to escape the clutches of poverty and give her unborn child life.

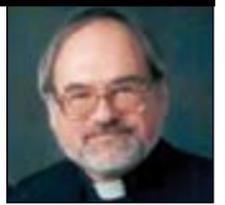
[Guest columnist, Audra Nakas, is a rising senior at The Catholic University of America and a former intern for the USCCB's Catholic Campaign for Human Development.]





THE BYZANTINE LITURGY

By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD



Pentecost - the Descent of the Holy Spirit

The feast of Pentecost is the closing day of the Feast of Pascha, the Resurrection of our Lord. In the Acts of the Apostles, the Holy Spirit came upon the followers of Jesus in the form of tongues of fire. This was the fulfillment of the prophecy of John the Baptist, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." (Luke 3:16) It is through the Holy Spirit that the risen Lord continues to be present among us, and in whom we have the hope of resurrection. This is seen in Romans 8:9-11: "But you are not in the flesh; on the contrary, you are in the spirit, if only the Spirit of God dwells in you. Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is alive because of righteousness. If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also, through his Spirit that dwells in you."

The Jewish feast celebrated the giving of the Law to Moses on Mt. Sinai, the Christian feast the giving of the Spirit to fulfill John 1:17, "For while the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." It is the day of the gift of the Spirit. We might ask, "where are the gifts of the Spirit today?" Where are the gifts of speaking in tongues and healing? However, even if the more "flashy" gifts are not present, and the spiritual Fathers always warn us against expecting these, we still have the power of faith, hope and love, theological virtues which can be practiced only in the grace of the Spirit. Another manifestation of the Spirit is ordination. The Western Church, in general, sees the priesthood as given at the Last Supper. The Eastern Church, however, more often sees the priesthood as established at

Pentecost. The Eucharist itself is a gift of the Holy Spirit, by whose power bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ.

Pentecost Day concludes the reading of the Acts of the Apostles and the Gospel of John following Pascha. The term Pentecost, in fact, first applied to the fifty days following Easter, which was a period of celebration and joy. During this time it was forbidden to fast or kneel. Saint Irenaeus (Fragment 7, 2nd century) claims that this is an apostolic custom. The earliest reference to this custom is found in a non-canonical book, the *Acts of Paul* (180), "While Paul was in prison, the brethren, since it was Pentecost, wept not neither did they bow the knee, but they stood and prayed rejoicing." According to Canon 20 of the Coun-

cil of Nicea, no fasting or kneeling was permitted during the fifty day period following Pascha.

The feast of the Fifty Days was a time of spiritual harvest, which is the reason the Acts of the Apostles were read, celebrating the growing Church. Saint John Chrysostom explicitly connected the feast of Pentecost with the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai. Because it was the feast of the giving of the Spirit, baptisms were done on Pentecost Sunday and "All you who have been baptized into Christ..." is sung on the feast in the Liturgy to this very day. However, there was some opposition to this custom in the East, since it was impossible to prepare for the baptism by observing a fast.

One of the popular Pentecost customs is to put up greenery, particularly from the linden tree. In the Slav tradition, Pentecost is often called *Rusaliya*. The displaying of greenery is given a Christian meaning, representing new life through the Spirit. It probably was a "Christianization" of a

pagan custom, for whom Spring was a time of release of the souls of children or maidens who had committed suicide or met a violent death. During *rusalki* these spirits were treated with pity and wreaths of flowers were offered to them. This feast was called *rosalia* in Latin and *anthesteria* in Greek and became associated with Pentecost because it was a spring feast. The day before Pentecost itself is a commemoration of all the departed, a Christian confrontation with the mystery of death and the hope of the general resurrection.

In the evening of Pentecost Sunday a special Vespers is celebrated, and during it three long prayers of kneeling are said. This Vespers, then, is a return to the "ordinary time" of the Church year after the celebration of the Fifty Days. These prayers follow the structure of the Constantinople sung Vespers of three antiphons with attendant prayers. The second part of these three prayers are the original prayers of the three antiphons, and special prayers for Pentecost and for the departed are joined. The week after Pentecost was observed festively, and there is no fasting. The week ends with the Feast of All Saints. This originally was called "all martyrs," that is the feast of those who gave witness to their faith in Jesus the Messiah. This cannot be done without the power of the Holy Spirit, beyond all human strength. It is only the Spirit who can enable us to live the Paschal Mystery. When Jesus was arrested in Jerusalem, the apostles all fled, being afraid for their lives. The path to glorification leads through the acceptance of death, which Jesus exemplifies and the apostles could not initially accept. After the Resurrection, the apostles still could not proclaim the gospel until they received the Holy Spirit. In the Gospels, then, martyrdom is connected with witness given in the Holy Spirit, "When they take you before synagogues and before rulers and authorities, do not worry about how or what your defense will be or about what you are to say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you at that moment what you should say." (Luke 12:11-12) Pentecost is the completion of the mystery of the resurrection, and the apostles and the Christians after them can be martyrs-witnesses to the gospel of Christ.

"...where are the gifts of the Spirit today? Where are the gifts of speaking in tongues and healing?"

Church History Book Collection

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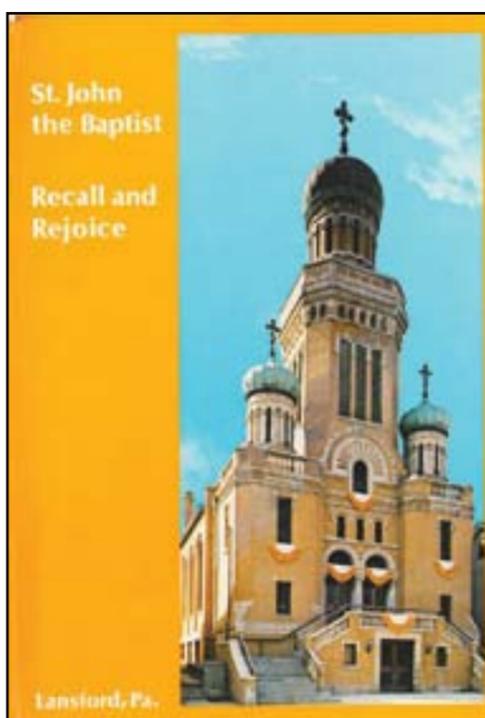
Sometimes the prose used is majestic: "Beyond ties of blood, language and shared memories, the Ruska Vira, the Greek Catholic Church and its rich traditions, bound this urban village together and gave meaning to simple but intense lives. The Rusin village in South Philadelphia did not rest until, like the ancestral villages in Europe, it nestled in the shadow of an onion-domed church and three-barred cross." (Holy Ghost Byzantine Catholic Church, Philadelphia PA, 1891-1991, 100 Blessed Years)

Sometimes the prose conveys (humorously) unintended imagery: "The fire of 1904 gave the parishioners a burning desire to rebuild the church." (name withheld)

I was able to use the collection with some oral history interviews to compile a history of the 17 churches in the metro Chicago area with significant or predominant Rusyn congregations in a presentation to the Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International Conference in Lombard, IL October 25-27, 2013.

I gave a similar presentation to the Carpatho-Rusyn Society of Youngstown-Warren-Sharon on April 19, 2014. It highlighted the Rusyn parishes in the Ohio counties of Mahoning and Trumbull and the neighboring Pennsylvania counties of Mercer and Lawrence.

In recent years, I have been very fortunate to have received the institutional collections of the Byzantine Franciscan Priory of Sybertsville, PA and Holy Trinity Monastery in Butler, PA. Msgr. Frank Korba of the Eparchy of Parma has given me his collection, numbering several hundred volumes.





SEMINARIAN REFLECTIONS

Subdeacon Lewis Rabayda

Worldly Love: Why Doesn't God Get it?

For some reason, I like to torture myself by looking at a major news source every day just to make sure some other continent didn't blow itself up. While being aware of what goes on in the world is important, it feels like torture because when I scroll through the news stories, I get so frustrated at the way the popular American mind understands an individual's rights. In today's culture, an individual has the right to think and feel how they like. Which, in reality, is good. I do not, nor does the Church, support people being suppressed, or not allowed to act out their free will, or to think how they like (see the Vatican II Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis Humanae*). But where the modern mindset has warped this gift of freedom is when a free choice of an individual is automatically labeled as "good" for them. When the label of "good" is placed on one person's freedom, it is then applicable to all persons, and is now "good" for everyone. So how could this be bad?

It is bad and even dangerous when what is labeled "good" is not good, but in the eyes of God's design for humans, in His design for our true happiness, and more importantly His design for our eternal salvation, it is in fact harmful or evil. This shines light on our ability or inability to understand the distinction between: good, fulfillment, pleasure, happiness, and what we have a right to. This contemporary morality is influenced by individuals' feelings or emotions towards their life experience. *Feelings* and *emotions* are important aspects of who we are and how we act, but they are not always good. We can *feel* that we have the right to treat our bodies in whatever way we see fit, whether it is right to do so or not. We can be *emotional* about certain social issues and fight for or against them, regardless of what side we are on. But where our culture has gone wrong is that they have ceased to place a value judgment on these feelings and emotion. There is no longer such a thing as an objective right or wrong because the popular mind has sanitized itself into thinking that God does not exist. God has been pushed into the personal dimension of peoples' lives and told that religion should stay there. When God has been taken out of the equation, then there is no longer moral truth. Truth then, is whatever an individual understands life to be and mean for them. Hence, the individual is God. The individual can create new definitions of right and wrong. The individual is not subject to anything outside of itself, except affirmation from a "tolerant" society.

"Umm, Subdeacon Lewis, you seem a little excited." It's true; I am excited. I'm excited because these popular inaccuracies are *not* true. Morality is not rel-

ative to every individual's perception of life. If God created us, then why would our reactions and responses to life's situations sometimes be bad? God created us to be human, to have emotions and feelings, as well as a sense of duty, so these experiences are not bad in themselves. In Genesis it is stated that God made Man in His "image and likeness," and that in order to bring Man to life, God breathed into him His Spirit. He gave us the ability to do good, by giving us His Holy Spirit. He gave us the greatest helper in our lives that we can have. But, the big but, the big side note that the modern culture does not want to hear, is that after God made Man, male and female, He gave them everything that was good for them. God gave them everything they needed to have a great existence in this paradise, but with One rule. A rule? A restriction? Yes. "And the Lord God commanded the man saying, 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die' (Gen. 2:16-17). God *commands* us to enjoy the good in life, to enjoy what He has made for our happiness, to find pleasure in His good creation, while also commanding us to abstain from what is not good for us, from what will bring us pain, hardship, and eventually death.

The modern secular notion of love and kindness has good aspects to it, but it is mixed with support and propagation of sin and pain. In the support of this pain and dysfunction, they often point a finger at religious people and accuse them of intolerance, hate, and of judging others. They say, "How could God hate people?" God does not hate anyone. God is the absolute source and giver of the most pure love all of creation has ever known. But what God does not do, is love sin because sin is the rejection of God's love, it is the neglect of His commands. God loves every human He created and wants them to love Him. He wants us to be happy and has given us guidelines to live happy, joyful, and fulfilled lives—if we follow those commandments that He has given us. So, according to the modern understanding of love and kindness, how come God doesn't get on board with it? Because God is God, we are to follow His rules, He does not follow the rules of the self-made gods of this world. God is omnipotent, meaning that He is all knowing, and He knows our psychology and physiology better than the best minds through history. He created this combination of soul and body, and He knows what is best for it. Since God wants us to be happy, and to join Him in glory for eternity, He has given us the guidelines of true love.

All we have to do, is say, "Yes Lord. Thy Will be done."

Upcoming Events for June

Eparchial and Parish Events

Glory to Jesus Christ!
Glory Forever!

JUNE

1 Fathers of the 1st Ecumenical Council

Eastern Catholic Life

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7 5th All Souls Saturday

8 Pentecost Sunday
Descent of the Holy Spirit

9 Pentecost Monday
Simple Holyday

11-13 USCCB Spring Assembly · New Orleans

15 Sunday of All Saints
Father's Day

22 2nd Sunday after Pentecost

24 Birth of John the Baptist
Simple Holyday - Chancery Closed

29 3rd Sunday after Pentecost
Feast of Saints Peter and Paul
Holy Day of Obligation