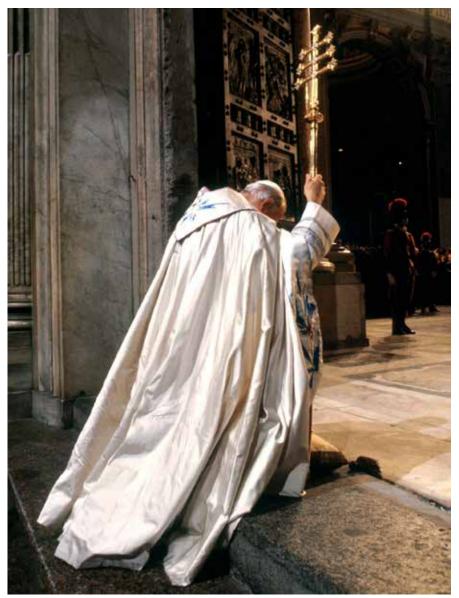


EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

Official Publication of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic

Tear Down this Wall

Holy Year Calls for Human Barriers to Tumble Down By Carol Glatz Catholic News Service, Vatican City, Nov. 12, 2015 Photo by Catholic News Service



Pope Saint John Paul II kneels at the Holy Door during the opening of the Holy Year of the Redemption in Saint Peter's Basilica at the Vatican in this March 25, 1983

Tor a spiritual leader who denounces a world divided by walls, a church shuttered by cliques and hearts hardened to compassion, opening wide the Holy Door for the Year of Mercy will be a significant and symbolic moment for Pope Francis.

In Catholic tradition, the Holy Door represents the passage to salvation -- the path to a new and eternal life, which was opened to humanity by Jesus. It also symbolizes an entryway to God's mercy -- the ultimate and supreme act by which he comes to meet people. Mercy is "the bridge that connects God and humanity, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness," the pope wrote in "Misericordiae Vultus" ("The Face of Mercy"), instituting the Holy Year of Mercy.

Doors have always had a special meaning for the Catholic Church, according to the late-Cardinal Virgilio Noe, the former archpriest of Saint Peter's Basilica. "The door of a church marks the divide between the sacred and profane, separating the church's interior from the outside world. It is the boundary defining welcome and exclusion," he wrote in the book, "The Holy Door in St. Peter's" in 1999.

The door is also a symbol of Mary -- the mother, the dwelling of the Lord -- and she, too, always has open arms and is ready to welcome the children of God home. Pope Francis was scheduled to open the door Dec. 8, the feast of Mary's immaculate conception.

But the door especially represents Christ himself -- the one and only way to eternal life. As Jesus said, according to the Gospel of John (10:9), "I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture."

The Holy Year traditionally begins with the opening of the Holy Door to represent a renewed opportunity to encounter or grow closer to Jesus, who calls everyone to redemption. Jesus knocks on everyone's door; he yearns to accompany and nourish everyone. "If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, then I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me," the Book of Revelation quotes him as saying.

But doors are also narrow, Cardinal Noe wrote, and people must stoop with humility and "be brought down to size by conversion" in order to be "fit" for eternal life. That is why passing through a Holy Door is part of a longer process of sacrifice and conversion required for receiving an indulgence granted during a Holy Year. A plenary indulgence, the remission of temporal punishment due to sin, is offered for pilgrims who also fulfill certain other conditions: reception of the sacraments of penance and the Eucharist, visits and prayers for the intention of the pope and performing simple acts such as visiting the sick.

This spiritual process of encounter and conversion is made tangible in the elaborate rituals developed over time for the opening of the Holy Door. The symbolic ceremony of opening a Holy Door came more than a century after the first Holy Year was proclaimed in 1300.

Pope Martin V, in 1423, opened the Holy Door in the Basilica of St. John Lateran for the first time for a jubilee. Next, Pope Alexander VI called for all four Holy Doors in Rome to be opened at Christmas in 1499 for the Jubilee of 1500.

Starting in the 16th century, the ceremony to open the door in St. Peter's Basilica included the pope reciting verses from the Psalms and striking the wall covering the Holy Door with a silver hammer three times.

Masons completed the task of dismantling the brick and mortared wall, which represents the difficulty and great effort required to overcome the barrier of sin and to open the path to holiness.

Some have found meaning in the fact that Jesus had five wounds and St. Peter's Basilica has five doors. Opening the Holy Door recalls the piercing of Jesus' side from which poured forth blood and water, the source of regeneration for humanity. The Holy Door of St. Peter's, in fact, is decorated with 16 bronze panels depicting the story of Jesus, in his mercy, seeking his lost sheep.

The symbolism of the hammer in the hands of the pope represents the power and jurisdiction God gives him to cast away the stones of sin, chink open hardened hearts and break down walls separating humanity from God.

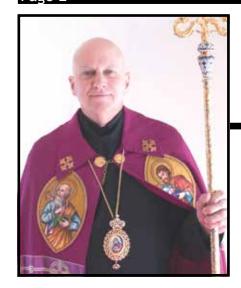
The removal of the wall also conjures up pulling away the stone that sealed the tomb of Lazarus, whom Jesus resurrected from the dead.

For the closing of the door at the end of the Holy Year, the traditional rite included the pope blessing and spreading the mortar with a special trowel and setting three bricks for the start of a new wall -- a symbol of the spiritual rebuilding of the Lord's house as well as the ever-present human temptation to put up new barriers against God with sin.

While there have been some changes to those ceremonies over time, the Holy Door is always a reminder that because of God's mercy, any obstacles can always be removed, and the door to hope and forgiveness is always there waiting.



Christ is Born! Glorify Him! Christos Raždajetsja! Slavite Jeho!



dants may live, loving the Lord your God." In the

great alphabetic psalm at the Parastas we sing, "If

your law had not been my delight, I should have

perished in my affliction. I will never forget your

precepts; for by them you give me life." The first

moral law that we received was when God made a

covenant with Noah and told him that He would

require an accounting of the blood of every man,

whether shed by beast or man, for God said, "for

God made man in his own image. And you, be

fruitful and multiply, bring forth abundantly on

the earth and fill it." God placed the rainbow in

the sky to remind us of his covenant with Noah

Throughout the Scriptures, we read that God

intervenes in marriages to bless them with chil-

dren, sometimes against biological or even spiri-

tual forces, to remind us that life comes from God

and belongs to God. It is not our property. We

are made in His image, and our origin is Divine.

and they lived long with their children.

and that life is sacred to God.

I LIFT UP MY EYES...

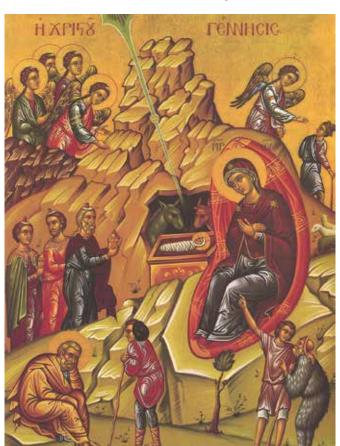
Pastoral Reflections of Bishop Kurt



BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY

Life is from God, and a happy life is a generous life. From the beginning, the tempter has worked tirelessly to separate us from God and from each other. He told Eve, "If you eat the forbidden fruit, you won't need God any more. You can replace God." As Pope Benedict pointed out, Adam and Eve believed that they could find happiness in When God made our first parents, He made them in His own image and likeautonomy instead of community. The scriptures warn us over and over that when we turn away ness and then He said to them, "Be fruitful and from God we choose death. Our modern culture multiply and fill the earth and subdue it." God of individualism, self-fulfillment, and autonomy made us to be creative like Himself, and to have was accurately described by St. John Paul as "the the power to create new life, and to create generculture of death". For us to achieve or own "maxiously and unselfishly. The story of the Scriptures mum potential", someone else must lose out. and the story of our salvation is the story of life. Non-reproductive sexual activity, abortion, in-When Moses left the chosen people, he entrustfanticide, eugenics, sterilization, genocide, and fied them with the law of God and said to them, "I nally killing sick or damaged adults—our culture call heaven and earth to witness this day, that I calls these things progress and human rights, but set before you life and death, blessing and curse; they are a reversion to pre-Christian barbarism. therefore choose life, that you and your descen-

In early October, the culture of death achieved one of its most desired goals, the largest state in the United States passed laws allowing physicians



Icon of the Nativity of Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ

When our father Abraham left his homeland to become a great nation, as promised by God, his wife was well beyond child bearing age, but he was visited by God in the form of three angels who promised that within a year, Sarah would bear a son. Even our mother Sarah laughed nervously when she heard this hard to believe announcement. God brought Isaac into the world beyond the laws of biology to show the divine origin of our salvation—Jesus the Messiah was descended from this unlikely birth. Hannah, the mother of the great prophet Samuel, was unable to have children and suffered the mocking and jeering of her rival. She prayed so fervently at the shrine of Shiloh that the priest Eli accused her of being drunk and told her to go sober up. God blessed her with a son, whom she gave back to God, and he became a great prophet who anointed King Saul and then King David. And then we read that the union of Tobias and Sarah was threatened not by biology but by a demon. The demon had already killed her first seven suitors. Her mother told her on her wedding night, "Be brave my child, the Lord of heaven and earth grant you joy in place of this sorrow of yours. Be brave my daughter." With the assistance of the Archangel Raphael, their marriage was successful

to help kill their patients. Jesus described the devil as follows, "He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies." In California, the governor called an extraordinary session of the state legislature, claiming that the purpose was to reduce medical costs. Without the usual legislative safeguards, the legislature rushed through a bill legalizing the killing of sick people. Not only was the extraordinary session of the state legislature invoked with a lie, the law also legislates lies: when a sick person is killed with poison under the new law, the law requires that, "Actions taken in accordance with this [act] shall not, for any purposes, constitute suicide, assisted suicide, homicide or elder abuse under the law." So the coroner is required by law to lie about the cause of death. The statement by the governor when he signed the law included at least one lie,

but he did tell the truth when he said that he may decide to kill himself when he is sick. The next time the governor sees a rainbow in the sky, or any other rainbow, perhaps he should remember God's covenant with Noah, "For your lifeblood I will surely require a reckoning; of every beast I will require it and of man, ..., for God made man in his own image."

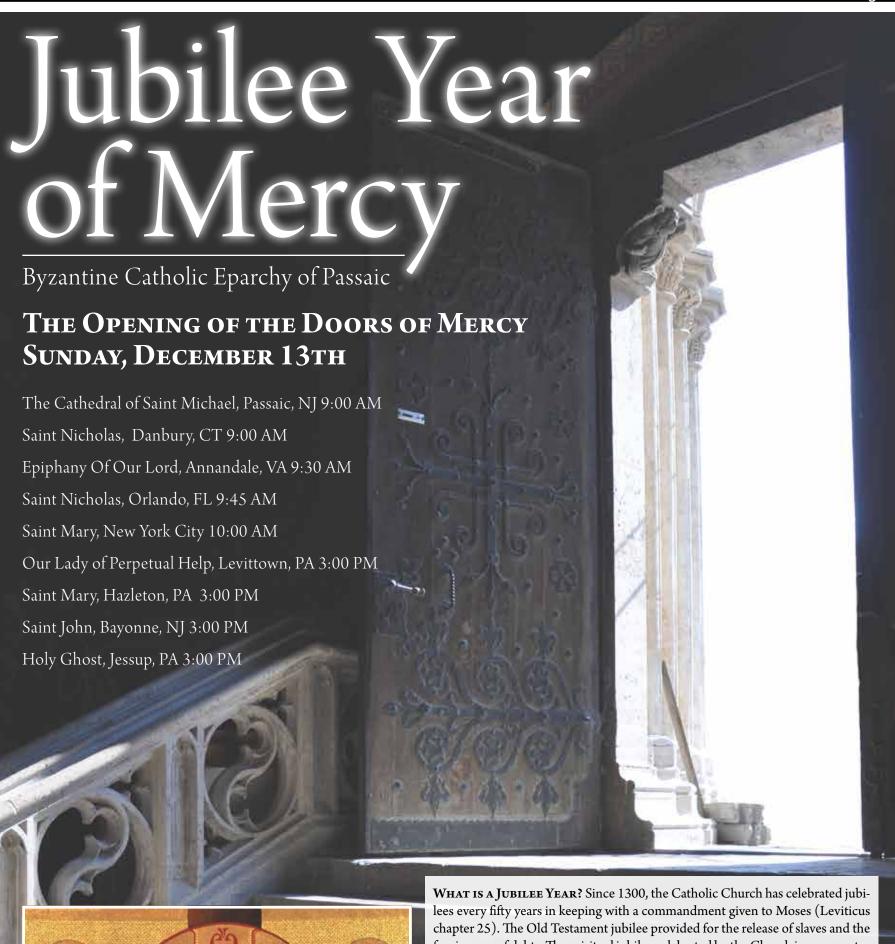
In a few weeks on December 25, we will celebrate yet another miraculous birth—a birth by a woman without a man. Even when we turn away from God and choose death, God still has the last word. Four thousand years ago, two thousand years ago, and even in our own day, we are surrounded by miraculous births. Children brought into the world against the laws of biology through the power of prayer. In the midst of the culture of death, God still brings good out of evil and love is still more powerful than hate. Two thousand years ago, God blessed the union of the infertile couple Zechariah and Elizabeth as a prelude to the birth of his own Son from a virgin womb.

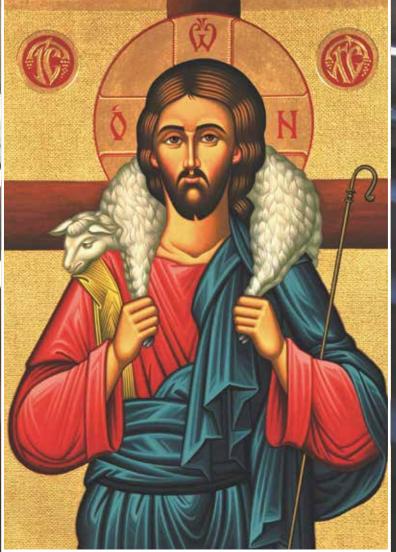
> Beginning with a message of peace and reconciliation, the Archangel Gabriel told the doubting priest Zechariah that his son John would "turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared". And then Zechariah said to John, you will "give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of sins, through the tender mercy of God, when the day shall dawn upon us from on high".

What are we to think in these dark winter days of 2015? On her wedding night, Sarah's mother said to her, "Be brave my child, the Lord of heaven and earth grant you joy in place of this sorrow of yours. Be brave my daughter." And so too, the Angel said to St. Joseph, "Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife." And so too the Archangel Gabriel said to the elect Virgin, "Do not be afraid Mary, for you have found favor with God, and you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will

give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there will be no end." In the book of the Apocalypse, we read "woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short." The kingdom of evil and the culture of death are always angry because they know that their time is short. But at Christmas time, we believers read at the end of the book of the Apocalypse, "Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away." "Behold, I make all things new." Maranatha. Come Lord.

+ Kurt Bunette





WHAT IS A JUBILEE YEAR? Since 1300, the Catholic Church has celebrated jubilees every fifty years in keeping with a commandment given to Moses (Leviticus chapter 25). The Old Testament jubilee provided for the release of slaves and the forgiveness of debts. The spiritual jubilee celebrated by the Church is an opportunity to be set free from sin, to experience God's mercy in an extraordinary manner and to share that forgiveness and liberation with others. The jubilee interrupts ordinary time and challenges us to step away from "business as usual" so as to enter more fully into God's eternal plan for us all. Pope John Paul II called an extraordinary Holy Year in 1983. Pope Francis has done the same for this Jubilee of Mercy.

WHAT IS AN INDULGENCE? One of the features of a jubilee is the opportunity for the faithful to obtain a plenary indulgence. Forgiveness flows from Jesus' sacrifice of Himself on the Cross once and for all for the sins of all mankind (Hebrews 7:27). Jesus Himself ordained that this forgiveness should flow through the sacramental ministry of the Church (John 20:21-23) especially through the sacramental mysteries of Baptism, Holy Anointing of the Sick, and Repentance (Confession). But even confessed sins leave scars, and the damage remains to be undone. Healing this damage and satisfying God's justice require our own active embrace of penance. Fasting, prayer, works of charity freely undertaken all contribute to this atonement on our part. An indulgence is God's free gift to us of the spiritual means of repaying the debt caused by sin, a debt which must otherwise be paid by our own sufferings in this life or after death. An indulgence does not replace the need for confession. It is not absolution. It is not a "get out of jail free card" for sins we may choose to commit later. It does not condone or excuse sin. It cannot be bought or sold. An indulgence is God's gift to help put sin and all its consequences firmly in our past. God allows us to participate in the merits and the sanctity of the centuries of saints who have gone before us and with whom we are united in the one Body that is Christ's Church. An indulgence allows us to experience both God's mercy and the solidarity we share with all those who are "in Christ" whether living or dead, already saints or not yet saints. Thus, we can choose to gain an indulgence for the departed rather than for ourselves, since we are all one Body in Christ (Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:27).

PEOPLE YOU KNOW AROUND THE EPARCHY

IN WILKES-BARRE...

Heinz Rehab Hospital Recognizes Archpriest James Hayer



Marianne Sailus, Coordinator of Pastoral Care, and William Conaboy, CEO of the Allied Services Integreated Health System, present Father Hayer with the icon

Allied Services Integrated Health System Heinz Rehab Hospital, Wilkes-Barre Township, PA, recently recognized the Right Rev. Mitred Archpriest James G. Hayer for eleven years of service to the hospital while Pastor of Saint Mary's Assumption Byzantine Catholic Church in Wilkes-Barre, PA.

In addition to serving as a member of the hospital's interfaith Pastoral Care Advisory Board and Conference Committee, Father Hayer also chaired three of the hospital's Spirituality and Disability conferences and presented a talk at one of them. Most notably, Father Jim had a very special ministry to people who had a stroke, and gave them encouragement during the difficult rehabilitation process.

In Father Jim's honor, an icon was commissioned of *The Healing of the Paralytic* that was presented to him at the hospital's 2015 conference on October 15th. Pictured are (L to R): Marianne C. Sailus, BCCC, Coordinator of Pastoral Care; the Right Rev. Archpriest James G. Hayer, and Atty. William Conaboy, CEO of Allied Services Integrated Health System.

IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MD...

Bishop Kurt Visits Maryland Mission Church



The faithful of the Montgomery County, MD, Mission, gather around their Chief Shepherd, Bishop Kurt, with Father John Basarab and Deacon Peter Turko and mission servers.



Bishop Kurt blesses the faithful as Father John Basarab and Deacon Peter Turko pray attentively

DEACON LEWIS RABAYDA TO BE ORDAINED TO THE HOLY PRIESTHOOD Saturday, January 30, 2016 · Annandale, VA



Bishop Kurt will ordain Deacon Lewis Michael Rabayda to the Priesthood of Jesus Christ on Saturday, January 30, 2016, at 10 a.m.

The ordination will take place at Epiphany of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church in Annandale, VA, where Deacon Lewis was attending when he accepted his vocation to serve the Chruch and where Father John Basarab is Pastor.

An Invitation

Father John Basarab and the Parish Family of Epiphany of Our Lord welcome all to attend the Ordination of Deacon Lewis to the Priesthood.

If you would like to attend the reception afterwards, please contact the Parish Office of at 703-573-3986 by Monday, January 11th.

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UNITED STATES

20 YOUNG MEN "COME AND SEE" THE BYZANTINE CATHOLIC SEMINARY

Exceptional young men from across the country recently gathered at the Seminary for a weekend of discovery, prayer, and discernment Reflection by Christopher LoGrippo, Westbury, NY

ver the weekend of October 16, 17, and 18, I had the privilege of attending the "Come and See" Retreat at the Byzantine Catholic Seminary of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Pittsburgh, PA. From the moment I walked in the doors to the moment I left on Sunday evening, I felt extremely welcomed and part of a new family. It was so great to meet the other 19 retreatants coming from the Archeparchy of Pittsburgh and the Eparchies of Passaic, Parma, and Phoenix. Together, we found ourselves in deep prayer throughout the weekend and also had many opportunities to speak candidly with the current seminarians about their journey. Now a senior in college, I have considered the priesthood since my youth, and being able to hear the different stories and perspectives of the seminarians was very helpful for my own discernment. Of course, we also had time for recreation, when we enjoyed some friendly competition during an exciting game of bowling complemented with ice cream. One of my favorite parts of the retreat was visiting local Byzantine parishes for Sunday Liturgy with our respective Seminarian Mentors. During my visit to Saint Stephen Byzantine Catholic Church in North Huntingdon, PA, I was able to further experience life as a seminarian and priest through teaching, worship, and service to the community. I feel so blessed to have had this "Come and See" experience and I look forward to continuing my discernment through prayer and conversation with the seminarians.

SAVE THE DATE

The Fourth Annual Women's Retreat

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

The Shrine of Our Lady of Consolation Retreat Center Carey, Ohio March 4th, 5th and 6th, 2016 Retreat Master Father Thomas J. Loya Contact Joan Washburn for further information 419-798-9107



Further details will follow Sponsored by Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church

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

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

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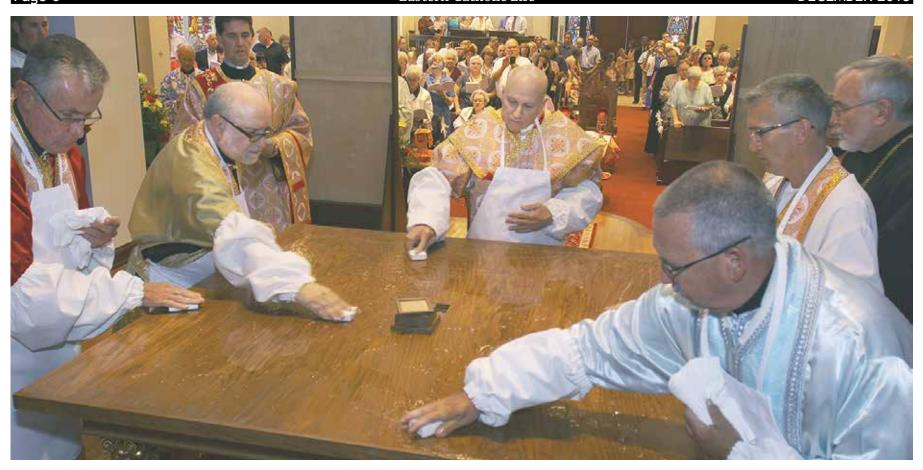
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Bishop Kurt, Father Ronald Hatton, pastor, and former pastors Fathers Michael Popson, Jack Custer, and John Cigan, wash the altar with soap and water, wine, and spikenard mixed with water before the relics are set in place.

Saint Nicholas Parish, Danbury, CT, is Dedicated

Parish church rises from the ashes



Bishop Kurt is presented the traditional Bread and Salt by Trustee Stephen Hrabcsak and Stephany Fanning



Holy Relics of the Blessed Bishop-martyr Theodore Romzha and of Men and Women Martyrs of the Catacombs were prepared for placement in the Altar



Over 200 faithful, including 17 priests, came to share in the celebration

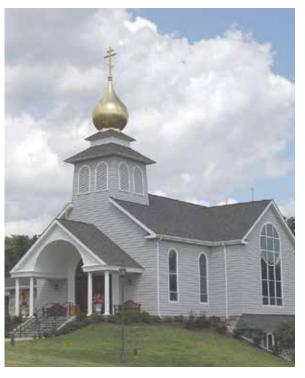


The corners of the altar are sealed with icons of the Four Evangelists



Banquet: Deacon Stephen Russo, was Master of Ceremonies for the banquet in The Amber Room Colonnade after the Divine Liturgy

wo years after Saint Nicholas Parish was ▲ destroyed by fire, Bishop Kurt came to dedicate the newly rebuilt church. On August 16, 2015, over 200 parishioners, clergy, and friends of the parish gathered together to celebrate this joyous day. Bishop Kurt consecrated the altar with relics of Blessed Bishop-martyr Theodore Romzha of Mukachevo and martyrs of the Roman Catacombs, chrismated the church, and celebrated the first Hierarchical Divine Liturgy in the church. Concelebrating were Father Ronald Hatton, pastor, former pastors Fathers John Cigan, Michael Popson and Jack Custer, Deacons Stephen Russo and Nicholas Dadonna, and servers of Saint Nicholas Parish. Cantor Randy Weyant was assisted by Cantor Glenn Sedar of Saint Mary Parish, Hillsborough, NJ and, choir members of Saint Nicholas. Father Edward Higgins and Deacon Lewis Rabayda served as Masters of Ceremonies. Father Michael Wytish, of the Archeparchy of Pittsburgh, created the vestments specially for the dedication. After the celebration, the assembly repaired to the Amber Room Colonnade for a dinner reception. The Amber Room served as host for the parish Sunday Divine Liturgies during construction.



May God grant to all the parishioners of Saint Nicholas peace, health and happiness for many years!



The katasarkion, symbolizing the burial shroud of Jesus, is placed over the consecrated altar



The relics are chrismated before placing them into the center of the Altar



Bishop Kurt poses with Father Ronald, Deacon Stephen Russo, Assistentia and servers

EPARCHIAL FAMILY DAYS OF RECOLLECTION

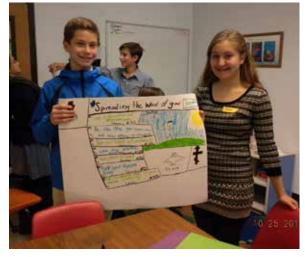
Concluding celebrations By Ann M. Koshute, MTS



Father Ron Hatton, pastor of Saint Nicholas Parish, Danbury, CT, with attendees of the Day of Recollection at his parish.



In Hillsborough, NJ, the children show off the fruits of their participation in the Day of Recollection...



..and in Annandale, some of the older children show their participation in that prayer-filled occasion

The Day was a great opportunity to re-**I** new me in the Faith and meet people from other parishes," said Olga Kowal of the Family Day of Recollection hosted by Saint Nicholas Parish in Danbury, CT. Father Ron Hatton in Danbury, Father John Basarab at Epiphany of our Lord in Annandale, VA, and Father Ed Cimbala at Saint Mary in Hillsborough, NJ, hosted the final three Eparchial Family Days of Recollection. The Days were part of the Eparchy's celebration of the World Meeting of Families, and brought together parishioners from Connecticut, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Virginia. Claire Cooke participated in the teen activities at Epiphany of our Lord and said, "I am looking for more spirituality in my life. I was excited to go on a retreat with my whole family! It was also nice to be away from my parents to be with my peers because it is great to see other people my age searching for God."

Though the Days of Recollection are over, the work they began isn't! Each of us is called to witness Christ's love in our families and to the world. No matter who we are, our family situation, our abilities or our age, each one of us is a son or daughter of God belonging to His family. We are signs of His love in a world in need of the peace and comfort that are only found in communion with each other. In these Days of Recollection, the people of Eparchy of Passaic showed that we are a Family, and enthusiastic witnesses to our faith in Jesus Christ!



Father John Basarab, Pastor, and Deacons Peter Turko and Elmer Pekarik welcomed the pilgrim faithful to the Day of Recollection at Epiphany of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church in Annandale, VA



Father Edward Cimbala, Pastor, and Deacon Charles Laskowski, welcome the assembled faithful to the Day of Recollection at Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church, Hillsborough, NJ



CATHEDRAL OF SAINT MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL CELEBRA

Passaic, NJ

n Sunday, November 8, the feast of Saint Michael the Archangel was filled with memories and gratitude as the faithful of Saint Michael Cathedral in Passaic, NJ, celebrated their 125th parochial anniversary.

The day was marked with a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy celebrated by Bishop Kurt Burnette, Bishop of Passaic, Father Jack Custer, Rector of Saint Michael Cathedral; Father Jody Baran, Assistant; Father Robert Wisniefski; and Deacon Nicholas Daddona. There followed a festive banquet at the Venetian in Garfield, attended by nearly three hundred area clergy, parishioners, civic dignitaries and friends. Thomas Duch, Esq., served as toastmaster for the banquet, and lively Rusyn music was provided by the Pitaši Ensemble.

Close to Ellis Island and bursting with industries in need of cheap labor, Passaic was one of the most popular destinations for Rusyn Greek Catholic immigrants from the 1880's through the aftermath of the Second World War. From humble beginnings in a second hand wooden chapel, the original congregation quickly grew to six hundred souls under the leadership of Fathers Alexander Dzubay and Nicephor Chanath and, in 1903, the sac-

rifices of working men and women with large families sufficed to build the present monumental temple, Passaic's second oldest Catholic Church. The parish flourished, despite world wars, economic depression, the plague of Communism in the European homelands and unfortunate church controversies in their new home.

Under the vigorous leadership of Father Michael Jackovics for a record thirty-one years, the parish cemetery and auditorium were founded and the mortgage burned. In 1953, Monsignor John A. Stim established Saint Michael Parochial School, where Sister Servants of Mary Immaculate educated children without charge until 1985. In 1963, Saint Michael Church was elevated to the rank of Cathedral, as the Eparchy of Passaic was established with then-Bishop Stephen J. Kocisko as the first eparchial Bishop, and Msgr. George Durisin as Rector of the new Cathedral. In 1985, the Cathedral expanded its outreach with a new 250-seat chapel, built in a style reminiscent of Carpathian wooden churches, along with classrooms and banquet facilities in Woodland Park, adjacent to the Eparchial Center.

Saint Michael parishioners have always responded generously to the special responsibilities that come with the dignity of a cathedral, hosting dozens of ordinations, special celebrations and countless visiting dignitaries. Under the twentysix year ministry of Father Marcel Szabo, the entire parish plant was refurbished and redecorated, and the parish reached out to the changing environment with a variety of new activities and ministries. Father Marcel led the Cathedral through the joyous celebrations of its centennial in 1990, the fiftieth anniversary of the Eparchy in 2013, and the enthronement of three Eparchial Bishops, as well as the more somber committal of Bishop Michael and Bishop Andrew to God's eternal

Contributing greatly to the beauty of God's house in Passaic is the ministry of the cantors and choir directors over the years: Professors Ignac Pelazzi, John Saxun, Theodore Ratzin, Anthony Racin, John Kahanick and John Klapko.

Nineteen priests have served as pastor or rector at Saint Michael's Cathedral since 1890 with thirty one assistants. 9,234 individuals have been baptized into Christ, 4,598 couples crowned in Holy Matrimony, and 3,820 souls laid to rest in the hope of the resurrection on the last day.



Emily and Kaitlyn Majewicz welcome Bi



Father Jack Custer, Cathedral Rector, ed







Dancing a czardas to the music of "Pitasi"

Toastmaster Tom Duch

TES 125 YEARS



shop Kurt with traditional bread and salt



Father Jody Baran offers a prayer of thanksgiving



Pitasi



Mayor Walter Wargacki of Wallington, NJ, proclaims "Saint Michael Cathedral Day"



Among the guests were local Byzantine, Melkite, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox clergy as well as the provincials of both the Sisters of Saint Basil and the Sister Servants of Mary Immaculate



LIFE, LOVE, AND THE HUMAN PERSON By Ann M. Koshute, MTS

HE COMES IN SILENCE

Awith me called the "Saint Andrew's Christmas Novena." The devotion, popular in the Western Church, is prayed daily from the feast of Saint Andrew until Christmas. It is a beautiful prayer, and it goes like this:

"Hail and blessed be the hour and moment in which the Son of God was born of the most pure Virgin Mary, at midnight, in Bethlehem, in the piercing cold. In that hour vouchsafe, I beseech Thee, O my God, to hear my prayer and grant my desires through the merits of Our Savior Jesus Christ, and of His blessed Mother. Amen."

This prayer, profound in its simplicity, tells not only the meaning of Christmas, but the



few years ago, a friend shared a prayer meaning of our lives in Jesus Christ. Close your eyes and picture the scene: night falls after a long day's travel. Mary, uncomfortable and tired, knows her time of delivery is imminent. Joseph, doing his duty by registering for the census, feels the weight of responsibility for the care of the wife he brought so far from home, and the child who's on his way. Searching the crowded city, the couple finally finds a cave in which to rest and wait. It's quiet and cold. Finally, the child is born, but not just any child: the Word of God spoken as a helpless infant. The silence of the night is interrupted by the cries of the Child, the low hum of His mother's comforting song, and Joseph softly stroking the newborn King's head. Once again the quiet, and only Heaven really knows the wonder, the miracle of God's love that the Earth will puzzle over and misunderstand as the Child grows.

> In our "traditional" experience of Charlie Brown Christmas specials, "Midnight Mass," and the breaking of oplatky embossed with Nativity scenes, it's easy to embrace the "noise" of Christmas and lose the quiet contemplation and wonder. In our cozy kitchens, by the fireside, and snuggled in our beds we may forget the magnificence in the austerity of the Nativity of Christ. God becomes a man, the Creator becomes a creature, and the Son becomes a son. God breaks into time and history, into "the piercing cold" on a night a long time ago, in a place far away, yet into the very heart of the experience of each one of us.

> The one, true living God is not a concept or a distant Watcher. He is a Person: a relationship of love - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - who desires to be so close to us for all eternity that He comes to meet us "on our own turf." The Son

of God enters His creation as a baby, piercing not only the cold darkness of one night in history, but the cold, dark spaces of our human experience. Christmas shopping and gift-giving, baked ham and cranberry sauce, and the reunion of family and friends are an important and vital part of our Christmas experience. Worship in the Divine Liturgy and communion with each other are essential to the celebration. But so too is the quiet meditation, deep in each of our hearts, on the Word made flesh. Jesus became a man to save us - yes - to heal our spiritual infirmity – yes – and to conquer death - YES! Yet within the magnanimity of this saving act is the simple, subtle, unassuming truth of Emmanuel: God with us. When we are vulnerable, so is He. When we are weak and sick, so is He. When we laugh and when we cry, He is there.

As we wrap gifts and buy groceries, prepare feasts and make our way to Liturgy in the cold of night or the crisp early morning, let's remember to steal moments of quiet thought. The gifts are signs pointing to the Gift of God Himself. The feast and fellowship we share foreshadow the bountiful goodness He has prepared for us. The Liturgy is that place where we meet Him, face to face, as vulnerable in the Bread and Wine as He was in the manger, but no less physically and spiritually present. Our hearts are the place where He lives, if we prepare a place there for Him to rest with us.

"Hail and blessed be the hour and moment," and every moment of our lives, because God is **ECL** near.



SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES Father Jack Custer, S.T.D.

YES VIRGINIA, THERE IS A CHRISTMAS DONKEY (NUMBERS 22-24)

You won't find Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer in the Bible, nor the Little Drummer Boy for that matter, but there is some precedent for Dominick the Christmas Donkey. Sort of. Indirectly. Well, at least one of the Old Testament prophecies connected with Christmas includes a donkey. We find the whole story in Numbers 22-24.

In the last stages of the Exodus, the Israelites were passing through the plains of Moab (modern Jordan). The Moabite King Balak was none too happy to see this horde of strangers marching through his territory and so he hired a pagan prophet, Balaam, to curse them. Balaam is warned by God not to comply with the invitation

but, after refusing two of Balak's requests, he is given permission by God to accept the third invitation, provided he say only what God gives him

Travelling by donkey to Moab, Balaam encountered an angry angel of the Lord, apparently because Balaam was prepared to say whatever would earn him the most reward from Balak. Although Balaam saw nothing, his donkey saw the sword-wielding angel and shied away three times, injuring Balaam's foot. Twice, he struck the animal and finally threatened to kill it, at which point the donkey spoke up: "Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden, ever since I became yours, until today? Was I ever disposed to do this to you?" Balaam answered his talking donkey and simply admitted, "No." Then the prophet's eyes were opened and he saw the angel with the sword, who said, "Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come to oppose you, because your way is perverse before me. The donkey saw me and turned aside from me three times now. Had she not turned aside from me, I would certainly have killed you by now and let her live" (Numbers 22:32-33). We are meant to laugh at a pagan "prophet" whose donkey sees and speaks more correctly than he. Humbled, Balaam continues on to Moab having agreed to say only what the Lord God tells him

Three times King Balak asks Balaam to curse the Israelites. Three times, despite elaborate rituals, which again are intended to make us laugh at pagan folly, Balaam blesses rather than curses the Israelites. Finally, in his fourth attempt, Balaam says this: "I see him, but not now. I behold him, but not near. A star shall come out of Jacob; a staff shall arise out of Israel.... Out of Jacob one shall have dominion... (Numbers 24:17-19; on that "dominion" see Isaiah 9:6 and Daniel 7:14). This is a prediction of the coming of the Messiah, a descendant of one of the sons of Jacob. The star, which the pagan Magi of the East (Matthew 2:2)

identify immediately as "his star," was recognizable to them because of this ancient prophecy. In fact, archaeological evidence from the 8th century BC, found in Jordan, shows that Balaam was well known centuries after his death. The star predicted by Balaam is the star of Bethlehem (Matthew 2:9). Were it not for the donkey who was more perceptive than her master, he might never have seen it.

Another donkey makes an appearance at the other end of our Lord's earthly ministry: Jesus enters Jerusalem six days before the Passover of His death and resurrection, riding the donkey

predicted by Zechariah 9: 9-10: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, shout, O daughter of Jerusalem. Behold, your king is coming to you. . .lowly and riding on a donkey. . .his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth." Once again, the donkey bespeaks humility and the prophet foretells the Messiah's dominion over all. **ECL**



Understanding Icons

Father Joseph Bertha, Ph.D.

THREE ICONS OF CHRIST

Countenancing God in the Refulgence of Christ's Glory

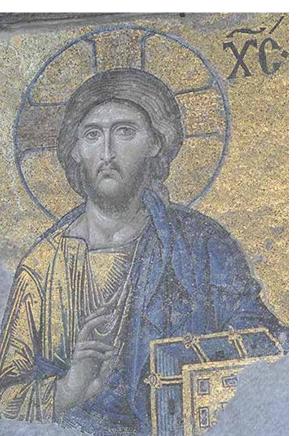
Installment 4 of 12

The three other of the five senses, namely smell (the nose), hearing (ears) and taste (the mouth) as they are portrayed on the countenance of Christ, indirectly portray the infinite mercy of God manifest in this world.

The nose as portrayed in icons not only of Our Lord but of all figures is shaped long and slender. The sense of smell is described in the short prophecy of Jonah. In chapter 4:2 we read Jonah's prophetic words about our sense of smell: "I knew that you were a merciful God, slow to anger, rich in mercy." This words in Aramaic/ Hebrew have a double entendre. First they signify exactly what they state, God is rich in mercy. Secondly, they mean that the person who has a long and slender nose, i.e. slow to anger, is God-The sense of smell is the like in countenance! perception of the sweet-smelling fragrance of the clouds of incense which rise heavenward and are no longer visible. However, the residue lingers in the church, exuding that particular church scent that we can perceive even with our eyes closed tight. The high priest offers up the burnt offering in atonement of sins, covering it with manifold layers of resinous incense. The Lord, as a sign of

His acceptance of this sacrifice, fills the Holy of Holies and the sanctuary with the aroma of the fragrance of incense to indicate that He has forgiven our sins.

In 2 Corinthians 2:15, Saint Paul writes: "For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing." I was once riding with two other priest brothers in a car bringing a woman to the bus station who had no idea how she had arrived at the Mercy Shrine at Stockbridge, MA. I had to make room for her to sit next to me in the back seat. Immediately upon entering the car she exclaimed: "You priests smell different than other priests." All three of us looked at each other and remarked that we had indeed showered in the morning, but the woman's remarks pointed to a deeper reality, she perceived the aroma of the fragrance of Christ in the forgiveness of sins which priests grant in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Believers exude a certain aroma, the sweetness of the forgiveness of sins. With the depiction of the sense of smell, the nose, iconographers describe the long enduring mercy of God.



13th Century Icon from Hagia Sophia, Istanbul, Turkey

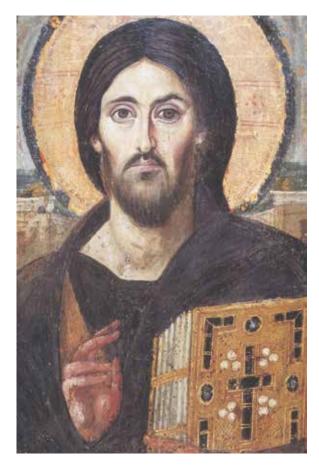
The ears are always depicted as large and receptive to hearing and listening to the word of God. The angels are charged with the mission of being all ears to listen and obey, and care out the works of God's mercy. Hearing and listening is frequently exhorted to us by Our Lord during his preaching: Let those who have ears listen! When we hear the words of the sacred scripture we can understand, and visualize how Christ worked the fourteen works of mercy. They include:

Corporal works of mercy

- 1. Feed the Hungry
- 2. Give drink to the thirsty
- 3. cloth the naked
- 4. shelter the homeless
- 5. visit the sick
- 6. ransom captives
- 7. bury the dead

Spiritual works of mercy

- 1. instruct the ignorant
- 2. counsel the doubtful
- 3. Admonish the sinner
- 4. bear wrongs patiently
- 5. forgive offences willingly
- 6. comfort the afflicted
- 7. pray for living and the dead



6th Century Icon from Saint Catherine's, Sinai, Egypt



15th Century Icon from Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, Russia

The significance of the Cruciform Halo particular to Christ

Every icon of Our Lord shows Him with a cruciform halo, inscribed in the three bars with the Greek letters: ó åv. Literally this translates as "I am Who am," or YHWH (Yahweh) the sacred tetragrammaton or four letter abbreviation of the name of God.

When God appears to Moses in the burning bush, (Exodus 3:13-15) He reveals His sacred name to the intercessor and priest. When Moses asks Him who do I tell the people that You are? He replies: I am Who am, YHWH. This title is considered to be so sacred that Jewish printed editions of Exodus do not even spell the letters but leave a gap. The High Priest on Yom Kippur used to pronounce this name once a year, petitioning God to forgive sin.

Such high regard for the name of God is derived also from the first of the ten commandments, you shall not take My name in vain. Jesus in the Gospel of Saint John employs this formula seven times, calling Himself:

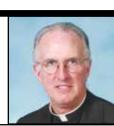
- And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst" (John 6:35).
- Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life" (John 8:12).
- "I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture" (John 10:9).
- "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep" (John 10:11).
- Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live" (John 11:25).
- Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

• "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser" (John 15:1).

Jesus shows He is the promised Messiah the Holy One of God by the cross inscribed halo behind his countenance. This device particular to Him alone is a powerful demonstration of God the Father's love for all humanity by sending His Only Begotten Son to die for our sins and to bestow His great mercy on the world.

Another echo of the tetragrammaton is found in the IC XC designation on either side of Christ. These four Greek letters are an abbreviation of Iasous Christos. Out of respect for the Jewish prohibition of the pronunciation of the Sacred Name, icon painters have continued through the ages to abbreviate the Holy Name of Our Beloved Lord. When we pray the Jesus prayer we pronounce the sacred name in the context of the forgiveness of sins: "O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, Have Mercy on me a sinner. **ECL**

CATECHETICAL REFLECTIONS



Father Robert F. Slesinski, Ph.D.

OMG: A SHOUT IN THE STREET?

The Wonder of Knowledge Continued: Installment 9 of 9

In conceiving philosophy as midwifery, Plato cannot but inquire of his interlocutor, Theaetetus, as to the nature of knowledge and their inability to give an actual definition of it, let alone a proper accounting: "Are we in labor, then, with any further child, my friend, or have we brought to birth all we have to say about knowledge?" (201b). Plato's dialogue Theaetetus does not go beyond this query. But our task now is to delve into this matter more deeply and to try to draw out implications from the fact of human knowing for human self-understanding.

The act of knowing as a fundamental, intrinsic given of all human experience is, as Plato clearly—intuitively—grasped, a primary—even better, ultimate—component of experience that cannot be reduced to anything else. As such it cannot be defined, but that does not mean that it cannot be understood. Even Theaetetus in his eponymous dialogue grasped this point, as human knowing is at one with the human mind; it is its concomitant. Put otherwise, the act of knowing can only be grasped by the human mind in itself and not through anything else. It is, in fine, an ultimate, i.e., irreducible, given of human experience.

Significantly, as we all know, the experience of knowing—the fact of knowledge—is at one with human life itself. We have absolutely no contact with the world beyond us without knowledge. We participate in the world order—personally, interpersonally, empirically—through our knowledge. Without knowledge we would be hermetically sealed within ourselves—no contact, "no nothing," with reality—with us living in

an absolute prison.

But we all know in our knowledge we know we have actual, vital contact with reality. In knowledge we stand before reality. In the act of knowing we transcend—go beyond—ourselves, having a true contact with that which is beyond ourselves. In fine, in our act of knowing and the fact that we do, indeed, have true knowledge, we have a true intentional—i.e., a mind-focused—partaking of the world order. In the act of knowing, in other words, we have an intentional awareness of the world; in cognitional contact with the world we know, at once, that although we are in some sense independent of the world, we truly grasp that in the end we are truly co-dependent on the world and especially on the human others who occupy it. This, we could say, is the first mark of knowledge. Beyond any mechanical causal connection with the world, we mentally—intentionally—participate in it. In a word, we are no mere physical objects in the world; nay, we are knowing human subjects.

A second intrinsic character of human knowing comes to the fore at the same time. In our acts of knowing we are receptive beings. The world presents itself to us; it comes to us as a gift. We do not, in other words, "impose" our mental constructs upon the world as is done in typical, "idealist" conceptions of human knowing. Knowledge is precisely a gift to us; we have no right to it as such. In our intentional participation in the world order, reality itself presents itself to us as a gift to be savored. We have no dominance over it as a last word. No, we must listen to it to gain true knowledge. The Russian poet, F. I. Tiutchev,

again, could not have been more prescient:

Nature is not what you think, Not an empty, soulless face, It has a soul, it has freedom, It has love, it has a language.

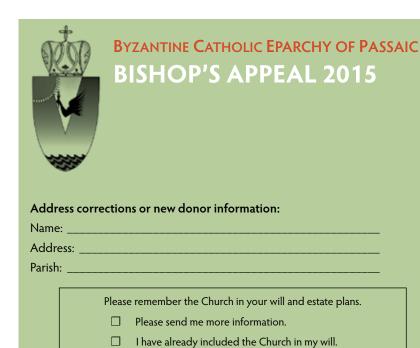
But if the act of knowing is essentially receptive, it does not mean that it is essentially marked by passivity. To the contrary, in his or her other acts of transcendence before reality as a knowing subject, the human person is fully engaged in the world. This aspect of active personal involvement in the act of is, therefore, a third intrinsic mark of the cognitional process. To know, in other words, we must commit ourselves to gaining knowledge. Put otherwise, we must collaborate with reality in order to penetrate into it and comprehend something of its "language" to us.

With this "humanistic" understanding of human cognition, what more can we say about human being? Well, for starters, in the act of grasping the essential gift character of knowledge, we fully admit our non-dominance over the world. Somehow in our implicitly acknowledged dependency on the world for our knowledge, we admit our creaturehood at the same time. Ultimately speaking, we are not lords (or dames) unto ourselves. We are creatures, which, of course, means that we are dependent upon a Creator. OMG!, in our acts of knowledge that brings us out of ourselves into the very presence of a reality before and beyond us we implicitly also acknowledge an even superior Source of this knowing contact with reality, but from Whom, though Whom, and with Whom we have our being. **ECL**

BISHOP'S APPEAL 2015

- "Year of Mercy"





In gratitude to God and to honor my commitment to the Church,
I have prayerfully considered my gift to the Eparchy of Passaic
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One Time	Plec	ige	Amount	or:		6	Monthly Payments
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SEASONAL REFLECTIONS



Monsignor John. T. Sekellick, JCL

Ветнгенем

As the solemn celebration of the holy Nativity of Our Lord and Savior draws near this month, our thoughts focus intently on many of the individuals involved with it such as Jesus' mother, the ever-virgin Mary; His foster-father, Joseph; the three Magi (or Kings) led by a bright star; the shepherds tending their sheep by night; the Angel who proclaimed to them the holy birth; the wicked King Herod, jealous that a new King had been born in Bethlehem within his territory.

Bethlehem itself is located some five to six miles South – Southwest of Jerusalem in the Judean hills near the chief North-South route linking Jerusalem with Hebron and the Negeb. It is, of course, best known as the site of Jesus' holy birth. At that time, it was a small and politically insignificant village. It became important due to the prophet Micah who connected it symbolically with a future time of peace under a royal deliverer from King David's line (Micah 5:1-4). Aside from a passing reference in John's Gospel (7:4), the New Testament mentions the town only in the birth narratives found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke.

Rachel, the wife of Jacob, was buried nearby. Ruth and Naomi settled there. Bethlehem was King David's birth place and the place where the prophet Samuel chose and anointed him as the future king to succeed Saul. It became known as the "city of David" although its name means "House of Bread." There and in its environs, the slaughter of boys two years of age and under took

place following King Herod's orders subsequent to the visit of the three Wise Men who came in search of the new-born King.

Today approximately 25,000 people inhabit Bethlehem with an economy primarily tourist-driven which peaks during the Christmas season. It was destroyed by the Emperor Hadrian during a second century revolt but rebuilt after Christianity was allowed to flourish through the patronage of Empress Helena, mother of the Emperor Constantine who commissioned the great church of the Nativity in 327. Over the centuries, it was subject to various conquests.

In modern times, control of Bethlehem fell under the Ottoman Empire and passed from it to the British at the end of World War I. Since 1995, Bethlehem has been administered by Palestinian authority and now has a Muslim majority. Rachel's tomb (mentioned previously) is an important Jewish holy site found at its northern entrance.

A popular Christmas carol, "O Little Town of Bethlehem," tells in song its place in the story of Jesus' birth. It forms the lyrics of our own well known Slavic carol *Viflejemi novina* ("In the Town of Bethlehem") and is featured prominently in our liturgical texts such as the following found in the pre-festive Vespers of December 22: "O Bethlehem, adorn yourself! Sing, O city of Zion! Rejoice, O wilderness! Be filled with joy because the star goes ahead into Bethlehem, announcing Christ Who desires to be born. The cave receives

Him Whom nothing can contain. The manger prepares to receive the eternal Life. Therefore, let us all sing and cry out: Christ God, You are now born for our sakes; have mercy on us and save our souls."

May the Prince of Peace to be born now in Bethlehem bestow on you abundant blessings at His holy birth. **ECL**





SCHOOL OF PRAYER

Father G. Scott Boghossian

When You Don't Feel Like Praying

any people realize the importance of Many people realized spending time in prayer. They make some attempt to pray, but quickly get discouraged. The truth of the matter is that prayer is hard work. It's not that fancy words or elaborate sentences are needed. Rather, spending time in prayer every day, consistently, as a personal discipline is no simple matter. It is not always pleasurable, fun, or entertaining. Once we make up our mind to pray every day, we will find a thousand and one other things to do, things that are more stimulating, or seem more rewarding, or offer some immediate gratification. Sometimes we just don't feel like praying.

But why isn't prayer pleasurable? It can be, and for many people, it is, at least initially. The saints tell us that sometimes new converts, people who are starting out on the path of repentance, actually do feel quite a bit of pleasure in pursuing spiritual things. When they talk to God, tears of devotion flood their eyes, or they experience a special feeling of closeness to the Lord. What is happening here? God is being merciful and granting sensedominated, carnal people spiritual delights that will begin to lure them away from sinful pleasures and earthly things. When we break with our old life and start the new life of Christian discipleship, we are like little children who need to be motivated and drawn with spiritual pleasures into living a holy life.

Do you know someone experiencing a lot of pleasure in prayer? If so, don't be envious. "Why don't I feel like that? Why is God favoring them with this and I don't experience the same things?" It may be that God knows that you don't need those feelings. If you are someone full of devotion and sweetness in prayer, don't look down on a brother or sister for whom prayer is a bit of a struggle. Be grateful. If God didn't give you those wonderful feelings, perhaps you wouldn't be praying at all, would fall into serious sin, and end up in hell. If prayer is difficult and dry for you, realize that God is calling you to overcome your flesh and that whether or not you are praying well is not at all dependent on how you feel when you

"I am so distracted!" Don't give up, involuntary distraction is not a sin, and God is pleased with your continual efforts to return your attention to Him after being distracted in prayer. Saint Francis de Sales says that half an hour spent in prayer while continually trying to banish distractions is a prayer well made.

Feelings by their very nature are temporary. God is interested in our will. Do we choose to pray, to read, to attend services, out of a decision to love God and put Him first or because of the delightful feelings we experience? Do we obey God's commandments because it makes us feel good or because we have made a personal commitment to live out our baptismal promises, and follow Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior?

Forget about feelings, because feelings come and go. The great saints often experienced long seasons of terrible dryness in prayer. Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Saint Jane de Chantal, and many other saints experienced great dryness and difficulty in prayer. Dryness and darkness in prayer are often how God purifies and perfects His Saints.

Thank God for feelings of devotion, but what God wants is our will. He wants us to put Him first, and to overcome our sinful selfishness. He wants us to learn how to love and to be conformed to Jesus Christ. Authentic prayer, with or without spiritual feelings, will eventually produce Christlikeness in us. Your goal is to become a saint! To become a saint you must pray, whether you feel like it or not. No matter how you feel, keep praying! ECL

THE BYZANTINE CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF PASSAIC subscribes to the

- Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People -

adopted by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The Eparchy, within all its parishes, institutions and programs, is committed to assuring a safe environment in ministry for its children and young people that conforms to Charter requirements.

> For further information regarding the Eparchial Safe Environment Program please contact: Father David J. Baratelli, Ed.S., M.Div. • Safe Environment Program Coordinator • 973.890.7777 Dr. Maureen Daddona, Ph.D. • Eparchial Victim Advocate • 516.457.5684



FAITH AND COMMUNITY ISSUES

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

SUICIDE AMONG ADOLESCENTS

The Statistics

According to the studies researched and cited by Comer (2011), suicidal activity increases in frequency after age 14 than any earlier age; according to research by Van Orden and his colleagues (2008), as cited by Comer, 1,500 teens of the age brackets of 15 to 19 (7 out of every 100,000) commit suicide each year. According to Goldston and his colleagues (2008) as cited by Comer, at a minimum, 1 in 12 teens attempt suicide while 1 in 6 contemplated it. Fatal illnesses are ruled out among the young as very rare; this puts suicide as the third leading cause of death among teen-agers surpassed by accidents and homicides (Shane, 2007 as cited by Comer, 2011).

Teen suicide victims are also seen to suffer clinical depression, low self-esteem, feelings of hopelessness as do members of other age groupings. However symptoms of anger, impulsivity, addictions, alcohol or drugs also appear in the teens who attempt suicide, this according to Renaud and colleagues (2008) and Witte and colleagues

expand the problem, study has also discovered by Comer, 2011). that some teens who commit suicide suffer deficiencies in sorting and problem solving abilities (Brent, 2001, as cited by Comer, 2011). Capuzzi and Gross (2008), as well as Apter and Wasserman (2007) (as cited by Comer 2011), observe that suicidal teens often exhibit being under great stress possibly experiencing pressures over the long term in the areas of relationships (either poor or missing), poor or lacking parental relationships, isolation from peers and others in a socialization context.

Suicidal activity may also be triggered by emergent situations in which the teen may find himself or herself: for example, unemployment crisis of a parent or parents, medical illness finances gone awry on the family level or a young love lost (Orbach & Iohan, 2007 cited by Comer, 2011). One cause of suicide among teens is scholastic stress, the maintenance of high grades and the push to excel can be overwhelming whether the individual is an average or honors-level student

(2008) as cited by Comer (2011). To further (Ho and colleagues, 1995; Delisle, 1986 as cited

There is also the reality that being in the teenage years is enough to produce the levels of stress that can be conducive to suicide (King & Apter, 2003 as cited by Comer, 2011). The reasons for this kind of response is attributed to the rapid growth spurts that occur in the teen years which are earmarked with conflict, feelings of depression, tension and issues at home and school; the result being that the adolescent has the tendency to overreact to issues in ways that present as supersensitive or angry with dramatics and a large dose of impulsivity that tend to outstrip other age populations so the chance of suicidal behavior as a response to stressful experiences goes up (Comer, 2011 cites Greening et al., 2008 for this data). As cited by Comer, Apter and Wasserman (2007) imply that adolescent suggestibility and their drive to imitation of another, suicide attempters included, arranges the scenario for suicidal activity. Conrad (1992) as cited by Comer, found in his research that a study revealed that

"93 percent of adolescent suicide attempters had known someone who had attempted suicide" (Comer, 2011, p.247).

Teen Suicide: Attempts vs. Completions

Comer (2011) states that a higher percentage of teens attempt suicide than actually carry it to completion. The ratio may be as high as 200 to 1.



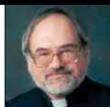
Backed by the research of Apter and Wasserman (2007) as well as Leenaars and his colleagues (2001) Comer states the cause of such a large number of attempts as opposed to completed suicides appears to point to possible uncertainty as opposed to older aged people who attempt suicide. While some do perish in the attempts many simply use suicide as the stage upon which they proclaim their desperation, need for clinical help or as a lesson to be learned by another who may have injured the person in some way so suicide becomes the means for I'll-teach-them-a-lesson. .. type of experience (Comer cites Apter & Wasserman, 2007; Leenaars et al., 2001). Research shows that up to 50 percent of teen attempters at suicide repeat the actions anew and according to Wong and colleagues (2008) and Borowsky and colleagues (2001) as many as 14 percent are successful at the suicide attempt (cited by Comer 2011).

What makes the rate of attempted suicide so high among the teenage and even among the young adult scene? Comer (2011) points to several factors among them societal issues as causative. Comer proposed the job market scenario as a prime example. Citing from the works of Holinger and Offer (1993, 1991, 1982) as the numbers of the teen and young adult population rises, so does the competition for gainful employment, college entrance, scholarships and honors

academically and athletically, the proportion of shattered dreams and devastated ambitions increases dramatically. Other studies reveal the possibilities of weakened ties in family life, leading to rejection or alienation experiences becoming commonplace. The pain of such experiences is deadened through the use of alcohol easily available combined by the presence of the street drug market and peer pressure to use them as a means of escape (Brent, 2001; Cutler et al., 2001 as cited by Comer, 2011).

Another issue that contributed to the suicide attempts is the media's coverage of teen and young adult suicides. The vivid detail given for media hype may become instead the seedbed for copycat behavior among the teen and young adult population (Cheng et al., 2007; Wertheimer, 2001 as cited by Comer, 2011). A study done by Maris (2001) found a 7 percent rate increase in completed suicide attempts among teens in New York during the week that followed a television film on suicide contrasting sharply to a 0.5 percent in adults during the same week (cited by Comer, 2011). The factors influencing teen and young adult suicide are multiple and complex. In the next segment the issue of multicultural backgrounds will be explored to reveal how of multicultural issues factor into the consideration and carrying out of the act of suicide among teens and young adults.

THE BYZANTINE LITURGY



By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD

THE NAME OF GOD

↑ Then we come to fullness of faith in God, **V** we become aware that God is not simply an unconscious "ground of being," or "force of nature" but Himself the Creator of all personhood, as Dionysius said, "mind beyond mind, word beyond speech," "the life of the living, the being of beings," who makes us to be who we are, and with whom we must have a relationship to be, to live and to think. If, therefore, God is essential personhood, inevitably we must ask the question of Him, "Who are You, what is Your name?" We use the word "God" as a name, but this is more a title of what God is. When he was called by God to win the freedom of his people from slavery, it was the Great Prophet Moses who asked this question: "But," said Moses to God, "if I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you, 'and they ask me, 'What is His name?' what do I tell them?" God replied to Moses: 'I am who I am. Then he added: This is what you will tell the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you.' (Exodus 3:13-14)"

In a certain way, God replies to Moses indirectly. God does not have a name like creatures have. His very name is His being. He Is. The people in Moses' day did not have the philosophical system the Greeks were later to develop and which has formed our ways of thinking. God's name is who He is and how He acts as God. It is not a passive name, but a name that accomplishes God's creative activity, for He Is and so in Him everything else has its existence by his creative being, acting always to keep all that is in being. The name of God is not passive and static, but active and dynamic. It has the nature of goodness. Thus, God reveals his name more fully to Moses on Mt. Sinai, "The Lord came down in a cloud and stood with him there and proclaimed

the name, 'Lord.' So the Lord passed before him and proclaimed: 'The Lord, the Lord, a God gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in love and fidelity.' (Exodus 34:5-6)"

We see here the use of the word "Lord" for God. In the Jewish faith, the name of God, "I AM," revealed to Moses was all-holy. The name of God was so sacred that it was never to be pronounced. The holiness of God's name was taught by Jesus in the basic prayer of a Christian, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be thy name." Since it was never said, its pronunciation was disputed. We think now it most likely was said "Yahweh," although older texts sometimes use "Jehovah." Whenever this sacred name appeared in the revealed texts, the pious Jew would substitute the word "Adonai," which we translate "Lord." In the scriptures, then, "Lord" is the name given to God and is a synonym for his holy name, though the Greek word for "Lord," which is "Kyrios," is also used as an honorific for some human beings.

The Byzantine Liturgy does use the sacred name of God in certain solemn prayers, not in its Hebrew form, but translated into Greek. It is the beginning of the Anaphora of Saint Basil. We address God as "O You-who-are." This is very difficult to translate into English because to the ear it sounds like a sentence rather than the name of God, as if we were saying to God, "You are Master, Lord, God, Father Almighty." In our English translation, then, we have rendered it as "Eternal Being." This is because God "is", essentially He exists eternally, without beginning or end, in the fullness of being, Creator of all that is, therefore, "Eternal Being." We also use God's name in the solemn dismissal for the morning and evening prayer of the Church, Matins and Vespers. Here the Name of God is given to Jesus, the Lord and God, and we pray, "Blessed is Christ our God, the One-who-is, always, now and ever and forever." This expresses our faith in the Trinity, that truly, the Father is God, Jesus is God and the Holy Spirit is God, so that they can all be called by the name of God.

Jesus uses this name in the Gospel of Saint John. "So the Jews said to Him, 'You are not yet fifty years old and you have seen Abraham?' Jesus said to them, 'Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham came to be, I AM. 'So they picked up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid and went out of the temple area. (John 8:57-59)" We see here that his listeners understood immediately that Jesus was giving the divine Name to Himself, and that He was claiming to be eternal. They considered this to be blasphemy, and they were ready to apply the punishment for blasphemy, execution by stoning. Jesus also brought us to a greater understanding of God through his name. These are the "I am" sayings, for example, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. (John 14:6)," "I am the resurrection and the life, (John 11:25)," "I am the light of the world (John 8:12," and others. It is not surprising, then, that from the very beginning of our faith in Christ, he was addressed in prayer as God. The Name of God is essential for our faith, and again Jesus taught, "And whatever you ask in My name, I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything of Me in My name, I will do it. (John 14:13-14)" Therefore, every Sunday the Church in her prayer reminds us of the privilege we have of knowing God's name: "Having beheld the Resurrection of Christ, let us bow to the holy Lord Jesus Who alone is sinless...For You alone are our God, and we know no other. We call You by name." **ECL**



Spiritual Reflections

Deacon Lewis Rabayda

RECEIVING THE ULTIMATE GIFT

We all love receiving gifts. No matter what shape, color, or utility, gifts are a physical way of communicating our love for one another. We may not like the gift and it might be the wrong fit, but even an odd gift can show us how much the giver cares about us. The giver takes time from their busy lives to remember those they love and feel close to, and they go out of their way to pick out a card, or pick out a special item they think we would enjoy. The giver may even take the time to wrap it and hand it to us in person or to wait in line at the post office to make sure it gets to us from across the country. It might be our birthday, a holiday, a special event in our lives, just because, or the ultimate gift-giving occasion, Christmas; but each and every gift is a sign of affection.

When the giver is emotionally healthy, they give the gift without strings attached. They give freely and without expecting anything in return. All a grateful receiver has to do to reciprocate their affection for the giver is to say a very personal "thank you" (with the occasional accompanying hug) and the joy they share with the giver helps them to affirm a mutual affection. This is proper and just when we know who is giving us the gift and we have a physical thing in our hand or a knowable effect from someone's actions. But not all gifts are so easily understood.

The Magi traveled from the East to pay homage to and to worship the newborn King of the Jews in Bethlehem. They brought Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, and yet in this great sign of affection and worship, they had never met this new King. Because of their study of the sky and the Scriptures, the Magi knew that He was a person the world had never encountered before. They knew that this Child was to be the One the prophets spoke about, Who would bring great change to the world, Who would come to save the Israelites, and the rest of mankind. Their study and discovery of this star led them to selflessly seek out this newborn king and to give Him these luxurious gifts. But like any good gift giver, it is unlikely that these wise men were seeking anything in return, but rather that their gifts were out of honor and respect.

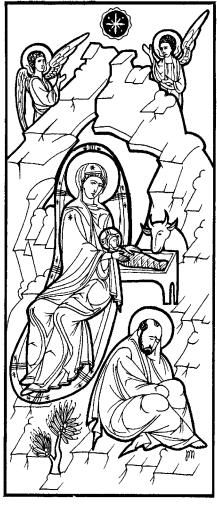
The Magi may have traveled a great distance by camel to place their gifts at the foot of the new king. But the furthest distance ever traveled to give a gift was that of Jesus Christ, who forever left His purely spiritual essence as being one in the Holy Trinity, to entering into His physical creation and becoming subject to it. Jesus showed great affection and humility towards us when He took on this fallen flesh with all of its limitations and challenges. And what is this gift that He traveled so far to

give? Jesus Christ came to freely offer us the gift of eternal salvation.

Since sin came into the world through the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, so too, did sin have to be expunged through human action. Since Eve first rejected God's will and partook of the forbidden fruit and then shared it with Adam, so too, the Theokotos (God Bearer) and Ever Virgin Mary had to first accept the will of God to bear "the Son of the Most High" in her womb. In this way, Jesus becomes the new Adam, by correcting the disobedience of God's will with His total obedience which led to His physical death on the cross. Since Jesus "offered up Himself" as the final sacrifice for sin, He gave us the gift of the cleansing of our sins, so that we too can enter into the eternal paradise.

Jesus, because of His unconditional and unending love for all of humanity, traveled from Heaven to the Cross, down into Hades and back up to Heaven to give all of us the greatest gift ever known. Jesus gave us a clean slate by wiping out the debt of our sin, and if we continue to sin, He still offers us His mercy. As recipients of this great gift, let us deeply reflect during this Philip's Fast leading up to the Feast of the Nativity on how we can thank God for what He has done for us. How can we write a thank-you note

that can match the enormity of the gift we have received? How can we express to God the joy we feel at knowing that we will be saved from the pain of this world? How can we give God that warm embrace to let Him know that we love Him, too? "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these by brethren, you did it to Me" (Matt 25:40). **ECL**



Icon of The Nativity

UPCOMING EVENTS FOR DECEMBER

Eparchial and Parish Events

Eastern Catholic Life

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- 6 28th Sunday after Pentecost * Solemnity of Our Holy Father Nicholas
- 8 Beginning of the Jubilee Year of Mercy * Solemnity of the Maternity of the Holy Anna

Solemn Holyday* Chancery closed

- 12 Theotokos of Guadalupe Patroness of the Americas
- 13 Sunday of the Holy Forefathers
 Opening of the Doors of Mercy at nine
 designated sites throughout the Eparchy
- 20 Sunday before the Nativity * Sunday of the Holy Ancestors
- Vigil of the Nativity of Our Lord Chancery closed

25 The Nativity of Our Lord, God, and Savior, Jesus Christ According to the Flesh

Solemn Holyday* Chancery closed. Christ is born! Glorify Him!

- 26 Synaxis of the Theotokos Solemn Holyday
- 27 Sunday after the Nativity * Holy Proto-Martyr and Archdeacon Stephen * Commemoration of David, Joseph, and James
- 31 Leave-taking of The Nativity of Our Lord Chancery closed