

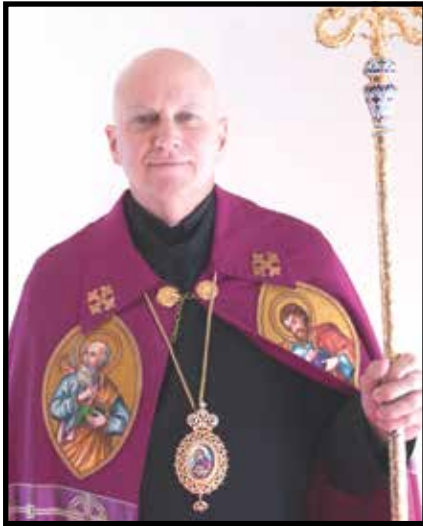


EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

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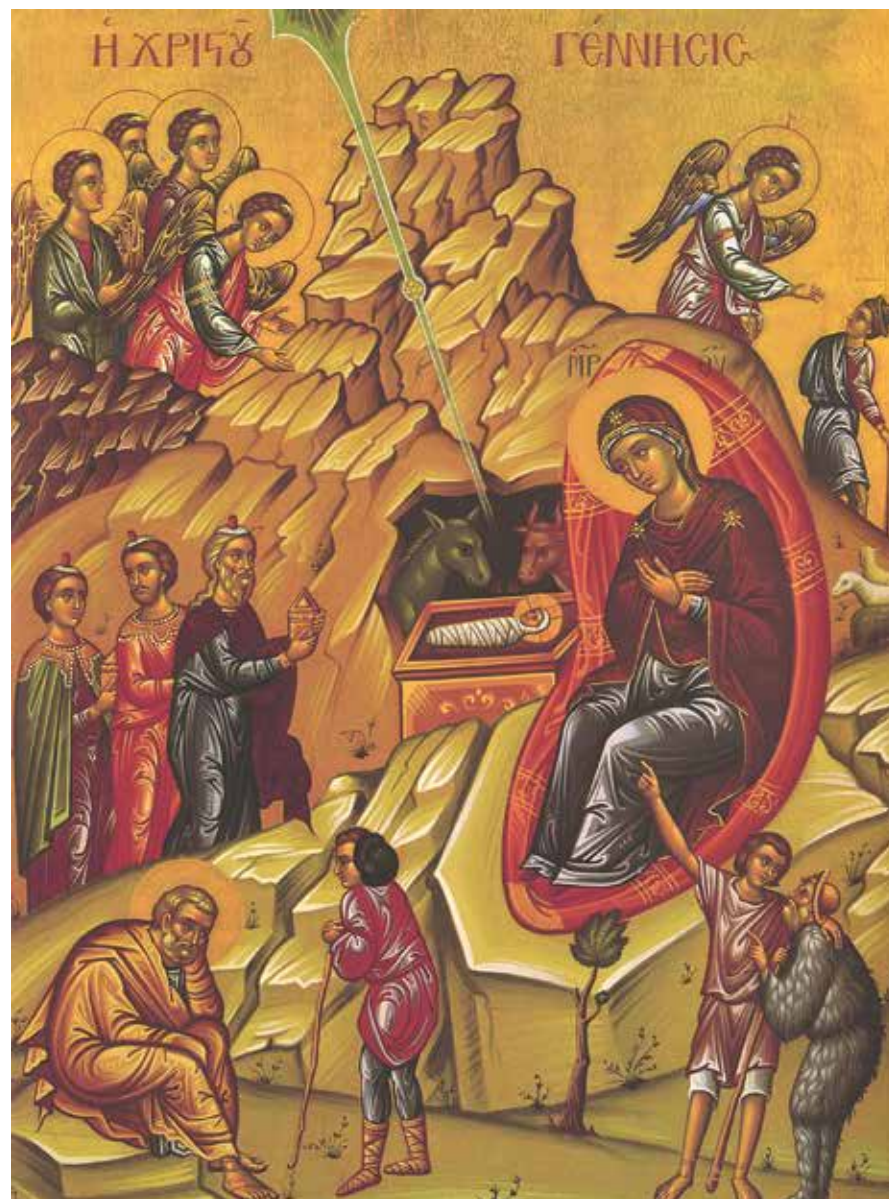
CHRISTMAS BELLS

Bishop Kurt's Reflection on the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord



“For there is one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of us all who is above all and through all and in all.” We read these words a few weeks ago from the Epistle to the Ephesians—Saint Paul tells us boldly that there is only One Christ, and therefore all Christians must be united. Nevertheless, there is beauty in diversity, and that is never more on display than at Christmas. As all the different kinds of Christians show off their Christmas traditions, it’s like a house full of exotic birds spreading out their many-colored feathers. The different churches compete in a dizzying kaleidoscope of images and music. We have our own music and rituals, but we often seem worlds apart because of our prohibition on the use of musical instruments. One thing I’m grateful for is that we have our own Christmas Carols, beautiful songs that outshine the western ones, and (thank God) have not been ruined by the shopping malls.

Although we don’t allow musical instruments inside our churches, there is one musical instrument that is used by Christians all over the world, and that is the Bell. Bells have become a symbol of Christian churches, and are especially popular at Christmas. Bells are also popular in Ukraine and Russia with their unique rhythmic call to prayers. Instead of swinging the bells to make them ring, the young men hit the bell rhythmically with a loose clapper on a rope. In my first parish, I purchased the movie *Andrei Rublev*. I found the movie depressing, but my Slavic parishioners borrowed



Icon of the Nativity of Our Lord

it, and they loved it. They enjoyed trying to understand some of the Russian, but the climax of the movie is the casting of an enormous bell.



The Bell “Daniel” from Saint Michael the Archangel Cathedral, Passaic, NJ

When they talked about the bell, I realized why my parishioners liked the movie so much—they were retired steelworkers!

In the English-speaking world, poets were popular at one time, and we had great poets. Nowadays, poetry has fallen on hard times in our civilization, but in eastern Europe, poets are still admired. In Russia, a famous poet can fill up a sports stadium for a reading of his own poetry. In smaller cities, a citizen will point out a statue of their own poet with great pride. When I attended a Russian New Year celebration in Florida many years ago, Yevgeny Yevtushenko, a famous poet, read his own poems and autographed

his book for me. When I returned to my parish in Portland, my Ukrainian parishioners wanted to see the autograph and touched the book like a holy relic. Here is the beginning of Yevtushenko’s poem “New York Taxis”:

*New York is all mankind in the same casserole.
Don't ask New York for mercy,
you'll get cooked anyway.
Crawling like yellow turtles,
flying like golden bullets,
New York taxis, taxis, taxis.”*
(translated by Albert Todd)

In the English language, we have three famous poems about bells, and one of them has a surprising connection with the greatest art of Eastern Europe.

In 1850, Alfred Lord Tennyson was made poet laureate of England, and in the same year he published a book of poems called *In Memoriam* that contained the poem, “Ring Out Wild Bells”. The poem rings out the old year, and in 32 lines it “rings out” many bad things and “rings in” many good things. This famous poem was set to music by the French composer Charles Gounod among others, and was quoted in a song by George Harrison. A Swedish translation, *Nyårsklockan*, is recited every New Year in Stockholm since 1897 and is now a major part of the New Year on Swedish television. Tennyson’s poem ends with:

*Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.*

The other two bell poems are by Americans. One of the most creative American authors was Edgar Allen Poe. It is unfortunate that he

Continued on page 2



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



CHRISTMAS BELLS

Continued from page 1

is associated nowadays with horror movies. Hollywood has trashed his reputation. He was considered a good poet and literary critic in his day and invented many new forms of literature. In 1848, he wrote a poem called "The Bells" which achieved popularity around the world. It inspired many musical compositions including three by the Scottish composer Hugh S. Robertson.

The surprising connection with Eastern Europe came about when the Russian poet Konstantin Balmont translated the poem into Russian, "КОЛОКОЛЬЧИКИ И КОЛОКОЛА". Balmont's translation into Russian inspired none other than the great composer Sergei Rachmaninoff who wrote a choral symphony in 1913 based on this poem! Rachmaninoff considered it one of his two favorite works, according to some, the other one being his *All-Night Vigil*. He wrote the symphony in Rome, Italy, at the same desk that was used by Tchaikovsky to compose.

Poe's poem is the longest and most complex of the three, and, in the end, the darkest. While the other two poems end with hope, his goes from life to death. His poem has four parts, the silver bells of a sleigh, the golden bells of a wedding, the brass bells of a fire alarm, and then the iron bell of a funeral knell. The four sections parallel the four classical ages of ancient mythology: the golden age, the silver age, the bronze age, and the iron age.

The third great poem takes us back to Christmas. We call the Christ-child the "Prince of Peace", and, at this time of year, we try to put aside our differences and our sorrows for some Christmas cheer. But try as we might, the sorrows of life intrude. About 150 years ago, our country was embroiled in a terrible war in which six hundred thousand Americans killed each other. Lincoln said that all of that bloodshed was payment for the sin of slavery. With the rioting today, it seems

there is still a debt owed for that sin.

At Christmas of 1863, in the middle of that war Henry Wadsworth Longfellow found himself similarly vexed. His beloved wife died a slow painful death from a house-fire in 1861. And then, his oldest son, Charles Appleton Longfellow, ran off to join the Union army without telling his father. Henry found out the whereabouts of this son when the commander contacted him from Washington, D.C. The father gave his permission, and Charles joined the 1st Massachusetts Artillery. Charles was sent home soon with malaria and typhoid fever. Recovering, he returned to battle, and on November 27, 1863, he was severely wounded at the battle of New Hope Church, Virginia. The family heard on December 1 and traveled to Washington to bring Charles home, arriving home on December 8. And so it was that Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, a recent widower, with the Civil War raging, and caring for his badly wounded eldest son, wrote a poem of hope and light in the pain of family tragedy and the darkness of human evil. His poem is sung now at Christmas in many settings, but most of them leave out some of the darkest verses about the war. It begins with a naïve view of Christmas:

*I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old, familiar carols play,
and wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!*

Then Longfellow describes the horror of a nation divided by hate and violence:

*Then from each black, accursed mouth
The cannon thundered in the South,
And with the sound
The carols drowned
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!
It was as if an earthquake rent
The hearth-stones of a continent,
And made forlorn
The households born
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!*

Next Longfellow describes his own personal hopelessness hearing the church bells:

*And in despair I bowed my head;
"There is no peace on earth," I said;
"For hate is strong,
And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"*

But despite his gloomy feelings, the great Christmas bells continue to ring, and they bring about a transformation in him. He remembers that Jesus Christ has conquered death, that God is more powerful than our evil, and love is more powerful than hate:

*Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The Wrong shall fail,
The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men."*

+Kurt Burnette



Another bell from Saint Michael the Archangel Cathedral, Passaic, NJ



FROM THE OFFICE OF THE BISHOP CLERGY APPOINTMENTS EFFECTIVE DECEMBER 14TH, 2016

Rev. Richard Rohrer is relieved of his pastoral duties in Saints Cyril and Methodius Byzantine Catholic Church in Cary, North Carolina and appointed Parochial Vicar of Holy Ghost Byzantine Catholic Church in Jessup, Pennsylvania.

Rev. Mark Shue of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Saint Josaphat is appointed Administrator of Saints Cyril and Methodius Byzantine Catholic Church in Cary, North Carolina.

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+SISTER STEPHANIE BAVOL, OSBM, ENTERS INTO THE ETERNAL EMBRACE

Remembered as the first iconographer of the community

Sister Stephanie (Elizabeth) Bavol quietly and peacefully entered into the fullness of life on Mon., Oct. 17. After retiring from active ministry due to health issues, Sister Stephanie resided at Mount Macrina Manor for the past eight years. Her cheerful countenance and acceptance of this change in her life was an inspiration to all who cared for her. She never failed to greet one with a smile and the question, "So, how are you doing?"

Sister Stephanie was born in Trenton, NJ, the daughter of the late John and Susan (Vasilko) Bavol. She entered the Sisters of Saint Basil from Saint Mary Church, Trenton, NJ, in 1941. Having made the decision to offer her life in service to God at the early age of 16, she remained faithful to this call for 76 years.

Sister Stephanie's life in ministry ranged from being prefect of boys and girls in Saint Nicholas Orphanage, to prefect at Mount Saint Macrina Academy, to being a teacher in the primary grades for over 25 years in the various places where the Sisters served. For ten years, with other Basilians including her sister, Sister Theresa, she was also

a familiar face at Camp Come Alive sponsored by the Eparchy of Passaic. Of her last and most beloved ministry, that of iconography, she wrote, "My last apostolate which is iconography—is the most prayerful and peaceful. I pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to guide and help me." Sister Stephanie, in fact, has the distinction of being the first iconographer in the community. In addition to this, Sister designed the community cross which can be seen in the photo. This uniquely designed cross was accepted as the official community symbol of the Sisters of the Order of Saint Basil internationally.

After receiving her degree in education and certification in Elementary Education and Art from Marywood College, she was privileged to pursue her study in art under Master Iconographer, Philip Zimmerman, with whom she also conducted workshops both in this country and abroad. Over the years, Sister Stephanie had been commissioned to write several icons for special occasions, one of which was presented to Pope Saint John Paul II by the late Archbishop Judson Procyk as a token of esteem and gratitude. Through prayer and inspiration, Sister also wrote an icon depicting the Call of the Apostles which became the official Vocation Icon of the Eparchy of Passaic at the time. These and many other commissioned icons and the several which grace the walls of the monastery near the chapel are testimony to Sister's gifts and God-given talents.

In his homily at the Funeral Divine Liturgy, Father Petro brought together the many aspects of Sister Stephanie's life as a Sister by comparing them to the changing seasons in nature. One

point focused on the beauty of the colors of autumn leaves. These brilliant colors are hidden during spring and summer, since chlorophyll is being manufactured all the time. Then the "leaf factory" slows down, and what has been hidden emerges in all its glory. So, too, Sister's earlier life in community found her busy in many ministries; but then, through her giftedness in art and her faith journey, an entire new ministry of iconography came into being. The richness which this brought to our Church has been noted above. Our prayer and belief now is that Sister Stephanie in her falling asleep in the Lord will now open her eyes to the beauty awaiting her in her new life.

Sister Stephanie was preceded in death by her parents; her sisters Mary Bavol, Ann Vanisko, and Margaret Mattaliano; and her brothers, John and Michael Bavol. In addition to her members in community, she is survived by her cherished sister, Sister Theresa, also a member of the Sisters of Saint Basil, and many devoted nieces and nephews.

The Parastas Service was concelebrated by Very Rev. Archpriest John G. Petro and Father Michael Huszti, Monastery Chaplain. In attendance were Fathers Ronald Larko and Stephen Wahal. The Funeral Divine Liturgy was concelebrated on Fri., Oct. 21, at 10:30 a.m. by Very Rev. Archpriest John G. Petro and Father Michael Huszti, Monastery Chaplain. Father Ronald Larko was in attendance. Interment followed in the Dormition Section of Mount Macrina Cemetery

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

BISHOP KURT BAPTIZES PRIEST'S DAUGHTER

By Laure Evans Marcin, Kingston, PA

Antonina Sophia Prodanets, born on May 27, 2016, daughter of Father Mykhaylo and Pani Ivanna Prodanets and sister to Stepan and Ivan Prodanets, was illumined with the Sacraments of Initiation by Bishop Kurt. The Divine Liturgy was celebrated at Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church, Kingston, PA, on July 17, 2016. Father Igor Vorontsov, of Saint Nicholas Church, White Plains, NY, served as godfather and Laure Evans Marcin of Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church of Kingston, PA, served as godmother.

Following the Baptism, Chrismation, and Divine Liturgy, the parishioners of Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church, Kingston, PA and Saint John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church, Wilkes-Barre Township, PA, along with family, friends and visiting clergy, were invited to a luncheon reception at The Knights of Columbus, Luzerne, PA. At the reception, all were able to meet our newest parishioner and guest of honor, Antonina Sophia.

Bishop Kurt blessed the food and, following a delicious meal, Father Mykhaylo thanked everyone for sharing in this joyous occasion. He then spoke about the importance of church and family. He talked about his family's gratefulness to his parishioners for becoming their adopted family in the United States.

The date of this happy occasion also marked the 15th wedding anniversary of Father Mykhaylo and Pani Ivanna. May God bless Antonina So-

phia and her family with many healthy, happy and blessed years.



Father Igor Vorontsov, Father Mykhaylo Prodanets, Bishop Kurt, Pani Ivanna, Laure Evans Marcin, and the Prodanets children



Bishop Kurt baptizes Antonia Sophia Prodanets



Bishop Kurt with Pani Ivanna and Antonia



PEOPLE YOU KNOW

IN HILLSBOROUGH...

On Sunday, November 20, Mrs. Patricia Kubik and the students in her Pre-K and Kindergarten class at Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church held their annual Thanksgiving party. The children, helped by Mrs. Kubik and the teenage assistants, made costumes and then shared with each other those things for which they were most thankful to God. This was followed by a festive Thanksgiving party. The pastor of Saint Mary Parish in Hillsborough, NJ, is Father James Badeaux.



IN ANNANDALE...

The Epiphany Men's Club at Epiphany of Our Lord Parish in Annandale, VA, where Father John Basarab is pastor, recently celebrates its 35th Anniversary with a special breakfast and awards ceremony. Also, the parish couples recently celebrated their wedding anniversaries at a Hierarchical Liturgy as part of the Eparchial wedding anniversary celebration.

Right: A highlight of the breakfast is presentation of "Joseph Koshuta Award," named after an Epiphany Founder and presented to a Men's Club member, whose unselfish service to the many needs of parishioners has consistently been an inspiration and example. This year's award was given posthumously to long-time member Jerry Mattingly. Flanking Jerry's widow, Betty Mattingly, are (l to r) Father John Basarab, Mattingly daughter Audrey, Betty Mattingly, daughter Stacy, and Men's Club President, Jack Kepick.

Below: Members of the Epiphany Men's Club gather after Divine Liturgy offered for deceased members. Eternal Memory!



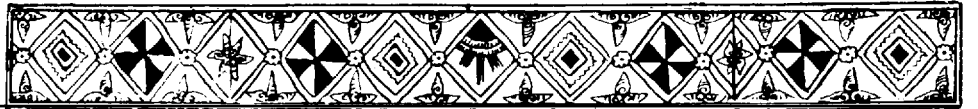
Bishop Kurt Burnette greets Sophia and Stephen Tanner, celebrating their 30th anniversary



The "Senior Jubilarians" cut the anniversary cakes at the celebration. Pictured here are Edward and Carol Gubanich (50 years) and Mary Ann and John Anthon (45 years)

AROUND THE EPARCHY

IN BELTSVILLE...



The parishioners of Saint Gregory of Nyssa Parish in Beltsville, MD, had their annual Slavic Food Festival on November 5th. The preparation took place for two months beforehand to make all of the ethnic foods necessary for sale during the event: kolachi, holupki, holuski, sauerkraut, as well as preparing pirohi, and kolbasi. Almost all of the parishioners have donated to the event either by monetary donations, ingredients, or countless hours of their precious time and effort to make the event a success. The event turned out to be a great success with more than expected attendance and all prepared foods were sold. Father Lewis Rabayda is Parochial Vicar of Saint Gregory of Nyssa in Beltsville, MD.



Jacob Szewczyk bakes Kolachi



Joanne Becka and LaVerne Hametz weigh dough



Frank Roskind and Dale Purich wash dishes



Mary Jane Bodner rolls kolach dough



Steven Harper sells kolachi



National Prayer Vigil For Life

January 26-27, 2017

Thursday, January 26, 2017

5:30 - 7:30 pm Opening Mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, DC Great Upper Church
Principal Celebrant & Homilist: Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan, Archbishop of New York and Chairman, USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities

10:00 - 11:00 pm Night Prayer (Byzantine Rite) - Crypt Church
Celebrant: Most Reverend Kurt R. Burnette, JCL, DD, Bishop of the Byzantine Eparchy of Passaic, NJ, Homilist: TBA

Friday, January 27, 2017

10:00 AM Bishop Kurt will celebrate the Divine Liturgy at Epiphany of Our Lord in Annandale, VA.

12:00 NOON The March for Life Rally will take place at noon on the grounds of the Washington Monument, near the corner of 15th Street and Constitution Avenue.

1:00PM The March For Life will begin on Constitution Avenue between 15th and 17th Streets.

<http://www.usccb.org/about/pro-life-activities/january-roe-events/national-prayer-vigil-for-life-schedule.cfm>



BISHOP'S APPEAL 2016

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

"For to us a Child is born,

wonderful
COUNSELOR

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

Isaiah 9:6-7

PLEDGE NOW THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2016

BYZANTINE CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF PASSAIC

BISHOP'S APPEAL 2016

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<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 1,000.00	or:	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 250.00 per month
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PRAYERFULLY PLEDGE & RETURN THIS FORM TO THE EPARCHY BY DEC. 31. All Money received after Dec. 31 will be credited to your 2017 tax year



Deacon Dennis Prestash and his son Denny

THE BEST TRIP EVER

A reflection on Rome from a child’s perspective

More photos to come...

One of the best times of life was when I served with my Dad, Deacon Dennis Prestash, and the Archbishop in the Divine Liturgy while I was in Italy. It was also pretty cool to watch Archbishop William and Father Andrew speak in all the churches especially when we were in Rome at Saint Peter’s. I think Saint Peter’s Basilica was the biggest church I have ever been in during my entire life. You could have fit one hundred and fifty of our Byzantines Churches in the main hall of Saint Peter’s. I also really enjoyed the Coliseum and seeing all of the ancient artifacts. I liked going to the hotels because when you opened the window you could see for miles and miles. I felt like we were in a movie. When we arrived in Venice, I was so excited because you could not drive your car to your destination. You actually had to get around by a boat taxi. It was the first time a boat took me to a restaurant for dinner. We really had good meals in Italy and we always had a great time with my new friends I met on the trip. Everyone was so nice. The food was homemade and they serve lots and lots of pasta. But my favorite part of our pilgrimage was when we visited Pope Francis. It felt like I was dreaming because we were about ten feet away from the Holy Father. All of the people received a blessing from him. After seeing Papa, (That’s what they call him in Rome) I felt like I was million times stronger. I have to say, overall, the best moment in Rome had to be spending time with my Dad, seeing the ancient cities and praying together. That was awesome and unforgettable. I really hope we can go back again someday so we could do it all over again. Glory to Jesus Christ.



Spring 2017 Byzantine Online

Credit courses (Jan. 16-May 5, 2017)

Theology of the Divine Praises (Fr. David Petras, SEOD)
This course will survey the theological, spiritual and historical elements of the daily official prayer of the Eastern Catholic churches. (2 credits)

Pastristics II (Kyle Washut, STL, STM)
This course will introduce the history, theology, and spirituality of the patristic period from St. Athanasius of Alexandria to St. Symeon the New Theologian. The rich ethnic and cultural diversity of early Christian thought will be highlighted through study of primary sources.
(2 credits; Patristics I not a prerequisite).

Certificate courses (Jan. 16-March 17, 2017)

The Bible for Eastern Catholics (Deacon Daniel Dozier)
The course will introduce students to the unique ways in which Eastern Catholic liturgy and tradition is steeped in the appropriation of Scripture.

Plainchant of the Byzantine Catholic Church
(Jeff Mierjezewski, Metropolitan Cantor Institute)
In this course, we will examine the prostopinije, or plainchant, of the Byzantine (Ruthenian) Catholic Church. Students from other churches or disciplines will be provided with a living example of a complete system of liturgical chant, and learn how it has been used in the past, and is used today.

Application information and registration available at: online.bcs.edu.

YOUR BISHOP’S APPEAL GIFTS SUPPORT OUR EPARCHIAL PROGRAMS

OUR GOAL: \$650,000

PARISH REVITALIZATION

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

ASSISTANCE TO BLESSED THEODORE ROMZHA SEMINARY

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

\$50,000

DEACON FORMATION

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

\$15,000

EDUCATION OF SEMINARIANS AND PRIESTS

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

\$50,000

EASTERN CHRISTIAN FORMATION

Publications, Youth Ministry, Family Enrichment, Catechist and Coordinator Formation

\$45,000

HERITAGE MUSEUM AND LIBRARY

Preserving our beautiful heritage for future generations to enjoy and learn about their ancestors and Church history

\$25,000

PAROCHIAL FAMILY EVENTS

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

\$20,000

DIGITAL OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATIONS

Maintenance of the Eparchial website and media coverage of special events

\$15,000

YOUTH EVENTS

Eparchial Summer Youth Camp, the Altar Server Congress, Eparchial and Interepar- chial ByzanTEEN Rallies and other regional events to foster spirituality in Community

\$40,000

RETREAT & EDUCATIONAL CENTERS:

CARPATHIAN VILLAGE

- and -

THE BISHOP MICHAEL DUDICK

EVANGELIZATION CENTER, SYBERTSVILLE, PA

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\$100,000

PAROCHIAL SUPPORT

Grants to individual parishes for support, renovation and maintenance

\$125,000

give online

www.eparchyofpassaic.com



Professor Tara Tymo with Deacon Stephen

I had the great honor and pleasure of being invited to lecture at the new Information Technology School and Business School of the Ukrainian Catholic University of Lviv. UKU, as it is referred to is, among other things, an amazing triumph of endurance and perseverance for the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. It is continuing to expand from a seminary to a major academic institution centered on Eastern Catholicism. During the period of Soviet occupation, attempts were made to systematically eradicate the Church and the faith of the people. At least that was the intention of the atheistic regime, but through this difficult time, the Greek Catholic Church not only survived, but has triumphed. The brand new church in the center of the campus is a living testimony. It was built right on the very spot where once existed the Soviet headquarter building for the area – truly a sign the Christ does conquer all!

I was initially invited to present to the undergraduate and graduate IT students new breakthrough technologies in both cognitive computing and multi-media analytics and to present at the Lviv IT Forum Conference. When Dean Yaroslav Prytula of the Information Technology School found out I was also an Eastern Catholic deacon he asked me to help fill another need of the University. Due to the suppression of the Church and many secular pressures, a separation had developed: the students did not see a rela-

THE BALANCE BETWEEN TECHNOLOGY AND FAITH

By Deacon Stephen Russo

tionship between business/technology and their faith. I was asked to put lectures together on the balance and important interaction between a person's technical or business career and their faith. It was an exciting and interactive class, showing not only the importance of one's Catholic faith to their personal well-being and salvation, but also the true business value of bringing high integrity moral practices into their careers, and the great

advantage this brings in conducting business on a global basis. I look forward to future collaboration with the University and possibly bringing their innovative academic style and drive to help mature and grow students of other institutions. Special thanks to the Rector of UKU, Father Bohdan Prach, and the Dean of the Information Technology School, Prof. Yaroslav Prytula, for their invitation and gracious hospitality.



New incoming students at UKU



Deacon Stephen with Master's student Tetyana Blah and Dean Prytula



New church on the UKU campus, where was once a Soviet headquarters building

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9. **DVD Video "Gubi – Jaslickari"** – Male Chorus presentation of The Bethlehem Carolers in Slavonic – Carpatho Rusyn. (\$16.95 each DVD).

10. **DVD Video "The Byzantine Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom in Church Slavonic"** church Slavonic Commemorative Production with Four Concelebrants (English Liturgical subtitles included), 90 minutes (\$21.95 each DVD)

Listen to samples of each at <http://holyghostphila.byzcath.org/recordings.php>

In celebration of our parish's 125th anniversary year, there is no additional costs for shipping and handling. Items 1 through 8 are offered in digitally re-mastered \$12.95 CD format. Make checks payable to: Holy Ghost Choir, 2310 South 24th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19145-3207.

THE HEALING POWER OF BYZANTINE PLAINCHANT

By Susan Hornak

What voice have I to share with the world, to express needs and wants, to bestow compliments and kindness, to ask of others how may I understand?

A little over eight years ago, I experienced the sudden onset of a muscular vocal disorder leading to my inability to speak. It was an ordinary day in late November, one moment my voice was normal and then, the next moment, it was not. As the quality of my voice degraded, I went from specialist to specialist in search of answers to this mystery. This started a terrifying journey of loss, grieving and eventually the reclamation of life and faith.

The prolonged exposure to a chronically stressful set of circumstances coexisting was too much for me to effectively cope. Some people get stress headaches, others develop digestive/stomach problems but my body's reaction was the loss of its ability to speak. The more I would try to speak the harder it became to perform this seemingly simple task. The frustration grew as I tried harder and harder to be heard. This was the beginning of a vicious downward spiral causing damage to my body, mind and soul.

I gradually lost the ability to produce speech but not voice; my ability to transition from voice to speaking was essentially broken. Voice and speech are different in the sense that voice is the sound produced by humans and other vertebrates using the lungs and vocal folds. Voice is not always speech because it includes laughing, crying, singing, and babbling. Speech is a series of complex oral movements used for verbal expression using decodable sounds.

The thought of losing one's voice is at best incomprehensible and at worst inconceivable. Until having experienced the loss there is no way to imagine the grave mourning of self that occurs when the voice becomes broken. When poised to speak many people without thought present their message taking for granted this beautiful instrument in its fullest expression.

Having been raised by a very devout Byzantine Catholic mother my faith was ever present and ever practiced; there was no choice other than having blind faith in God. That level of faith was implied and expected in every aspect of life. However, my blind faith was now challenged, questioned and doubted. During this, the most trying time in life; I questioned how could God allow such hardship to fall upon one of his most trusting servants?

After several years of failed treatments, surgi-

cal procedures and pharmaceutical intervention hope was all but lost. There were times of great anger, fist shaking and throwing stones up at heaven. I had turned my back on not only my faith but on God himself. Shouting in a mangled and distressed voice, wishing for death to find me or some other form of relief from this living hell my faith was now gone.

Pursuing the last viable option to regain my voice I committed to a year-long course of speech therapy. During this time I patiently recreated the most basic building blocks of speech. Humming and speaking in a sing-song manner, counting to three and saying my name for hours on end. This was not only humiliating but tiresome. There was a great deal of physical pain involved as well. The pain was produced by years of forcing speech to occur using disassociated muscles improperly causing my entire upper body to contort.

Somehow little by little, ever so gradually in the lowest and most controlled tones my voice had started to return. Chanting was the key to helping the brain to remap the neurological pathways that governed the production of speech. The brain had to be reprogrammed back to the old normal after becoming conditioned to have an automatic tensing response cutting off the natural production of speech.

After finding a great deal of success in speech therapy there needed to be a way to maintain the gains that were made and perhaps even achieve greater vocal control once the formal treatment sessions ended. A friend introduced me to Byzantine plainchant. The Byzantine Rite liturgical services are entirely chanted. There are eight tones used in the services; Plain chant is a form of chanting that requires no special skills or musical knowledge.

This chant pattern in its simplest form along with other interventions has allowed me to regain my ability to speak. This form of vocalization initiates chord movement creating a physically comfortable environment for the laryngeal muscles to function. The effects are miraculous after attending services at Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church in Hillsborough, NJ, where Father James Badeaux is the pastor.

The Byzantine plainchant can be applied to any speech or reading material. It was interesting to observe the clergy reciting the Gospel in a chant tone. There are no musical notations in the many of the books but it is easy to notice the Psalms were being chanted in a particular pattern that was extraordinarily simple to learn. After learning to adopt this technique to my own pattern



of speech, it became easier to speak especially during times of emotional stress. After becoming more comfortable with this form of chanting, my voice started to reveal itself once again.

After giving up all hope on ever being able to speak normally, the combination of speech therapy and Byzantine chant helped me to regain my voice, dignity, sense of self, and will to live. Being voiceless in a vocal world is not only difficult but it is also depressing and frightening. Having the confidence to use chant as a reliable method of communication during times of elevated stress has proven to be a valuable tool during my continued job search. During a job interview my vocal chords started to seize from the inherent stress of the situation. Having the comfort and security in Byzantine chant as a voicing option, I conducted the entire interview in plainchant.

The position was not offered to me but this was the first time having hope was actually an option. This ancient form of communication used in the praise of God is now incorporated in my daily life. Surely, this is a new use of this religious and cultural tool and not what Saint Basil intended it to be yet I suspect he might be smiling at this newly found use for an ancient form of praise. Employing its use has not only helped me to regain greater control over the production of speech but also brought me back to faith in God.

If you or anyone you may know is experiencing a sudden inexplicable loss of voice, Ms. Hornak acts as a mentor, support and guide to those with new onset vocal disorders. She can be reached at susan.hornak@gmail.com. As a result of her silence, she became a professional writer and editor. She maintains a blog about the psychosocial aspects of voice loss and it the volunteer Media and Communications Director for <http://www.vocaldisorders.org/connect/>

SUNDAY EVENING DIVINE LITURGY TO BEGIN IN BAYONNE PARISH

SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST

15 EAST 26TH STREET, BAYONNE, NJ
All Welcome to Attend!

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

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

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

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



FAITH AND COMMUNITY ISSUES

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

PASTORAL CARE TOWARDS THE HOMOSEXUALLY INCLINED: INDIVIDUAL AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Roles of The Mysteries and Divine Liturgy (Sacraments & Worship)

The Bishops' document, "Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination: Guidelines for Pastoral Care," (USCCB, 2006) emphasizes the need for full and regular participation in the sacramental life of the Church. The reception of Eucharist is paramount in the daily empowering of the individual in the way of holiness and Christian Life.

The use of the Sacrament of Penance is especially encouraged as a means of staying on the mark in the day-to-day living out of the Gospel Life in the modern world. Respect for the individual's journey and the realization that not all people advance at equal pacing and that spiritual counsel is of great assistance on an on-going level in keeping one securely on the path of spiritual growth and holiness.

Within the context of a holy life enriched by sacramental and scriptural intervention, the bishops again return to the theme of the uniqueness of marriage, quoting from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Considerations regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons, no. 2." The Bishops state that, "The Church recognizes that, 'marriage exists solely between a man and a woman, who by mutual personal gift, proper and exclusive to themselves, tend toward the communion of their persons. In this way, they mutually perfect each other, in order to cooperate with God in the procreation and upbringing of new human lives'" (MPHI, 2006, p. 20).

The bishops make clear that any semblance of a married state between two people of the same sex is not and cannot be supported nor blessed by Church ministers "directly or indirectly" (p. 21). In the same vein, adoption of children by people of the same sex is not supported "since homosexual unions are contrary to the divine plan" (MPHI, 2006, p. 21; quoted from Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons*, no.7).

Although the Baptism of children of same-sex couples does give the Church a pastoral concern, the Church will not refuse to baptize these children, notwithstanding providing a profoundly based hope that the Children will be raised as responsible, practicing Catholics. For the cases where Baptism is granted, the ministers are cautioned by the bishops in the exercise of prudential judgment in the preparation of the ceremonies for the baptism. They also state specifics for the baptismal record, namely, "a distinction should be made between natural parents and adoptive parents." (the situation where between two males, *in vitro* fertilization occurs through the mixing of the semen of the two men utilizing a surrogate mother to supply the egg(s) and carry the embryo through to birth is not addressed in this document. God-willing, a future study and document will be composed specifically address-

ing this issue and providing further clarification in this sensitive area of human sexuality and Marriage as Mystery).

Pastoral Support of Homosexual Individuals

There are many with same-sex attractions who are ardently striving to live a faith-filled lifestyle within Catholicism; the ministries of the Church are there to encourage perseverance in their desire and efforts to faithfulness, in particular the utilization of spiritual direction from a priest. The Document further encourages the structures in place to avail the youth of their aid in discerning a Christian way of life and to avoid getting involved in the homosexual subculture.

The document suggests on-going pastoral support and counseling specific to homosexual identity for both the individual and their families to help provide some stability. Support groups are necessary and should be encouraged by the Christian community to provide support and inclusivity. The document states, "Support groups, noted for their adherence to Church teaching, for persons who experience same-sex attraction continue to be an important part of Church ministries and are to be encouraged" (MPHI, 2006, p. 22).

Although sexuality does play an important part in the formation of a person's identity, it is still only one facet of a much larger and mysterious picture that embraces the entire person. The Church therefore encourages people with homosexual inclinations to identify themselves in terms of the much wider community to which they rightfully belong and friendships within that wider community are to be encouraged, according to the Document (p. 22).

Adolescent issues are a big concern because of all the changes taking place within the youth to adult phases they go through, the uncertainty can cause a vulnerability that can be exploited easily by adults. The Church supports age-appropriate counseling for teens dealing with sexual identity issues especially programs that uphold Church teaching concerning the understanding of the human person. Such programs that uphold such teaching should have wide publication multi-medially.

Pastoral Care of the Sick

HIV/AIDS victims should find in the Church a place of comfort, healing and solace according to the document. The discovery of a family member with AIDS related illness can be a profound moment of crisis in a family and the Church needs to reach out to them in merciful pastoral care, assisting the family in processing the event and aiding in keeping the bonds of love and familial devotion intact. Again, the document speaks of support groups for families to help with the coping mechanisms of the familial members so that a healthy moral approach can be had as the document states, "they can also learn the full truth of the Church's teaching regarding the human dig-

nity of persons with a homosexual inclination and the moral principles regarding chastity that lead to the fullness of authentic human living" (MPHI, 2006, p.23).

Where Do We Go from Here?

The discussion of homosexuality is a complex and difficult one. It is multi-focal in its effect upon the individual the family and society in general. The role of the Church is one of pastoral concern, supportive of the individual as made in the image of God. The individual is deserving of the greatest respect and care as that image so deserves to be nurtured, upheld and allowed the dignity to which each human has the God-given right to enjoy.

Notwithstanding, the moral teaching of the Church regarding the role of sex in the human life, the singular role of marriage, the teachings of morality and tradition handed down through the ages, and the inherent dignity proper to each person and to the Mystery of Marriage must be maintained. To be true to the teaching of Christ, the Son of God regarding the dignity accorded to marriage as a covenantal love between a husband and wife dissolved by death alone and for the continuation of the human species upon this planet in this cosmos until the end of time is the calling to which the Church and its members respond in obedience.

The existential angst experienced by the individual whose sexual orientation takes a different path than the one just described is very real and must be approached with sensitivity and compassion. The pastoral approach used must not at the same time water down the teachings of Scripture, revelation and Natural Law when dealing pastorally with the individual experiencing this angst. The Document states, "The message (of the Gospel) provides the foundation for all her ministries. In the measure that we authentically preach Christ, we will build a healthy and holy communion of sisters and brothers, diverse gifts but one in the Spirit" (MPHI, 2006, p.24).

This presentation over the last few months may have raised more questions than it answered and that is good. This is an on-going issue and it needs an on-going discussion. What is needed over all is the open-ended compassion that never ceases to listen to the cry of the heart and responds with the only gift that has the capacity to fill every need, that of unconditional love. The words from Paul's letter to the Ephesians, from which ended the Document of the bishops, will serve as a fitting end to our presentation:

With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace: one body and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (Eph. 4: 2-6). **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



SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

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

HE WILL BE PEACE

The services leading up to the Divine Liturgy of Christmas serve up a rich selection of Old Testament Scriptures. While Isaiah, the prophet who announced that “the virgin will conceive and bear a son” (Isaiah 7:14), figures most prominently, there is also a short selection from the prophecies of Micah (Micah 5:2-4) that glimpses the mystery of the Incarnation more than 700 years before it happened. You would hear this reading at the Royal Hours on December 24 and again at Vespers that evening.

Micah prophesied at a time when the Assyrian Empire threatened from the north. In this age of anxiety and disappointment, Micah pronounced God’s judgment on His people and envisioned a perfect ruler who would restore Jerusalem to its promised glory. This is the setting for Micah’s vision of Bethlehem. He calls it “Bethlehem Ephrathah,” specifying the group within the town of Bethlehem from which King David descended (1 Samuel 17:12). God had promised that a descendant of King David would rule Israel “forever” (2 Samuel 7:16) but, by Micah’s time, most of Israel was ruled from Samaria by a king who was not of David’s line, and David’s heirs in Judah and Jerusalem never measured up to David or Solomon. They claimed confidence in God’s covenant even as they blatantly disobeyed it.

Bethlehem was “little” when David was found there, herding sheep and was anointed king by the prophet Samuel. It was even smaller when Jesus, the “Son of David” (Luke 1:32; Matthew 21:9) was born there in a manger in a cave. David was an unexpected choice: the youngest son of an insignificant family, designated as God’s choice

for king while King Saul was still officially reigning. Jesus was even more unexpected, the “carpenter’s son” (Matthew 13:55), born in poor and dubious circumstances.

“Ephrathah” connects with the birth of Jesus in yet another way. Rachel, wife of the patriarch Jacob, the father of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, died and was buried there (Genesis 35:16). Rachel is mentioned by Jeremiah (31:5) in a prophecy fulfilled when Herod slaughtered the baby boys in Bethlehem in his crazed attempt to kill the newborn Messiah (Matthew 2:16-18): “Rachel mourning her children; refusing to be comforted, for they are no more.”

Nearly every word of this brief text points to the Gospel. The Messiah is human, born of a human mother (verse 3), but His origins are “of old, everlasting” (verse 2). In these simple words, the mystery of Jesus’ human and divine natures is sketched. Micah describes Him as a shepherd (verse 4), such as David had been. Jesus, of course, identifies Himself as the Good Shepherd (John 10: 1-30). The “remnant” (verse 3) is “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 10:6 and 15:24) that Jesus was sent to gather and which becomes the “little flock” of the original Church (Luke 12:32). But Micah also envisions the Messiah’s reign extending beyond Israel “to the ends of the earth” (verse 4). Jesus’ farewell to His Apostles was the command to “make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19).

Finally, Micah predicts, this ruler would be “Peace.” This promise of peace, inspired by the Holy Spirit, looks beyond whether Assyria would conquer Israel and beyond the policies and poli-

tics of this or that king. Peace is a person: Jesus Christ. Saint Paul clarifies: “He is our peace” (Ephesians 2:14) because he has abolished the barrier between mankind and God. The King born in Bethlehem won no wars; rather, He offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for sin, to reconcile the human race to God. Peace is a person because peace is a personal relationship: our adoption into God’s family. Thanks to the birth of the Son of God, we can become children of God (John 1:12). The peace Micah envisions, the peace the angels announce in Bethlehem (Luke 2:14), cannot come from a policy or a program. It can only come from persons embracing the Person who is Peace and letting themselves be ruled by Him. “God is with us,” we sing with Isaiah (8:8-9); therefore “submit yourselves, for God is with us!” **ECL**



Icon of the Prophet Micah



LIFE, LOVE, AND THE HUMAN PERSON

By Ann M. Koshute, MTS

OUT OF DARKNESS—LIGHT

The world is a mess. That’s a pretty bold statement, but a glance at the nightly news, the internet or social media seems to justify such boldness. Religious persecution, particularly in the Middle East, is decimating communities and places of worship. Terror and war aren’t just concerns “over there,” but unpredictably poke tiny holes in our own bubble of busy self-absorption. With violence ravaging neighborhoods, bullies popping up online and in person, and a presidential election we just barely weathered, 2016

will surely register among the most divisive and unsettled periods in America’s 240-year history. People are anxious, and darkness threatens to overtake us.

In the weeks leading up to Christmas, I spend lots of time looking at the icon of the Nativity of Our Lord. The wall-sized icon at the front of my parish church is unavoidable as I sit in my pew. Gazing on the scene, a moment in time that changed the world for all time, my eyes cannot resist peering into the darkness. I can’t seem to

look away from the gaping hole of the cave, thick with nothingness. I look and I look, trying to see inside, straining to penetrate the pitch black and find... something. But the darkness is never-ending. I can’t break through it, not with the force of my will, or my imagination. Hard as I try, I can’t cut the darkness—not in the icon, not in certain moments in my life, and not in the world.

Darkness is attractive in a perverse way because sin is so attractive. We’re often drawn to what we know isn’t good for us—or we’re mislead into be-

believing the bad to be good; believing the dark is somehow better for us than the light. Eventually though, giving in to darkness' attraction leaves us empty, thinking that nothing and no one can make things better. Focusing on the darkness, searching it and trying to cut through it ourselves leads us nowhere except hopelessness. The devil knows something about this, and so does Saint Joseph. The Nativity icon shows Joseph pondering everything that's happened in the last several months: his betrothal to Mary, discovering her pregnancy and planning to quietly divorce her—and an angel from Heaven visiting him, a simple carpenter. So many things happened to Joseph that he couldn't understand, and they all led here, to a cave and a newborn Son. In the icon, an Old Man (who is the devil) interrupts Joseph's meditation. Who knows what he's saying—but it's likely about that blinding darkness. Looking at the icon I try to imagine the Old Man introducing doubt into Joseph's mind: doubt about the miracle he just witnessed, doubt about Mary's faithfulness, and doubt that God is working everything that's happened (and everything to come) for good. I imagine that the words from the Old Man in the icon echo the words of the Serpent in the Garden: "God doesn't love you as much as you think. He's holding out on you. The darkness is always just ahead, ready to swallow you up." Maybe the Old Man is telling Joseph to figure his own way out of the dark—or that he should just give in to it.



Coptic rendering of the Icon of the Nativity of Our Lord

The world is indeed a mess, and it is our sinfulness and our doubt (or rejection) of God's love that makes it so. The gaping hole in the Earth that my sight can't penetrate in the icon is symbolic of this mess. In that blackness is every evil that exists—and my own sinfulness, too. It's all there in the pitch black of the cave. That's what the Old Man wants Joseph to see, and it's what he wants you and me to see, too. It's a good plan, and there's certainly enough evidence (in Joseph's world and in ours) to make us believe the Old Man is right:

God is asleep or lying or got swallowed by the darkness Himself. A good plan; except that it's a lie.

I recently came across a Coptic rendering of the Nativity icon, and it refutes the Old Man in a few powerful brushstrokes. In this version, the entrance to the cave is not black but bathed in bright light. The light emanates from the Child: the Son of God made man, made a little baby, filled with power and glory in His poverty and vulnerability. The Light (which is brighter than any sun, moon or star because HE is the light itself) penetrates the darkness and obliterates it. Unlike the pitch-black cave, my eyes can see into the Light. I see hope—for the world, and for me. I see God's unbelievable Love, and I believe it! I see the Old Man slink away, exposed as a liar and a fraud. I see Joseph, strengthened by the Light, in awe of it, and grateful for it. In that Light I see Mary, overwhelmed by events, probably still somewhat incredulous, but trusting God completely. In that Light I see my Savior. He is a baby, like I once was, tiny and fragile. Yet He is the Light, so powerful It burns off darkness, yet so gentle that It doesn't burn us. His Light bathes us in the warmth of Goodness, Mercy, Beauty and Love. This is Jesus! Light of the World, King of Kings, and Hope in a hopeless, mess of a world.

Christ is born! Glorify Him! And rejoice in the confidence that His Light will always overcome the dark. **ECL**



UNDERSTANDING ICONS

Father Joseph Bertha, Ph.D.

SHELTER THE HOMELESS: CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY

To give shelter to the homeless is an apropos work of mercy in view of the Feast of Christmas, the Incarnation of the Savior. Saint Joseph and the Theotokos could not find any shelter to spend the night, and so they stayed in a cave with the animals, and this is where the Lord was born. While the holy family did not have a roof over their head at the Nativity of our Lord, Jesus dwelled in the womb of his mother for nine months. Later in life, Jesus laments to his apostles: "And Jesus said to him, 'The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.'" Luke 9: 58.

A visualization of the dwelling of God with us is explicit in the signature hymn of the Christmas, *God is with us*, i.e., God has made his dwelling place among us. The wonderful exemplar of the Incarnation is the actual physical church building, which combines both icon and architecture to visualize God's sanctuary here on the face of the earth. No wonder so much care and concern surrounds the physical church buildings of our parishes as great sacrifice and effort went into saving, paying and erecting these dwelling places of God on the face of the earth.

The cosmology of salvation is literally depicted in the architecture of the church building. From the apex or highest point of the church, the highest dome over the central portion of the nave, represents way up the heaven, Christ as Pantocrator, ruler over all. He is depicted with a gospel book in hand and bestowing his blessing to those below in the congregation. He descends at the

moment of the Annunciation via the four piers which support the central dome. He enters into the womb of the Theotokos as if by cascading drops of rain, descending upon the newly mown meadow, a recurrent image of the arrival of the Messiah in the Old Testament.

This visual articulation of the Incarnation is described in the Byzantine Liturgical Akathist Hymn, the quintessential Byzantine articulation of the Annunciation. This sophisticated hymn, composed of 24 *oikoi* (singular *oikos*, "house" in Greek) form an acrostic of the Greek alphabet. The first four houses describe exactly that how God is sheltered, or more to the point makes, His sanctuary or dwelling among us! He is present on the altar in church every time the Eucharist is celebrated. His abiding presence resides in the tabernacle on the altar. God is with us, both spiritually and physically.

There are parallel resonances between the physical work of mercy of providing shelter for those without a roof over their head, but also in the spiritual realm where people who are without the true home, can receive sanctuary from the people of God, by their warm welcome of embrace and consolation.

Making people feel at home is done by offering them God's mercy and cordial welcome! Both of these are characteristics of evangelization, our extending ourselves to others to invite them in to share in God's mercy. Of course, we can only extend this mercy if we ourselves experience God's mercy in a very personal way. This is done

through the frequent reception of the Mystery of Reconciliation in the sacrament of Penance, Confession. When we are prepared for Holy Communion by receiving Holy Reconciliation we invite Jesus to enter into the house of our soul.

In a Byzantine Church, we have Jesus Christ portrayed both in icons and architecture as dwelling among us—He who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. We need to teach, preach, invite, exhort ourselves and others to this wonderful gift of God's mercy which has been handed down to us from generation to generation. As we so joyfully proclaim and sing at the Holy Supper table: God is with us! No one can be against us! Be humbled.

Giving sanctuary to homeless persons means inviting them to our Sanctuary, the House of God, where Jesus reposes in the tabernacle. To shelter, to protect, to guard, to give asylum and safe haven to troubled souls journeying through the tumults of life, is a wonderful act of mercy so desperate in need of practice in our troubled times.

We need to ask ourselves: Do we invite people to our parish church to receive sanctuary, to shelter the homeless? To be present with the Lord? Do we invite them to come and see our icons, our Liturgy, our priest? Do we encourage our children to participate in lessons of hospitality? Do we teach them about the commandments of God, and how to be open to all people? **ECL**

CATECHETICAL REFLECTIONS

Father Robert F. Slesinski, Ph.D.



MAN BEFORE GOD

The Spiritual Substantiality of the Mind. Installment 17

The marvel of the mind, it should be clear, has been the dominant focus of this ongoing column probing man's relation before the Godhead. Our immediate aim has been to point out how the reality of mind and soul cannot but be spiritual in nature, a reflection that in turn suggests to us the need for a meditation on the spiritual source of our being. The mind, we have seen, is the subject of its own conscious acts—its acts of knowing, doubting, questioning, etc. Moreover, it bears underscoring that our individual acts of memory, understanding, and love are *not* their own, but are *mine*. It is *I* who remember, understand, and love. As Saint Augustine cogently puts it in *The Trinity* (XV, 22, 42),

These three, memory, understanding and love, are mine, not their own; and whatever they do, they do it for me and not for themselves—or rather, I do it through them. It is I who remember with memory, understand with understanding, love with love. And when I turn the focus of my thought onto memory, and thus utter in my heart what I know, and a true word is begotten of my knowledge, each is mine—both the knowledge, that is to say, and the word. For it is I who know, I who utter what I know in my heart.

In this fashion, we grasp how it is *I* who actualize myself in my acts. Consciousness of this fact is of uppermost importance. Without consciousness, i.e., without actualizing myself with consciously performed acts, I would not be a true *I*, but only a “sleeping” entity like any blunt corporeal being. In sum, it is a matter of “being awakened” to being rather than “being asleep.”

At the same time, we grasp how in our con-

scious acts the individual mind knows itself as a living, understanding *whole*. The mind, in other words, is not constituted by parts, but is truly an indivisible whole. And as such, it is a spiritual substance, having its *own* meaning and value that enjoys a true *persistence* in being. The mind as a substance literally “stands under” itself (Lat., *substantia*) in the sense that it enjoys existence *in* and *for itself* and *not* in another.

Admittedly, the topic of the spiritual substantiality of the mind may not be readily graspable. But we can, once again, take recourse to Saint Augustine whose probing analyses of the mind and human cognition have remained unparalleled in the history of philosophy. We read in *The Trinity* (X, 4, 18):

These three then, memory, understanding, and will, are not three lives but one life, nor three minds but one mind. So it follows of course that they are not three substances but one substance... For this reason these three are one in that they are one life, one mind, one being... Likewise when I understand these three I understand the whole of them together... Therefore since they are each and all and wholly contained by each, they are each and all equal to each and all, and each and all equal to all of them together, and these three are one, one life, one mind, one being.

Being essentially incapable of availing ourselves of the mind and faculties of another human being, we grasp how we ourselves are blessed with an unrepeatable individuality, that we are, indeed, our *own* persons called to live out our own *unique* vocations in life.

On this note, the sage counsel of Saint Augustine bears an attentive hearing:

A great marvel rises in me; astonishment seizes me. Men go forth to marvel at the heights of mountains and the huge waves of the sea, the broad flow of the rivers, the vastness of the ocean, the orbits of the stars, and yet they neglect to marvel at themselves (Confessions, X, VIII, 15).

Dare we now call out along with the psalmist, “Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication” (Ps 130:1–2). **ECL**



Icon of the Holy Trinity



ASK A PRIEST A QUESTION

Father Vasyl Chepelsky

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SEASONAL REFLECTIONS

Monsignor John. T. Sekellick, JCL



THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

Saint Matthew recounts the visit of the Three Magi at the time of the holy birth of Jesus in Chapter 2 of his Gospel: "Behold the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came to rest over the place where the Child was" (vs. 9). Mention of the star which guided them occurs both in our Christmas Troparion: and Kontakion: *Your birth, O Christ our God, has shed upon the world the light of knowledge; for through it, those who worshipped the stars have learned from a star to worship You, the Sun of Justice... Today the Virgin gives birth to the Transcendent One, and the earth offers a cave to the Inaccessible. The angels sing His glory with the shepherds; the wise men journey with the star...*

Mention of a star also appears in a number of Christmas hymns and carols. We think of the prayerful refrain from the carol of the Three Kings: *O, Star of Wonder, Star of Night, Star of Royal Beauty Bright, westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy Perfect Light* or from among our ethnic hymns, *Joyous news to the whole world: "Christ is born to redeem men. Brilliant star shines in the heavens leading kings to Bethlehem"* (Nova radost' stala).

Scientists and scholars have puzzled and speculated over the centuries to determine when such a phenomenon actually occurred. This has never been determined. There is evidence according to some astronomers that the star was a conjunction

of the planets Jupiter and Venus which probably took months to form and would have been a steady and very bright light in the dark skies which the three Wise Men could follow readily.

Matthew's account seems to suggest that the Wise Men were aware that Jesus had already been born before their arrival in Jerusalem and visit with King Herod, but did not know exactly

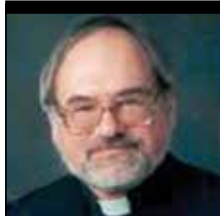
in what town until the chief priests and scribes researched the Scriptures and informed them that it was Bethlehem. The star then leads them there. The Wise Men, however, did not go back to King Herod with any information and instead returned to their homes some other way, being warned in a dream not to revisit Herod.

Mentioned in the Gospel account are the three gifts the Wise Men presented to the Christ-Child: gold, befitting a King; frankincense offered in adoration of a divinity and myrrh, the fragrant oil to anoint the dead, symbolic of Christ's burial following His death on the Cross. This is echoed in a hymn found in the Great Compline for Christmas: *The Persian Magi clearly recognized the heavenly King born on earth. Led by a bright star, they arrived at Bethlehem bearing choice gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh; and falling down, they adored Him; for they saw the eternal one, lying as a child, in the cave.*

In our Eastern Church, the star of Bethlehem is a miraculous event whether or not it coincided with an actual, natural phenomenon, which is to say it was a sign offered by God to lead the Wise Men to the Christ-Child. The Christmas icon depicts the star often as a dark semicircle out of which is emitted a ray pointing to the place where the Christ Child, the uncreated Light of Divine Grace, is found (Matthew 2:9). May we be blessed at Christmas and through the New Year with the grace of the Christmas season's joy, peace and abiding love. **ECL**



Icon of the Adoration of the Magi



THE BYZANTINE LITURGY

By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD

THE CREATOR OF ALL

The Creed begins, "I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible." The Syrian theologian who wrote under the name of Dionysius wrote, "... we must not dare to resort to words or conceptions concerning that hidden divinity which transcends being, apart from what the sacred scriptures have divinely revealed." (*The Divine Names* 1,1) One of the difficulties of faith in God is that we form concepts of Him that are unreal. The importance of our faith in God must be sought in what God has told us about Himself. Therefore, the first source we must turn to is Scripture, which is actually a series of books and shorter tracts written by various authors, but all inspired by God. In the Torah, the books of the law, Genesis is the first and probably the most important book. It begins with the words, "In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth ... then God said: Let there be light, and there was light." (Genesis 1:1-3) The prophecy of Isaiah tells us, in God's words, "All who are called

by My name I created for My glory; I formed them, made them. Isaiah 43:7)"

The psalms are full of references to God's creating work. In the New Testament, Saint Paul writes, "For in Him were created all things in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things were created through Him and for Him." (Colossians 1:16) In another place Saint Paul quotes a pagan philosopher, "In him we live and move and have our being. (Acts 17:28)" This is what has been revealed to us and what is the very foundation of our faith.

In his Letter to the Romans, Saint Paul tells us, "Ever since the creation of the world, His invisible attributes of eternal power and divinity have been able to be understood and perceived in what He has made. (Romans 1:20)" Truly all creation that can be seen with our human eyes is evidence enough for knowledge that God is the Creator. But since God is beyond space and time, whereas

we are finite, we truly cannot form an adequate concept of Him with the limitations of our mind. We cannot bridge that gap with our human intelligence. We cannot come to God through human understanding and the tool of the physical sciences. God challenges Job, "Where were you when I founded the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. (Job 38:4)" How, then, did God create the universe? We simply don't know and science can only give us understanding of how it works, not why and how it came into existence. Perhaps a clue is in the book of Genesis, in describing creation, the author writes, "Then God said ..., " and from His "saying", all that is comes into being. God, who is reality beyond all reality, creates the laws of nature simply by uttering a word, and creation, following His plan comes into being.

We must not form false ideas of God. One such false concept is perhaps the idea that God did bring everything into being through one

creative act, which scientists call the “big bang,” and then left it to unfold according to his plan. If God is, however, beyond all the limitations of the universe, His creating power is not restricted to one moment in time. For us, the universe has a beginning and will have an end. However, God is present in all times and places. We see the reality through the lens of time, but for God, it is all present at once. His creating power is at work now, and in all times and places. We are eternally being created.

Sometimes, people are overwhelmed by the vastness of creation. They are then led by a false concept of God as simply one being among others, and questioning how this one individual can have control over such a vast universe, containing trillions of stars. The well-known agnostic Carl Sagan said, “The size and age of the cosmos are beyond ordinary human understanding.” If we accept that God is infinite and eternal, though, the size and the age of the universe is irrelevant. We are awed by the vastness of creation because we are discrete beings about 5-6 feet tall, so that

compared to the dimensions of creation, we are extremely and hopelessly insignificant. What we can do, however, is know and understand the whole of the cosmos and that its vastness is only because we compare it to our physical size. For God, on the other hand, space and time have no meaning, and creation is important because God loves it. In Genesis, after each creative act in chapter 1:31, “God looked at everything He had made, and found it very good.”

If the universe is so vast, there is another question: are we human beings the only intelligent beings in it? Science is daily discovering others stars beside our Sun that have planets orbiting them. Is it not reasonable that some of these planets support intelligent life? Even in ancient times philosophers and theologians speculated on the existence of other races. Today, we try to find them by sending out radio signals. The problem is that all travel is limited by the speed of light. Even if we were to journey to the stars, it would take many years, perhaps centuries before we find other intelligent beings. We are also

tricked by a concept that everything everywhere happens simultaneously. If the age of earth were reduced to one day, then the emergence of mankind would be limited to a few minutes on the last day. Millions of creatures may have already appeared and have died out, while others may be millions of years ahead of us in development. Likewise, other intelligent life may be so different from us that we could not understand their history. They might relate to God in an entirely different way than us. In any case, such a discovery could only make us more awestruck at God’s loving plan for all creation, which exists because of His divine and infinite love. **ECL**



SCHOOL OF PRAYER

Father G. Scott Boghossian

THE PRAYER OF ADORATION

“Come, let us adore and bow down to the only Lord Jesus Christ, the King and our God.”

When we worship God, we recognize His infinite greatness, power, and majesty, and humble ourselves before Him. The highest form of prayer is the prayer of adoration or worship.

Our English word “worship” comes from the Old English word “worth-ship.” When we worship God, we express his worth to us. His attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, absolute moral perfection, goodness, love and justice, conquer us with a sense of awe and wonder. This impression of wonder moves us to give ourselves to Him, to surrender all to Him, and to consecrate ourselves to His will. Various bodily postures, such as standing, kneeling, bowing, and lying prostrate express adoration. Saint Francis of Assisi demonstrated this attitude of adoration with the frequent aspiration, “My God and My all!” Saint John the Baptist manifested the attitude of worship when he said of Jesus Christ, “He must increase, and I must decrease” (Jn. 3:30).

In our churches, we use various material things that speak to us of the spirit of worship and adoration. As wax candles burn, they annihilate themselves to provide light and beauty. The incense is wholly consumed by fire as it provides a sweet fragrance to the Lord. The wine we use for the Divine Liturgy comes from crushing and pressing grapes. The bread we use comes from flour produced by grinding wheat. Our Lord Jesus Christ offered God our Father the supreme act of worship and adoration by pouring himself out to the very last drop of His blood when He died on the Cross. This supreme act of worship is renewed in an unbloody manner at every Divine Liturgy. In the Divine Liturgy, Christ’s sacrifice is re-presented to the Father, and its saving power

applied to our souls.

Only the one true God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is worthy of adoration or worship. Jesus Christ, present in the Blessed Sacrament, is deserving of our adoration and worship. While we show honor and respect to creatures insofar as they are related to God, we only worship that which is the source and fount of all goodness, beauty, and truth, the uncreated Divinity.

God created us for the purpose of worship. Saint Ignatius of Loyola writes: “Man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul.” Sacrifice is the supreme act of worship. To offer sacrifice to any being other than God is an act of idolatry. As Christians, we offer our lives to God without reservation to belong entirely to Him. “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship (Rom. 12:1). The holy martyrs laid down their lives without reserve for the Savior who laid down His life for them. This sacrifice was their most perfect act of worship and one that we must all strive to imitate in some measure.

According to Saint Catherine of Sienna, self-love is the “principle and foundation of every evil.” Self-love is at the root of all the sins we commit. Contrary to the self-sacrificial mindset of Christ (Phil. 2:5) we are almost always concerned with our interests and priorities, and risk making self the center of the universe. There is a danger that our prayers and devotions may become self-centered. But in the prayer of worship and adoration, we focus on God and His greatness. We forget ourselves and our problems. In so doing we are freed from the painful prison of self-centeredness, and lose ourselves in the majestic splendor of the Infinite Triune Goodness. Worship and adoration will be our eternal occu-

pation in heavenly glory. Here on earth, may our worship and adoration be a foretaste of eternal bliss. The highest form of prayer is the prayer of adoration and worship.

“Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!’ And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, ‘To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!’ And the four living creatures said, ‘Amen!’ and the elders fell down and worshiped” (Rev. 5:11-14). **ECL**



Jesus with the Cleansed Leper



SPIRITUAL REFLECTIONS

Father Lewis Rabayda

THE REALITY OF OUR ACTIONS

In our lives, we often encounter excuses made for actions performed. We have a tendency to make everything appear as good and acceptable even if our actions are found wanting in virtue or justice. We have become people who can explain away every poor decision we make, or worse, we tend to cover up our secret schemes or sins. But our attempt at justifying even the worst behavior does not make a poor choice good, and it does not nullify the sin committed. Every thing we do, every action we perform demonstrates the reality of who we are and of how we think, and more importantly, where we place our devotion.

It is too easy to be convinced that our actions do not represent our thoughts and most deeply held values. All through Sacred Scripture God gives us clear guidelines between two ways of life. In the Catholic Revised Standard Version of the Bible, the first Psalm is labeled: *The Two Ways*. And indeed this psalm paints a clear picture of only two possibilities for our lives: one whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and the other of the wicked who like chaff, shall be driven away by the

wind (Ps. 1:2&4). Here we see no gray area, there is no waffling or explaining away this action or that action, but there is a clear line between the only two possible ways we can live, and the only two possible directions for our devotion.

When we act in ways that are not pleasing to God, in ways which are contrary to His design for our happiness in Him, then we give clear signals to both angels and demons alike as to where we place our devotion. Guardian Angels and tempting demons see these actions in the light or darkness of their reality, but it is always the tempting demons who try and cloak these actions as insignificant or inconsequential. If we are duped into believing that what we do for better or for worse can be explained away, then we have lost an understanding of the very reality present in each of our actions.

But the reality is that we are sinners, and we need the saving Grace of Jesus Christ through the gift of His Church and the Sacraments. Christ gave His Apostles the direction to baptize, the power to forgive sins, and the power to celebrate the Eucharist. We have been given these

tools, these very real symbols of our devotion to God to act for our benefit as a combatting offensive to the demons which afflict us. When we participate in these realities, it is a sign of our devotion to God and it shows the enemy that we are serious in this battle.

When we fall into sin and perform actions that show our lack of devotion to God, these are seen by the demons as their foot-in-the-door to our souls. They know that if they can get to us once, they can get to us again and tempt us to make more and worse decisions in our lives. If the demons can convince us that our actions are not real symbols of our devotion, then they can continue to persuade us to do things contrary to God's law and

things which hurt our lives, relationships, and souls. **ECL**



Icon of the Prophet King David, author of the Psalms

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

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

UPCOMING EPARCHIAL AND PARISH EVENTS

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DECEMBER

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| 6 | Our Holy Father Nicholas the Wonderworker
<i>Solemn HolyDay</i> | 23-26 | Christmas holidays
<i>Chancery closed</i> |
| 8 | Maternity of the Holy Anna
<i>Solemn HolyDay*Chancery closed</i> | 25 | Nativity of Our Lord, God, and Savior, Jesus Christ
<i>Christ is born! Glorify Him!</i> |
| 11 | Sunday of the Holy Forefathers | 26 | Synaxis of the Theotokos
<i>Solemn HolyDay</i> |
| 12 | Theotokos of Guadalupe
<i>Patroness of the Americas</i> | 27 | Holy Proto-martyr and Archdeacon Stephen
<i>Simple HolyDay</i> |
| 18 | Sunday of the Holy Fathers * Sunday before Christmas | 30 | New Year's Holiday
<i>Chancery closed</i> |

JANUARY

- 27 March For Life
Washington D.C.