



EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

Official Publication of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic

VOL. L, NO. 5

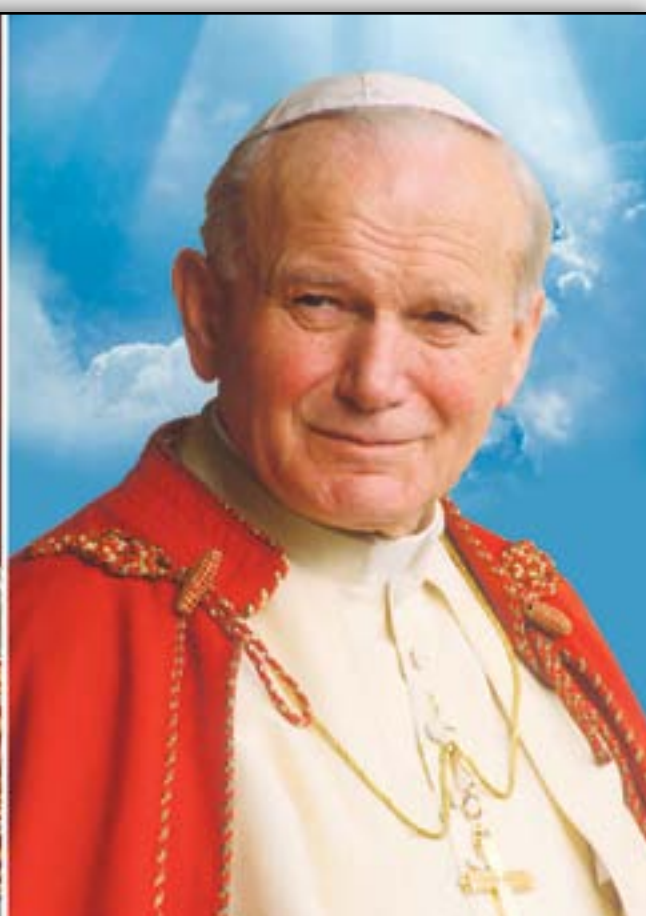
MAY, 2014

Two Popes Canonized Saints *SAINT JOHN XXIII AND SAINT JOHN PAUL II*

Saint John XXIII



Saint John Paul II



Pope Francis announced in late September that he would canonize two popes as saints in a single ceremony on April 27th, Divine Mercy Sunday.

Saint John Paul, known as a globetrotter who made 104 trips outside Italy, served as pope from 1978 to 2005 and was beatified by Pope Benedict XVI on Divine Mercy Sunday, May 1, 2011. Saint John XXIII, known particularly for convoking the Second Vatican Council, was pope from 1958 to 1963; Pope John Paul beatified him in 2000.

In July, Pope Francis signed a decree recognizing the healing of a Costa Rican woman with a life-threatening brain aneurysm as the miracle needed for Saint John Paul's canonization. The same day, the Vatican announced that the pope had agreed with members of the Congregation for Saints' Causes that the canonization of Blessed John should go forward even without a second miracle attributed to his intercession.

A first miracle is needed for beatification. In Pope John Paul's cause, the miracle involved a French nun suffering from Parkinson's disease, the same disease the pope had. In the cause of Pope John, the Vatican recognized as a miracle the healing of an Italian nun who was dying from complications after stomach surgery.

In February, Cardinal Angelo Amato, prefect of the Congregation for Saints' Causes, said Pope Francis did not skip an essential step in

approving Saint John's canonization, but "only shortened the time to give the entire church the great opportunity of celebrating 2014 with John XXIII, the initiator of the Second Vatican Council, and John Paul II, who brought to life the pastoral, spiritual and doctrinal inspiration of its documents."

The cardinal said Pope Francis recognized that the "positio" or official position paper prepared for Saint John's cause, is "full of accounts of miracles" and favors granted by God through his intercession. One case, often mentioned, involves a woman from Naples who accidentally swallowed cyanide; she believes her poison-induced liver damage was miraculously reversed after prayers to Saint John.

Asked by reporters in July to describe the two late popes, Pope Francis said Saint John was "a bit of a 'country priest,' a priest who loves each of the faithful and knows how to care for them; he did this as a bishop and as a nuncio" in Bulgaria, Turkey, Greece and France before becoming a cardinal and patriarch of Venice.

He was holy, patient, had a good sense of humor and, especially by calling the Second Vatican Council, was a man of courage, Pope Francis said. "He was a man who let himself be guided by the Lord."

As for Saint John Paul, Pope Francis told the reporters on the plane, "I think of him as 'the great missionary of the church,' because he was "a man who proclaimed the Gospel everywhere." (CNS)

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I Lift up My Eyes...

The Pastoral Reflections of Bishop Kurt



Peace on Earth

I remember when I was a little boy how my parents were mesmerized by watching the election of Pope Paul V on our small black and white television. Since the election is announced with black or white smoke, a black and white television seems somewhat fitting for the occasion. I didn't know what a pope was, and can't remember ever really catching on to the idea at that age, but I knew it was very important to the adults. They explained that a new pope was elected because the last one had just died, John XXIII. Since I never heard of him before, I wasn't too upset about his death. Little did I know, or did anyone else, that I would live my life in the Era of Good Pope John.

Before becoming pope, Angelo Roncalli had already lived a life of heroic service to others. As part of the Vatican diplomatic corps, he was the Pope's representative to Turkey during the tumultuous years of 1935 - 1945. Working from his office as nuncio, and using his network of friends, he saved the lives of a large number of Jews, especially Jewish children, from extermination by the Nazis. Although he was assigned to Turkey, he saved the lives of Jews from Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and other places. He used a variety of creative techniques, including providing them with "immigration certificates", allowing them to migrate to Palestine. Much of the information about his work of saving lives from the Nazis has been collected by the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation. Raoul Wallenberg was a diplomat who also saved the lives of thousands of Jews. He was the Swedish ambassador in Budapest, and pulled Jews directly off trains, sometimes getting physical with Nazi guards, insisting that they were protected by Sweden. When Russian troops took Budapest, he disappeared into the Russian prison system, and his final fate is still unknown.

Pope John, because of his wide experience living in different parts of the world, was obsessed with breaking down barriers between different peoples. A common theme in his writing was "misunderstandings". He believed that most division and hatred is the result of a failure to understand other people, their history, their beliefs, and their way of life. He worked tirelessly to bring understanding between different Christians, and also between Christians, Jews, Moslems, and others. He summed up his idea, "All the evils which poison men and nations and trouble so many hearts have a single cause and a single source: ignorance of the truth—and at times even more than ignorance, a contempt for truth and a reckless rejection of it. Thus arise all manner of errors, which enter the recesses of men's hearts and the bloodstream of human society as would a plague. These errors turn everything upside down: they menace individuals and society itself." (Encyclical on *Truth Unity and Peace, in a Spirit of Charity*) He didn't just write about these ideas, but he also took forceful action. At first his Good Friday as Pope, he dramatically interrupted the services to change some of the prayers that were insulting to Jews.

We Eastern Christians were most affected by Pope John through his project, the Second Vatican Council. The *Decree on the Catholic Churches of the Eastern Rite* observed that our church is distinguished for our venerable antiquity, and, in our church, "there remains conspicuous the tradition that has been handed down from the Apostles through the Fathers." The ecumenical Council went on to say that the different churches "are consequently of equal dignity, so that none of them is superior to the others!" The Council went on to say that we "enjoy the same rights and are under the same obligations of preaching the Gospel to the whole world!" The Council also urged us to follow our own liturgical tradition.

In his great encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, Pope John taught that peace on earth, to the extent that it can be achieved, will come from recognizing the dignity of others, and their natural rights. He enumerated those rights starting with "the right to live," and all the things necessary for that, such as food, medical care, and employment. "Man has a natural right to be respected. He has a right to his good name." We have the right "to worship God in accordance with the right dictates of his own conscience". "Human beings have also the right to choose for themselves the kind of life which appeals to them: whether it is to found a family...or to embrace the priesthood or the religious life."

Good Pope John didn't just talk about our rights, though, he also reminded us of our duties, and most especially, the duty of personal holiness. Before the Second Vatican Council, Pope John issued an encyclical that seems completely forgotten in the riot of experimentation that followed that great council. He issued an encyclical called *On the Need for the Practice of Interior and Exterior Penance*. In it, he writes, "No individual Christian can grow in perfection, nor can Christianity gain in vigor, except it be on the basis of penance." He begged the Catholics of the world

to prepare for the Council by penitential practices. He balanced the rights of man against the rights of God, and the Council's "manifest task, therefore, will be publicly to reaffirm God's rights over mankind, whom Christ's blood has redeemed, and to reaffirm the duties of redeemed mankind towards its God and Savior." When was the last time you heard anyone mention God's rights?

Finally, Good Pope John was famous for his sense of humor. One of his most quoted jokes was when a reporter asked him "How many people work at the Vatican?" He answered, "About half." Once, an architect submitted plans for a new building at the Vatican. Imagine the pressure of building there next to Michelangelo! Pope John wrote on the plans, in Latin, "We are not angels." (The architect had forgotten to include washrooms in the building.) On another occasion, a reporter asked the pontiff, "Is it true that no one works at the Vatican in the afternoon?" Pope John replied, "No, no, no. They don't work in the morning. They don't come in the afternoon."



TWO NEW SAINTS

SAINT JOHN XXIII AND SAINT JOHN PAUL II

Saint John XXIII, pray to the Lord for us!
Saint John Paul II, pray to the Lord for us!



+Michael Russo

DANBURY, CT – +Michael C. Russo Sr., 85, of Southbury, Connecticut, husband of the late Helen (Grabowski) Russo, fell asleep in the Lord on Sunday afternoon, March 30, 2014 at River Glen Health Care Center, Southbury, CT surrounded by family and friends. He was the father Eparchial Deacon Steven Russo of Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church in Danbury, CT where Father John Cigan is Pastor.

+Michael was born in Stamford, CT, September 18, 1928, a son of the late Raffaele and Lucia (Lorato)

Russo. He was the first of their children to be born in the US. He attended Stamford schools and graduated from Stamford High School in 1947. He was a peacetime veteran of the US Air Force.

He initially became a mason with his father and later a butcher by trade. Mr. Russo owned and operated the former Stanley's Meat Market of Greenwich, later managed The Grand Central Market of Stamford.

A resident of Southbury, CT for the past six years, he was a member of Saint Cecilia Parish, and later, a member of St. Nicholas in Danbury. He was also a member of the Knights of Columbus of Stamford, as well as and the Italian Center of Stamford. An avid golfer, he also enjoyed woodworking, drawing and gardening and spending time with his grandchildren.

Mr. Russo is survived by two sons, Michael C. Russo, Jr. and Deacon Stephen R. Russo and his wife, Heather; his former daughter in law, Jody Russo; four grandchildren, Christopher, Scott, Nicholas and Sarah as well as several nieces and nephews and a brother, Guilo Russo of Florida.

He was preceded in death by his son, +Walter R. Russo; his wife, +Helen (Grabowski) Russo; his sister, +Caroline Uva; and his brothers, +Anthony Russo and +Ralph Russo.

The Divine Liturgy of Christian Burial was celebrated on Monday April 7th, 2014 at Saint Anne Melkite Catholic Church by the Most Reverend Bishop Kurt. Concelebrants included Father John Cigan and Deacon Stephen Russo. Burial followed in Lakeview Cemetery, New Canaan, CT. *May his memory be eternal!*



FROM THE OFFICE OF THE BISHOP



Clergy Appointments and Assignments

RIGHT REVEREND JAMES HAYER is appointed Protosyncellus of the Eparchy of Passaic effective March 25, 2014.

REVEREND JOHN FINK, a retired bi-ritual priest of the Archdiocese of Miami, is appointed administrator of Saint Basil Church, 1475 NE 199th Street, Miami, Florida effective March 31, 2014.

VERY REVEREND ROBERT EVANCHO is appointed administrator of All Saints Church, 10291 Bayshore Road, North Fort Meyers, Florida effective March 8, 2014.

REVEREND J. MICHAEL VENDITTI, M.Div., pastor of Saint Michael Church, 156 Green Street, Allentown, PA and administrator of Saints Peter and Paul Church, 142 Lafayette Avenue, Palmerton, PA, has been released from his assignments at these parishes and from his service to the Eparchy of Passaic. Father Venditti will be returning to his own Diocese of Metuchen effective Friday, March 28, 2014. The Eparchy thanks Father Michael for almost 17 years of service.

REVEREND FRANK HANINCIK is appointed pastor of Saint Michael Church, 156 West Green Street, Allentown, PA and administrator of Saints Peter and Paul Church, 142 Lafayette Avenue, Palmerton, PA effective Friday, March 28, 2014.

All Effective March 1, 2014:

VERY REVEREND JOHN G. BASARAB is reappointed Syncellus of the Middle States Syncellate.

VERY REVEREND ROBERT EVANCHO is relieved as Protopresbyter and appointed Syncellus of the Southern States Syncellate.

RIGHT REVEREND JAMES G. HAYER is reappointed Syncellus of the Susquehanna Syncellate.

VERY REVEREND PETER J. HOSAK is reappointed Syncellus of the Central Pennsylvania Syncellate.

VERY REVEREND ROBERT J. HOSPODAR, J.C.L. is reappointed Syncellus of the New York/New England Syncellate.

VERY REVEREND MICHAEL J. MONDIK is reappointed Syncellus of the New Jersey Syncellate.

VERY REVEREND SALVATORE PIGNATO is appointed Protopresbyter of the Southern States Protopresbyterate of the Eparchy of Passaic effective Saturday, March 1, 2014.

Bishop Kurt Celebrates Compline for Life



Bishop Kurt offers reflections on the value of life.



Hospitality is provided by a dedicated crew as they watch the Pro-Life March on TV.



Father John Basarab, host pastor, welcomes the Bishop.

This year was the 40th All Night Prayer Vigil for Life at the Basilica of the National Shrine. The Prayer Vigil is sponsored by the Office of Pro-Life Activities of the USCCB and was held the evening and night of January 21. Bishop Kurt concelebrated the opening Liturgy in the Great Upper Church with thirty bishops. Sean Cardinal O'Malley, O.F.M., Cap. was the principle celebrant and homilist. 300 priests concelebrated

including, Father Ron Barusefski, Father Richard Rohrer, and Father Alex Shuter. 500 seminarians were present. Although there was a severe snow storm in Washington on January 21st, the huge basilica was filled with thousands and the overflow congregation gathered in Memorial Hall and the Crypt church to view the Liturgy on TV monitors.

Following the Liturgy, the Mothers for Life prayed the Rosary in the Crypt Church. After the Ro-

sary, Byzantine Catholic Compline was celebrated, followed by the beginning of the All night Vigil at 11:00 PM. Although the snow continued and the temperatures dipped into the teens, one hundred fifty people were present in the Crypt Church for Compline, including parishioners of the area Byzantine Catholic churches. The celebrant and homilist was Bishop Kurt. Deacon Steven Galuschik and Deacon Elmer Pekarik assisted. The responses

were led by the Slava Men's Chorus of Epiphany of our Lord Church, Annandale, VA where Father John Basarab is Pastor.

The next morning, as Cardinals and bishops celebrated Masses at the Basilica and throughout the District of Columbia in preparation for the 41st March for Life, Bishop Kurt offered a Divine Liturgy for the Protection of Life and preached the homily at Epiphany of our Lord Church, Annandale, VA.



Parishioners Enjoy Hayride

During the recent Fall months, several parishioners of Saint John Parish in Wilkes-Barre Township (Georgetown) joined the children of the Eastern Christian Formation Program on a field trip to Berger's Farms in Drums PA for a Pumpkin Pick and Hayride.

Pictured from left are Vera Hubick, John and Patti Mentrikoski, Stepan and Father Michael Prodanets, Audralaine Mentrikoski, Alyson Sedon, Mary Polakoski, Paul Sedon, Betty Zbigner, Helen Fealy and Helen Bedrin.

EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

(USPS 165-600)

(ISSN 0894-9786)

Official Publication of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic
Subscription Rate: \$15.00 per year.

News and Photo Services: Catholic News Service, CNS Picture Service and Member of the Catholic Press Association of America.

Published monthly by the *Eastern Catholic Press Association*,
445 Lackawanna Avenue, Woodland Park NJ 07424.

Phone: 973-890-7794. Fax: 973-890-7175.

Postage Paid at Little Falls, NJ and additional office at Bellmawr, NJ.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:

Eastern Catholic Life

445 Lackawanna Avenue, Woodland Park, NJ 07424.

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Vičnaja Pamjat!

Bishop Jan Hirka Reposes in the Lord



Bishop Jan Hirka, Bishop Emeritus of the Greek Catholic Eparchy of Prešov, fell asleep in the Lord on April 10, 2014 at the age of 90. He was ordained to the Priesthood of Jesus Christ on July 31, 1949 by Blessed Basil Hopko.

After having served as Apostolic Administrator of the Eparchy of Prešov since 1969, he was ordained appointed bishop and ordained to the episcopacy on December 21, 1989. He served as eparchial bishop until his retirement in December, 2002.

May his memory be eternal!

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ByzanTeen

July 10-13 Rally 2014

Mount St. Mary's University,
Emmitsburg, MD

ages
13-18

Cost per
participant
is \$300.00

Nationally Recognized Speakers:

Leah Darrow
Rick Soldinie

Featuring the Band:

L'Angélus

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

Registration Deadline is June 16, 2014
To register, or for additional information, visit
www.Byzanteen.com

Called to Sainthood

Pope St. John XXIII and Pope St. John Paul II

Saint John XXIII

Although he served as pope for less than five years, Blessed John XXIII left one of the most lasting legacies in the Catholic Church's history by convening the Second Vatican Council. A plump, elderly, smiling Italian of peasant origins, the future pope had an illustrious career as a papal diplomat in Bulgaria, Turkey and postwar France.

He became pope amid the dismantling of colonialism, the rise of the Cold War and on the cusp of a technological transformation unlike anything the world had seen since the Industrial Revolution. Citing the Holy Spirit as his source of inspiration, he called the Second Vatican Council to help the church confront the rapid changes and mounting challenges unfolding in the world - and, by inviting non-Catholics to the council, to work toward Christian unity.

As pope from 1958 to 1963, Saint John launched an extensive renewal of the church when he convoked the council, which set in motion major reforms with regard to the church and its structure, the liturgy, ecumenism, social communication and the Eastern churches.

After the initial session's close in 1962, he set up a committee to direct council activities during the nine-month recess. Subsequent sessions - the final one ended in December 1965 - produced documents on the role of bishops, priestly formation, religious life, Christian education, the laity and interreligious dialogue.

He produced a number of historic encyclicals, including "Mater et Magistra" on Christian social doctrine and "Pacem in Terris," issued in 1963 at the height of the Cold War, on the need for global peace and justice. He established the Pontifical Commission for the Revision of the Code of Canon Law, which oversaw the updating of the general law of the church after the Second Vatican Council, culminating in publication of the new code in 1983.

Before he was elected pope, he served as a Vatican diplomat. His work in Bulgaria and Turkey put the future pope in close contact with many Christians who were not in full communion with the Catholic Church and inspired him to dedicate so much effort as pope to try to recover the unity lost over the centuries. It was Saint John who, as pope in 1960, created the Vatican's office for promoting Christian unity.

With his humility, gentleness and active courage, he reached out like the Good Shepherd to the marginalized and the world, visiting the imprisoned and the sick, and welcoming people from every nation and faith. He visited many parishes in Rome, especially in the city's growing suburbs. His contact with the people and his open display of personal warmth, sensitivity and fatherly kindness earned him the nickname, "the Good Pope."

Saint John brought a humble yet charismatic, personal style to papacy. He placed great importance on his modest upbringing in a village about 25 miles northeast of Milan, saying:

"I come from the country, from poverty" that he said was "happy and blessed poverty - not cursed, not endured."

Born in Sotto il Monte, Italy, in 1881, Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli was one of 13 children in a family of sharecroppers. He entered the minor seminary at the age of 11 and was sent to Rome to study at the age of 19. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1904 and, after several years as secretary to the bishop of Bergamo, he was called

to the Vatican. In 1925 he began serving as a Vatican diplomat, first posted to Bulgaria, then to Greece and Turkey and, finally, to France. He was named a cardinal and patriarch of Venice in 1953. After more than five years as patriarch of Venice, then-Cardinal Roncalli was elected pope Oct. 28, 1958. He died of cancer June 3, 1963 and was beatified in 2000, by Saint John Paul II, with whom he was canonized on April 27.

Key events in the life of Pope John XXIII

Pope John XXIII was the 260th successor of St. Peter, serving as pope from October 1958 to June 1963. He is best known for convening the Second Vatican Council.

1881
Nov. 25, Born Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli to Giovanni Battista and Marianna Giulia Roncalli

1904
Aug. 10, Ordained a priest; serves as secretary to bishop of Bergamo.

1915-18
Serves as medic and chaplain during World War I.

1921
Goes to Rome to head Italian national office of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith.

1925
Named archbishop; appointed apostolic visitor to Bulgaria.

1934
Transfers to Istanbul to serve as apostolic delegate to Turkey and Greece.

1939-44
During World War II, helps many Jews escape Nazi persecution, coordinating rescue plans with other ambassadors

1944
Named nuncio to Paris.

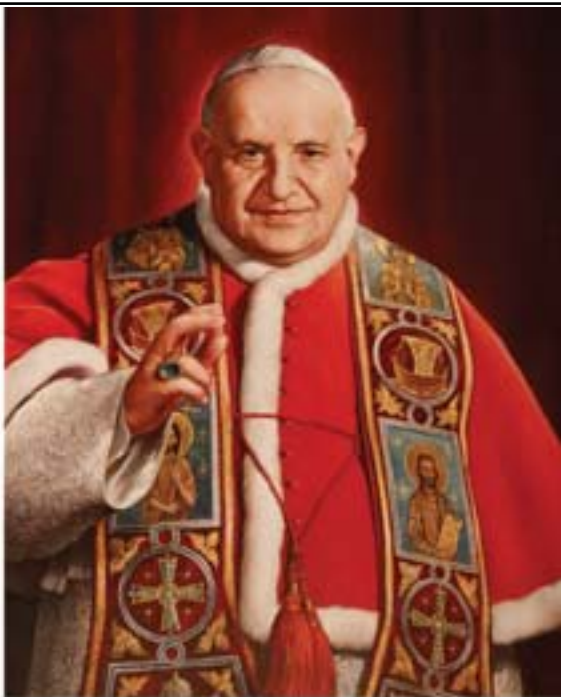
1953
Named a cardinal and patriarch of Venice.

1958
Oct. 28, elected pope, takes name John XXIII.

1962
Oct. 11, opens first session of Second Vatican Council.



Pope John XXIII leads the opening session of the Second Vatican Council in St. Peter's Basilica Oct. 11, 1962. (CNS photo/L'Osservatore Romano)



Releases "Pacem in Terris" ("Peace on Earth"), social encyclical teaching that true peace must be built on pillars of truth, justice, love and freedom.

Pope John XXIII signs his encyclical "Pacem in Terris" ("Peace on Earth") at the Vatican in this 1963 file photo. Considered a highlight in Catholic social teaching, the encyclical addresses universal rights and relations between states. (CNS photo)

1963
June 3, dies of cancer.



The body of Pope John XXIII lies in state at the Vatican June 4, 1963, the day after he died of cancer. (CNS)

2000
Sept. 3, beatified by Pope John Paul II.

SOURCES: Wikipedia, vatican.va, "Pope John XXIII: Shepherd of the Modern World," papagiovanni.com



The Eparchy of Passaic and the **GCU** *Invite ALL to Attend*

BYZANTINE KNOEBELS AM SUNDAY

*Open to ALL Parishioners, Family, Friends,
GCU Members and Guests – Rain or Shine!*

Tentative Schedule

11:00 am	Park Opens
1 pm - 2 pm	Catered Lunch! (optional)
3:00 pm	Bingo / Games for Adults (with prizes!)
4:00 pm	PRAYER SERVICE (Moleben)
4:30 pm	Kids Games with prizes!
5:45 pm	Evening Entertainment / Sing-A-Long!
7:00 pm	Park Closes - hope you had a great day!



Discounted ride-all-day passes and tickets! Free admission! Free Parking!

Lunch ticket purchase will not be required to join us in Pavilion "O"

Families may instead bring a picnic lunch or buy food in the park.

Questions? Call Christie Petty: 1-724-495-3400 x209.



THE CATHOLIC FAMILY DAY • PA

AMUSEMENT PARK - ELYSBURG, PA

DAY, MAY 18, 2014



Join us in Pavilion "O"
Conveniently located near the park and the parking area!



New this year!

Byzantine Catholic Family Day • NJ
6 Flags Great Adventure
Jackson, New Jersey
Sunday, June 22nd



The Eparchy of Passaic and the GCU are proud to present an additional "Byzantine Catholic Family Day" celebration at 6 Flags Great Adventure in Jackson, NJ on Sunday, June 22nd!

Double the fun! "Byzantine Catholic Family Day • PA" is at Knoebels Amusement Resort in Elysburg, PA; and "Byzantine Catholic Family Day • NJ" is at 6 Flags Great Adventure in Jackson, NJ.

More details will be coming soon through local GCU Lodges, your parishes, and the Eastern Catholic Life. But, for now, save the date! Hope to see you there!

“Come, Follow Me...” (Matthew 4:19)

Seminarian Lewis Rabayda Ordained Subdeacon



Bishop Kurt with the newly-ordained Subdeacon Lewis Rabayda, concelebrants, clergy and seminarians, and altar servers following the Hierarchical Liturgy on Lazarus Saturday.

LANSFORD, PA – Seminarian Lewis Rabayda, son of Daniel and Pat Rabayda, was ordained to the Order of Subdeacon on Lazarus Saturday, April 12, 2014, by His Grace, Bishop Kurt, at his home parish of Saint John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church in Lansford, PA where Father Vasyl Chepelsky is Pastor. Immediately prior to the ordination to the subdiaconate, the Bishop tonsured the seminarian and conferred upon him the Order of Reader. The new Subdeacon is completing his fourth year of theological graduate studies at Saints Cyril and Methodius Seminary in Pittsburgh, PA.

Concelebrating clergy included Father Peter Hosak, regional Syncellus; Father Vasyl Chepelsky, host Pastor; Father Gregory Hosler, Parish Vocation; Father John Zeyack; and Deacon Steven Galuschik. Other clergy and seminarians in attendance included Father James Hayer, Eparchial Protosyncellus; Father James Badeaux; Father Edward Higgins, Liturgical Master of Ceremonies; Father Harold Mikale; Deacon Basil Soroka; Deacon Robert Behrens; Deacon Kenneth Malley; Subdeacon Michael Bezruchka; Subdeacon John Russell; Seminarian Thomas Moses, and Seminarian Bryan Scotton, who led the responses along with parish Cantor Bill Gribble.

The Byzantine Catholic Youth Group, under the direction of Cecelia Keer, welcomed the Bishop as he entered the church. Youth Group member Isaiah Kupchinsky greeted the Bishop as he was presented with bread and salt, the traditional symbols of hospitality. The Bishop and concelebrants then processed into the church for the conferral of tonsure prior to the start of the Litur-

gy. Through tonsure, a person is prepared for the clerical state and Divine service. The Bishop cuts a small portion of the candidate's hair in the shape of a cross, symbolizing the devotion, humility, and the setting apart from the cares of the world that the candidate must now have.



Bishop Kurt and Subdeacon Lewis with his parents, Daniel and Pat Rabayda.

Following the conferral of tonsure, Seminarian Lewis was ordained to the order of Reader (Lector). He chanted the epistle during the Hierarchical Liturgy and was vested in the small phelonian for the proclamation of the Word of God. Finally, he was ordained to the order of Subdeacon and vested with a dalmatic and crossed oration, symbolic of the liturgical service that he is to render through Sacred Orders. Part of this service is the ritual of washing the hands of the bishop during the Divine Liturgy. After assisting

the bishop with the cleansings, the new Subdeacon has the towel placed over his head as a symbol of service and humility. He then takes his place before the icon of Christ. The Orders of Reader and Subdeacon are necessary steps in preparation for diaconal and presbyteral ordination.

In his homily, Bishop Kurt reflected on the awesome task of anyone called to God's service. Drawing on the message of the Epistle to the Hebrews (Hebrews 12:28-13:8) and the Gospel for Lazarus Saturday (John 11: 1-45), the Bishop spoke of God's "unshakable kingdom" and the virtuous characteristics of anyone called to service of the Lord. It was through envy that the enemies of Jesus decided to kill Him after He performed His greatest miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead. The Bishop then called upon the newly-ordained Subdeacon to imitate the lessons of the saints and grow in virtue as he continues to prepare for ministry in the Lord's vineyard.

At the conclusion of the Hierarchal Liturgy, Father Vasyl Chepelsky, host pastor, presented the newly-ordained Subdeacon with an icon, as a gift from the parish, and cordially invited all to attend a luncheon in the parish hall. There, Subdeacon Lewis thanked the Bishop, the clergy, his fellow seminarians, his parents, family and friends, and all those in attendance, for their ongoing and prayerful support. "This is as much your day, as it is my day," he said with heartfelt gratitude.

May God grant to His newly-ordained Subdeacon Lewis, peace, health and happiness for many years in the Vineyard of the Lord!



The members of the Byzantine Catholic Youth Group await the arrival of the Bishop.



Father Vasyl, host Pastor, presents a gift to the new Subdeacon.



Some of the many clergy, family and guests in attendance enjoy a luncheon following the Ordination Liturgy.

Ordination of Subdeacon Lewis Rabayda

Photo Highlights



Bishop Kurt preached the homily.



“ I thank God, the Bishop, and my father and mother for giving me such a great example of what a devout Christian should be.”

Subdeacon Lewis Rabayda
Words of gratitude following his ordination
to the Order of Subdeacon on Lazarus Saturday.



Subdeacon Lewis offers words of gratitude following his ordination.



Photo credit:
Father James Hayer





FAITH AND COMMUNITY ISSUES

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

God's "Hesed"

FAITHFUL, UNFAILING LOVE FOR HIS PEOPLE

John Paul II, in *Familiaris Consortio*, finds a parallel between the faithful love of God for the People Israel, and the vowed love of a married couple. In marriage, then, the concretization of the Revelation that God loves His people is found fundamentally in the marriage covenant, the relationship between a man and a woman. This loving expression finds its fullest expression in the physical world through the conjugal love of husband and wife. In the words of John Paul II: "Their bond of love becomes the image and the symbol of the covenant which unites God and His people." (*Familiaris Consortio*, 1981, §12)

In like manner, within the context of the Holy Scriptures, the images of adultery and prostitution become the analogies between the infidelity of the people toward God, and the sin which can harm the conjugal covenant of Marriage. Hence, idolatry becomes prostitution, and adultery becomes infidelity. Within this context, disobedience to God's law is seen as leaving behind the covenantal love of God as John Paul II states in *Familiaris Consortio* (1981, §12) "Disobedience to the law is abandonment of the spousal love of the Lord."

Although the people may walk away from the covenant, God does not. God's fidelity is eternal. It is the everlasting nature of God's love that is given to humanity, in order to consider as the *exemplum primum* of the degree of love which should exist between spouses. For John Paul II, the intimate relationship that exists between God and His People finds its perfect emulation and complete fulfillment in Jesus Christ. He is the

all-loving Spouse who gives Himself in totality as Savior uniting Himself to humanity's weakness, accepting it as His own body and transforming it into glory by His power. Christ's relationship with humanity is revelatory of God's vision for humanity. As witnessed in the Book of Genesis, from the very beginning, Christ's love literally transforms humanity's heart of stone into the biblical heart of flesh. And, in so doing, activates the spiritual, mental and physical faculties of humankind to realize fully the Truth, the meaning this kind of love has in human existence.

This revelation of Divine Loving relationship reaches a radical depth and fullness in the Mystery of the Incarnation, the Word of God taking upon Himself the totality of human nature. Such assumption culminates in the complete sacrificial act upon the cross. Christ's death upon the cross becomes the supreme gift of the spouse to His bride, the Church. In the center of this action, the entire plan of God's design for humankind, since its very inception and creation, is revealed. The covenantal love of the married, baptized couple is rendered as a real symbol of the eternal covenant between God and His People, sanctioned and sanctified in the Blood of Jesus Christ.

It is the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, proceeding from the Eternal Father, whose activity creates a new heart. Man and woman are thus empowered to love one another, mirroring the love Christ has for each of us insofar as we are capable. It is through this outpouring of the Spirit of God, and humanity's cooperation with

that unique and sublime operation, that conjugal love reaches its fulfillment. Such fulfillment "is the proper and specific way in which the spouses participate in and are called to live the very charity of Christ who gave Himself on the Cross." (*Familiaris Consortio*, 1981, §13)

It was Tertullian (ca. 150-225), one of the Early Theologians of the Church, that John Paul II quotes in expressing the relationship in Christ that a married couple shares and in that sharing reveals to the world around it the beauty such a life reveals:

How can I ever express the happiness of the marriage that is joined together by the Church, strengthened by an offering, sealed by a blessing, announced by angels and ratified by the Father? . . . How wonderful the bond between two believers, with a single hope, a single desire, a single observance, a single service! They are both brethren and both fellow-servants: there is no separation between them in spirit or flesh; in fact they are truly two in one flesh, and where the flesh is one, one is the spirit (Tertullian, *Ad Uxorem*, II, VIII, 6-8: CCL I, 393 as quoted by John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 1981 13).

The Church has consistently held that the Marriage is numbered among the Seven Mysteries of the Church, basing its belief upon fervent study of the Sacred Scriptures, the very Word of God. The Church recognizes that, through the Mystery of Baptism, humanity, man and woman,

Continued on next page



GUEST CONTRIBUTION

IF THE LORD CALLS, WILL YOU ANSWER?

By Sister Elaine Kisinko, OSBM



Our Holy Father Francis has designated the year of 2015 as the Year for Consecrated Life. We Sisters welcome this designation with the realization and hope that in focusing on the value and importance of consecrated life, others may discern that they too are called to walk this way.

There is no doubt that the Lord is calling women just as He called us, each Sister of Saint Basil.

Perhaps it was different for us because it was a different time. Though it was not an easy decision to leave family, interests and life as we knew it, each of us in some way believed that this was what God wanted us to do – to follow Him as a vowed religious nun. Most of us had the support of our loved ones and of our parish communities.

Now it seems that as families

have become so much smaller, parents are reluctant to see their daughter, who is their only child or is one of two children, set aside all that the world appears to offer. Education and professional careers have become paramount.

Opportunities for women beckon in fields that were before unknown to them. Many times vocation awareness is not mentioned or encouraged in parish activities because it is considered a topic which fosters no interest. Sadly, in America today, as we see church populations shrink and parishes close, even young people who have been brought up in the Church do not continue practicing their faith.

Criticism and disapproval of Catholic teaching is evident in subtle ways and in obvious ways as well.

But our God is eternal and un-

changing. The world and everyone and everything in it remains His despite constant and rapid change in ever place and way imaginable. As we see laws and morality crumbling, society seems intent in trying to make His reality fade and become more and more obscure.

So it remains the task of the Church and of all of the good, faithful and wonderful people in it to keep living and reflecting Jesus and His Gospel way of life. Our hierarchs, priests, deacons, monastics, brothers sisters, laity and you who are reading this have been called and all continue to be called to do this. Every vocation and state in life, whether it be married, single, ordained or religious, is of the greatest value.

But if ever you have had even a tiny fleeting thought of wanting to do more for God and His Church, please bring that thought back into

your mind and heart and ask our Lord to help you discern what He is calling you to do. Talk about it to those whose guidance you trust.

I have been blessed, honored and grateful to be a Sister of Saint Basil for a very long time. I have witnessed the changes in the world and absorbed the changes of religious life. It is clear that both will continue to change. Though the vision for our Church can appear dire, it can also become exciting and life giving as seminaries and monasteries grow with new members who have much to offer. To respond to God's call to the Consecrated Life can be challenging, but it is not a giving up but a receiving more.

When the Lord said, "You have not chosen me but I have chosen you." (John 15:16), He is gently confirming and beckoning. How will you respond?



Icon of the Holy Virgin in the apse of the Church of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul (Constantinople).

Among the multitude of Byzantine Liturgical services, there are many references to Our Lord, the Holy Theotokos, and the panoply of saints. Sundays during the Great Fast, and on a few other Holy Days, the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great is celebrated. The hymn in honor of the Theotokos chanted during this Eucharistic Liturgy is entitled: "In You O Woman Full of Grace All Creation rejoices." This hymn translates from the Greek as "Ha Platytera tou ouranon," and into Old Church Slavonic as "O tebi radujetsja."

Almost certainly, Byzantine iconographers were inspired by this hymn to conceive of an icon which depicts the Holy Virgin traditionally located in the concave apse area above the main altar in the sanctuary. They labeled this icon as the *Platytera tou ouranon*, the wide wings of heaven, a phrase taken from the Liturgy of Saint Basil which describes her ability as Theotokos to conceive in her womb the limitless Godhead her Son Jesus Christ.

Before we delve into the description of this type of Mother of God

icon, we must understand the theme of this prayer: "In You O Woman Full of Grace, all creation rejoices, the angels in their ranks, and the human race. Sanctified Temple and Rational Paradise, Boast of Virgins, from whom our God took flesh and became a child, while remaining God from before all time. He made your womb a throne, setting it apart, a room more spacious than the heavens. In you, O Woman full of grace, all creation rejoices, Glory to You."

The composition of this hymn is attributed to Saint John Damascene (+742), and is an elaborate articulation about the Conception and child bearing of the Christ Child by the Holy Virgin Mother. This theme is entirely consonant with the Lenten celebration of the Annunciation (in Greek, the *Evangelization of the Mother of God*), celebrated annually on the fixed date of March 25. Whenever this feast day occurs, and indeed sometimes it falls on Good Friday itself, the Divine Liturgy is celebrated.

One of the oldest surviving icons which portrays this type of icon, the *Platytera* can still be viewed in the apse of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, and dates from the ninth century.

The Virgin is depicted enthroned with the Christ Child seated on her lap, while her feet rest on a footstool. She wears the deep purplish-blue *maphorion*, and has the three stars of virginity - one on her forehead, and one on either shoulder. She is presenting her Son as the Eternal High Priest who is shown in His *himation* and *chiton* with refulgent radiating rays of gold.

The hymn refers to the womb of the Virgin as a "throne" and a "san-

UNDERSTANDING ICONS

Father Joseph Bertha, Ph.D.



More Spacious than the Heavens

tified temple." Both terms reference specific church architecture and locations, the Holy of Holies, the Sanctuary, and the Bishops throne. Most prominently, the icon which depicts this subject is located in the apse area above the main altar serving as a parallel to the presence of the pre-existent God-head in the womb of the Theotokos, and its correspondence with the Holy Table upon which the Eucharistic Gifts are enthroned.

The ingenuity of the early Byzantine iconographers is exhibited in this remarkable interplay between location and image. The Virgin and the Christ-Child shown in a concave apse reflect the womb of a Mother carrying a child. On the altar below, when the Eucharistic Liturgy is celebrated by the priest, the precious Flesh and Blood of Jesus is made present in the world.

As the Byzantine missionaries, and subsequently, their iconographers brought the faith into the Slavic regions, the title of this image remained the same, and the icon which illustrated the apse became more structured and delineated. The

Theotokos now wears a deep red colored *maphorion*, reflecting her virginity, and is enthroned surrounded by an immense choir of angels. Below, and on the terrestrial level, the different ranks of saints encircle the Holy Mother and Child.

The Letter to the Hebrews verbally portrays the holy pair found in the sanctuary: "When Christ came as high priest of the good things which have come to be, He entered once for all into the sanctuary, passing through the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made by hands, that is, not belonging to this creation."

The next time you enter into a Byzantine church and marvel at the "More spacious than the heavens icon" recall the wonderful correspondence between image and architecture. Be in awe at the wonderful work of God's grace which was accomplished through the conception, birth giving of the Holy Mother of God. Finally, give ample thanksgiving for the great gift of the Eucharist given by the High Priest Jesus Christ!

Faith and Community Issues

Continued from page 12.

finds itself at home within the New everlasting Covenant revealed in the spousal covenantal love of Christ toward His Church. It is through this "belonging" that the union of a man and women in the married state is lifted up and placed with the very love that Christ has for his church, sustained and fed by Christ's sublime act of redemption the supreme act of love for His Spouse the Church.

It is by, and through, the very nature of this Mystery called Marriage, that spouses are bound to one another in an indissoluble bond of profoundly radical depth. In the

words of John Paul II (1981) "Their belonging to each other is the real representation, by means of the sacramental sign, of the very relationship of Christ within the Church." (*Familiaris Consortio* §13)

How is such a relationship manifested spiritually and practically in today's world? What consequences are derived from such a witness? What credible witness value does the married state offer to world of today? These questions will be examined and addressed in the next installment.

Oriente Lumen XVIII Conference "Ecumenical Dimensions of Marriage"

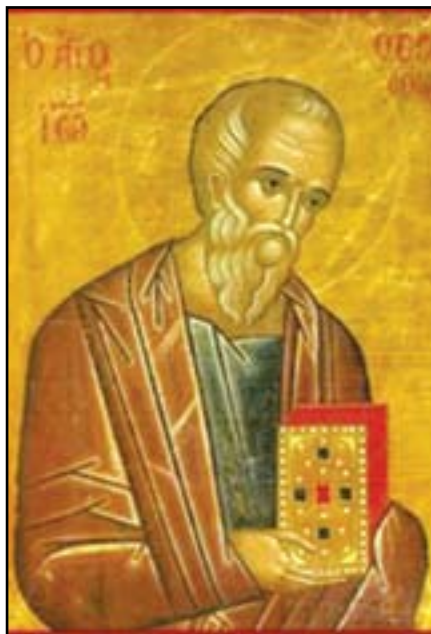
June 23-26, 2014
Washington, DC



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

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

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



In many of our churches on the feast of the glorious and radiant holy Resurrection of our Lord which we are currently joyously celebrating, we heard the Gospel chanted in several languages. After each verse, the church bells rang out. This is truly a grand proclamation of the message of salvation in Christ now resurrected and alive following His sacrificial death by crucifixion and His three-day burial.

The text which is used are the first twelve verses of Saint John's account as the Gospel opens which differs substantially from the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke who present more of a history of our Lord's life and ministry on earth while Saint John writes in very theological and sublime imagery. His principal focus

is on our Lord's promise of life after life seen mainly in Chapter six, His discourse on the Eucharist, and the stirring account of the resurrection of His dear friend, Lazarus, recorded in chapter eleven.

Saint John is called "the disciple whom Jesus loved." Since he was the last to write his Gospel at an advanced age, probably near 100, we know he was quite young when he accepted, with his brother James, the call of Jesus to follow Him. His Gospel was composed at Ephesus and by tradition was written down by Prochorus, a young disciple. They are usually depicted in iconography with Prochorus seated at a writing table while rays of light stream down onto him through John symbolizing the outpouring of inspiration from the Holy Spirit.

Our Lord entrusted the care of His holy Mother, Mary, to John as He hung dying of the Cross. With that solemn gesture, Mary has become our spiritual mother as well.

Saint John explains the reason for writing His Gospel shortly before its end in Chapter 20 stating,

"These (signs) are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing in Him you may have life in His Name." (verse 30) It would seem since he is the last to write a gospel account, his readers already know about the other three Gospels to which he adds more details. The thoughts expressed by Saint John have been the subject of much reflection and discussion among scholars and superb spiritual reading for everyone. Because of the loftiness of his writing, in Christian art he is assigned the symbol of an eagle, representing his soaring thoughts.

Within this Gospel are found the great "I-Am's" of Jesus, a clear reference for Jewish readers (and for us) to His divinity: to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, "I who speak with you am he" (4:26); "I am the bread of life..." (6:34); "I am the light of the world..." (8:12); "Amen. Amen. I say to you, before Abraham came to be I am." (8:58); "I am the door..." (10:9); "I am the good shepherd..." (10:14); "I am the resurrection and the life..." (11:5); "I am the true vine..." (15:1); "I am

a King..." (18:37).

With this Gospel, the view of our Lord in early Christian times made a giant leap forward in a direction which eventually proved to be the way later on that the Church would go in its statements and teachings on the divinity of our Lord. The person and work of Christ is the heart of John's Gospel which supports the decisions of the early Church Fathers at the time of Arius, Nestorius and other false teachers. We see Jesus in this Gospel constantly revealing Himself about who He is and from where He comes. He has the courage to make the statements cited above. They describe Him in His activity within the community, towards both the world and the individual. Most essentially, they express the revelation of the divine commitment involved in the Father sending the Son to show and to share the life of the Father, to lay down His life in love for his friends, and to draw them (and us) through faith and love into the very life of communion with the Blessed Trinity. Christ is risen! Indeed He is risen!



HOLYDAY REFLECTIONS

Msgr. John T. Sekellick, JCL

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN



RESPECT LIFE FORUM

By Kimberly Baker

Begin Again



Participation in the Sacrament of Reconciliation washes away the "dirt" of our sin and opens our hearts to encounter God's mercy so we can start with a "clean slate." When we consider our pro-life witness, it is helpful to reflect on the renewing power of God's mercy in our lives and how that can affect others.

God's mercy is extended to each person and has no limits, as long as we have true contrition. Whatever the circumstances, no matter how serious the sin – even something as serious as abortion – God wants to heal our hearts and make them whole again; he wants to fill us with his love.

Pope Francis provides such a simple witness of God's mercy through his words and actions. He says, "... God never tires of forgiving us; we are the ones who tire of seeking his mercy... With a tenderness which never disappoints, but is always capable of restoring our joy, he makes it possible for us to lift up our heads and to start anew" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 3).

Simply put, *God's mercy is life-giving*. To experience forgiveness is healing. It is freeing. It is renewing. The extent to which we have personally experienced God's mercy will greatly affect how we are able to radiate his mercy to others -- and

how we communicate the pro-life message.

In the Gospels, a great example of God's mercy is found in the story of the woman who washes Jesus' feet with her tears (Luke 7:36-50). Especially significant: the woman comes to Jesus already *in tears*. At his feet, she expresses regret for her past life and pours out her heart. She has interrupted Jesus' dinner with the Pharisees, but he responds with gentleness. The Pharisees regard her scornfully, but Jesus says, "I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much..." (Luke 7:47). Then he tells the woman directly, "Your sins are forgiven" (Luke: 7: 48). In conclusion, as if to set her at ease and calm her tears, Jesus tells her, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace" (Luke 7:50).

Once you are touched by God's mercy, you understand how he is gentle and loving and is always calling you closer to himself. Its impact reaches the depths of your heart and transforms your life. You see yourself, and the world, with new eyes. You realize that you are precious, that you are loved, that your life is sacred in God's eyes and that he cares about you deeply. Having experienced this gentleness and mercy, you then want others to experience the same peace and joy you

have found. It is impossible to keep it to yourself.

Each one of us can be messengers of God's mercy to the world, wherever we find ourselves, with the people we encounter every day. To be pro-life is not only to defend life. It also means to help heal and restore the life around us. For we live in a broken world, where people are crying for mercy and do not understand what it truly means to be loved.

So let us begin again, moving forward with hope and trust in God's mercy. May this Lenten season be a time of cleansing so each one of us experiences the love of God more profoundly, strengthening our hearts so that we, in turn, may share this love with others. Let us live the pro-life message, first and foremost, by being messengers of God's mercy.

[Kimberly Baker is a staff assistant for the Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities, US Conference of Catholic Bishops. For more information on the bishops' pro-life activities, please visit www.usccb.org/prolife. If you or someone you know has been involved in an abortion, find hope and help at www.hopeafterabortion.com or call 888-456-HOPE (4673).]

THE BYZANTINE LITURGY

By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD



Resurrection in the Old Testament



The Resurrection of Christ is the center of our Christian faith. How the resurrection took place is not described in the Gospels, but it is certainly presented as a historical reality and the evangelists witness to the effects: Jesus is seen by his followers and the tomb is empty. In the articles to come, I want to return to the meaning of Jesus' resurrection. First, I want to make the observation that Jesus' resurrection was not the first or only rising from the dead. However, it was unique because it brought about a new relationship of people with God, and gave us the hope of eternal life.

In the resurrections that occurred before our Lord, the people risen returned to life in this world and had to die again. Jesus, however, does not return to living in human society after His resurrection. He ascends into heaven to take His place at the right hand of the Father. Resurrection from the dead are attributed to the prophets Elijah and Elisha in the Old Testament. We are not speaking about a theology of resurrection or prophecies about resurrection in the future. For example, in Isaiah 26:19, the prophet proclaims: "But your dead shall arise, their corpses shall rise, awake and sing, you who lie in the dust." (Isaiah 26:19) This is the final verse of the Canticum of Isaiah, which is the Fifth Ode on the Matins Canon of the Church, chosen perhaps for its reference to resurrection. Or of the wondrous reading of the dry bones that rise again in Ezechial 37, which

became the subject of the great Afro-American Hymn, and is the reading for the Liturgy of the Word at Matins on Holy Saturday. We speak here of actual resurrections from the dead:

In I Kings 17, the Prophet Elijah raises the son of the widow in Zarephath. He does this by stretching himself out three times on the dead boy, praying, "O Lord, let the life breath return to the body of this child." (1 Kings 17:21) Of course, it is not the prophet who brings about the Resurrection, but "The Lord heard the prayer of Elijah; the life breath returned to the child's body and he revived." (Verse 22). This story is read at the Vigil of Pascha at Vespers.

Jesus' resurrection was not the first or only rising from the dead. However, it was unique because it brought about a new relationship of people with God, and gave us the hope of eternal life.

In 2 Kings 4, Elisha, who received a double portion of the spirit of Elijah, performs a similar resurrection. Again, it is a young boy that is raised. He is the son of a woman in Shunem (not a widow) who had done a kindness to Elisha. Her son dies, and Elisha sends his servant Gehazi to the house. Gehazi lays his staff on the child, who does not revive. Elisha goes himself, and "he lay upon the child on the bed, placing his mouth upon the child's mouth, his eyes upon the eyes, and his hands upon his hands. As Elisha stretched himself over the child, the body became warm. He arose, paced up and down the room, and then once more lay down upon the boy, who now sneezed seven times and opened his eyes." (2 Kings 4:34-35) This seems more like a gradual healing of a boy who has just died. This story is likewise read at the Paschal Vigil. In both cases, the boys return to ordinary human life, and must die again some day.

A naturalist philosophy would focus on the mechanics of the resuscitations, for that is, indeed, what they are. Our deeper concern here is the faith meaning of these resurrections. It should be noted that they are performed through the

prayers of prophets. We think, sometimes too simplistically, that prophets are men who foretell the future. Forecasting the future is just a sidebar to their deeper function, which is to discern and proclaim the will of God. That is why we find the formula in Scripture so often and as the liturgical heading for a prophetic reading, "Thus says the Lord." First and Second Kings, however, are less prophetic texts than history. They give the life of Elijah and Elisha, some of their prophecies and mostly their acts. If these resuscitations are the will of God, then what is being proclaimed is that the God of Israel is a God of life. Life is restored here to the poor - to the widow who has only her son, and to the Shunnamite woman, not terribly poor materially by any means, but humble in spirit, because of her barrenness. Then her only son, granted to her miraculously, is torn from her. God hears the petition of these people and grants them life.

If Elijah and Elisha, as prophets, are able to pray for life and have it granted, then how much more Jesus, who was seen by the people as the Great Prophet: At the raising of the son of the widow of Nain, "They (the witnesses) began to praise God, 'A great prophet has risen among us,' they said, and 'God has visited his people.'" (Luke 7:16) "They said (Luke and Cleopas speaking to the risen Jesus whom they do not yet recognize), 'All those that had to do with Jesus of Nazareth, a prophet powerful in word and deed in the eyes of God and all the people.'" (Luke 24:19). Both these passages are from the Gospel of Luke, though that is not the only gospel in which He is called a prophet (cf. Matthew 16:14 and John 4:19), and both passages are in the context of a resurrection. Jesus, however, was to prove to be more than a prophet: When Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi he asked His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter said in reply, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." (Matthew 16:13-16)

We must now turn to Jesus, who said "I am the Resurrection and the Life." (John 11:25)



LETTERS FROM THE EDITOR

Compiled by Father James Hayer, Editor

The Final Wishes

A miserly old man was on his death bed, surrounded by his wife, his two sons and his daughter. Although he hadn't bothered with his children in years, he called them to his bedside as he was dying in order to express his final wishes.

He proceeded to tell his first son he wanted him to have the apartment building on First Street. To his second son, he gave the homes in the development on Cherry Street. Finally, to his daughter, he gave the homes in the Hill Section of town.

A nurse overheard the conversation and commented to the man's wife, "I am impressed by your husband's generosity. Your children must be thrilled by

what they just received!" His wife responded, "image how thrilled they'll be when they find out that they just received his paper routes!" ☺

In Sacred Scripture we read, "Wealth is good where there is no sin..." But, "wealth is not appropriate for the mean-spirited." (Sirach 13:24, 14:3)

[Many thanks to Felix from Pennsylvania for sharing this story!]

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



SEMINARIAN REFLECTIONS

Subdeacon Lewis Rabayda

Ordination is no Minor-thing

As I reflect on the events that have led up to my ordination to minor orders, I see a four-year journey of trials and triumphs (normally, one is ordained to the minor orders at the end of their third year of seminary, but since our eparchy was without a bishop for 18 months, this was not possible). This journey has changed me in ways I could not have imagined. This journey has opened-up to me the knowledge of the depth of God’s love; but not just an understanding of mind, an experience of the heart.

Some people think that a young man has to have it all figured-out before he enters seminary—this is not true. Some people think that he has to be a saint before he enters seminary—this is also not true. Seminary is a time of self-discovery and growth—who am I, who has God made me to be? Very few people make a life changing decision in a moment and then drastically live their whole life differently. It is a process. Some people I’ve met also think that seminarians just fall from the sky, or, that priests will always be here because they always have. Religious vocations come from families just like yours and mine. At one point we were just like everyone else, and in some ways, we are still like everyone else—except of course for one difference.

Ordination. All faithful can leave behind a world of vice and sin, everyone can make a promise or vow to God to live the rest of their lives striving for holiness and to live according to God’s commands. Every faithful person of the Church can also receive a number of the sacraments and the grace of God that they confer on the recipient. Marriage especially comes to mind. Marriage is a life-long commitment made from one spouse to another with God as the contract holder and blessing. Both spouses intimately share their lives with each other through mimicking the self-sacrifice of

Some people think that a young man has to have it all figured-out before he enters seminary—this is not true.

Jesus Christ. There is grace given in these sacraments, just as we pray that God is the “giver of every good thing.”

An ordination within the tradition of the Church also confers grace to the ordinand. Minor orders are sometimes not considered a full-blown sacrament, but I’ll let that debate to the scholars. For my part, the ordination to minor orders is the official entry into the clerical state. I am no longer a layperson. I no longer have the ease of leaving this path towards priestly ordination and a life of service to God through His Church for some other way of life. As one of the prayers of ordination to Reader state, “the Order of Reader is the first step to the priesthood. As you read the Holy Scriptures, strive for virtue day by day, so that those who hear you and observe you may do the same.” Striving for virtue is indeed a goal of Christian life, and likewise, we struggle on this path so that others may see Christ in us and through that vision, they too will want to have Christ in their heart.

Another step in the process of *theosis*—becoming like God, becoming Holy—has now come and is now a part of my life. I am now a member of the Church in a way that I have not been before, in a way that few people can be. This should not lead to elitism; rather, it leads to humility. Being chosen by God to serve His Church in a unique way is warming, and yet it should evoke in those chosen a great fear of the Lord. “Everyone to whom much is given, of him will much be required.” But, again, each of us is chosen by God to play our part in spreading the word of God to all the nations. Each of us has a vocation to share the love of Christ that we have received. So, my brothers and sisters in Christ, I exhort you to not be shy in fulfilling your vocation, for this is the way God has for us to experience true happiness. Happiness is serving Christ Jesus our Lord with fervor.

Upcoming Events for May

Eparchial and Parish Events

Christ is Risen!
Indeed He is Risen!

MAY

- 1
- Last Day of Eparchial Presbyteral Days
Marriottsville, MD
- 4
- Sunday of the Ointment-Bearers

Eastern Catholic Life

Circulation Department
445 Lackawanna Avenue
Woodland Park, NJ 07424

Next Issue:
June, 2014

Copy Deadline:
May 16th

The current issue of the ECL was printed at Evergreen Printing, Bellmawr, NJ and was distributed from the U.S. Post Office via second class mailing in Bellmawr, NJ.

- 11
- Sunday of the Paralytic Man
Mother’s Day
- 14
- Mid-Pentecost
- 18
- Sunday of the Samaritan Woman
BYZANTINE CATHOLIC FAMILY DAY
KNOEBEL’S AMUSEMENT RESORT • ELYSBURG, PA
PARISH PIG ROAST
EPIPHANY PARISH • ROSWELL, GA
- 20
- New Jersey Board of Bishops Meeting
Newark
- 25
- Sunday of the Man Born Blind
- 26
- Memorial Day
Chancery Closed
- 29
- Ascension of Our Lord
Holy Day of Obligation
Chancery Closed