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CONGREGATION CENTENNIAL: SUPPORTING EASTERN CATHOLICS AGAINST ALL ODDS

By Cindy Wooden of Catholic News Service, The Vatican
Photo by CNS/L'Osservatore Romano

The Vatican is celebrating the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, an office that supports the Eastern Catholic Churches and strives to ensure that the universal Catholic Church treasures its diversity, including in liturgy, spirituality and even canon law.

Coincidentally established five months before the Russian Revolution, the congregation continually has had to face the real persecution and threatened existence of some of the Eastern churches it was founded to fortify.

Until 1989-90, many of the Byz-

antine Catholic churches—disintegrated and once-persecuted churches begun to flourish, then the first Gulf War broke out; then there was the invasion of Iraq; the turmoil of the Arab Spring across North Africa; then, the war in Syria. And Israeli-Palestinian tensions continue. The Chaldean, Syriac Catholic, Coptic Catholic, Melkite, and Maronite Churches have paid a high price.

“In all of this, the Eastern Churches suffer the most because they find themselves crushed in the struggle between bigger powers, both local and global,” Archbishop Vasil said in mid-August. Even those conflicts that are not taking direct aim at Christians in the Middle East make life extremely difficult for them,



Slovak Archbishop Cyril Vasil, secretary of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, prays at the Mass opening a plenary meeting of the congregation in this November 2013 file photo. The congregation is celebrating the 100th anniversary of its establishment as a Vatican office dedicated to supporting the Eastern Catholic Churches and ensuring their liturgies, spirituality and traditions continue to be part of the universal Catholic Church.

antine Catholic churches—including, notably, the Ukrainian Catholic Church, the largest of all the Eastern churches—were either outlawed or severely repressed by the communist governments of Eastern Europe, said Archbishop Cyril Vasil, a member of the Slovak Catholic Church and secretary of the congregation.

No sooner had the Soviet bloc

and so many decide to seek a more peaceful life for themselves and their families outside the region.

One impact of the “exodus,” he said, is the greater globalization of the Catholic Church. While 100 years ago, when the Congregation for Eastern Churches was established, only a few Eastern

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Bishop Milan Lach, SJ, and Archbishop Christophe Pierre Apostolic Nuncio

SLOVAK BISHOP WELCOMED TO U.S. EPARCHY, SEEKS TO BUILD UNITY

By Laura Ieraci, Catholic News Service, Parma, OH
Photo by David Bratnick, CNS

Slovak Bishop Milan Lach took his new post as apostolic administrator of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Parma wanting to encourage and unify Byzantine Catholics of the eparchy in faith.

The eparchy’s clergy and faithful welcomed Bishop Lach during a Divine Liturgy July 21.

The 43-year-old Jesuit was the auxiliary bishop of the Archeparchy of Presov, Slovakia, at the time of his appointment June 24. Ordained a priest in 2001 and a bishop in 2013, Bishop Lach is the first European-born bishop to oversee the Eparchy of Parma since its founding in 1969, though he is the second European bishop to be named to the United States this year.

Ukrainian Catholic Bishop Benedict Aleksiychuk, former auxiliary bishop of Lviv, Ukraine, was named to head the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Chicago in April.

Archbishop Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the United States, read the Vatican decree of Bishop Lach’s appointment during the July 21 Liturgy at the Cathedral of Saint John the Baptist in Parma. Byzantine Catholic Archbishop William C. Skurla of Pittsburgh,

who preceded Bishop Lach as apostolic administrator for 14 months, was the celebrant.

Upon Archbishop Pierre’s introduction of Bishop Lach, the more than 300 people in the congregation responded with a standing ovation and the traditional Eastern Christian hymn, “God Grant You Many Years.”

“You will enjoy his presence,” the nuncio told the congregation. “A bishop is there to serve the people, to be with the people.” Citing Pope Francis, he said the role of bishops and priests is to be “ahead to lead the people, behind to push them, and in the middle to be with them.”

In an interview after the liturgy, Archbishop Pierre commented on the contribution European bishops can make to the U.S. Church.

“It’s always good to have people coming from a different experience. The diversity, and especially these people who are being sent, have been chosen for their capacity to (adapt) from one country to the other but also for their abilities,” he told *Horizons*, the newspaper of the eparchy.

“It’s also a sign, especially today, where there is a tendency to build some walls ... (that) the church is

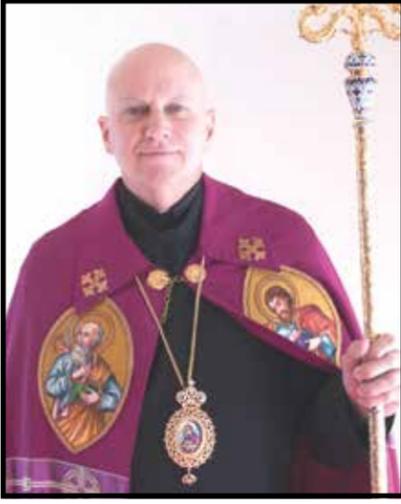
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I LIFT UP MY EYES...

Pastoral Reflections of Bishop Kurt



IT SEEMED GOOD TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

Photo by Paul Haring of Catholic News Service

Recently I've been reading a book about the Lateran Synod of 649. I can't imagine what I was thinking when I ordered the book. It must have come up as a suggestion on Amazon, and it took several months to arrive. It has been quite a fascinating experience. When I read about the early councils, I'm always amazed at how much we know about them: the arguments, the letters, the fights before and after. As a matter of fact, a great deal of history from the first millennium we know from multiple sources. The Popes and the other Patriarchs often sent complete copies of all the documents to bishops or monasteries in England or Germany or Egypt and North Africa. It seems like a shame that Christians know so little of their own history. In our English speaking world, there is an obsession with discrediting any history before the time of Elizabeth I, but the fact is that we have a lot of Christian documents going back almost to the time of Jesus Christ. Even from before then, it's fascinating to see how many events in the Old Testament have been corroborated by archeologists, or by ancient clay documents from the Assyrian, Babylonian, or even Hittite empires. For example, there was a siege of a town mentioned in the Old Testament in which the attackers eventually lit everything on fire, and archeologists have found that from that time period the city was burned, and the fire was so hot the mortar between the stones around the gate melted into glass. Other events described by Isaiah and in the historical books of the Bible are corroborated by Assyrian records.

In our church, we commemorate the great Councils with a tropar and an icon on the tetrapod, and occasionally a pastor will provide a one paragraph summary of what the Council decided, and why it is important to our faith. As a matter of fact, there are many books now in English that translate the "Acts" of these Councils, and I encourage anyone who loves Jesus Christ to read through these Councils. Our spiritual "ancestors", people just like us, spent decades and centuries trying to understand who Jesus is, what He asks of us, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, praying for guidance. Jesus promised us in Saint Matthew's Gospel that He would found a Church, and that the "gates of hell would not prevail against it". In times of uncertainty, like today, learning about the history of the Church's struggles to formulate and defend the truth are both inspiring and informative.

Another Synod of Bishops is approaching, and the Holy Father has asked this time for input from youth around the world. There are many online tools available, and I encourage all the young people in our Eparchy to go online and answer the Holy Father's call for your advice.

Reading a book about the Synod of 649, I looked online and saw that many people are still

talking about the Synod on the Family, and many people are still confused or upset by it. I think if I got all my information from the secular news media, I would be frightened and confused as well. After all, that is how they make their money. Unfortunately, even many people masquerading as faithful are making money by disseminating information that is designed to keep people upset and divided.

Since I was a Synod father, I decided to write some columns for the record about the Synod on the Family, and also for education about synods. In this first column, I will provide all of the people of this Eparchy with a record of my own contributions, which are not recorded elsewhere. Every synod father was asked to make a three minute statement called an "intervention" to the whole Synod. "Intervention" doesn't mean the same thing in English. It's just what they call a public statement at a conference in Italy. The interventions were submitted in advance and translated into Italian, English, French, and German (as far as I recall). Our Holy Father Pope Francis listened attentively and respectfully to all 270 of these interventions by synod fathers, as well as some more by various "experts" from around the world. He never interrupted nor commented on any of them. For my intervention, I chose a story from the Bible about a family with problems, and



Pope Francis with an Eastern bishop at the Synod in 2015

added my own observation for today's society. It might be interesting to ask for "interventions" from the people of our Eparchy. Remember, I had to be able to read it clearly in three minutes or less (while nervous about speaking in front of the Pope). Here is what I presented at the Synod in 2015:

"Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valor, and he was the son of a harlot: and Gilead begat Jephthah.

{11:2} And Gilead's wife bare him sons; and when his wife's sons grew up, they drove out Jephthah, and said unto him, Thou shalt not inherit in our father's house; for thou art the son of another woman. {11:3} Then Jephthah fled from his brethren, and dwelt in the land of Tob: and there were gathered vain fellows to Jephthah, and they went out with him." Judges 11

Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valor. When his brothers grew up they drove him out of the family because his mother was a harlot. He moved to the land of Tob where he formed a gang. Later when they were in

danger, the elders of Gilead went to Tob and begged Jephthah to return to Gilead to save them. Throughout the scriptures we see that families, like the people in them, were not perfect. Forgiveness and reconciliation are the dispositive teachings of the Christian religion. Many people are wounded by their families, and the injuries of the family are the deepest, the most painful, and the longest lasting. The greatest sins are often hidden in the family. It is in the family that many learn the most difficult lessons of love, the lessons of forgiveness that make us most like God in whose image we were made in the beginning. The scriptures also remind us that those who are least respected by society also have families. The unhealthy nature of Jephthah's family climaxed when he killed his own daughter because of a foolish promise. It's striking that his daughter loved him so much that she willingly sacrificed her life rather than allow her father to incur the guilt of forswearing his oath.

In my first parish there were many children but 4 out of 5 were from an irregular situation. Only 1 out of 5 had a mother and a father at home. For these children from irregular situations the parish was their stable family. Our ancient faith was taught by two loving Franciscans, including the sacraments. As the children acted out the marriage ceremony, I noticed it was their childlike hope to have a happy stable sacramental marriage no matter what their own parents had. Their hope for their future was our ancient faith taught by Jesus Christ who created us to be happy.

My recent experience with university students in the United States is this: that although they repeat the slogans of contemporary culture and the entertainment industry, when they meet someone who explains our ancient faith without shame or embarrassment, they embrace it with joy. Young people want what we have, Jesus Christ, the fulfillment of the law and the prophets.

In the East, the wedding ceremony emphasizes the divine nature of sacramental marriage. Without the blessing of an ordained priest, there is no sacrament. In the West, the sacrament is a contract between two people but not in the East. This is why an Eastern Catholic wedding cannot be performed by a lay minister or even a deacon. Without the priestly blessing, there is no sacramental marriage.

In addition to these public "interventions" in front of the Holy Father and the whole Synod, each participant was assigned to a smaller group based on language. I was assigned to one of the English language groups. Other members were Cardinal DiNardo of Houston, Archbishop Gomez of Los Angeles, and Archbishop Chaput of Philadelphia was our recorder. Strangely enough, Archbishop Chaput earned a reputation as an outspoken rebel in the international blogo-

sphere. In fact he was simply reporting accurately the comments of members of the group. I guess it's a reminder that you shouldn't believe everything you read. As you might know at a previous synod, Cardinal Tobin was a member of a small Spanish language group and sat next to Archbishop Broglio, so that is how he came to be friends with the Pope. If people knew he was the future pope, I suppose a lot of ambitious people would have been trying to sit next to him. You just never know in life what little things might be part of God's great plan for you.

In my small group, many people severely criticized the preliminary synod document. One constructive criticism was that it needed an introduction. So Archbishop Gomez and I each wrote introductions based on our point of view and submitted them to the group for approval. If approved by the group, these suggestions were sent to a central office, and the final document was based largely on these contributions from the small groups. Each contribution was called a "motus". We would probably call it a "motion" in our parliamentary rules. Our group overwhelm-

ingly approved Archbishop Gomez's suggested introduction, though I don't think it had any affect on the final document. My suggestion was approved by more than half the bishops, but our parliamentarian—a Legion of Christ priest—ruled that it needed one more vote, so it was not sent to the central office. For the historical record, Cardinal Wuerl was part of the final editing committee, so he had a lot more say in the final document. Since we all ate together several times a day, and talked about the meetings, I can tell you that Cardinal Wuerl was very concerned to make sure that the final document reflected what the synod fathers said, not the agenda of any individual. In case you don't know, Amoris Laetitia is not the document produced by the Synod. It was written later. Here is the introduction that I suggested to the Synod, and that was not included in any final document:

In the name of God, one in the Holy Trinity. The Synod Fathers acknowledge the essential role of the family in God's plan of salvation. God called Abraham and Sarah from their homeland, visited them in the form of three

angels, and blessed their union in their old age, bringing forth from them a great nation in which all nations find blessing. Likewise, God blessed the union of Isaac and Rebecca with Jacob; and from Jacob He brought forth twelve sons: by Joseph He saved Egypt from famine, and from Judah and Tamar He brought forth the royal House of David. God, who is the source of all life, blessed the union of Elizabeth and Zechariah, making the infertile fertile and the parched desert flow with water, bringing forth the holy prophet John, the forerunner of the Messiah. For our salvation God sent Jesus the Christ, begotten before time from the Father without a mother, and taking flesh from the Virgin Mary without a father. This Synod rejoices in the rich and varied families of God's creation, treasures reflecting the eternal glory of God, the Unoriginate Father, the Only-begotten Son, and the holy and life creating Spirit.

+Kurt Burnette

Congregation Centennial: Supporting Eastern Catholics Against All Odds

Continued from page 1

churches had eparchies—dioceses—outside their traditional homelands, today they can be found in Australia, North and South America and scattered across Western Europe.

"In Sweden today, a third of the Christians are Chaldeans or Armenians," he added. "In Belgium and Holland, where Catholicism has suffered a decline, communities are reborn with the arrival of new Christians, which is a reminder of the importance of immigrants bringing their faith with them."

In countries like Italy, where thousands of Ukrainians and Romanians have come to work, they add ritual diversity to the expressions of Catholicism already found there, he said.

The growing movement of people around the globe means that part of the congregation's job is to work with the Latin-rite bishops and dioceses, "sensitizing church public opinion" to the existence, heritage, needs and gifts of the Eastern Catholics moving into their communities, the archbishop said. Where an Eastern Catholic hierarchy has not been established, the local Latin-rite bishop has a responsibility "to accept, welcome and give respectful support to the Eastern Catholics" as their communities grow and become more stable.

The idea, Archbishop Vasil said, is to help the local Latin-rite bishop seriously ask himself, "How can I help them free themselves of me and get their own bishop?"

Although it has only 26 employees -- counting the prefect, Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, and the receptionist -- the Congregation for Eastern Churches works with 23 Eastern Catholic churches and communities, fulfilling the same tasks that for Latin-rite Catholics fall to the congregations for bishops, clergy, religious, divine worship and education. It supports the Pontifical Oriental Institute, which offers advanced degrees in Eastern Christian liturgy, spirituality and canon law. And it also coordinates the work of a funding network known by the Italian acronym ROACO; the U.S.-based Catholic Near East Welfare Association and Pontifical Mission for Palestine are part of that network.

The congregation's approach in some areas is different than its Latin-rite counterparts because it follows the Eastern Catholic traditions and the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches. For instance, some of the Eastern churches ordain married men to the priesthood.

And, like the Congregation for Bishops, the Congregation for Eastern Churches helps prepare the nomination of bishops by Pope Francis, but only for dioceses outside the Eastern churches' traditional homeland. The Eastern Catholic synods of bishops elect new bishops closer to home and submit their names to the pope for his assent.

But the congregation's primary concern is the survival of the Eastern Catholic churches, which is an issue not only in places where Eastern Cath-

olics are threatened with death or driven from their homelands by war.

Archbishop Vasil said others risk losing their Eastern Catholic identity through assimilation.

Some of the blame, at least before the Second Vatican Council, lies with the Vatican and the Latin-rite hierarchy and religious orders, who, for decades encouraged Eastern Catholics to be more like their Latin-rite brothers and sisters.

Vatican II urged a recovery of the Eastern Catholic traditions, liturgy and spirituality. But, especially for Eastern Catholics living far from their churches' homelands, uprooting vestiges of the "Latinization" can prove difficult, Archbishop Vasil said.

Using his own Slovak Catholic Church as an example, he said parishes have been asked beginning Sept. 1 to return to the Eastern Catholic tradition of administering baptism, chrismation (confirmation) and the Eucharist together at the same liturgy, even for infants. In Slovakia, as in some parishes in North America, Eastern Catholics adopted the Latin-rite church's practicing of withholding the Eucharist until a child is about 7 and then celebrating the child's first Communion.

Especially for Eastern Christians whose ancestors immigrated two or three or four generations ago, the archbishop said, maintaining their specific identity as Chaldean, Ruthenian or Syro-Malankara Catholics is a challenge.

"The greatest danger in the coming years is extinction," Archbishop Vasil said. "We don't know what history has in store for us, but we must make sure we have done everything possible to avoid this danger."

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PEOPLE YOU KNOW

IN FORT PIERCE...

On August 6th, the faithful of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Fort Pierce, FL, celebrated the first anniversary of the arrival of Father Mykhaylo Kravchuk and his wife, Pan'i Olga, and their three children. Although Florida is vastly different from the Ukraine, they are adjusting to their new environment. We are so blessed to have Father Mykhaylo and his family here.



Father Mykhaylo, Pan'i Olga, and children

IN SMITHTOWN...

God bless our service men and women!

A very generous and successful fund raiser event was sponsored by the Women of Resurrection at Resurrection Byzantine Catholic Church of Smithtown, Long Island, NY. The proceeds are being shipped overseas to a select unit of Marine, Army and Air Force men and women, currently located in Afghanistan.

Showing our support items shipped were decks of playing cards, cotton swabs, various snacks, candy, stationary, pillow cases, socks, tissues, foot and body powder, razors, deodorant, plastic bags, lip balm, and thank-you notes for their selfless service! God Bless America.



IN MYRTLE BEACH...



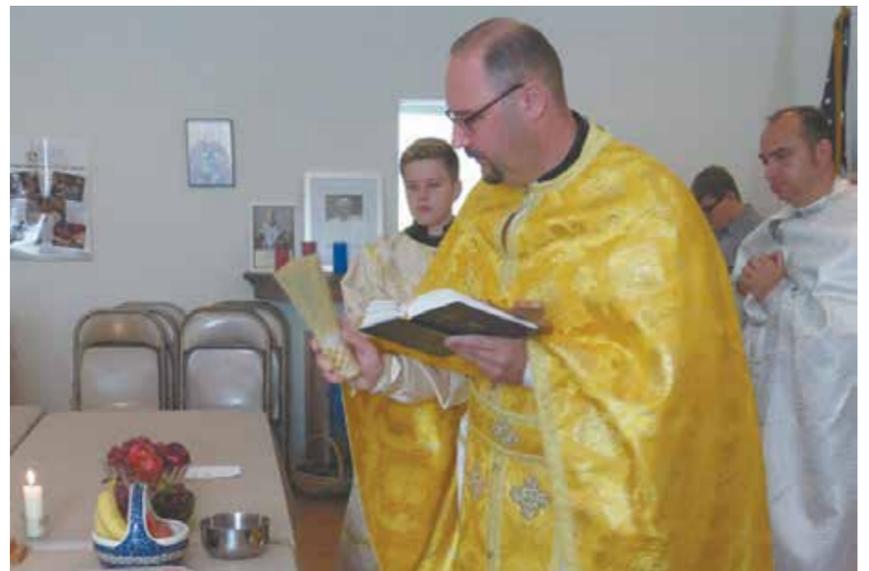
Father Eduard Shestak, Pastor of Saint Nicholas Church in Old Forge, PA, and Saint Mary Church in Taylor, PA, was the celebrant of the Divine Liturgy for the Blessed Basil Hopko Mission at Myrtle Beach, SC. The community is thankful for his visit. Father Conan Timoney of Baltimore is the administrator of the Mission with its community of active members.



Father Mykhaylo Prodanets of Saint Mary Parish in Kingston, PA, and Saint John the Baptist Parish in Wilkes-Barre Township, PA, and Father Volodymyr Klanichka of Saint Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church in Wilmington, DE, celebrated the first of two Divine Liturgies at the Blessed Basil Hopko Mission at Myrtle Beach, SC. There was a total of forty persons present for the first of two final liturgies.. In the coming months, Father Conan Timoney will celebrate four Tuesday evening Liturgies.



Father Martin Vavrak of Saint Nicholas and Saint Michael Parishes in Perth Amboy, NJ, was the celebrant of the Liturgy at the Basil Hopko Byzantine Chapel at Myrtle Beach, SC. Father Volodymyr Klanichka of Saint Nicholas Ukrainian Church in Wilmington, DE, concelebrated



Father Martin Vavrak blesses fruit for the Feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord

AROUND THE EPARCHY



IN WESTBURY...

On Sunday, July 2, 2017, Father Nicholas Daddona, the administrator of Saint Andrew the Apostle Byzantine Catholic Church, in Westbury, NY, blessed Paul and Eileen Ulrich for their 50th wedding anniversary. The couple was married at Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church in Manhattan, NY, on July 1, 1967. May God grant them many happy years!



Father Nicholas with Eileen and Paul Ulrich

IN GLASGOW...

Father Slesinski Invited to Glasgow Conference

A Seminar-Conference sponsored by Oxford University Press was held in Glasgow, Scotland, July 15–16, 2017, for the authors invited to contribute chapters for an upcoming *Oxford Handbook of Russian Religious Thought*. The sessions were directed by the editors for this volume, George Pattison, Ph.D., University of Glasgow; Randall Poole, Ph.D., College of Saint Scholastica (Minnesota); and Caryl Emerson, Ph.D., Princeton University (retired). Among the invitees was Father Robert F. Slesinski, Ph.D., a priest of the Eparchy of Passaic, who has been engaged to write a chapter entitled “Sergius Bulgakov in Exile: The Flowering of a Systematic Theologian.” Another chapter concerning Bulgakov’s pre-revolutionary period will be authored by Regula Zwahlen, Ph.D., of the University of Freiburg (Switzerland). Father Slesinski’s book, *The Theology of Sergius Bulgakov: A Catholic Appreciation*, soon should be available from Saint Vladimir’s Seminary Press.



IN LEVITTOWN...

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Byzantine Catholic Church, Levittown, PA, celebrated their Patronal Feast on Sunday, June 25, with Father Edward G. Cimbala, D.Min, Pastor. The Divine Liturgy was held at 10 AM and was followed with a catered parish picnic. At 1 PM, Akathist was celebrated outdoors at the shrine. Tom Hadzick, Roberta Potzgo, Steve and Anna Maria Macinsky, and Jennifer and Dan Starrs volunteered to take care of the shrine. The event concluded with a special treat, an ice cream sundae bar.



Father Edward Cimbala, pastor, celebrates the Akathist



The faithful sing the Akathist



Everyone enjoys the ice cream sundaes!

Slovak Bishop Welcomed to U.S. Eparchy, Seeks to Build Unity

Continued from page 1

always open. And I think it is a challenge to the church to remain what it has always been -- universal," he continued.

He said he thinks bishops from other countries "are also being sent to help us not to lose the missionary dimension, because a church that is not missionary is not the church."

The appointment drew international attention. Thousands of people logged onto the eparchy's Facebook page to watch the livestream of the July 21 liturgy. By the end of the day, Facebook reported about 19,000 views of the video; many were from Bishop Lach's native Slovakia.

Bishop Peter Rusnak of Bratislava, Slovakia, as well as several Slovak priests, traveled to Parma to concelebrate the liturgy, alongside retired Bishop John M. Kudrick of Parma; Byzantine Catholic Bishop John S. Pazak of the Holy Protection of Mary Eparchy of Phoenix; and Romanian Catholic Bishop John Michael M. Botean of St. George in Canton, Ohio. More than 70 clergy, including three Orthodox priests, and religious attended.

Archbishop Skurla noted in his homily that the Byzantine Catholic Church in the United States was established by European bishops, priests, and faithful.

"With excitement and enthusiasm ... they started from nothing," he said. "They built churches that we continue to use today." He urged the faithful to "be gentle" with Bishop Lach as he adjusts to life in the United States. "We pray that his time here is fruitful," he said.

At the reception that followed in the parish hall, dozens of people stood in line to shake hands with Bishop Lach, speak with him briefly, and take photos.

In an interview after the liturgy, Archbishop Skurla described Bishop Lach's appointment as the pope's decision to "share a little bit of the

Jesuit charism with Parma," to "reconnect with the Slovak churches in Europe and also to have someone who would be able to go back to the meetings in Europe," which he said was "a good plan."

Slovakia is a "very spiritual country," and this appointment also could help to share this richness and bring about "a revitalization" of the eparchy, he said.

In an Italian-language phone interview five days after his appointment, Bishop Lach said he wanted to encourage and unify Byzantine Catholics of the eparchy in faith. Though surprised by the appointment, he was eager to follow the will of God, he said. As a Jesuit, he added, he was formed for 18 years to go wherever the pope were to send him.

Bishop Lach said he was aware that some people were skeptical about his appointment, as they were perhaps expecting an American cleric.

"We're one church," he said. "A church is not an institution of nationalities. We are brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ above all else. In Christ, as Saint Paul says, there is no Greek, nor Jew, because we are all united in Christ.

"There are those who would like to create divisions. I'm not coming to divide ... Rather, I'm coming to unify everyone as a pastor, as a father," he said.

Bishop Lach described his pastoral approach as "being human, being close to the people."

"I am one who, before making a decision, will listen, pray, reflect and perhaps only after propose a solution. Things may not happen quickly, but first I want to know how things really are," he said.

"I am convinced that the Christian life and faith are lived in the parish and, above all, in families, where daily life happens," he said, adding that

faith, family and marriage are "under strong attack."

"The attack on life is a disgrace for Christians," he said. "That innocent life, from conception is threatened up until the end of life with euthanasia ... is a dishonor to the human being."

He said he appreciated the distinctness of "American culture developed in freedom," adding that the church within the culture is to "collaborate with everyone, even with those who perhaps hate us."

In this era of globalization, hope and encouragement in the faith are needed today in the United States, as much as in Europe, he said.

He also said he is not as much of a foreigner as some people might think. His maternal great grandfather immigrated to the United States and his grandfather was born and baptized in Oglesby, Illinois, within the present-day territory of the 12-state Eparchy of Parma. He visited the United States twice before his appointment. He speaks English and said he expects it to improve with time.

In an English-language in-person interview July 23, Bishop Lach repeated that his objectives were "to be attentive, to listen." He said he is "open to every proposal" to help the faithful of the eparchy grow closer to God.

His "main interest" is to be close to the priests of the eparchy, as well as to the families of those priests who are married, "with all of their necessities, questions, challenges, and so on," he said.

The bishop said he would like to create "good conditions" for priests "to proclaim the Gospel, to be indeed pastors, to be shepherds, to be indeed fathers." Tasks in management and finance, which can be carried out by laypeople, are secondary to the priesthood, he said.

While he believes he needs to learn more about American culture, "I think that the heart of people is the same everywhere," he said.

60TH JUBILEE OF RELIGIOUS PROFESSION

Photo by Joseph Rudinec

Sister Barbara Pavlik, OSB, a Byzantine Benedictine Sister of Queen of Heaven Monastery in Warren, OH, observed her 60th jubilee of religious profession on July 23, 2017. A Divine Liturgy of Thanksgiving was celebrated by Metropolitan Archbishop William C. Skurla, D.D. at Saints Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church in Warren, OH. Concelebrants at the Divine Liturgy were Fathers Simeon B. Sibenik, pastor of Saints Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church, Warren; and Richard I. Lambert, dean of the Youngstown Deanery and pastor of Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church, Youngstown. After the Gospel reading, Sister Barbara renewed her vows of poverty, chastity, obedience, the pursuit of monastic perfection, and stability. The homily was given by Father Simeon Sibenik who explained and focused on the Benedictine vow of Stability.

Following the Divine Liturgy, a festive dinner was held at DeLucia's Catering Facility. Rev. Kevin Marks, pastor of Saint Michael Byzantine Catholic Church, Hermitage, PA, and Master of Ceremonies, introduced Father Robert J. Karl, a former pastor, who was also celebrating 60 years of service to the Byzantine Church. After a few short remarks, Father Bob opened the dinner with prayer. Sister Barbara was joined in the celebration of her 60th jubilee by her family, religious community, clergy, and many friends.

Towards the end of the dinner, she spoke of the many people and many blessings she had encountered in her 60 years of service.

Sister Barbara, was born in Irwin, PA, the daughter of Frank and Barbara Pavlik. She is next to the youngest of ten children. Her home parish was Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church in Herminie, PA. She entered Sacred Heart Monastery, Lisle, IL, on September 11, 1955, in her senior year of high school, and professed her vows July 22, 1957. Sister Barbara was a charter member of Queen of Heaven Monastery of Byzantine Benedictine Sisters when it was founded in Warren in 1969.

Sister Barbara taught at Catholic schools in Wichita Falls, TX; Joliet and Chicago, IL; and Warren and Parma, OH. In the 1970s, she worked with the Religious Education Office of the Archeparchy of Pittsburgh on the writing of the "God with Us" catechetical books for use in the Archeparchy. Other areas of ministry were administrative assistant of Colonial Manor Nursing Home; office work at Truck World; and the teaching of Eastern Christian Formation classes at several Byzantine parishes. Sister Barbara also worked in the finance office of the Diocese of Youngstown and as secretary/bookkeeper at Saint Anthony Church in Youngstown. She served as prioress of Queen of Heaven Monastery for eight



years, was a member of the community council, and has been a frequent delegate to Chapter meetings of the Federation of Saint Scholastica.

Sister Barbara is currently secretary/bookkeeper and coordinator of the Eastern Christian Formation Program at Saints Peter and Paul Church in Warren, OH, in addition to being community secretary. She is one busy, happy, dedicated, prayerful and God-centered woman!

The jubilee celebration ended with a short reflection and prayer given by Msgr. George Appleyard. May God grant you many happy and blessed years, Sister Barbara!

BISHOP'S APPEAL 2016 – FINAL REPORT

Highlighted parishes reached their goal and received a 40% refund

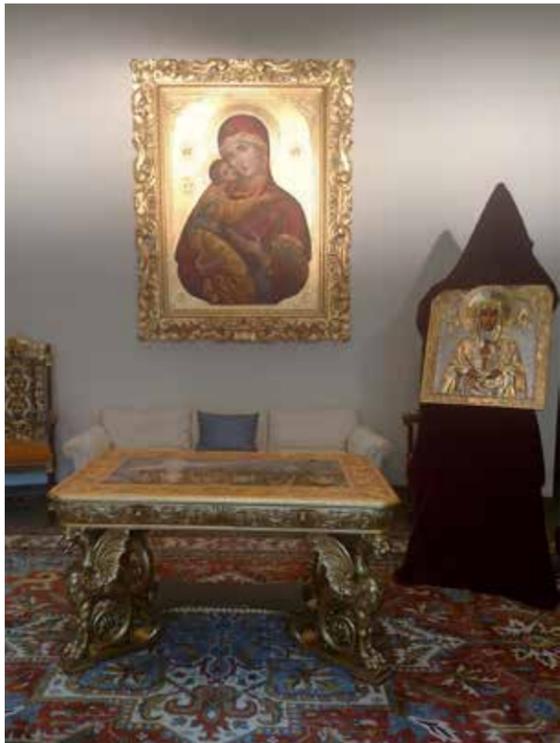
Parish	Location	Goal	Received	Refund
All Saints Byzantine Catholic Church	North Fort Myers, FL	\$3,000.00	\$3,095.00	\$1,238.00
Ascension of Our Lord Church Byzantine Catholic Church	Williamsburg, VA	\$6,800.00	\$2,700.00	\$0.00
Assumption of the Virgin Mary Byzantine Catholic Church	Trenton, NJ	\$10,000.00	\$5,940.00	\$0.00
Blessed Basil Hopko Mission	Conway, SC	\$600.00	\$925.00	\$370.00
Blessed Virgin Mary Byzantine Catholic Church	Coatesville, PA	\$4,000.00	\$550.00	\$0.00
Cathedral of St. Michael the Archangel	Passaic, NJ	\$25,200.00	\$25,920.00	\$10,368.00
Epiphany of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church	Annandale, VA	\$19,800.00	\$21,160.00	\$8,464.00
Epiphany of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church	Roswell, GA	\$10,800.00	\$5,495.00	\$0.00
Epiphany of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Mission	Gaithersburg, MD	\$6,000.00	\$6,360.00	\$2,544.00
Holy Cross Byzantine Catholic Church	New York, NY	\$1,000.00	\$800.00	\$0.00
Holy Dormition Catholic Byzantine Catholic Church	Ormond Beach, FL	\$3,800.00	\$1,600.00	\$0.00
Holy Ghost Byzantine Catholic Church	Jessup, PA	\$13,000.00	\$4,770	\$0.00
Holy Ghost Byzantine Catholic Church	Philadelphia, PA	\$7,800.00	\$3,000.00	\$0.00
Holy Spirit Byzantine Catholic Church	Mahwah, NJ	\$2,600.00	\$4,430.00	\$1,772.00
Holy Spirit Byzantine Catholic Church	Binghamton, NY	\$12,000.00	\$4,030.00	\$0.00
Holy Trinity Byzantine Catholic Church	New Britain, CT	\$4,800.00	\$2,250.00	\$0.00
Holy Trinity Byzantine Catholic Church	Philadelphia, PA	\$3,000.00	\$2,150.00	\$0.00
Holy Wisdom Byzantine Catholic Church	Flanders, NJ	\$1,600.00	\$2,335.00	\$934.00
Nativity of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church	East Brunswick, NJ	\$4,200.00	\$870.00	\$0.00
Our Lady of Perpetual Help Byzantine Catholic Church	Levittown, PA	\$7,800.00	\$3,375.00	\$0.00
Our Lady of Perpetual Help Byzantine Catholic Church	Toms River, NJ	\$9,800.00	\$5,213.00	\$0.00
Our Lady of Perpetual Help Byzantine Catholic Church	Virginia Beach, VA	\$3,200.00	\$885.00	\$0.00
Our Lady of the Sign Church Byzantine Catholic Church	Coconut Creek, FL	\$6,200.00	\$6,200.00	\$2,480.00
Patronage of the Mother of God Byzantine Catholic Church	Baltimore, MD	\$9,800.00	\$7,465.00	\$0.00
Resurrection Byzantine Catholic Church	Smithtown, NY	\$8,800.00	\$7,035.00	\$0.00
Saint Andrew the Apostle Byzantine Catholic Church	Westbury, NY	\$3,200.00	\$3,265.00	\$1,306.00
Saint Ann Byzantine Catholic Church	Harrisburg, PA	\$16,000.00	\$13,410.00	\$0.00
Saint Anne Byzantine Catholic Church	New Port Richey, FL	\$4,200.00	\$2,050.00	\$0.00
Saint Basil Byzantine Catholic Church	Miami, FL	\$6,800.00	\$425.00	\$0.00
Saint Elias Byzantine Catholic Church	Carteret, NJ	\$5,400.00	\$2,725.00	\$0.00
Saint George Byzantine Catholic Church	Linden, NJ	\$8,000.00	\$1,670.00	\$0.00
Saint George Byzantine Catholic Church	Newark, NJ	\$2,400.00	\$1,215.00	\$0.00
Saint Gregory of Nyssa Byzantine Catholic Church	Beltsville, MD	\$5,400.00	\$9,620.00	\$3,848.00
Saint John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church	Trumbull, CT	\$15,400.00	\$4,875.00	\$0.00
Saint John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church	Bayonne, NJ	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$1,200.00
Saint John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church	Forest City, PA	\$4,000.00	\$1,615.00	\$0.00
Saint John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church	Hazleton, PA	\$18,400.00	\$4,970.00	\$0.00
Saint John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church	Lansford, PA	\$5,000.00	\$2,425.00	\$0.00
Saint John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church	Pottstown, PA	\$13,800.00	\$4,043.00	\$0.00
Saint John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church	Scranton, PA	\$3,200.00	\$650.00	\$0.00
Saint John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church	Wilkes-Barre Twp, PA	\$5,800.00	\$2,445.00	\$0.00
Saint Joseph Byzantine Catholic Church	New Brunswick, NJ	\$3,400.00	\$3,400.00	\$1,360.00
Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church	Jersey City, NJ	\$3,000.00	\$2,050.00	\$0.00
Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church	Hillsborough, NJ	\$30,000.00	\$12,678.00	\$0.00
Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church	New York, NY	\$5,000.00	\$3,375.00	\$0.00
Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church	Brockton, PA	\$2,000.00	\$345.00	\$0.00
Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church	Freeland, PA	\$15,000.00	\$11,155.00	\$0.00
Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church	Kingston, PA	\$8,800.00	\$5,245.30	\$0.00
Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church	Mahanoy City, PA	\$10,000.00	\$4,720.00	\$0.00
Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church	Nesquehoning, PA	\$3,000.00	\$2,070.00	\$0.00
Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church	Saint Clair, PA	\$3,200.00	\$2,245.00	\$0.00
Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church	Scranton, PA	\$6,600.00	\$4,410.00	\$0.00
Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church	Sheppton, PA	\$2,000.00	\$845.00	\$0.00
Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church	Taylor, PA	\$3,400.00	\$930.00	\$0.00
Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church	Wilkes Barre, PA	\$19,800.00	\$7,385.00	\$0.00
Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church	Hazleton, PA	\$12,000.00	\$3,850.00	\$0.00
Saint Michael Byzantine Catholic Church	Perth Amboy, NJ	\$4,000.00	\$1,525.00	\$0.00
Saint Michael Byzantine Catholic Church	Allentown, PA	\$10,000.00	\$11,009.00	\$4,403.60
Saint Michael Byzantine Catholic Church	Dunmore, PA	\$12,000.00	\$7,025.00	\$0.00
Saint Michael Byzantine Catholic Church	McAdoo, PA	\$10,200.00	\$2,155.00	\$0.00
Saint Michael Byzantine Catholic Church	Mont Clare, PA	\$8,000.00	\$5,215.00	\$0.00
Saint Michael Byzantine Catholic Church	Pittston, PA	\$8,200.00	\$2,425.00	\$0.00
Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church	Danbury, CT	\$7,000.00	\$2,385.00	\$0.00
Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church	Dunellen, NJ	\$4,000.00	\$1,200.00	\$0.00
Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church	Perth Amboy, NJ	\$4,000.00	\$1,335.00	\$0.00
Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church	Roebing, NJ	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$1,200.00
Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church	White Plains, NY	\$5,000.00	\$2,040.00	\$0.00
Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church	Old Forge, PA	\$8,200.00	\$3,535.00	\$0.00
Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church	Swoyersville, PA	\$7,400.00	\$3,535.00	\$0.00
Saint Nicholas Chapel	Pocono Summit, PA	\$3,600.00	\$1,975.00	\$0.00
Saint Nicholas Church	Meridan, CT	\$800.00	\$750.00	\$504.00
Saint Nicholas of Myra Byzantine Catholic Church	Orlando, FL	\$8,600.00	\$7,403.00	\$0.00
Saint Therese Byzantine Catholic Church	Saint Petersburg, FL	\$10,600.00	\$12,500.00	\$5,000.00
Saint Thomas the Apostle Byzantine Catholic Church	Rahway, NJ	\$12,400.00	\$13,165.00	\$5,266.00
Saints Cyril & Methodius Byzantine Catholic Church	Fort Pierce, FL	\$6,000.00	\$545.00	\$0.00
Saints Cyril & Methodius Byzantine Catholic Church	Cary, NC	\$10,000.00	\$1,475.00	\$0.00
Saints Peter & Paul Byzantine Catholic Church	Somerset, NJ	\$2,600.00	\$2,600.00	\$1,040.00
Saints Peter & Paul Byzantine Catholic Church	Phillipsburg, NJ	\$3,000.00	\$3,640.00	\$1,456.00
Saints Peter & Paul Byzantine Catholic Church	Granville, NY	\$800.00	\$1,700.00	\$680.00
Saints Peter & Paul Byzantine Catholic Church	Peekskill, NY	\$3,400.00	\$6,275.00	\$2,510.00
Saints Peter & Paul Byzantine Catholic Church	Beaver Meadows, PA	\$16,000.00	\$10,020.00	\$0.00
Saints Peter & Paul Byzantine Catholic Church	Bethlehem, PA	\$17,000.00	\$21,960.00	\$8,784.00
Saints Peter & Paul Byzantine Catholic Church	Minersville, PA	\$14,000.00	\$6,575.00	\$0.00
Saints Peter & Paul Byzantine Catholic Church	Palmerton, PA	\$1,000.00	\$1,005.00	\$402.00
Saints Peter & Paul Byzantine Catholic Church	Endicott, NY	\$4,000.00	\$3,605.00	\$0.00
Outside of Parish Contributions		\$12,400.00	\$4,875.00	\$0.00
Totals:		\$650,000.00	\$398,111.00	\$66,625.60

HIDDEN GEMS

By Diane Hvasta in Hillsborough, NJ

In the 1980s, after the fall of Communism, my father-in-law, John Hvasta, worked in Slovakia assisting in the coordination of the country's telecommunications systems, which was nonexistent under Communism. Having been born there, he was grateful to be able to go back to help shepherd this "new" Slovakia into the 20th century. Returning from his many trips, my family and I were always excited to see what he brought back for us—paintings, ceramics, wooden decorations. It was always a treat. But as my children grew up and moved out of the house, and I began to think of down-sizing, the many pieces of our heritage needed to find new and loving homes. I had remembered hearing stories about a cache of treasures at the chancery of our Passaic Eparchy. A friend suggested I reach out to the chancery, and asked if they might be interested in having new pieces for the collection. I was pleased to discover that Diane Rabiej, a former parishioner of Saint Stephen Cathedral and former employee of the Holy Protection of Mary Eparchy of Phoenix, was now a co-curator of the museum—one of her many assignments as Executive Assistant to Bishop Kurt! So I hesitatingly began parting with some of my own treasures, confident they would find new homes under Diane's care. Diane also encouraged me to visit the museum when I next visited my mother in New Jersey—and to bring Mom.

So on a warm, humid day in July, my mom,



Icons of the Theotokos



Tabernacle

Helen Stefanchik, a long-time parishioner of Saint Mary Church in Hillsborough, NJ, and I found ourselves driving along I-80 for a tour of the museum. Diane and Bishop Kurt welcomed us and we soon found ourselves swept up in religious and secular history! Diane has managed to care for the many "hidden gems"—the appropriate name for the booklet describing the many items of the museum, which was created for the Eparchy's 50th anniversary.

We were greeted in the main hall, which is graced by a huge, golden magnificent icon of the Theotokos by Christina Dochwat. We began our tour at the displays of the coal mines of Pennsylvania and our parishioners who worked them. These strong, hard-working immigrants from Eastern Europe who found themselves scorned as they toiled in the mines, were represented well. There were helmets and dog tag IDs, tin lunch boxes and sculptures. Etchings of the miners' and their family's lives by world-class Pennsylvania artist, Nick Bervinchak, depicted the dedication of the people who became the catalysts for bringing Byzantine Catholicism to America. Displays of pysanky, chalices, and pectoral crosses soon followed, and above the display cases were icons, paintings and woven textiles.

Having circled the main hall, I was taken aback when Diane asked us to follow her to the museum. There was MORE! The actual museum is currently housed in the basement of the chancery. There we began an overwhelming tour of the many rooms and hallways, each with a unique theme: the icon room—Our Lord, the Theotokos, saints, and Scriptures written in dozens of



Diane Rabiej with Helen Stefanchik

icons; the vestment and religious items room; and the textile room filled with embroideries and woven items, clothing and paintings. As Mom moved on to study the icons and paintings in the hall, I stayed mesmerized by the intricate embroidery and woven items from generations past, e.g., a young girl's pocket hanger for combs and brushes, an Easter basket covering, a tablecloth. Each more intricate than the next.

While Diane escorted us through the museum, she would patiently answer my many questions about the pieces. It turns out, the late Bishop Michael Dudick was an ardent antiques lover and collector, and he and his colleagues would scour the art world as shipments came in from Europe to the major New York City auction houses.

Finally came the library, filled with many religious and secular books; it took my breath away. Mom and I had to go around twice because on the top shelves were placed ceramic and bronze statues, and wooden replicas of many of the diocesan churches and photos. Diane shared a story of burst pipes and having to rescue—one snowy Friday evening in January—the many irreplaceable books. Her dedication to the museum radiated from her.

It was with regret we had to finish our tour and let Diane return to her regular duties. It was an amazing tour and I can't wait for another trip to NJ to visit again. Our day ended with lunch at Park West Diner in Little Falls, NJ. No visit to NJ is complete without a pork roll (Taylor ham) sandwich with fried onions! Yes, I am definitely eager to visit my mom again!

HOLY LAND PILGRIMAGE 10 DAYS: JANUARY 30 - FEBRUARY 8, 2018

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SUNDAY AFTERNOON DIVINE LITURGY 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 afternoon Divine Liturgy at Saint John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church, Sundays at 4 PM

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
- 3:30 PM - Prayer Service (Moleben) to Blessed Miriam Teresa
- 4:00 PM - Celebration of the Sunday Divine Liturgy.

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



UNIONTOWN PILGRIMAGE IN HONOR OF OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP SCHEDULE

Friday, September 1

7:00 PM—Office of Small Compline at Shrine Altar

Saturday, September 2

7:00 AM - 12 NOON—MYSTERY OF RECONCILIATION (Confessions)
House of Prayer Patio

OPENING OF PILGRIMAGE

8:00 AM—MATINS at Shrine Altar

9:45 AM—Procession with icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help from House of Prayer to Shrine Altar

10:00 AM— DIVINE LITURGY
Welcome: Sister Ruth Plante, OSBM

Divine Liturgy to be followed by procession to Lourdes Grotto for the Solemn Blessing of Water; procession to return to the House of Prayer at the conclusion of the Blessing.

1:00 – 5:00 PM—MYSTERY OF RECONCILIATION (Confessions)
House of Prayer Patio

1:00 PM—MOLEBEN at Shrine Altar

2:00 PM

CHILDREN'S PILGRIMAGE at Children's Tent

ORIENTATION for TEENS at Prayer Garden

ENRICHMENT SESSION at Trinity Center

MYSTERY OF ANOINTING at Shrine Altar

FESTAL ICON SHRINE WALK

3:00 PM—TEEN PILGRIMAGE at Prayer Garden

4:00 PM—VESPERS with DIVINE LITURGY at Shrine Altar

6:00 PM—ENRICHMENT SESSION at Mausoleum

7:15 PM—Procession from House of Prayer to Mount Macrina Cemetery

Sunday, September 3

7:00 AM—MATINS at Shrine Altar

7:00 AM—DIVINE LITURGY House of Prayer Chapel

7:30 AM - 12 NOON—MYSTERY OF RECONCILIATION (Confessions) House of Prayer Patio

8:30 AM—DIVINE LITURGY in Slavonic Shrine Altar

10:30 AM—DIVINE LITURGY Shrine Altar

12:30 - 5:00 PM—MYSTERY OF RECONCILIATION (Confessions)
House of Prayer Patio

1:00 PM—CHILDREN'S PROCESSION with Special Blessing for Youth & Young Adults - from House of Prayer to Mother of God Shrine

1:30 - 2:30 PM—MYSTERY OF RECONCILIATION (Confession for the infirm, sick and physically challenged) Manor Gazebo

2:00 PM

CHILDREN'S PILGRIMAGE at Children's Tent

ENRICHMENT SESSION at Trinity Center

TEEN PILGRIMAGE at Prayer Garden

MYSTERY OF ANOINTING at Shrine Altar

3:45 PM—Procession from House of Prayer to Mother of God Shrine

4:00 PM—DIVINE LITURGY Mother of God Shrine
Words of Gratitude: Sister Ruth Plante, O.S.B.M.

7:15 PM—Procession from House of Prayer to Mother of God Shrine

7:30 PM—CANDLELIGHT PROCESSION
(Beginning and ending at the Mother of God Shrine)

CLOSING OF THE PILGRIMAGE

Following the Candlelight Procession::

TEEN SOCIAL Prayer Garden Area

YOUNG ADULT SOCIAL Trinity Center

Monday, September 4

9:30 AM DIVINE LITURGY at Shrine Altar

Please note: Curfew is 1:00 AM for those participating in Chaperoned Youth Activities. For all other youths, the curfew is 12:00 Midnight. Although casual attire is acceptable, participants are asked to be mindful of the religious nature of the services and activities that take place and to dress accordingly to traditional Christian values and standards of modesty. Thank you!

SLAVIC FESTIVAL

St. Michael's Cathedral

Sunday Sept 24th - 12pm - 6pm

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Join us for our **45th Annual**

SLAVIC AMERICAN FESTIVAL

Sunday, September 10th
12 Noon til' 6:00 P.M.

Epiphany of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church

www.slavicamericanfestival.com

Nourishment for the Body
Traditional Slavic delights • Holupki • Potato Pancakes
• Bake Sale • Haluski • Kolbasi • Pirohi • and Nutrolls/
Kolachi • Farmers Market

Nourishment for the Mind
Silent Auction • Football on TV • Bingo
& Instant Bingo • Children's rides, games
& face painting • Rummage Sale

Nourishment for the Soul
Slavic Religious & Folk Art • Bookstore
• Arts, Crafts & Polka Lessons
Church tours: 12:30, 2:30, 3:30, and 4:30 pm
Concert of Sacred Slavic Music at 1:30 pm
Epiphany Slava Men's Chorus

Divine Liturgy Schedule:
Saturday Sept 9th-5pm & Sunday Sept 10th-8:00 & 10:30 am
Free Admission • Free Shuttle parking from 3301 Woodburn Road.
No Pets Please

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ASK A PRIEST A QUESTION

Father Vasyl Chepelsky

MORE ANSWERS ON VOCATION

So, what other signs should we look for as we try to discern our vocation and God's will for our life? How do I know what my vocation is?

God's will is found in the commandments and the counsels, in ordinary events, in the judgment of conscience, and in the inclinations of "faith working through love" (cf. Gal. 5:6). It isn't strictly necessary to have "special" signs of God's will, because there are normal and general signs of God's will. There can even be a certain danger in looking for special signs. The choice of "signs" or the interpretation of them may be colored by one's own desires. One may ask as "signs" from God things that one secretly, perhaps half-unconsciously, think are likely to happen; or again, one can interpret ordinary events as the fulfillment of signs.

God does not usually give extraordinary signs of His will, even though in some rare case, He might. God speaks within a person's will itself, moving it to a way of life by which that person may draw near to Him.

Prayer about one's vocation is an essential part of the discernment process. Daily reading of the Bible and meditating on the text, attending liturgical services at one's parish, retreats and moments of silence and contemplation, partaking in the Sacraments – these and many other things are all very helpful in the process of finding out God's will for one's life and his or her life vocation.

Who did God mean us to be? I want to present a very simple way to help us figure out how God might be calling us to live. If you can remember the acronym GOD you can remember this one, so hopefully pretty easy.

GIFTS: What are the gifts that you have been given by God? Remember that grace builds on nature, so the gifts we have been given will be instrumental in how we are called to live.

OTHERS: What do others say? Oftentimes others, especially those who are already living a life of holiness, can serve as mouthpieces for God. Remember Samuel? How did he finally recognize that it was the Lord calling him? It was through the advice of Eli. Maybe there is an Eli for you out there who will help you recognize the call of the Lord.

DESIRES: What are your deepest desires? God will not give us a desire that he cannot fulfill, that he does not want to fulfill.

But we cannot do this if we are always being pummeled with the noise of the world. We need to tune out

the noise of the world in order to hear the voice of God in our lives. God often doesn't speak in loud signs but rather in quiet moments that are incredibly personal. In order to hear that voice we need to consistently practice silence.

God works in our lives in different ways and because we are different, He will work in my life, He will reveal His call to me in a different way than He will reveal your call to you. This is where a holy and experienced spiritual director can be very helpful. If you are serious about finding how God is calling you to fulfill your call to holiness, ask your local priest for a suggestion for a spiritual director in order to help you figure this out. They can often help you determine what the voice of God sounds like in your own life. Discernment with a spiritual director is a necessary component in finding God's will and your vocation, as he will be able to point you in the right direction, and to guide you in your life journey.

Always remember, it is God who is calling. He is calling each of us like He called Matthew – to follow Him. God is calling each of us in specific ways about how to live out that call to holiness in ways that are exciting, are meaningful, and ultimately in ways that will lead us to greater holiness. Whether we think we are worthy or not to answer the call does not matter to Jesus Christ. He calls us. When we sin, He calls us; when we ignore Him, He calls us; when we least expect it, He calls us, as He did with Matthew. Our vocation, our call from the Lord, is always there, to everybody, as it is said, God does not call the qualified, He qualifies the called.

Vocation always remains a mystery. The gentle action of the grace of the Holy Spirit call each of us to a specific path to heaven., a particular vocation. But this gentle stirring of God's grace in our hearts must be received in our wills. In any vocation, there are two aspects: the gift of God, and the acceptance on our part.

Can we refuse a vocation? Usually in refusing such a gift from God, a person finds his or her path to heaven more difficult. It is not so much that there is only one way to heaven for each of us – for example, that a particular person is suited only for marriage or, more specifically, that there is only one possible spouse for that person. But it seems that God calls us to the best possible vocation suited to our personalities and talents. If we refuse to accept it, then there will always be alternative paths to heaven for us, but they may not be the best possible ones for us.

Vocation is what makes us happy, allows us to fulfill the mission of our life, becomes our way to God, by serving him and other people.

Cardinal Newman nicely put it when he said: "God has created me to do Him some definite service; He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission – I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next. I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons. He has not created me for naught. I shall do good. I shall do His work. I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth in my own place while not intending it – if I do but keep His Commandments. Whatever, wherever, I am I can never be thrown away. If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve Him; in perplexity, my perplexity may serve Him; if I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve Him. He does nothing in vain. He knows what He is about. He may take away my friends, He may throw me among strangers, He may make me feel desolate, make my spirits sink, hide my future from me – still He knows what He is about. Therefore I will trust Him."

The Virgin Mary is a great example of how to accept the vocation from God. She had a complete trust in God. Even though she was not able to understand completely what God was inviting her to do, she responded: "I am the servant of the Lord, let it be done to me according to your word." Mary could have refused, for she was not a passive instrument, but an active participant with a free and positive part to play in God's plan for our salvation. In the feast of Annunciation we see that God not only chose her but also she herself chose to follow His will. And by doing so, something far greater than she imagined for her life happened in her life and in the life of us all, in the whole history of our salvation.

You and I have a vocation God wants us to fulfill. He places a call into our hearts hoping for our response. We may feel unprepared, scared, unqualified, we may not understand it at first, but let us pray that God gives us His grace to say: "Yes!" to his initiatives, and He will guide us on the way of our vocation. Today God needs us to become His apostles, He needs our feet to go to those who are in most need, He needs our hands to continue to do the acts of mercy, He needs our hearts to love those He sends into our lives.

In I Samuel, 3:2-10, we read the story of God calling Samuel. We can learn and discover so much about our own vocation meditating on this episode from the Bible. Let us answer together with Samuel, "Speak, for your servant is listening" and let our whole life be the answer to God's call: "Come, follow me." **ECL**

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: [SaintJohntheBaptistByzantineCatholicChurch](https://www.facebook.com/SaintJohntheBaptistByzantineCatholicChurch)



LIFE, LOVE, AND THE HUMAN PERSON

By Ann M. Koshute, MTS

NO SHADES OF GREY – ONLY PERFECT LOVE

A robust economy and booming business is good for our country. One industry is certainly booming at almost \$13 billion per year, and impacting more people every day. It's pumping money into our economy (\$3,000 spent on it every second: www.highonbrands.com). And... it's sucking our souls dry. This industry is pornography, and it's the dirty little secret we don't talk about, but which negatively impacts us all. Shattered marriages and families, sexual dysfunction, violence, and spiritual poverty are its effects.

In "the old days" adolescent boys looked under dad's bed for his stash of "girlie magazines," often thought to be a rite of passage into manhood. Instead, it's a symptom of a larger problem in our understanding of human sexuality and personal dignity, and the goodness of our bodies. Far from teaching us about sex (and how to enjoy it), pornography distorts our perception of it, and ourselves. It teaches self-gratification over self-gift. Pornography objectifies the person on film or print (even if she/he "chose" to participate), and the viewer. It fixates on bodies and physiologi-

cal responses (which are good, but distorted in this context), rather than authentic love and the sacrifices it entails. Pornography creates a world that isn't real, desensitizing the viewer to what – and who – is real, true, and good in our lives. Pornography not only debases bodies, but persons. It doesn't "spice things up," but poisons.

According to the internet accountability site, Covenant Eyes, 64% of Christian men, and 15% of Christian women view porn at least once a month. The statistics for the general population

are even higher. Pornography use among women is growing. The “50 Shades of Grey” phenomenon sought to normalize and romanticize pornography among women, and it’s had a lot of success. Women flocked to see the original movie adaptation and its sequel, which celebrate the sexual and emotional subjugation of a woman by a powerful, handsome man. What does such fantasy teach women about their worth as persons? What message does it send to men about how to treat women? The increase of pornography use among women isn’t a sign of sexual equality, but of sharing a distorted and dysfunctional vision of men and women, our bodies, and our worth. Getting caught in this distortion is devastating to male female relationships (not just sexual ones), and one’s relationship with God. When we treat others as a means to our gratification, we (unconsciously) come to believe we’re just bodies and tangles of pleasure and pain responses. If that’s the case, what are we saying about God, in Whose image and likeness we’re created?

On September 14, the Church celebrates the Exaltation of the Cross, the symbol of our liberation from sin and death. But we don’t honor the Cross for itself. After all, it’s an instrument of torture, and of the ultimate sin: the murder of God. We honor the Cross because of the One who willingly hung on it. Jesus Christ offered Him-

self for our salvation – an offering that subjected Him to physical and emotional pain. We don’t get the full impact of that pain inflicted as shame and humiliation, because Crucifixion art so rarely depicts it. The fact is, Jesus was stripped naked, a move not designed to celebrate the goodness of His body (cf. Genesis 2:25), but to leave Him exposed, vulnerable. His nakedness on the Cross was meant to treat Jesus simply as “a body” to be abused, leered at, and viewed only as a “thing.” According to the purpose of the executioners, His body was the target of suffering, and His spirit (His emotional life, personal dignity, history as a Son and friend) was of no consequence.

The humiliation and torture Jesus suffered was voluntary, but not to pile on as much suffering as possible to make His sacrifice “more legitimate.” Jesus endured such indignity in order to turn it on itself, to challenge it (and us) to understand that He is powerful enough to conquer it. Jesus’ naked body on the Cross should make us sad, grateful, and more determined than ever to defend human dignity at all times. We don’t exalt the Cross for itself, but because of Christ who transformed it into a new Tree of Life. The Cross teaches us that our weakness and susceptibility to sin dulls our senses, but Jesus reawakens our sense of personal dignity and respect for each other.

Some of you view pornography on a regular basis. This column is not to shame you but to say that you’re worth so much more! Some of you have a spouse, child, grandchild or friend caught in pornography’s grip. Your love and support are essential. Becoming educated on the harm of pornography helps those involved in it, and those who love them. The saints are our friends, and two in particular understand pornography and sexual sins: Mary of Egypt and Moses the Ethiopian. Learn about them, pray to them, and treat them as allies in the battle. Pastors: you hear about pornography in the confessional (though not as often as it’s occurring in the parish). Educate yourselves about its effects and the resources available to help in recovery. Don’t be afraid to address it in your ministry. Be firm but loving, and accompany your spiritual sons and daughters in their struggle.

There is no grey area – no such thing as “watching a little porn.” But there is perfect, healing love radiating from the Cross, and His grace to overcome.

Pornography hurts relationships, damages the spirit, and hurts those we love. But there is help. If you or a loved one has a problem, visit www.covenanteyes.com, www.theporneffect.com, and www.fightthenewdrug.com. **ECL**



SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

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

MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME? PSALM 22

Psalm 22, the first antiphon for the Exaltation of the Cross, figures prominently in the account of Jesus’ crucifixion. All four Gospels note that Jesus’ garments were divided and gambled over, just as the Psalm describes (Psalm 22:13; Matthew 27:36; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:34; John 19:24). Ss. Matthew (27:43), Mark (15:29) and Luke (23:34) also see the crowd’s mockery of Jesus as a direct fulfillment of Psalm 22:8. Jesus’ hands and feet were pierced with nails, just as the Psalm describes (Psalm 22:16). Most famously, Matthew (27:46) and Mark (15:34-35) both quote Jesus reciting the first line of Psalm 22 in a Hebrew/Aramaic form not quite identical to the traditional Hebrew words. You hear them in the Passion Gospels on Great and Holy Friday: “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani;” that is, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ These highly emotional words may be the highlight of any dramatization of the Passion, but they pose a puzzle for interpreters.

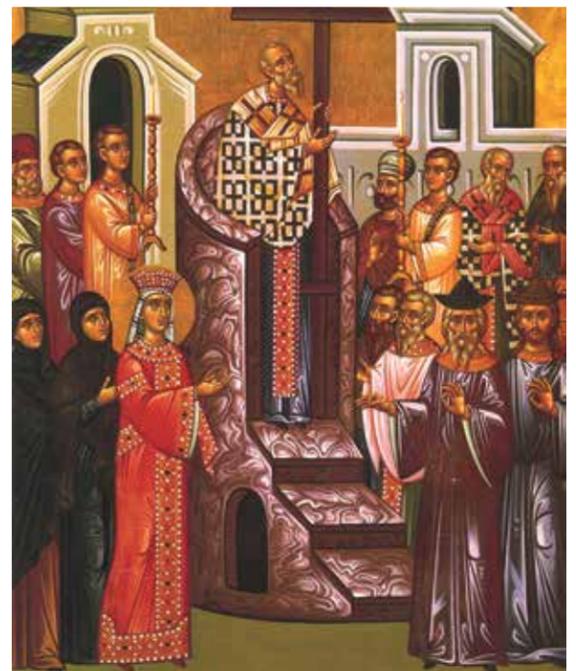
The Holy Trinity is an inseparable unity of three Persons. The troparion recited quietly during the initial incensation of the Holy Table at every Divine Liturgy insists: “When your body was in the tomb and your soul in Hades, when you were in Paradise with the thief, you were at the same time, O Christ, as God upon your throne with the Father and the Holy Spirit, infinite and filling all things.” Jesus clearly says that “The Father and I are one” (John 10:30 and John 17:21) and “I am not alone for my Father is with me” (John 16:32). How then can we understand Jesus’ quotation of Psalm 22? There are four approaches to that question in the history of Christianity.

Beginning with Saint Anselm, many Western authors, Catholic and Latin Protestant, see the

Crucifixion in a legalistic way. God’s mercy desires the salvation of sinners but His justice demands that sin be punished. Jesus takes upon Himself the collective guilt of all humanity, and God the Father pours out His wrath on that guilt through the immense psychological, spiritual and physical suffering Jesus endured. So much sin demanded so great a price and only Jesus was capable of paying it on our behalf. And so, in this view, the Father really does forsake the Son on the Cross. You will hear echoes of this view in some of the popular Lenten songs Byzantine Slavs adopted from Roman Catholic sources, but you will not find it in the Lenten Triodion or, indeed, anywhere in the Eastern theological tradition. It seems to contradict the doctrine of the Trinity. It contradicts the Father’s affirmation: “This is my beloved Son” at His Baptism and at His Transfiguration.

The Old Testament viewed death as separation from God (for example, Psalms 6 and 88). The words of Psalm 22 could reflect Jesus’ fully human experience of death, with all its pain and helplessness. Our Liturgy insists that Jesus embraced the Passion willingly, but the Gospel also teaches that Jesus struggled with the ugliness of death as it came closer and closer (John 11:33-38; John 12:27; and especially Jesus’ prayer in the Garden: Matthew 26:36-42; Mark 14:32-39; Luke 22:43-44).

A third and common view is that Jesus speaks on our behalf: humanity finds itself separated from God because of sin. Saint Paul paints a similar picture of the human condition in the first three chapters of the Epistle to the Romans. Saint John Damascene wrote: “Neither as God nor as man was He ever forsaken by the Father.... He



Exaltation of the Cross

said these things for it was we who were subject to sin and curse, because we were disobedient and unhearing and thus forsaken” (*On the Orthodox Faith* 4:18).

Modern scholarship has proposed a fourth possibility. Ancient cultures identified texts by their first few words rather than by a distinct title. We still do this today, especially when trying to identify songs. When Matthew and Mark write “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me,” could they mean that Jesus prayed the whole Psalm from the Cross? It is an interesting possibility. The second half of the Psalm (verses 22-31) describe a happy ending for the sufferer and something like eternal life. The Epistle to the Hebrews 2:12 actually imagines (or remembers?) one such line on Jesus’ lips: “I will declare your name to my brethren” (Psalm 22:22) spoken by someone who previously (22:15) claimed to have been brought down to “the dust of death.” Perhaps those “brethren” were, first of all, the dead in Hades, when Jesus descended there. Prayed in its entirety, Psalm 22 foresees the Crucifixion, the Descent into Hades, the Resurrection and even the Divine Liturgy that flows from the Cross **ECL**



UNDERSTANDING ICONS

Father Joseph Bertha, Ph.D.

THE ART HISTORY OF THE PANTOCRATOR

Hagia Sophia's Pantocrator as Prototype

The preeminence of the Great Church, Hagia Sophia, becomes the standard for all the Byzantine realm commencing after the Iconoclastic controversy. The sophisticated programs of mosaic decorations which adorn Byzantine Churches were developed, installed and proliferated during the end of the ninth century. The apse mosaic of the Theotokos Hagiosortissa in the Hagia Sophia apse was installed in 863. While there is no extant central dome Pantocrator in Hagia Sophia, Cyril Mango who examined, studied and recorded the mosaics there writes:

"The circular medallion at the apex of the dome diameter 36 feet excluding the border was occupied by a huge image of Christ. It may have been either a full-length figure seated on the rainbow as in Ascensions or a bust of the type usually called Pantokrator. This figure was destroyed when part of the dome collapsed in 1346 and was replaced by a normal Pantokrator bust, the latter appears to have been destroyed in the seventeenth century. The existence of any mosaic under the Koranic inscription which today occupies the center of the dome is most unlikely." (page 50, Kähler, Heinz, Hagia Sophia, with a chapter on the mosaics by Cyril Mango, translated by Ellyn Childs, Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, New York, 1967.)

In an interesting parallel, after Hagia Sophia was converted into a mosque a disc with an Islamic inscription was inserted into the central dome. The Islamic calligraphy which today occupies the central dome of Hagia Sophia intriguingly corresponds with the Pantocrator image of Christ intended originally by the Byzantines. The gospel pericope proclaimed as Our Lord enters into heaven is taken from John: I am the

Light of the world. I am with you always even until the end of the world.

Written in elegant Arabic calligraphy, the inscribed text from the Koran surah 24:35 reads:

Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The similitude of His light is as a niche wherein is a lamp. The lamp is in a glass. The glass is as it were a shining star. (This lamp is) kindled from a blessed tree, an olive neither of the East nor of the West.

Daphni mosaics 1100

Central dome Pantocrator

Hosios Loukas mosaics

Dieses Fresko ersetzt nachahmend das 1593 durch ein Erdbeben zerstörte ursprüngliche Goldmosaik.

As Byzantine Christianity spread, particularly into the north in the 11th century, three important churches, Kiev, Novgorod, and Polotsk, were named Hagia Sophia to replicate the Great Church of Constantinople. Not only were these similar in the dedicatory name of the church to the Holy Wisdom of God, but interiorly they replicated the Pantocrator in the central dome. Because of the significant snows in the Russian north, the central domes were shrunken to a small size yet they still retained the central dome as the apex of the church architecture.

Kiev's Hagia Sophia

The Cathedral of St. Sophia stone church, 1045-1050 Novgorod, central dome Pantocrator

(The 38-metre-high, five-domed, stone cathedral was built by Vladimir of Novgorod between 1045 and 1050 to replace an oaken cathedral built

by Bishop Joachim the Korsunian in the late tenth century[1] (making it the oldest church building in Russia proper and, with the exception of the Arkhyz and Shoana churches, the oldest building of any kind still in use in the country). It was consecrated by Bishop Luka Zhidiata (1035–1060) on September 14, in 1050 or 1052, the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. (A fresco just inside the south entrance depicts Sts. Constantine and Helena, who found the true cross in the fourth century; it is one of the oldest works of art in the cathedral and is thought to commemorate its dedication.)[2] While it is commonly known as St. Sophia's, it is not named for any of the female saints of that name (i.e., Sophia of Rome or Sophia the Martyr); rather, the name comes from the Greek for wisdom (Σοφία, from whence we get words like philosophia or philosophy—"the love of wisdom"), and thus Novgorod's cathedral is dedicated to the Holy Wisdom of God, in imitation of the Hagia Sophia cathedral of Constantinople.

The Cathedral of Holy Wisdom in Polotsk are depicted on a 2005 20-ruble silver commemorative coin. Vseslav of Polotsk, the cathedral's patron, is shown on the reverse.

The cathedral is, like the Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kiev and Saint Sophia Cathedral in Novgorod, named after the Holy Wisdom of God.

During 1596–1654 and 1668–1839, the church was a Greek-Catholic (Uniate) cathedral. It was rebuilt again in 1618–1620 by Greek-Catholic Archbishop St. Josaphat Kuntsevych (rr. 1618–1623) following a fire in 1607, and again after a fire destroyed the cathedral and the city in 1643.

ECL

Beginning Genealogy And Exploring Eastern European Ancestry



The Eastern PA Chapter of the Carpatho-Rusyn Society is very pleased to announce that Tom & Kathryn Peters, two outstanding professional Genealogists, will present an all day seminar for beginning and experienced

genealogists at the Penn State Lehigh Valley Campus located at 2809 Saucon Valley Road, Center Valley, PA 18034 on September 9th from 9:00AM to 3:00PM. The price including an assorted breakfast tray, refreshments, and a boxed lunch is \$35.00. Kathryn's "Beginning Genealogy 101" will be a boot camp for those trying to get started on discovering their heritage. Tom will provide his expertise on researching Eastern European Ancestry including Poland, Slovakia, Ukraine, and Hungary. Both will address the latest genealogy tools and technology, and be available to answer any questions and review documents.



Seating will be limited. Reservations are required. Contact Chuck Schneider at 610-691-2658 or e-mail cfsomni@aol.com no later than September 5th.

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.

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CATECHETICAL REFLECTIONS

Father Robert F. Slesinski, Ph.D.



MAN BEFORE GOD

Moments of Selfhood: The Ultimate Dynamic, Beinghood and Selfhood —Installment 6/6

By highlighting the indelible, *existential* marks of human “being-at-one-with-one-self” that pointedly enjoys moments of “self-presence” (cognition), “self-determination” (volition), and “self-donation” (affective activity), do we not skew our understanding of human personhood in favor of “subjectivity,” thus disparaging a more foundational *beinghood* at the very root of all possible, further actualizations of selfhood? Stated otherwise, does not a seemingly unilateral focus on the flowering (i.e., actualization) of personhood only serve to obscure the radical origins of personhood in *being* itself, the very basis of eventual “super-structural” manifestations of human beinghood?

Unless a proper balance is achieved, a great disservice to those at the margins of human existence can only result. Speaking bluntly, if “subjectivity” is the deciding mark of personhood, what becomes of the personhood of the human embryo or the unborn *per se*, on the one hand, and that of the irreversibly comatose, on the other?

Do they disqualify as human persons? Are they, at best, “merely” “living human beings,” but not true subjects of human rights? And, then, what judgment is to be pronounced for or against all those categories of human beings falling somewhere between those at the very beginning and those at the very end of human life, like those suffering from Down’s syndrome or from any mental illness and developmental deformity?

There are certain ecclesial indications pointing to the Church’s ultimate position on this issue. In celebrating the Infant Jesus *as a Babe*, the Church in no way attributes “omniscience” to the Infant Savior. Even in his precocious adolescence, as witnessed in the Temple (see Lk 3:41–52), there seems to be only a gradual development of self-awareness of mission on the part of the future Savior of humankind. More critical to the importance of the moment of conception as to personhood is the fact that three feasts on the Church calendar celebrate conceptions: that of our Lord (the Holy Annunciation, March 25), that of our

Lady (the Feast of the Conception of Saint Anne, Dec. 9), and that of the Forerunner, Saint John the Baptist (Sept. 23). These feasts cannot be taken lightly.

But as to *all* human individuals what we see at work is a gradual development in body and spirit that in no way negates the intrinsic dignity of personhood *in nuce*, at its very beginnings at the moment of conception. For this reason, we can affirm, beinghood trumps selfhood in any would-be complete conception of personhood. At the same time, what stands before us is an ultimate mystery as to the workings of the Godhead (OMG!) in the midst of humankind. **ECL**



SCHOOL OF PRAYER

Father G. Scott Boghossian

OUR FATHER—THE REAL JESUS PRAYER

There are so many different prayers found in the Bible and the prayer tradition of the Church. Which one is the best? There is one prayer taught to us by Almighty God Himself. That prayer is the Our Father, also known as the Lord’s Prayer.

We find the Our Father in two places in the New Testament. One place is in Luke 11, where one of Jesus’ disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray” (11:1). And Jesus responds, “When you pray, say...” and continues with the Our Father. The other place is in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7). Here, Jesus says, “pray then like this...” (Matt. 6:9-13).

The very fact that God the Son, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, gives us a prayer to pray should grab our attention. Having prayed the Our Father all our lives, we take it for granted. We forget how significant it is that the Incarnate God Himself, during His earthly life of teaching, healing, and saving did, in fact, give us this very prayer.

Because the Our Father was taught to us by God Himself, we can have great confidence in its efficacy. God, our Heavenly Father, will never refuse to grant us any of the seven petitions of the Our Father because we know that it is His will that we make these requests. “This is the confidence that we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us, and if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of

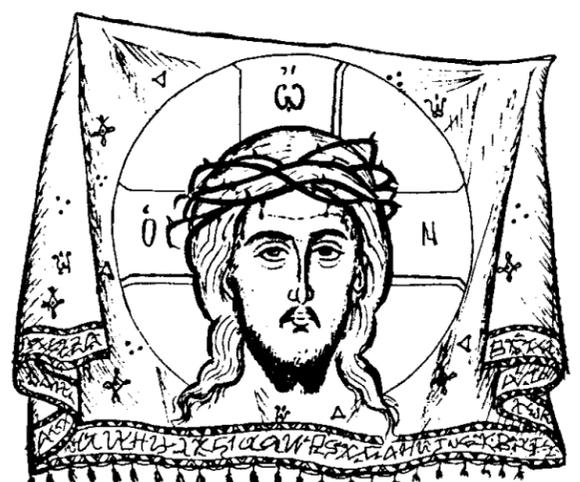
Him.” (1 Jn. 5:14, 15). To pray the Our Father is certainly to receive that for which we ask!

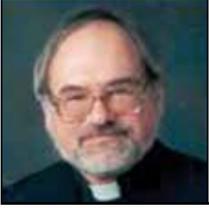
In the early church, the Our Father was only taught to baptized believers, because it is only after justification through faith, repentance, and baptism that we became sons and daughters of God and therefore can rightly call God our Father.

The Our Father contains everything! The third-century theologian Tertullian said that the Our Father contains the essence of the Law, the Prophets and the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. He called the Our Father a summary of the entire gospel. Saint Augustine says, “Run through all the words of the holy prayers [in Scripture], and I do not think that you will find anything in them that is not contained and included in the Lord’s Prayer.” Saint Thomas Aquinas writes, “The Lord’s Prayer is the most perfect of prayers.... In it we ask, not only for all the things we can rightly desire, but also in the sequence that they should be desired. This prayer not only teaches us to ask for things, but also in what order we should desire them.”

The early Christian document called the *Didache* urges Christians to pray the Our Father three times a day. In the medieval era, illiterate monks and lay people would substitute 150 Our Fathers for the 150 Psalms. We know that the Our Father plays a prominent part in the Divine Liturgy and the other liturgical services of the Church.

Let us begin to pray this old and familiar prayer, the Our Father, in an entirely new way. Let us pray it with close attention, thinking carefully over the meaning of the words. Pray the Our Father with great reverence and devotion, thinking about how it was taught to us by God Himself, and contains everything we need to ask from Him. Saint Augustine understood the Our Father as a kind of sacrament, containing within it the power to effect what it signified. Let us pray in faith, believing that as we say it, the Our Father works in us the true spirit of prayer. How often do we rush through the Our Father? From now on we will say it slowly and with devotion. The Our Father is called “the Lord’s Prayer” because it comes to us from the Lord Jesus, the master and model of our prayer” (CCC 2775). The Our Father is the real Jesus Prayer. **ECL**





THE BYZANTINE LITURGY

By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD

THE NEED FOR DIALOGUE (2)

Though Christians of different communities and people of different religions have often been hostile to one another, sometimes even to the point of violence, in the twentieth century, a charitable way of relating to the other, either ecumenism or inter-religious dialogue, became popular. I do not want to “rationalize” but I want to point out that throughout human history, there has been an impetus to peace and love and dialogue with the other. We sometimes don’t see this, because as someone once observed, “History is written by the victors.” There have always been holy Christians who have sought union through dialogue, often at great personal cost. Even the condemnation of iconoclasm came about through dialogue, where the iconodules, in dialogue with the iconoclasts, did admit that the making of statues smacked a bit of idolatry. This did not affect the West, where the iconoclast controversy did not lead to division.

In the twentieth century, however, a revolution in communication brought us into a closer and more intimate union with the other. This was supplemented by a revolution in travel, bringing different groups into the same place as the other through immigration. How did we deal with this? One way was through hatred, leading to the genocides of the twentieth century, of the Armenians by the Turks, of the Jews by the Nazis, of the Cambodian “killing field,” and of the massacre of the Tutsis in Rwanda by the Hutus, often under “Christian” auspices. Having grown up in a Slav-American “immigration” culture, I know from my childhood, how there was hatred for the blacks and Jews. I know even today how many now transfer that hatred to the Muslims - we need only to listen to contemporary political rhetoric. I know also from my life in faith how Orthodox and Catholics denigrated one another.

On the other hand, there was a strengthening of the ecumenical movement, in which we began to listen to one another, and to find common ground rather than mutual condemnation. We became aware that the destruction of the other was our own spiritual death, and maybe even our physical death. We became aware that we are all travelers on the planet earth, that we are all in this together, and that salvation depends on toleration. The goal of unity came to the forefront, for the Protestants at the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference, though there remain evangelical churches totally opposed, for the Orthodox in the 1920 Encyclical Letter of Ecumenical Patriarch Germanos, though there remain traditionalists, particularly many monastic communities who brand ecumenism as the “pan-heresy,” and for the Catholics in the Second Vatican Council, which many traditionalists still strongly oppose. Christians have felt the need to unite in the face of a dangerous and secularist world hostile to religion.

Another reason for dialogue may be the restructuring of society. Before the twentieth century, the secular power was wedded to religion. The Church proclaimed the faith, the government enforced belief, or, at the least, public ascription to the Church’s formulations of belief. This is no

longer true for most of the world, though there are still some governments supporting official religions. Also, in the twentieth century, we have seen governments hostile to religion. I even do not think there is any way in which we can consider the United States a “Christian” society, even though not “hostile” to religion. In recognition of this reality, the Catholic Church recognized freedom of religions in the Vatican II Council: “This Vatican Council declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom. This freedom means that all men are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power, in such wise that no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs, whether privately or publicly, within due limits.” (*Dignitatis Humanae* 2) Coercion is no longer a way of dealing with other churches or religions, and dialogue becomes an authentic way to relate to the other. It is certainly unrealistic to think that the billions of non-Christians will all convert tomorrow, or even in the next generation or in future generations, or that we will even find a common denominator among the followers of Christ. Dialogue becomes necessary, and even desirable.

Especially when the Catholic Church came on board with ecumenism, this resulted in what I can call an “era of good feelings.” Pope and Patriarch met in Jerusalem and opened a *Tomos Agapis*, a “dialogue of love.” Bi-lateral dialogues were established with virtually all Christian Churches with the express goal of a renewed Communion. The dialogues between Catholics and the Oriental Orthodox and the Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox have produced statements of mutual faith, where the linguistic differences are labeled as “semantic” and “political.” Traditionalists within these churches (cf. the Memorandum by Mt. Athos) have prevented these statements in coming to full fruition in Communion. I am a child of Vatican II, I was present in Rome during the Second Vatican Council and I can witness to the almost palpable presence and working of the Holy Spirit. However, as time has gone on, this elusive goal still seems far away. Zeal for unity and hope for communion has dimmed. The easier road of self-righteousness and condemnation of the other is still a basic component of human nature. We need to explore further the necessity of dialogue in our age, which seems to be closing back on itself. **ECL**



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Dr. Burkey is an Adjunct Professor of Pastoral Theology at Immaculate Conception Seminary School of Theology, Seton Hall University, South Orange, NJ. In addition to facilitating retreats, she teaches Catholic Evangelization, New Evangelization & Catechesis. Dr. Burkey has a Doctor of Ministry degree from Catholic University of America and a Master’s in Pastoral Ministry from Immaculate Conception Seminary School of Theology. Her work includes several years as a Pastoral Associate for Stewardship & Evangelization serving in the Archdiocese of Newark.

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SPIRITUAL REFLECTIONS

Father Lewis Rabayda

THE NEED FOR FORGIVENESS

What debts, have we been forgiven by God? This is a good question to ask ourselves—what sins have we committed, and confessed, and received absolution for in the past? How horrible or terrible were some of these sins? And how great is God's salvation and forgiveness that we have been cleansed of them? The unmerciful servant in Matthew 18:23-35 fell on his knees pleading for more time to repay his loan to a king, but to the servant's surprise, he was not given the mercy of having more time to pay, but instead, his king poured incredible mercy upon him, and forgave the debt completely.

The question we are being asked is, are we constantly aware of the gift of salvation God has bestowed upon us? Do we live each day knowing that we have been cleansed through Baptism, and then washed clean again after sincere confession and sincere repentance? Are we constantly aware of how much mercy we have been given? Because, if we are aware of the mercy so richly poured out upon us, and if we keep the commandment of Christ, to "love one another as I have loved you," then we will know that we must love our neigh-

bor by forgiving them when they trespass against us (Jn. 15:12).

Peter says to Jesus, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him. As many as seven times?" Jesus said, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven" (Mt. 18:21-22). Jesus is telling us, that we *shall* forgive those who trespass against us, those who sin against us, and especially those who harm us, and we *shall* forgive them countless times. Forgiveness of others is essential to the Christian life, we must forgive others their faults, their violence towards us, and their unjust offenses, and we must forgive them from our hearts.

Others can hurt us and cause wounds that we may never be able to recover from. And the older we are, the more opportunities we have had to be hurt, to be abused, to be neglected, ridiculed, shamed, or even physically assaulted. But to forgive these people from our hearts, does not mean that we forget what they did to us, but that we do not hold it against them, that we do not treat them differently because of their offense. Forgiveness is

not a feeling, it is not an emotion, but it is a letting go of our victimization. Forgiveness is to love the offender the way that Jesus Christ loves them and us, unconditionally, even self-sacrificially.

The unmerciful servant received mercy ten thousand times more than what he was pleading for, and in return for that immensely generous mercy, he seized his fellow servant by the throat and demanded repayment of a debt, and when asked to give a fraction of the mercy that he himself received moments ago, he refused, and had the other servant thrown into prison. When the king heard of this behavior, he rescinded his forgiveness and threw this unmerciful servant into prison.

Jesus tells us, that God the Father will do the same to us, if we do not forgive our brothers and sisters from our heart. There are at least four other times in the Gospels where Jesus says, "Forgive, and you will be forgiven." This passage is not mysterious and there is no hidden meaning; it clearly states the measure we will be forgiven, is the measure that we ourselves forgive those who trespass against us. If we have committed all kinds of horrible sins through our lives, and have asked for forgiveness, and received absolution, then should we not also forgive those who have offended us? In the face of injustice, should we not love one another, with the same example of love that Jesus showed us? Should we not also give the mercy we have been given to others? **ECL**

SEASONAL REFLECTIONS

Father Ronald Hatton



ENTERING THE NEW YEAR

With the beginning of September, we enter into a new liturgical year. Unlike our Roman Catholic brothers and sisters, who begin their liturgical year on the first Sunday of Advent, our calendar is based on the beginning of the year according to the civil calendar of the Byzantine Empire. One of the comforting things for me about how our liturgical year is set up is that the first big feast of the year is the Nativity of the Theotokos (September 8), and the last big feast is the Dormition of the Theotokos (August 15). I like to say that our life is enveloped by the life of the blessed Mother of God, in that the beginning and end of the year are highlighted by her birth and death.

September also gives us the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, an historical feast commemorating the finding of the true Cross by Saint Helena and the dedication of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which was built on that site in Jerusalem. So, in a kind of synchronicity, we ended the previous year with Christ's Transfiguration and the Dormition of His Mother, and open the year with her Nativity and then the Exaltation of the very cross upon which Christ died for our salvation! August to September is truly a blessed time for us in that sense.

In the same way as Mary's death and assumption are not a part of Holy Scripture but are a part of the Tradition of the Church, so, too, is her birth. It is set down for us in the Proto-evangelion of James, a work dating from the second century AD. The story tells of how her parents, Joachim and Anna, were childless for many years. They remained faithful to God, but their prayers for a child were unanswered. One day, when

Joachim came to the temple to make an offering, he was turned away by the High Priest who chastised him for his lack of children. To hide his shame, Joachim retreated to the hill country to live among the shepherds and their flocks.

As Joachim was praying, his wife Anna was praying at the same time at their house in Jerusalem. An angel appeared to both of them and announced that Anna would have a child whose name would be known throughout the world. Anna promised to offer her child as a gift to the Lord. Joachim returned home, and in due time Anna bore a daughter, Mary. Although the hymns for the feast accentuate this aspect, one hymn at the Litija at the Vespers for the Feast strikes me particularly:

Today is the beginning of our salvation, O people; for behold, the Mother and Virgin who was chosen from all generations to be the habitation of God is born and comes forth from the barren one. She is the flower from Jesse and possesses the rod from his root. May our forefather Adam rejoice and be full of joy; for behold, she who was created from the rib of Adam declares that her daughter and descendent is blessed. She says: My deliverance has been born to me. Through her, I will be freed from the bonds of Hades. May David rejoice, play on his harp, and bless God; for behold, the Virgin comes forth from the womb of a barren woman for the salvation of our souls.

With the birth of the Mother of God, we begin our celebration of the salvation of all mankind. God's promise to us begins to find fulfillment.

If this weren't enough, we next celebrate the finding and exaltation of the Cross by which that salvation is realized. Again, many hymns are sung in honor of this feast, but I will offer one to you here:

By its elevation, the Cross is like an appeal to the whole creation. We adore the blessed passion of Christ our God Who was suspended on it. By this Cross, Christ destroyed the one who had destroyed us. In His great goodness, He brought us back to life after we had been dead. In His mercy He clothed us with beauty and made us worthy of heaven. Therefore, we exalt His name with great rejoicing and glorify His infinite condescension.

This feast is not merely a remembrance of an historical event but is a celebration of the sacrifice on that Cross and a celebration of that salvation which began with the previous feast.

There are two times in the Byzantine Church where the Cross is placed at the center of our celebrations: the Veneration of the Cross on the Third Sunday of the Great Fast, and the Exaltation this month. Maybe it is no coincidence that these two celebrations occur about six months apart, as the Church, in her wisdom, gives us these two reminders of the centrality of the Cross to our salvation, and the reminder of our Lord that, "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23). In Mary we see how we are to work out our salvation, and by the Cross we see the fulfillment of that salvation. All praise be to God! **ECL**



SEMINARIAN REFLECTIONS

Seminarian Paul Varchola West

THE WORK OF THE LORD

When I was a small boy, my dream of dreams was to grow up to be an astronaut and travel into space. From roughly the ages of 9 till about 14, I was consumed by this dream. I studied all I could. I knew all the details about NASA missions such as Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo. I could rattle off crew details and technical aspects of all the manned missions to the moon. I was certain I was going to be an astronaut; however, it is quite evident as I write this article firmly secured to Earth, I never became an astronaut. Fortunately, while I was in graduate school studying music composition, I discovered astrophysics. I found that studying the mechanics of the Cosmos—all of Creation—allows my brain to do the traveling into space for me without the need of a space suit or a rocket.

Whenever I am blessed with the rare opportunity to find myself away from the chaotic din of city life, I always make it a point to spend some time with the stars. Late one night at the Carpathian Village, I was lay-

ing on a rock, fixated on the crushing immensity of the grandeur of God's Creation while I contemplated the trials of being in priestly formation. After some time, I came to realize that my "being in formation" does not make me at all special and my inner complaints were completely insignificant. I am not an isolated case. Every Christian, every person and, in fact, every single thing contained within the Cosmos is perpetually undergoing formation at the hands of the Almighty Father.

Staring up at the black sky punctuated by points of light, I realized that the stars above are but one of the miraculous ways God forms His Creation. The iron that supports the physical structure of our churches, the gold that adorns their sanctuaries, the calcium in the bones of those who worship in them; all these things were formed within stars, under nearly incomprehensible pressure and heat eons ago. In the final days of a collapsing star, as the pressure within it grows and grows, these rarer elements are forged and

ultimately this cauldron explodes, spreading the contents of the once shining star across the Cosmos. From the death of a star comes new possibility. This, as the Psalmist says, "is the work of the Lord, a marvel in our eyes" (Ps 118:23). As I came to this realization, I thought how fitting an analogy this is to the formation of a Christian person!

We are baptized into a life in Christ that we may carry the light of Christ throughout the world. As Christians, we spend our days discerning how the Holy Spirit is working through us and within us that we may properly serve our Lord and His Creation. After time of inward reflection, we may find that we can no longer keep our gifts to ourselves and we become more involved in parish life serving a particular ministry. More often than not, this ministry brings us to serving the greater community and suddenly we find ourselves carrying out the true mission of Christ and spreading His Gospel whether we realize it or not.

Just as the stars do not keep elements bound up within themselves, Christians are not meant to keep their gifts hidden. I urge each of you to dig deep within your hearts in prayerful discernment that you may discover where the Holy Spirit is guiding you. Do not keep your gifts to yourself. With love, care and the grace of God, spread them throughout the community that we may all be enriched by one another and create new possibilities to fortify The Father's Creation. As Christians, we are to be stewards of Creation, carrying out our days with the same love and respect God gives to each and every one of us, that we may live up to being created in the image and likeness of God. While I may not have traveled to the stars, knowing that, as a Christian, I am so intimately connected with God's Creation gives me overwhelming comfort. I pray that we may find a similar comfort as we are all formed through our lives in Christ, carrying out the work of the Lord. **ECL**

WHEN TRAVELING TO THE SOUTH THIS WINTER PLEASE VISIT OUR CHURCHES

All Saints
10291 Bayshore Road
North Fort Meyers, FL 33917
1-440-477-7392

Saint Anne
7120 Massachusetts Ave.
New Port Richey, FL 34653
1-727-849-1190

Epiphany of Our Lord
2030 Old Alabama Road

Roswell, GA 30076
1-770-993-0973

Saint Basil the Great
1475 N.E. 199th Street
Miami, FL 33179-5162
1-305-651-0991

Holy Dormition
17 Buckskin Lane
Ormond Beach FL 32174
1-732-674-1263

Saints Cyril and Methodius
1002 Bahama Avenue
Fort Pierce, FL 34982
1-570-550-4549

Our Lady of the Sign
7311 Lyons Road
Coconut Creek, FL 33073
1-954-592-8233

Saint Nicholas of Myra
5135 Sand Lake Road
Orlando, FL 32819
1-407-579-4337

Saint Therese
4265 13th Avenue North
Saint Petersburg, FL 33713
1-727 323-4022

UPCOMING EPARCHIAL AND PARISH EVENTS

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- SEPTEMBER**
- 2-3 83rd Annual Pilgrimage in Honor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help at Mount Saint Macrina, Uniontown, PA
 - 4 Labor Day
*Chancery closed * Happy Labor Day!*
 - 8 Nativity of the Virgin Theotokos
Solemn Holy Day
 - 10 Wedding Jubilarians Celebration for New Jersey and New York/New England Syncellates
3 PM Hierarchical Divine Liturgy with Bishop Kurt, Saint Mary Parish, Hillsborough, NJ
 - 14 Exaltation of the Holy Cross
*Solemn Holy Day * Traditional Day of Fast * Chancery closed*
 - 17 50th Anniversary of Resurrection Parish in Smithtown, Long Island
Festal Liturgy at 10 AM, followed by reception
 - 25-28 Eparchial Priests' Retreat
San Alfonso Retreat Center, Long Branch, NJ