



# EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

Official Publication of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic

VOL. L, NO. 2

FEBRUARY 2014

## Wilkes-Barre Parish Observes 125 Years *Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church Marks Milestone*

On Sunday, October 13, 2013 Saint Mary of the Assumption Byzantine Catholic Church in Wilkes-Barre observed the 125th Anniversary of its founding. To mark the historical and spiritual milestone, a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy of Thanksgiving was concelebrated by Metropolitan William, Bishop John Pazak, CSSR (a former Assistant Pastor and currently Bishop of the Slovak Eparchy of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Toronto, Canada), Bishop John Dougherty (Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus of Scranton, in attendance), and the Very Reverend Edward Cimbala (Eparchial Administrator at the time). Also concelebrating were Father James Hayer (Pastor and Syn-cellus), Father Michael Salnický (Protopresbyter), Msgr. John Sekellick (former Pastor), Deacon Edward Frey (Parish Vocation) and Deacon Basil Soroka (Parish Vocation). Unable to attend the Divine Liturgy, but present at the banquet was Father James Demko (former Pastor). Also present were over seventy-five priests, deacons, area clergy, and religious, including Sister Seraphim, OSBM (Provincial Superior of the Sisters of Saint Basil the Great. Uniontown, PA).

Leading the procession into the church were members of the Knights of Columbus 4th Degree Color Guard of the Bishop Hafey Council. The Metropolitan and other hierarchs were greeted at the door of the church with the traditional greeting of bread and salt. Metropolitan William was welcomed by Elizabeth Rodack and Andrew Kopcho; Bishop John Pazak was greeted by Betty Pohorilak and Georgeanne Frey; Bishop Dougherty was welcomed by Sister Regina and Sister Theodosia; and the Very Reverend Edward Cimbala was greeted by William and Kathy Hall.

Father Edward Higgins and Father Michael Mondik served as Liturgical Masters of Ceremonies. Parish Altar Servers offered liturgical assistance, and Jonathan Kopcho chanted the Epistle. Father Robert Lozinski served as chaplain to Bishop Dougherty; and congregational responses were led by Parish Cantors Christopher Sedon and Jenn Terza, assisted by area cantors under the direction

of Cantor Raymond Mastroberte.

In his homily, Metropolitan William noted that “it is always good to be back at Saint Mary’s” and recalled his experiences at the parish over the years. He then noted the historical “firsts” for which Saint Mary’s Church is noted. Founded by Father John Wolansky, the first Byzantine Catholic (Greek Catholic) priest in the United States, Saint Mary’s was the first parish to have a parochial school, and the first parish at which the Sisters of Saint Basil the Great were missioned for teaching and parochial ministry. Significantly, he said, the Sisters of Saint Basil have had a continued presence at Saint Mary’s for almost 90 years.

Furthermore, the Metropolitan noted, the Greek Catholic Union (GCU of the USA) also had its origins at Saint Mary’s in Wilkes-Barre and acknowledged the presence of George Juba, the National President of the GCU, also in attendance.

Bishop Dougherty also offered comments before the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy and reflected on the richly beautiful and profound traditions of the Byzantine Catholic Church. He encouraged all present to always be appreciative of their heritage. The Bishop’s endearing words were a fitting way to conclude the liturgical celebration of this joyous day.

A special treat was the presence of Bishop John Pazak of Canada, who was a former Assistant Pastor at Saint Mary’s in the 1980’s. Bishop John not

only concelebrated the Anniversary Liturgy, but was also on hand to celebrate the Saturday evening Liturgy for the parishioners and to reminisce about his time at Saint Mary’s.

Following the Divine Liturgy, an Anniversary Banquet was held at Gus Genettis in downtown Wilkes-Barre. As almost 400 guests arrived at the banquet facility, they were welcomed by the members of the Anniversary Committee and given a chance to view some historical displays of old photographs and memo-

*Continued on Pages 6 -7*



*Metropolitan William, Bishop John Pazak, Bishop John Dougherty with the clergy and servers following the 125th Anniversary Liturgy of Saint Mary Church in Wilkes-Barre. Front row (l. to r.) are: Father Edward Higgins, Rich Terza, William Hall, Father Ed Cimbala, Metropolitan William, Paul Terza, Subdeacon Steven Galuscik, TJ Wozniak, and Father Michael Mondik. Back Row (l. to r.) are: Jonathan Kopcho, Michael Wozniak, Jeremy Kozich, Father Michael Salnický, Msgr. John Sekellick, Bishop John Dougherty, Father James Hayer, Deacon Basil Soroka, Bishop John Pazak, Deacon Edward Frey, Jared Kozich, and Max Mukerjee.*



## Saint Ann Church • Harrisburg, PA 50th Anniversary Celebration Story and Photos on Pages 8-9

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Encounter 2014  
Orlando —p11





# I Lift up My Eyes...

## *The Pastoral Reflections of Bishop Kurt*



About three thousand years ago, Joshua stood on the banks of the Jordan River, looking across the river at the Promised Land, the land flowing with milk and honey. Around him stood our spiritual ancestors—God's chosen people. They were freed from slavery in Egypt by their passage through the waters of the sea—the forces of evil and sin pursued them into the waters and were drowned by the power of God. "The Israelites marched into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left." They were then purified by forty years of living in the desert, and after forty years of anticipation they stood with eagerness and innocent hope looking across the river into the land of Canaan. Just as they traveled through a parted sea to leave Egypt, they were about to walk through a parted river as if on dry land.

This time they had with them something they did not have when they left Egypt—the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark of the Covenant—the box made of Acacia wood—contained the three most sacred objects in the world. The first object was the stone tables with the Word of God carved onto them by God Himself. The second object was a gold jar containing the manna, the heavenly bread from the desert, which is a prefiguring of the flesh of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. The third object was the miraculous flowering staff of Aaron, a symbol of the priesthood of the Most High God.

Joshua told the people that they would see the power of "the living God" and "the Lord of all the earth". When everyone was ready, Joshua ordered the priests to carry the Ark of the Covenant into the Jordan River, and waters stopped flowing, piling up in a solid mass upriver. The entire nation of Israel walked through the river on dry land, and the priests stood on dry land in the middle of the river. When the entire nation had crossed over, the priests carried the Ark into the Promised Land, and the river began to flow again.



A thousand years later, something more sacred entered into the River Jordan, the divine flesh of Jesus Christ the Son of God. When the waters of the river touched the flesh of Jesus, they acquired a new power, not just the power to admit people to an earthly promised land, but the power to wash away sin and make us ready for entrance into eternal life. The Apostle Peter says in his second letter, "Baptism saves you now, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers subject to him." When the priest blesses the water with the three branched candle stick, he submerges the flame in the water as a reminder of the Divinity of Jesus entering into the water.

We Christians have among our treasures our own Ark of the Covenant, more sacred and powerful than the one made of wood. While dying on the cross, Jesus gave us His own mother, the Mother of God. She is the living Ark of the Covenant, for just as the wooden ark carried the stone Word of God, the manna from heaven, and the rod of Aaron, so Mary carried inside her body the living Word of God, the living Bread come down from Heaven, and the Great High Priest. Like the ancient Ark of the Covenant, the Mother of God has great power. She protects us in the river of life when we might be swept away by the turbulence of the world. Just as the wooden Ark could stop a river, she can stop the forces of evil. We turn to the Mother of God for special protection from evil and from diabolical forces, not only for ourselves but for our friends and family members.



*O most pure Theotokos, you are a mighty defender for those in sorrow. You are a ready help to those in trouble. You are the salvation and confirmation of the world. You are the depth of mercy, the font of God's wisdom; and the protectress of the world. O faithful, let us sing and praise her glorious protection, saying: Rejoice, O woman full of grace, the Lord is with you! The Lord, who because of you bestows great mercy on our souls.*

— Vespers, Feast of the Protection of the Mother of God, October 1

## Anniversary Icon Sale

*Transcarpathian Theotokos and Child  
Patroness of the Eparchy*

**50**  
YEARS AN  
EPARCHY  
Byzantine Catholic  
Eparchy of Passaic

As a special commemoration for the 50th Anniversary of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy a limited edition of the icon of Transcarpathian Theotokos and Child (Hodrigita) has been reproduced and is available for purchase. As Patroness of the Eparchy of Passaic, the Carpatho-Rusyn people have a deep and ever-loving relationship with the Theotokos. This sacred icon, written in Transcarpathis, is part of the Heritage Institute collection.

***The Heritage Institute Museum and Libraries***  
Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic · Woodland Park, NJ

This large icon (approximately 11" x 17") mounted on wood is available for purchase for \$45.00 including shipping and handling from the Eparchial offices by using the form below:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic and mail to: 445 Lackawanna Avenue, Woodland Park, New Jersey 07424.





BYZANTINE CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF PASSAIC

STEWARDSHIP APPEAL

2013-14



*If you have not received a PLEDGE CARD, you may use the one above, and return to your parish or to 445 Lackawanna Ave., Woodland Park, NJ 07424.*



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STEWARDSHIP APPEAL 2013

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Parish: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS CORRECTIONS ONLY:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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- Please remember the Church in your will and estate plans.
- ☐ Please send me more information.
- ☐ I have already included the Church in my will.

*In gratitude to God and to honor my commitment to the Church, I have prayerfully considered my gift to the Eparchy of Passaic this year and faithfully pledge:*

PLEDGE AMOUNT                      6 MONTHLY PAYMENTS

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| <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 60.00    | or: | <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 10.00 per month |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 120.00   | or: | <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 20.00 per month |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 150.00   | or: | <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 25.00 per month |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 200.00   | or: | <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 33.33 per month |
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CHECK ONE:    ☐ Single payment    or    ☐ Monthly Statements

Please make check payable to "Eparchy of Passaic" - Thank you!

Pledge Amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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PLEASE COMPLETE & RETURN TO YOUR PARISH BY MAR. 15th



# PEOPLE YOU KNOW

## AROUND THE EPARCHY



### SAINT THERESE CHURCH • ST. PETERSBURG, FL SUNNY SAINT NICHOLAS DAY

December 8th was a special day at Saint Therese Byzantine Catholic Church in Saint Petersburg, FL. The annual Saint Nicholas Day celebration was held on yet another sunny Florida day. Since many parishioners are originally from the northern states, many friends traded stories of holidays in the snow.

The children of the Eastern Catholic Formation classes presented a play about the Christmas star. The play was under the direction of Mrs. Justine Noth, catechist. A delicious dinner was also prepared by ladies of the church. Father Robert Evancho serves the parish as pastor.



*Father Frank Twardzik, SDB, and fellow Salesians following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy.*

Salesian Brothers and seminarians from Saint Don Bosco Seminary, Seton Hall, Orange, NJ recently visited Saints Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church in Minersville, PA where Father Frank Twardzik,

also a Salesian, is Pastor.

Following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, the seminarians and Brothers were treated to a delicious Sunday breakfast as a welcome from the parishioners.

### SAINTS PETER AND PAUL CHURCH • MINERSVILLE, PA

*SALESIAN SEMINARIANS VISIT PARISH*

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book early to avoid disappointment!

### EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

(USPS 165-600)

(ISSN 0894-9786)

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

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

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

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

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

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:

**Eastern Catholic Life**

445 Lackawanna Avenue, Woodland Park, NJ 07424.

Most Reverend Kurt Burnette, *President and Publisher*

Very Rev. James G. Hayer, *Editor*

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Eparchial Website: **www.EparchyofPassaic.com**



## Saint Michael’s Cathedral Holy Name Society Announces Men’s Retreat • March 15th

Bishop Kurt  
to serve as Retreat Master

The Holy Name Society of Saint Michael Cathedral, Passaic, NJ will hold a Men’s Retreat at Saint Michael’s Chapel located at 445 Lackawanna Ave. in Woodland Park, NJ on Saturday, March 15, 2014. John Paulich, Jr. Holy Name Society President invites all men to attend this retreat which will commence with registration at 8:30 AM and end when lunch concludes by 2:00 PM.

We are honored to announce that our Retreat Master will be Bishop Kurt Burnette, the newly-installed Bishop of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic.

Following registration, there will be an opening prayer service, retreat session, short break, completion of retreat session, Divine Liturgy celebrated by the Bishop, and then lunch.

There is no charge but advance registration is requested. Please respond to Thomas Duch, Jr. Retreat Chairman, by email to [tjdesq@aol.com](mailto:tjdesq@aol.com) or by calling 201-794-7234. The retreat is open to all Catholics, Byzantine and Roman, and to all Christians in search of a positive message.

## Coming Events at Franciscan Monastery

Sybertsville, PA

### Forgiveness Vespers

Sunday March 2, 2014 at 3pm

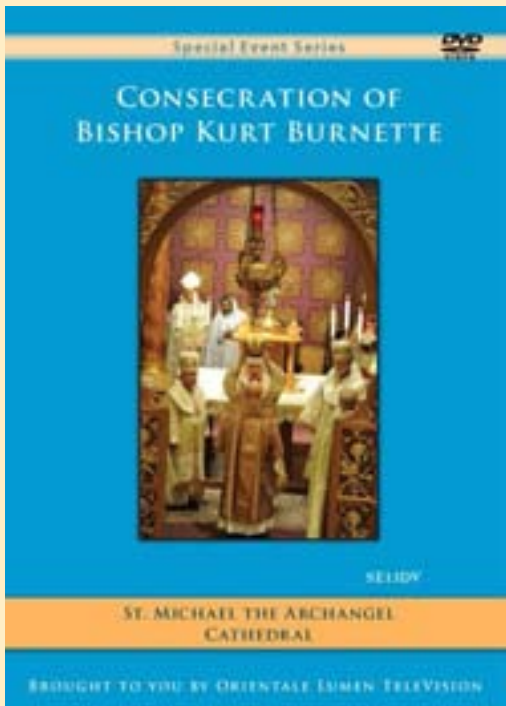
If you are not celebrating Forgiveness Vespers in your parish, please join the friars as we begin the Great Fast / Lent by asking each other to forgive us for the wrongs and hurts we have done this past year. Homily by Father Jack Lambert, pastor of Saint John Bosco Roman Catholic Church, Conyngham, PA. For more information or to provide refreshments after vespers: [holydormition@gmail.com](mailto:holydormition@gmail.com) or 570-788-1212 ext 402.

### Icon Retreat

Thursday March 6–Sunday March 9, 2014

Adults of all ages and any level of ability will complete an icon of Virgin Mary as “softener of evil hearts”; this icon is inspired by the words of Simeon at the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple, that Mary’s heart will be “pierced by a sword of sorrow.” Cost \$225 includes all materials plus Friday and Saturday midday meal. For more information or to register: [holydormition@gmail.com](mailto:holydormition@gmail.com) or 570-788-1212 ext 402.

Announcing from Orientale Lumen TeleVision...



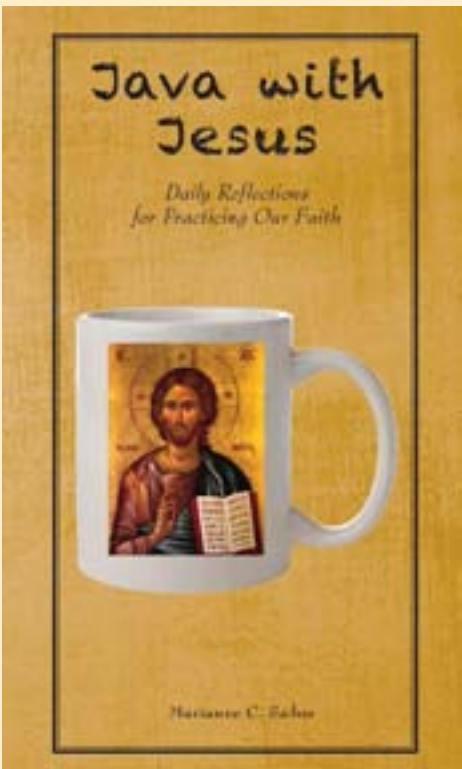
This 2-disk set includes over two hours of the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy, Consecration and Enthronement of Bishop Kurt Burnette, with commentary and explanation, and edited from five camera angles.

CD Audio	\$10.00/copy plus shipping
DVD Video	\$20.00/copy plus shipping

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Or call 703-691-8862 to order by phone. Credit cards accepted. Bookstores call for volume discounts.

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This 400 page book contains a daily reflection for each day of the year (including February 29) covering a wide range of topics related to “Practicing Our Faith.” Each day also includes specially chosen Scripture readings. A color feastday icon is included for each month.

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*Metropolitan William preached the homily.*

rabilia of Saint Mary's rich history. The piano music of Marianne Sailus greeted the guests as they entered into the Empress Room and found their way to their table.

Once the guests were all seated, the Knight of Columbus Color Guard escorted the hierarchs, clergy and other special guests to the Head Table. Elizabeth Rodack of the Anniversary Committee then welcomed the guests and then introduced Attorney James Oschal who served as Toastmaster for the evening. Before proceeding further with evening's program, Metropolitan William was asked to offer an Invocation and God's Blessing upon the meal. Attorney Oschal next called upon Joseph Yachim to lead everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance. At age 95, Joe Yachim, known to many as "Mr. Saint Mary's," is one of the senior members of the parish and had served as Chairman of the parish's Centennial Anniversary in 1988.

Attorney Oschal then asked all to raise a glass for an Anniversary Toast and then invited all to enjoy the Anniversary Meal. One of the highlights of the anniversary meal was the anniversary cake – which was adorned with images of the Altar, Icon Screen and all former Pastors. The delicious and uniquely beautiful cake was designed by Andrew (Butch) Kosmach and was a gift from the Kosmach Family, of the Bakery Delite.

Following the serving of the main entrée, the Very Reverend Edward Cimbala delivered the Main Address. He challenged parishioners to "pass the faith forward" from one generation to the next especially during the Papal Year of Faith during which the anniversary was held. His message – as well as his sense of humor – was embraced by subsequent speakers who built upon an ongoing joke about a

145-year-old nun!

Also offering comments and reflections were Bishop John Pazak of the Slovak Eparchy of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Toronto, Canada. Bishop Pazak served as an Assistant Pastor at Saint Mary's during the 1980's. He offered his comments, congratulations, and reflections on the memories and friends he made during those years. Following Bishop John's comments, Msgr. John Sekellick and Father James Demko, two former pastors, also offered remarks and reflections regarding their tenure at Saint Mary's. Other guests offering remarks included Sister Seraphim Olsafsky, OSBM, Provincial Superior of the Sisters of Saint Basil the Great in Uniontown; and Mr. George

parish children, Hannah Bridgland, Lauren Oschal, and Ariel and Brook Bebo, accompanied by ECF teacher, Stephanie DeRemer. All were delighted and surprised by this memorable display of appreciation by the young children of our parish.

Father James Hayer, Pastor, was then introduced to offer words of gratitude to all who made this day possible. Father Jim noted the presence of the parish clergy and religious - Deacon Edward Frey and wife, Georgeanne; Deacon Basil Soroka and wife, Christine; Sister Theodosia Alishofski and Sister Regina Adams. Former teachers and staff of the parochial school were acknowledged, including Sister Janet Decker, OSBM, the last principal of

was marking her 20th year of ministry at Saint Mary Parish. In appreciation for her two decades of parochial and catechetical ministry at Saint Mary's School and Saint Mary's Parish, a hand-painted icon was given to Sister Theodosia. Additional appreciation gifts were also given to Sister Regina, as well as to the Bishops, the concelebrants of the Anniversary Liturgy, Elizabeth Rodack of the Anniversary Committee, Attorney James Oschal, and Joe and Cel Yachim.

With everyone satisfied from a full day of activities, Father Michael Salnicko offered a closing prayer, after which all were invited to remain for after dinner dancing to the Eastern European music of *Fata Morgana*,



*Very Reverend Edward Cimbala is greeted by William and Katherine Hall.*



*The Color Guard of the Knights of Columbus leads the procession.*



*Bishop John Dougherty receives bread and salt from Sr. Theodosia and Sr. Regina.*

Juba, National President of the GCU of the USA. One of the Anniversary souvenirs, a note pad with a photo of Saint Mary's Church, was graciously donated by the GCU.

In appreciation for their presence, Metropolitan William, Bishop John, and Father Cimbala were then presented with bouquets of flowers by

Saint Mary's School. Also acknowledged were the former Assistant Pastors of Saint Mary's including Father Richard Rohrer who, along with Bishop John Pazak, were also present for the celebration.

Father Jim then made a surprise presentation to Sister Theodosia who

a Slavic ensemble. As the day ebbed slowly away, and the music faded to memories, the words of the Psalmist still echoed in the hearts of the jubilarians, "This is a day that the Lord has made!" Indeed, let us *continue* to rejoice and exult for 125 more years!



*Metropolitan William, Bishop John and Father Jim distribute the Bread of Life.*



*Deacon Basil Soroka and Deacon Edward Frey.*



*The proclamation of the Word of God.*



# Anniversary Banquet · Genetti's Empress Room

## Saint Mary Church 125th Anniversary



### HIERARCHS AND SPEAKERS



*Metropolitan William  
offers a prayer of blessing.*



*Bishop John Pazak  
remembers St. Mary's fondly.*



*Father Edward Cimbala  
delivers the Main Address.*



*Father James Hayer, Pastor  
offers words of gratitude.*



*Atty. James Oschal  
served as Toastmaster.*

### SPECIAL MEMORIES!



### REFLECTIONS AND REMARKS



*Msgr. John Sekellick,  
former Pastor,  
reminisces with a smile!*



*Elizabeth Rodack  
of the  
Anniversary Committee.*



*Father James Demko,  
former Pastor,  
offers reflections.*



*Sister Seraphim, OSBM  
Provincial Superior of the  
Sisters of St. Basil.*



*George Juba, National  
President of the GCU  
offers congratulations.*



# Saint Ann Byzantine Catholic Church Marks 50th Anniversary

## HARRISBURG PARISH CELEBRATES 50 YEARS OF FAITH

On Sunday, October 20, 2013, the Fiftieth Anniversary of Saint Ann Byzantine Catholic Church in Harrisburg, PA, was celebrated. Father Michael Popson, pastor, and Saint Ann parishioners were joined by visiting clergy, religious sisters, and guests on a beautiful, sun-filled autumn day to honor past accomplishments and to look forward to a rewarding future. As Father Edward Cimbala, Eparchial Administrator at the time, stated in his homily, "First, as a parish we are formed and identified by our history, by where we have been in our past. And second, the meaning of that history is determined by the future, by where our history is leading us."



At 3:15 PM, the procession of priests, altar servers, and the Knights of Columbus Honor Guard walked from the parish center to the church. At the church, the children of the parish began the procession into the church. Each of the 32 children carried a white rose that was placed in vases by the tetrapod and the icon of Saint Ann. The procession of priests and altar servers followed under the guard of the Knights.

The Liturgy of Thanksgiving was celebrated by Very Rev. Edward Cimbala with concelebrating priests - Father Michael Popson, pastor; Father Peter Hosak, regional syncellus;



*Father Edward Cimbala*

Father Edward Higgins, Father Charles Yastishock, and Father Michael Hutsko. Cantor James Kushlan led the congregational singing

that truly "celebrated fifty years of faith."

In the homily, Father Edward Cimbala reminded us that "we can learn a lot from the past, but its most important function is to lead us into the future . . . As a parish today, your anniversary celebration naturally turns your gaze back on your history. But you must let that history be part of your movement into



the future. Jesus has commissioned you and sent you into the world with a mission." Father Cimbala challenged the community by asking them, "how will you fulfill it?"

Following the Divine Liturgy, a reception was held at the Harrisburg-Hershey Sheraton. Guests enjoyed punch as they greeted each other and shared stories from the past before they entered the dining area. Soon after the



*Father Michael Popson*

guests were seated, John Falatovich, the Master of Ceremonies, welcomed everyone and introduced Very Reverend Edward Cimbala, who led the Invocation. Next, Cantor James Kushlan led the singing of the "Our Father" and gave the toast.

As guests finished eating their salad, Marie Nester, parish lay signatore, presented a few details about the history of Saint Ann Parish. She started with comments taken from the first anniversary book: "the many blessings and graces . . . and the individual sacrifices . . . are so numerous that only Heaven has them recorded with the purest gold." She continued by recognizing significant dates and events.



*Father Michael Popson, Pastor, with Father Edward Higgins, Father Peter Hosak, Father Charles Yastishock, and Father Michael Hutsko following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy for the 50th Anniversary.*

Saint Ann Church was established on February 6, 1963, by Bishop Nicholas T. Elko with Father John Opalenick assigned as the first pastor. By June of 1964, the first Divine Liturgy was celebrated in the all-purpose building for which the ground breaking was held just 3 months earlier. In 1966 Father Opalenick was transferred to Rome and Father Michael Shear became the pastor. The groundbreaking for the new church began in 1975 and, by 1977, the church was dedicated. After 40 years of service at Saint Ann Church, Father Shear fell asleep in the Lord in 2006.

Marie Nester then completed her presentation by acknowledging the priests who have served Saint Ann Parish since 2006. They included: Father John Zeyack, Father Leonard Martin, SJ, and Father Michael Popson, pastor since 2011. Also, Father Charles Yastishock, Father Michael Hutsko, and Father Frank Hanincik were recognized as vocations from the parish, and Deacon George Kashi was identified as the first permanent deacon in the





# h Anniversary

— Sunday, October 20, 2013



*Edward Cimbala, Father Charles Yastoshock, Father Michael Hutsko and the parish Altar Servers for the 50th Anniversary of Saint Ann Parish.*

Metropolitan Church of Pittsburgh. Additional details are be included in the parish’s 50th anniversary commemorative book, which was published in early December, in time for the St. Nicholas celebration.

Following this presentation, the anniversary dinner was served. The dinner menu included a choice of center-cut pork chop, chicken, or cod with vegetables and a salad. As guests completed their dinners, Tom Walko, lay signatore, was introduced as the next presenter. He began by stating that, “in celebrating 50 years of faith, our church family is currently living that faith actively!” Next, he recognized Cantor James Kushlan, who has led our singing for almost 24 years. Then he identified the many activities that take place throughout the year. Saint Ann children, he noted, are very active with their ECF classes and other activities funded by the ECF program. The Saint Ann Slavic American Festival, which was started by the founders, continues today on the third Sunday in July. Also,



the bakers continue the tradition of nut bread and pascha baking that was started in earlier years. Weekly bingo that began years ago has been a major fundraiser for the church. The Knights of Columbus was organized three

family must continue to pray, worship, and work together with Father Michael.”

Father Michael, Saint Ann’s pastor, was introduced as guests finished their cake and coffee. He began by stating, “this jubilee celebration reminds us that we’re all invited by Christ to belong and to build-up His Body, the Church, and to renew our membership and commitment to it. . . The most lasting memory of us will be the good we have accomplished by way of faith, hope, and love.” He added words of encouragement: “Be encouraged by these 50 years of humble discipleship and continue to live it with the two beliefs of Jesus: belief in God and belief in people. Jesus continues to put His trust and confidence in people like us!” After he congratulated the Saint Ann Parish family, he began singing “God grant you many years” and all the guests stood and joined in the singing.

After the Closing Prayer offered by Father Michael Hutsko, the Master of Ceremonies, John Falatovich thanked everyone and introduced the DJ, Tony Zoco. For the rest of the evening, children and adults enjoyed dancing and celebrating this joyous occasion.



*Marie Nestor*

years ago and has become very active. The Helping Hands Committee and the Respect Life Group sponsor activities that help those in need. He also mentioned our book store that has many one-of-a-kind articles. A fall community yard sale and a before-Lent Mardi Gras celebration have been celebrated for the past 10 years. He ended by stating, “to continue this momentum in the future, the church



*Cantor James Kushlan*



*Tom Walko*

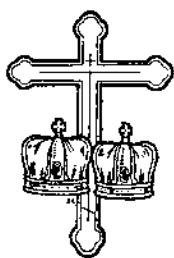


*John Falatovich*





# **Wedding Jubilee Celebration** *Central Pennsylvania Syncellate* **Minersville, PA**



*Father Edward Cimbala with Father Frank Twardzik, host pastor and Protopresbyter, along with Father Peter Hosak, Syncellus, and other clergy and servers following the Divine Liturgy.*



*70 Year Jubilarians George and Edith Harvilla of Saints Peter and Paul Church in Minersville cut the Anniversary Cake!*



**MINERSVILLE, PA** – The clergy of the Central Pennsylvania Syncellate, along with the Very Reverend Edward Cimbala, Eparchial Administrator at the time, recently honored Wedding Jubilarians. Once again, the annual event was graciously hosted at Saints Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church in Minersville, PA.

A Divine Liturgy was celebrated by Father Edward Cimbala, along with Father Peter Hosak, regional Syncellus and Pastor of Saints Peter and Paul Church in Bethlehem; Father Frank Twardzik, regional Protopresbyter and pastor of Saints Peter and Paul Church, Minersville and Saint Mary Church, Saint Clair, PA;

Father J. Michael Venditti, Administrator of Saint Michael Church, Allentown, PA, and Saints Peter and Paul Church, Palmerton, PA; Father James Carroll, OFM, pastor of Saint Mary Church, Mahanoy City, and Saint Mary Church, Brockton, PA; Monsignor Nicholas Puhak, pastor of Saint Mary Church, Freeland, PA; Father James Demko, pastor of Saints Peter and Paul Church, Beaver Meadows and Saint Mary

of Saint John the Baptist Church, Hazleton, PA; Father Peter Donish, pastor of Saint Mary Church in Hazleton; also concelebrating was Father Michael Mondik of Saint Thomas the Apostle Church in Rahway, NJ.

The Liturgical Master of Ceremonies was Father Edward Higgins, pastor of Holy Ghost Church and Holy Trinity Church, Philadelphia. Also in attendance were Fa-



Responses were led by Cantor Paul Konkus and the parish choir, along with guest cantors from the Syncellate. Assisting were parish altar servers. Following the liturgical celebration, a delicious banquet dinner was held in the parish's Hillcrest Catering Facility at which all couples were honored, including the George and Edith Harvilla who were given special recognition for 70 years of marriage! May God grant them all many blessed years!



Church, Sheppton, PA; Father Vasylyl Chepelsky, pastor of Saint John the Baptist Church, Lansford and Saint Mary Church, Nesquehoning, PA; Father George Bujnak, pastor Saint Michael Church, McAdoo, PA; Father Michael Popson, pastor of Saint Ann Church, Harrisburg, PA; Father Carmen Scuderi, OFM, pastor

ther James Badeaux, pastor of Saint Michael Church, Mont Clare, and Saint Mary Church, Coatesville, PA; Subdeacon Steven Galuscik of Saint Thomas Church in Rahway; and Subdeacon Gregory Lozynskii who was assisting at Saints Peter and Paul Church in Minersville at the time.



*Father Ed Cimbala preached the homily.*



*Father Frank Twardzik, host pastor.*

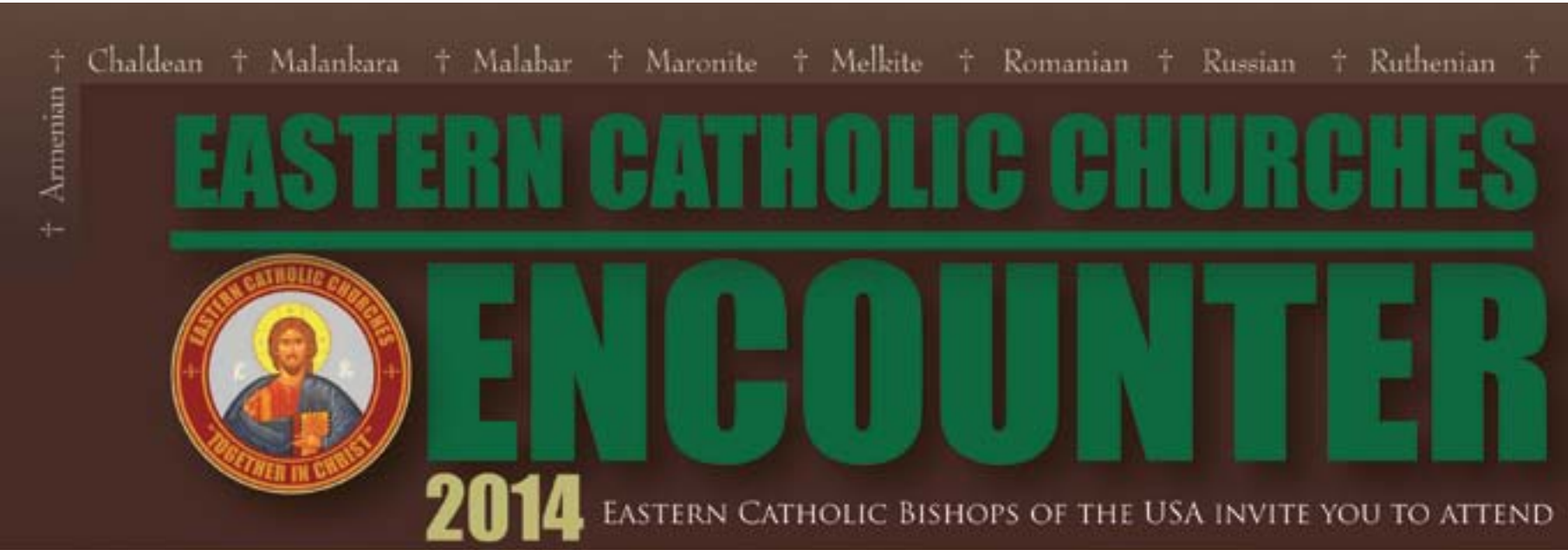


*Father Peter Hosak blesses the food.*



*Father James Badeaux offers a prayer.*





# ENCOUNTER 2014 • Orlando, FL

CONFERENCE LOCATION: RENAISSANCE ORLANDO AIRPORT HOTEL  
5445 FORBES PLACE, ORLANDO, FLORIDA



## Speakers and Schedule



**Go and Teach All Nations:**  
*Proclaiming Christ in Our Society*  
**Speaker: Bishop Peter Anthony Libasci**



**Casting Our Nets:**  
*Preparing Our Parishes for the Next Generation*  
**Speaker: Deacon Sabatino Carnazzo**



**On the Road to Emmaus:**  
*Encountering Christ in the Sacred Scriptures*  
**Speaker: Father Jack Custer**



**Come, Follow Me:**  
*Encountering the Call to Discipleship*  
**Speaker: Sister Michele Yakymovich, SSMI**

MAIN CONFERENCE	
<b>Friday, January 31</b>	
3-5 PM	Registration, Vendor Visits
5:30	Prayer Service and Welcome
	Dinner
	Session I
	Compline / Confessions
<b>Saturday, February 1</b>	
8:00 AM	Morning Prayer Service
	Breakfast
	Session II and III
	Lunch
	Vendor Visits
	Sessions IV and V
	Dinner
	Hospitality / Vendor Visits
<b>Sunday, February 2</b>	
8:00 AM	Holy Quarbana (Liturgy) Syro-Malabar
	Breakfast
	Closing Session
11:30 AM	Departure

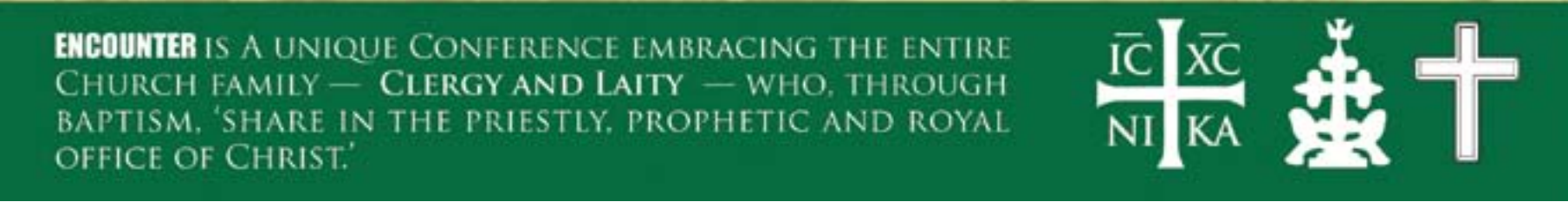


**Who Do You Say I Am?**  
*Confessing Christ in Our Daily Life*  
**Speaker: Father Deacon Alexander Wroblicky**

## EVERYONE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE

[www.Encounter2014@EasternCatholicChurches.org](http://www.Encounter2014@EasternCatholicChurches.org)

For conference registration availability and other information,  
please call Dr. Barbara Lutz 570-294-2910







# FAITH AND COMMUNITY ISSUES

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

## The Challenges to the Christian Family

*THE BASIS OF STRIFE IN THE FAMILY CONSTELLATION*

Where is the root of family strife located? From where does it come? What can one do to combat and ultimately conquer it? According to Blessed John Paul II's point of view, it has to do abusing the gift of freedom. In Bl. John Paul II's words, "the idea and the experience of freedom (is) conceived not as a capacity for realizing the truth of God's plan for marriage and the family, but as an autonomous power of self-affirmation, often against others, for one's own selfish well-being" (1981, *Familiaris Consortio* §6).

This distortion of self-welfare can be seen in the dichotomy of living environments seen between the rich of First-World nations and the poor of the Third-World nations. Members of the Third-World frequently lack the basics of food, shelter and clothing, work, medicinal necessities and often the "unalienable rights of life liberty and the pursuit of happiness" (1776, Declaration of Independence USA).

First World membership offers a stark contrast in the excess of prosperity, consumerism, which is conjoined paradoxically with angst about the future bringing about a perception of instability both in today and for tomorrow. This dilemma deprives "married couples of the generosity and courage needed for raising up new human life" (1981, *Familiaris Consortio*). The cascade of this is the perception of life being more of a curse than a blessing.

From the perspective of History, the progression of time is not fixed but rather an evolving cataclysm between mutually-warring freedoms or as Blessed John Paul II quotes St. Augustine's (*De Civitate Dei*) concept, "the love of God to the point of disregarding self, and the love of self to the point of disregarding God" (1981, *Familiaris Consortio* §6). What clarifies the vision and sculpts the understanding is a fundamental education in a sacrificial love rooted in authentic faith tradition. Such basis offers the lens needed to clearly interpret "the signs of the times" which, contextually, express in concrete historical terms the continual struggle between self and God.

When the attention is re-directed from history to the lived expression of the faithful in family and individual, the clarity of vision and purity of purpose needed to be authentic in Spirit and in Truth is often clouded; this confusion prevents an authentic witness to both right conscience and authentic Christian humanism for the family pattern.

Examples of this turbulence is pointed out markedly by the Synodal Members in the manifestation of an increase in the divorce rate with remarriage without a decree of nullity on the prior attempted marriage; the accepting of a civil marriage without the benefit of Church witness and blessing as is the right and duty of all the baptized to have the Lord Jesus at the center of their lives and when

it is celebrated in church it is done so not out of a lively faith response to God's working in their lives but secular motives as well as the rejection of morality and its norms regarding the expression of human sexuality in a responsible, human and Christian manner.

The entire Church then is being summoned to a profound meditation upon its Gospel Values the result of which is to be a deep commitment to evangelizing the nascent culture presenting itself to the world of today. This evangelization will sow the seeds of authentic Christian values, defending the rights of both women and men and that the structures of society may be buttressed with true justice in line with the gospel message of peace to all peoples of Good Will. In such an edifice, the development of the "new humanism" (1981, *Familiaris Consortio* §8) will cease to be a distraction but rather a sure beacon leading the faithful to a fuller, richer relationship with their God.

The Offerings of Science and Technology have their place with a new perspective fleshed out in the immense potential presented in the construction of the new humanism. Sadly, because of choices made politically and otherwise that have the power to decide the direction of such technology, "science is often used against its original purpose, which is the advancement of the human person" (1981, *Familiaris Consortio* §8). It becomes imperative that science

be re-directed to being true to this moral directive, seeing the value of the human person in itself and placing itself at the service of humankind for its advancement and growth.

Blessed John Paul II sees that this task of human advancement in the Christian sense is no small task but must be faced notwithstanding beginning with the monumental work of societal renewal and with a resurgence of the basic value of respect for all life, human especially. Life in all of its myriad forms and expressions is priceless. It meaning and giving the primacy of place to the fundamental values that surround that understanding of the priceless value of life, empowers the human creature to actualize the immense potentials revealed by science to humankind, so that the dignity and creativity of the human person can be advanced in its entirety. In such a work science is indeed wedded to wisdom and happily so.

His Holiness of Happy Memory quotes from the Second Vatican Council regarding family issues, "Our era needs such wisdom more than bygone ages if the discoveries made by man are to be further humanized. For the future of the world stands in peril unless wiser people are forthcoming" (1981, *Familiaris Consortio* §8). How this is all to come about will be discussed in the next segment of this presentation.

## Rahway Slavonic Festival

### Saturday, February 22, 2014

New Jersey's Largest Slavonic Festival to be held Saturday, February 22nd at Saint Thomas the Byzantine Catholic Church in Rahway. One day only! The fun-filled celebration will include live music, ethnic foods, dancing, a 50/50 raffle also a parish raffle. Sale of religious items and an informative tour of our beautiful church are more highlights of the day.

Always at the heart of this festival is the homemade food prepared by a number of our parishioners. In anticipation of the large number of people who will attend, volunteers will be busily preparing stuffed cabbage, kielbasa, halushki and chicken paprikash. Diners can end their meal with a palachinki, a delicate seasoned crepe.

Those who prefer to take their food home will be able to purchase pirohi, holupki and nut and poppy seed rolls. Father Michael Mondik and his parishioners extend a warm welcome and hope that you will be able to join our celebration.

Saint Thomas the Apostle is located at 1407 Saint Georges Avenue in Rahway. The hours of the festival are Saturday, February 22nd from 2PM to 8PM. If you would like more information about the festival please call 732-382-5300.





Save the Date!



## BYZANTINE CATHOLIC FAMILY DAY - 2014

*Knoebels Amusement Resort*

*Elysburg, PA*

**Sunday, May 18, 2014**



## RESPECT LIFE FORUM

*By Aaron Matthew Weldon*

### What is Conscience Protection For?

If you follow commentary on the court battles over religious liberty here in the United States, you will occasionally read statements that refer to a need for “balance” on matters of conscience protection. The thinking for some seems to be that people of faith, or even simply people of good will, should be able to compromise on their convictions when those convictions don’t conform to the expectations of the broader culture. For example, the ethics committee of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists has argued that health care professionals should simply refer patients to other providers for services, such as abortions, to which they morally object. It’s as if they are saying, “Sure, you may feel like abortion is evil, but this is a pluralistic society, so you have to give a little. Nobody’s asking you to perform abortions, so just keep quiet and let women make their own choices.”

But conscience is not a bargaining chip in a negotiation.

Conscience is not merely a feeling, as if I am acting in good conscience whenever I do what feels good. Rather, conscience is a means by which one grasps the truth. In political matters, my conscience guides me to the truth about how I ought to act with respect to family, neighbors, local com-

munity, and nation.

The right to follow one’s conscience is more than a right to be left alone. It is the right to pursue the truth and to act in accord with that truth. When we follow the dictates of our consciences, we act in accordance with the truth as best as we can understand it. In other words, we submit to the law of our loving Creator, not to a coercive agent such as the state. When we obey our consciences, we conform our lives to the truth that makes us truly free.

When the state attempts to coerce individuals and entire communities to act against their consciences, as it is doing now with the HHS “contraceptive mandate,” it is usurping the place of truth as the guide for the lives of its citizens. However, as Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, later Pope Benedict XVI, affirms, “truth is not a product of politics.” When a state seeks to order the lives of its citizens as if truth were a product of politics, then it has radically overstepped its bounds. It becomes a tyrant rather than a servant. People who seek to do what is right, who order their lives to the truth, cannot compromise on conscience, for such a compromise suggests that one should willfully act against what is right.

We need to be clear in our actions and our

witness about what we are for. Court battles may be necessary to seek protection from a state that would seek to step beyond its proper boundaries. But the freedom that is gained in a court victory is a freedom from coercion. Ultimately, religious liberty is freedom for the pursuit of truth and of lives lived in accordance with what is good. In all our actions, as entrepreneurs, artists, teachers, construction workers, and public servants, we must be people who seek the truth and strive to perform the good in all that we do. We can refuse to compromise on matters of conscience and work to protect our right to religious liberty with confidence, knowing that we do what we do so that all people may seek to live the truth.

Want to help protect conscience rights? Learn more and make your voice heard. Visit [www.usccb.org/conscience](http://www.usccb.org/conscience). Watch our video about three women whose rights of conscience have been violated: “Speak Up for Conscience Rights Today!” Then send your email to Congress in support of the Health Care Conscience Rights Act.

[Aaron Matthew Weldon is a staff assistant for the Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities, US Conference of Catholic Bishops. For more information on the bishops’ pro-life activities, please visit [www.usccb.org/prolife](http://www.usccb.org/prolife).]







# HOLYDAY REFLECTIONS

Msgr. John T. Sekellick, JCL

## ENCOUNTER OF OUR LORD IN THE TEMPLE

The holy evangelist Luke records in greater detail than the other 3 evangelists events in the early years of our Lord's life, principally the circumstances of His cousin, John the Baptist's birth, the Annunciation by the archangel Gabriel to Mary that she was chosen to be the Mother of the Messiah, His birth and circumcision, His presentation in the Temple 40 days afterwards and His finding, at the age of twelve, in the Temple. Except for the finding in the Temple, our Church, from its earliest years, has marked those events as festal celebrations with proper solemnity.

At the time of the great Byzantine Emperor Justinian (A.D. 527-565), the city of Constantinople and its surroundings were struck by an epidemic because of which over five thousand people daily were losing their lives. Compounding this was a massive, ruinous earthquake in Antioch. In the daunting face of these catastrophes the Em-

peror together with the Patriarch called for fasting throughout the whole empire to elicit divine intervention.

On February 2nd, the day of the Encounter of our Lord in the Temple itself, in the year 544, processions were arranged through the cities, towns and villages imploring the Lord to bring an end to the fearsome disasters. Both the epidemic and the earthquake instantly ceased. Trees began to sprout their fruits in abundance. In grateful thanksgiving for this blessing, the Encounter has been celebrated as a major feast honoring the Lord.

Saint Luke does not identify in the account the priest of the Temple to whom the Child Jesus was presented; however, a tradition tells us it was Zachary, the father of John the Baptist, according to which Zachary took Joseph and Mary with the Child not to the court for married women but to the place for maidens where they were met by the

righteous elder Simeon and the prophetess Anna, both of whom recognized Jesus as the Messiah.

The Pharisees, though, witnessing what was happening and vexed that Zachary had gone with Mary to the court of maidens, reported this to King Herod. Believing Jesus to be the newborn King of whom the Magi had spoken, Herod quickly sent guards to seize the Child and kill Him. However, Joseph and Mary meanwhile had departed from the Temple by God's design and escaped Herod's murderous intent.

Our Church invites us, the faithful, by this feast to "...welcome Christ and receive Him with hymns of praise and glory. He is the salvation Simeon has seen. He is the One whom David foretold and of whom the prophets have spoken..."

Vespers at *Psalm 140*

## UNDERSTANDING ICONS

Father Joseph Bertha, Ph.D.



### The Meeting with Simeon and Anna, The Purification of the Virgin

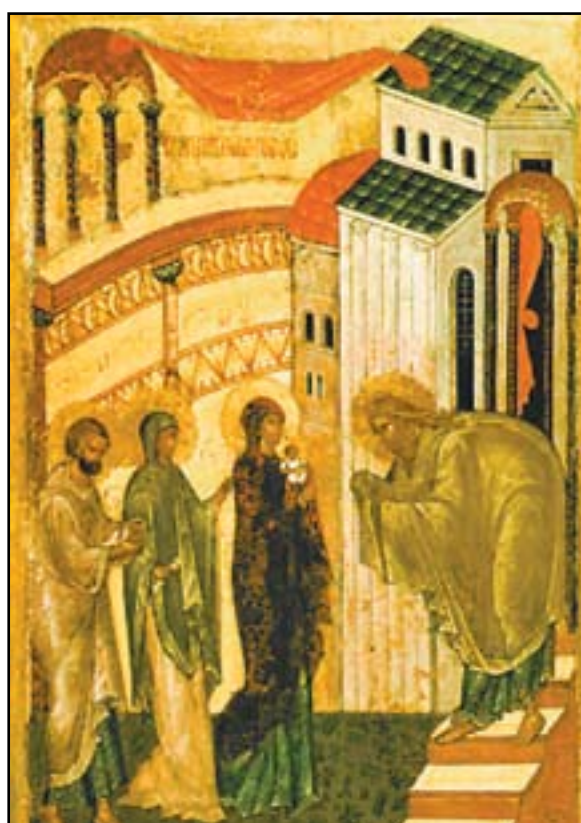
February 2nd

The icon used to portray the Presentation/ Encounter/Purification of the Lord in Jerusalem derives from the gospel account found in Luke 2:22-40. Saint Luke the iconographer uses his words to 'paint' the details of this event, which takes place forty days after the Nativity of Christ. Saint Joseph offers two turtledoves, prescribed by Jewish law (Exodus 13:2), while the Virgin holds and offers the Christ Child to Simeon. The gospel describes this encounter occurring in Jerusalem.

The earliest surviving depiction of this scene can be found in a fifth century mosaic at Santa Maria Maggiore Church in Rome, where it is depicted in the triumphal arch. This architectural feature of the church, the triumphal arch, stretched from the floor and above the apse and over the sanctuary like an inverted 'u', and recalls the pagan custom of erecting magnificent elaborately ornamented gateways to the city, which welcome the returning victorious emperors and his armies. The very same meaning has been utilized by the Christian mosaicists at Santa Maria Maggiore. Christ the Lord is victoriously presented into the holy temple (city of Rome) and welcomed into the world. He is also present in the Eucharistic sacrament on the altar below and meeting the world as the Messiah.

There is a wide gap in the portrayal of the Presentation of the Lord between this early Christian monument in Rome and its subsequent form as portrayed today. We have to wait five hundred years before we recognize the familiar type of Presentation icons that we use today. Already by the eleventh century this scene is de-

picted as unfolding in the inner sanctuary, where a baldachino covered altar is shown. Recall that in the gospel account Simeon is not called a priest, but is described as a 'pious man, awaiting the con-



solation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.' He typically stands on the right of the image and is shown wearing the vestments of the high priest, sometimes even wearing a mitre and twelve stones, representing the twelve tribes of Israel, on the front of his tunic.

The importance of the gesture of offering/ encountering/presentation, as Simeon awaits receiving from the Virgin the Christ Child into his embrace, highlights the intensity and duration of time spent in anticipation of this encounter. Simeon was promised by the Lord that he would see the Messiah before he died.

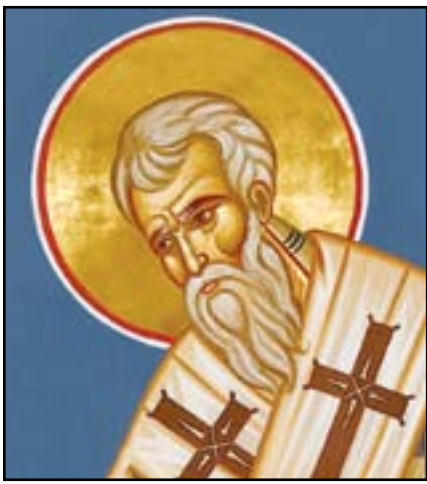
The Theotokos always offers her Divine Son to Simeon. This gesture is replicated even today in the Byzantine Churching ceremony administered to mother and child after Baptism 40 days after the birth. The priest receives the first born son into his arms and bears him into the sanctuary while praying Simeon's canticle.

As Simeon prays his great canticle, which the Byzantine church uses at every Vesper service the "Now you may dismiss your servant O Lord." Simeon appeals to the sense of sight/vision three times during his prayer. This mention is significant for the world of icons in that through icons we can see with our earthly eyes, just as Simeon did, the Son of God, present here on the face of the earth.

Anna, the prophetess, constantly in the temple worshipping day and night in fasting and in prayer is shown head bowed and covered with a maphorion, usually standing alongside Simeon.

After Simeon blesses Him, he offers a dire prophecy to the Theotokos: Luke 2:34-35: "This child is destined to be the downfall and the rise of many in Israel; a sign that will be opposed and you yourself shall be pierced with a sword so that the thoughts of many hearts may be laid bare."





Icon of Saint Cyril of Jerusalem

Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, whose feast is March 18, was bishop of the Holy City in the middle of the fourth century. He has left us a wonderful description of the holy sacramental mysteries as they were celebrated in Jerusalem in his time, as an instruction to those who were newly baptized. He tells us of the holiness of the Communion that we receive, “with fullest assurance let us partake of the Body and Blood of Christ: for in the figure of bread His body is given to you, and in the figure of wine, his blood; that by partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, you might be made of the same Body and the same Blood with Him. For thus we come to bear Christ in us, because His Body and Blood are diffused through our members; thus it is, according to the blessed Peter, we become partakers of the divine nature.” (2 Peter 1:4) (Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogical Catechesis* IV.4)

One of the reasons for quoting Saint Cyril is that in the same series of homilies, he gives us a detailed description of how Christians received Holy Communion in the fourth century. He instructs his newly-baptized faithful, “Approaching, therefore, come not with your wrists extended, or your fingers open, but make your left hand as if a throne for your right, which is on the eve of receiving the King. And having hollowed your palm, receive the Body of Christ [this is the way priests and deacons still receive the Eucharist], saying after it, Amen. [The Roman Church has restored the “Amen” when receiving Com-

munion.] .... taking care that you do not lose any of it, for what you lose is a loss to you as if it were from one of your own members ... observe that not a crumb falls from you, of what is more precious than gold and precious stones. [The consecrated bread is the Body of Christ, nothing more precious could be imagined, and the Church has always taught respect for the smallest visible crumb of Communion.] ... then, after having partaken of the Body of Christ, approach also to the cup of his Blood, not stretching forth your hands, but bending and saying in the way of worship and reverence, Amen, be also sanctified by partaking of the Blood of Christ.” (*Mystagogical Catechesis* V, 21-22)

“...by the twelfth century, it was the general practice that the clergy received Communion in the hands and sipping from the chalice, while the lay faithful received Communion from a spoon.”

We see here that in the fourth century the faithful received Communion in the same way as did the priest, according to Saint John Chrysostom’s principle that in Holy Communion all the faithful are equal. Today, the priests and deacons still receive Communion in the way described above, but now the faithful are given Communion from a spoon. The holy Body of our Lord is broken into as many portions as will be necessary for Communion and the deacon puts them into the chalice containing the precious Blood. The faithful then are communicated with a portion of the Holy Body dipped in the holy Blood by means of a spoon.

The spoon was introduced in the second half of the first millennium. We really don’t know why, for no one has left an eye-witness account. Some speculate that it is because the lay faithful were not

taking enough care with the holy gifts placed in their hands. It is not likely that there was widespread disrespect, but perhaps simply a bit of negligence. On the other hand, it may have been simply for practical reasons, to find an easy way of distributing the Eucharist. We do have records that even the clergy may at times have used spoons to receive Communion, and we do know that in the Western Church, a golden straw was sometimes used to receive the precious blood. Whatever the reasons, by the twelfth century, it was the general practice that the clergy received Communion in the hands and sipping from the chalice, while the lay faithful received Communion from a spoon.

We might ask what our attitude toward this practice is today. Though no one ever really says so, perhaps some feel that the practice is a bit demeaning. We see that the Roman Church has, in many places, restored the practice of Communion in the hands today though many still discourage it. The Melkite and Romanian Catholic Churches have partially reformed the distribution of Communion, by eliminating the spoon, as the priest dips the precious blood (intincts) into the chalice and places it on the tongue of the faithful with his hand. This resembles the pre-Vatican method of distributing Communion in the Roman Church, except that leavened bread is used and the faithful receive both the Body and the Blood. Whatever the case, there is no demand for changing the method of giving out Communion.

Whatever the reason for the

spoon, its original purpose seems to have been practical. As far as I know, there is no popular spiritual reason given for Communion by this method. However, some have pointed to the prophecy of Isaiah for understanding. When God called Isaiah to be His prophet, Isaiah strongly protested that he was not worthy, for his lips were unclean. God then sent an angel to purify him: “Then one of the seraphim flew to me, holding an ember which he had taken with tongs from the altar. He touched my mouth with it. ‘See,’ he said, ‘now that this has touched your lips, your wickedness is removed, your sin purged.’” (Isaiah 6:6-7)

In the Syrian Church, the portion of Communion that the faithful receive is called the “coal,” from this passage. The tongs with which the angel held the burning coal (ember) is represented by the holy spoon. This image is kept in the Liturgy, for when the priest has distributed Holy Communion, he says quietly to the congregation, “Behold, this has touched your lips and will take away your iniquities and cleanse your sins.” From a simple act, we learn, then, a profound truth: that in receiving the Body and Blood of our Lord, we are purified and made worthy.



## LETTERS FROM THE EDITOR

Compiled by Father James Hayer, Editor

### A Nut Who Held His Ground

There was a priest who was imprisoned in a Communist prison in the former Soviet Union for a number of years. Shortly after his release, he met with reporters and was asked how he survived all those years in prison.

Thoughtfully, the priest responded that he felt his survival was much like that of the oak tree which

stood its ground in a nearby field. He said, “I guess I’m just another nut who stood his ground!” ☺

It has been said that every great oak tree had its beginnings with a couple of nuts who held their ground. Or, as Sacred Scripture reminds us: *Be strong and do not give up, your work will be rewarded!* (2 Corinthians 15:7)



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





# SEMINARIAN REFLECTIONS

Seminarian Lewis Rabayda

## Anticipating the Great Fast

When pondering the Christmas season, people often embrace the notion of the Christmas song that says, “it’s the most wonderful time of the year...” And in many respects, the Christmas season is a time of great joy and celebration and *can* be the most wonderful time of the year. But for the modern world, Christmas has accumulated a lot of baggage that can distract the faithful from having a truly spiritual experience. This distraction can also lead the faithful away from focusing on Christ during this time, and to focus on all the peripherals of the holiday season. However, I am contrasting the possible spiritual experience one can have at Christmas with that of Pascha - Easter. These are the two greatest feasts of Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ that we celebrate, and both bring us great joy. But I suggest that we are blessed to not have Pascha muddled by modern culture into something that is unrecognizable to the true disciple.

We are now at the *calm before the storm*, or in the *eye of the storm* between the two great fasting periods of the year. But, we gain a great gift from our culture that our next journey, the most important spiritual journey of the year, is free from secular and commercialistic distractions—save for the single debaucherous weekend that is known as Mardi Gras. This period will not be twisted by the culture into something else; we will not be persuaded to feast while we should be fasting. I think a reason that the culture will not attempt to confuse us about this span of time is because it does not understand it. The culture does not understand fasting and restraint, nor discernment or obedience, let alone the absolutely dumbfounding sacrifice of Christ on the cross. As much as we have the right to complain and lament what commercialism has done to deChristianize Christmas, I believe we should rejoice that it has not taken away from us the most solemn feast, nor the most spiritually renewing period of the year.

The calm after Christmas and the Theophany season has become one of my favorite times of year. Yes, I am probably a little bit fatter after all of the feasting with friends and family and from all the great baked goods and relaxing times watching movies, but now I am ready for the next step. I am now ready to meet God in deeper prayer. I am now ready to resist indulging myself and to sacrifice a little. I am now ready to spend extra time reading Scripture and spiritual books that guide me back onto the right path. Before I entered seminary I barely knew about fasting traditions, but now, I am already planning and *anticipating* my fasting regimen. Yes, for me, I am eagerly *anticipating* this coming Great Fast. I do not see it as a burden,

nor do I see it as a time to do without. The Great Fast allows us the greatest opportunity to get back on track with God’s commandments. Or, better, for those who have been away for years, or who have never seriously embraced the Fast, this is their opportunity to experience the heart of Christianity, which is, to be truly prepared to mourn the crucifixion and celebrate the resurrection of God’s Son, Jesus Christ.

Yes, the actual beginning of the Great Fast is more than a month away. But, anyone who has significantly more than 20 years under his or her belt knows how swiftly it will come. Now is the time to prepare. Now is the time to get ready. The wisdom of the Eastern Church is not shy about over-doing things. Our liturgical services are extremely beautiful and meaningful. Likewise, the 40 days are not the whole fast. The Church gives us a preparatory fast to *ease* into the Great Fast, and Holy Week itself is a completely different period of fasting not included in the traditional 40 days. The fast begins with MeatFare Sunday (Feb. 23rd), which would be the last day that meat may be eaten if one is following the traditional fast of the Eastern Church. The

following Sunday is CheeseFare (Mar. 2nd), which likewise means that it is the last day on which dairy may be eaten. These fasts from all meat and all dairy are followed all through Lent until the celebration of the Paschal vigil on Holy Saturday night, or until after the Paschal Divine Liturgy Easter morning. It is also

prescribed that we fast from oil and wine during the Great Fast, with mitigation from abstaining from these items on certain days.

You might be saying that this is way too much to give up. How could I possibly not eat meat or dairy for almost two months, let alone wine and oil? This is the tradition of the Eastern Church and this is the ideal. When one undergoes this type of fast to test their bodies, they must also strengthen their souls with equally intense prayer. Luckily, the Eastern Church also supplies us with ample opportunities for intense prayer. But, this type of intense fast is one that can be done gradually. Maybe a good first step would be to not eat meat during the weekdays, then next year you can add a more complex step until you eventually are able to complete the whole tradition. When we grow beyond the idea of “giving-up,” and embrace the idea of “abstaining” from more than just chocolate, and embrace a more aggressive prayer-life, we will know what time of year is truly the most wonderful. Let us consider to relish in this gift that our culture has given us, and to keep strong the Great Lenten tradition, to keep strong our commitment to Jesus Christ.

WE ARE NOW AT THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM,  
OR IN THE EYE OF THE STORM BETWEEN  
THE TWO GREAT FASTING PERIODS OF THE YEAR.

## Upcoming Events for February

Eparchial and Parish Events

Glory to Jesus Christ!  
Glory Forever!

### Eastern Catholic Life

Circulation Department  
445 Lackawanna Avenue  
Woodland Park, NJ 07424

Next Issue:  
March, 2014

Copy Deadline:  
February 10th

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

### FEBRUARY

- 1-2 Encounter 2014  
*Orlando, Florida (begins January 31)*
- 2 Sunday of Zacchaeus  
*Encounter of Our Lord with Simeon*
- 9 Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee
- 16 Sunday of the Prodigal Son
- 22 First All Souls Saturday
- 22 Slavonic Festival · Rahway, NJ  
*St Thomas Church · 2PM-8PM*
- 23 Sunday of Meat-Fare