



# EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

Official Publication of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic

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APRIL 2016

## CHRIST IS RISEN! INDEED HE IS RISEN!



### OH HAPPY TOMB

Bishop Kurt's Pastoral Message for Pascha 2016

At the beginning of our Great Fast, we were disturbed by the words of our Judge, "Whatsoever you did to the least of these little ones, you did to me!" And then on Forgiveness Sunday, even more disturbing, we were reminded of Christ's words, "Unless you forgive each other from the bottom of your hearts, your heavenly Father will not forgive you." As we spent more than forty days contemplating our sins, and God's perfection, who can hold up his head? Who can look forward to judgment?

As we travel through the Great Fast, it seems that the standards become higher with each Sunday, from the first Sunday of the True Faith, to the Sunday of the Ladder of Ascent, to the remarkable repentance of Saint Mary of Egypt. And no matter how hard we try during Lent, we always seem to fall short of the standards set for us by tradition and by our own desire for perfection.

But then we come to Holy Week, and everything gets better, when we remember that we don't save ourselves. On Last Judgment Sunday, Our Lord admonishes us to feed the hungry, but we are the ones who hunger for life, and this week he makes His own flesh into food that gives eternal life to our souls and consolation. He admonishes us to give drink to the thirsty, but this week he gives us His own blood to drink for the cleansing of sins. He tells us to clothe the naked, but then He takes away our shame by hanging naked on the cross. He tells us to visit the sick, but it is when we are sick that we experience divine visitation, as Our Lord comes to comfort us. As Saint Matthew says, He cured all their afflictions: the sick, those in intractable pain, the possessed, the lunatics, and the paralyzed.

Jesus admonishes us to visit the prisoners, but the prison of sin is our own hearts, carrying a lifetime of sins both deliberate and accidental, a lifetime of injuries and regrets and selfishness, a prison of envy and bitter unforgiveness. And Our Lord comes into our hearts, our jail, and



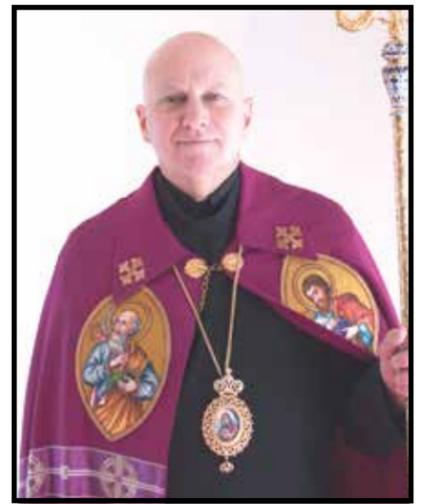
announces freedom to the captives and breaks the chains and loosens the bonds, "Come out into the light! Your sentence is finished! You are free!"

After Adam sinned, when he heard God walking in the garden he was afraid and ashamed and hid from his own Creator, but after Jesus is laid in the tomb, when Adam hears Jesus walking in the underworld, he is overcome with happiness and rushes

to meet him, his fear and shame left behind. When the body of Jesus lies in the grave, remarkable things happen. The stone and the grave were hewn from rock by human hands, and Joseph a mortal man conceals God in a tomb, then as the earth embraces the body of her immortal

Creator, she quakes and trembles with fear, waking up the dead from their slumber, and the centurion announces, "This was truly the Son of God!"

When creation saw its Creator lying in a tomb, how could it hold back its grief? The sun and moon clothed themselves in black garments of mourning, the ground shook, and rocks were split in two. When the armies of angels, and the great lead-



er of the heavenly hosts saw God hanging naked and bleeding on the cross, how could they restrain themselves from action, how could they control their anger? But wait, I will show you something more remarkable than this.

When Adam slept, Eve came from his side, and they brought death into the world and all our sorrows, but when Jesus lay in the tomb, eternal life flowed from His side, blood and water, cleansing baptism and the precious drink of everlasting life. Hell held all of us in fear for thousands of years, but when Jesus walked in the underworld, Hell was afraid and immediately gave up its prisoners. Death itself, the ruler of this world, was annihilated by the Creator of Life. As it says in the Scriptures, "Do not bring death by the error of your life, nor bring on destruction by the works of your hands, because God did not make death, and He does not delight in the death of the living...the dominion of Hades is not on earth. For righteousness is immortal."

Oh happy tomb, to receive the Creator in your peaceful embrace. Oh happy tomb, to give rest to the Divine Flesh on the seventh day, the sabbath of all sabbaths. Oh happy tomb, that the King lay upon you. Oh happy tomb, that touched the flesh of Jesus. Oh happy, happy tomb, but happier still to release Him in the Resurrection on the third day!

+Kurt Burnett

Subdeacon to be ordained to the Sacred Diaconate—p2

Eparchial priest reposes in the Lord—p3

Byzantine National Youth Rally—p5

What's cooking for Pascha?—pp8-9

## CATHEDRAL OF SAINT MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL, PASSAIC

### Schedule of Divine Services For Great Week and Pascha

#### FLOWERY SUNDAY

5:00 PM - (Chapel) Saturday Vigil Divine Liturgy  
 9:00 AM - (Cathedral) Divine Liturgy  
 11:00 AM - (Chapel) Divine Liturgy

#### GREAT AND HOLY MONDAY

9:00 AM - (Cathedral) Bridegroom Matins

#### GREAT AND HOLY TUESDAY

9:00 AM - (Cathedral) Bridegroom Matins

#### GREAT AND HOLY WEDNESDAY

11:00 AM - (Chapel) Office of Holy Oil for the Anointing of the Sick

#### GREAT AND HOLY THURSDAY

7:00 PM - (Cathedral) Great Vespers with Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great

#### GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY AND THE ANNUNCIATION

9:00 AM - (Cathedral) Office of Matins and the Reading of the twelve Passion Gospels  
 3:00 PM - (Cathedral) Vespers with Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom

#### GREAT AND HOLY SATURDAY

9:00 AM - (Cathedral) Jerusalem Matins at the Grave  
 12 NOON (Cathedral Auditorium) Blessing of Paschal Foods

#### PASCHA - THE GREAT DAY - THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD

8:00 AM - (Cathedral) Resurrection Matins and Divine Liturgy - followed by Blessing of Paschal Foods  
 11:00 AM - (Chapel) Divine Liturgy - followed by Blessing of Paschal Foods

#### BRIGHT MONDAY

9:00 AM - (Cathedral) Divine Liturgy of Pascha with Procession  
 7:00 PM - (Chapel) Divine Liturgy of Pascha

#### BRIGHT TUESDAY

9:00 AM - (Cathedral) Divine Liturgy of Pascha

#### BRIGHT WEDNESDAY THROUGH BRIGHT SATURDAY

8:00 AM - (Cathedral) Regularly Scheduled Divine Liturgy



## FROM THE OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

**TO BE ORDAINED TO THE ORDER OF DEACON**  
 Subdeacon Edward Quinn

Sunday, May 1st at 10:30 a.m.

*Saint John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church,  
 Pottstown, PA*

## FATHER: AN EXTRAORDINARY JOURNEY OF VOICE LOSS

by Susan Reagan

*At press time, the staff of the Eastern Catholic Life learned of the passing of Father Michael Mondik, retired priest of the Eparchy. Below is an interview conducted with Father Mondik about health he issues he was bravely facing some time before he fell asleep in the Lord. Used with permission.*

Is prayer spoken or is it felt? When the voice is absent how are prayers expressed? Voice loss presents itself for many different reasons. In this case voice loss was the quiet warning signal that announced a greater challenge was yet to come.

As a 26 year old young man, Michael Mondik felt a calling that could not be ignored. That calling was to serve God as an ordained Byzantine Catholic priest. At an early age, Michael was a devout Catholic as a result of being raised in a religious home. Going into the seminary was the only logical choice; it was his greatest desire throughout his life.

When asked what motivated him to join the priesthood, he was not sure what to say. He just knew it was meant to be. When his father dropped him off at the seminary he said, "Michael, it is okay to change your mind". As they said their final good-bye's young Michael simply said, "It's where I belong, Dad". His family was always supportive, encouraging of his choices every step of the way. Father Michael recalls never looking back towards the car for one last goodbye. Forty-two years later he still feels very strongly that he made the correct decision so long ago.

Father Michael Mondik was the Pastor of Saint Thomas the Apostle Byzantine Catholic Church in Rahway, New Jersey until July 1, 2015, when he retired from active ministry. He was the parochial leader of one-hundred and sixty five families or roughly three-hundred parishioners. Father Mi-

chael's greatest joy was serving at the altar, conducting liturgical services with the perfection that Eastern Christianity strives to achieve. The Eastern Christian Divine Liturgy is for the Glory of God so every word is spoken with precision and every movement carried out with grace.

Being a pastor is more than conducting services. He also enjoyed counseling parishioners when they came forward in need of help. Seminary training prepared him by offering coursework in counseling and psychology but they also taught him when he was in over his head. He learned how to make referrals to other more qualified professionals. He lamented, "Things are different these days: society has changed a great deal creating a very litigious environment". Towards the end of his tenure, all priests were not permitted to counsel people outside of their parish.

Using one's voice is the one common factor in performing both of these duties. Without a voice these tasks would be nearly impossible to perform. In 2010, Father presented with vocal issues that caused him to seek medical advice. He felt tightness in his throat and hoarseness in his voice. After a great deal of exploration and medical testing Father Mondik was diagnosed with multiple myeloma and amyloid sarcoidosis. Voice loss was the first warning sign well before being diagnosed with cancer.

By 2009, Father Michael noticed he was unable to control the pitch of his voice. This was a critical aspect of his ministry as Byzantine Catholic services are chanted without musical accompaniment. His face, throat and neck sporadically swelled but with medication could be treated. Eventually, his doctor was unable to remove the protein rich fluids that engorged his lymphatic system creating permanent swelling in the area.

He is grateful because the swelling could have occurred in his lungs and/or heart, causing the inability to breathe or cardiac arrest. He considered himself lucky looking at the possibilities.

Father Mondik had to make several changes in his service and life. He learned not to force his voice and realized no matter how much he pushed or strained it would make no difference in the quality of his voice. He reports feeling no pain in his throat but does admit to getting tired by the end of the day. Singing and chanting is difficult so he tries to keep both to a minimum. At times he heavily relies on the parish Deacon and the use of a microphone. He will recite prayers instead of chanting when optional.

It is terrifying to lose one's voice when your career depends on that voice to be effective. It is unimaginable to cope with a diagnosis of cancer with a poor prognosis. Even though parishioners knew and understood his situation it was still very hard, as living is always the hardest part. While talking about mortality Father admits that quality of life is more important than quantity. He questioned over and over how would he lead a parish without a voice?

When asked about faith and accepting the will of God and he responded "it is not a matter of faith it's matter of knowing life is eternal in the kingdom of God." This life is temporary.

Currently Father Michael Mondik has retired and moved to Arizona to be surrounded by the comfort of friends. His condition continues to worsen with frequent hospitalizations. The eventual end not very far off, Father Michael is at peace in knowing that he served God in this life and will be with God in the next life everlasting.



### +ETERNAL MEMORY!

Father Michael Mondik, retired priest of the Eparchy of Passaic, has fallen asleep in the Lord. A full report will appear in the next issue. In blessed repose, grant, O Lord, to your servant, the Priest Michael, and remember him forever!

## Preparing for Marriage in 2016?

Pre-Cana Classes will be held on Sundays,  
April 10th and April 17th, from 2 to 5 PM  
at Saints Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church,  
Route 93 in Beaver Meadows, PA 18216.

Participants are asked to arrive at least 15 minutes early  
on April 14th in order to fill out a registration form.

Cost is \$50 per couple for materials for the two weeks.  
Couples planning to attend should inform their pastor.

Pastors are asked to let Father James Demko know as soon  
as possible how many couples from their parish will be attending.



# PEOPLE YOU KNOW AROUND THE EPARCHY

## IN CARY...

*Parish announces schedule 25th anniversary celebration*

In the early years of our church's inception (1988), Father John Lazarek from Epiphany of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church, Annandale, VA, met monthly with area parishioners at Saint Andrew Catholic Church in Apex, NC. After a year, Father Thomas McCann, from Saint Gabriel Catholic Church, Greenville, NC, continued to meet with the parish until, in March, 1991, the church of Saints Cyril and Methodius, Cary, NC, was officially founded as a mission of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic with the blessing of Bishop Michael Dudick. Over the past 25 years, the parish continued to thrive under the leadership of Father Thomas McCann (1991-1993), Father David Siroki (1993-1994), and our current pastor, the Father Richard Rohrer (1994- present).

In honor of our parish's 25th anniversary the Bishop Kurt will visit the parish the weekend of April 2nd and 3rd (Thomas Sunday). We invite everyone to join in the festivities as we share our memories of yesterday and visions for tomorrow. If you have any questions, please contact Marie Taylor at MrsTaylor@nc.rr.com or the parish at SSCyrilMethodius@gmail.com or 919-851-9266.

### Saturday, April 2:

- 3:00 PM: Re-dedication of the Pro-Life Monument followed by Tea and Pascha Pastries (Hosted by Project Rachel and Birthchoice)
- 4:30 PM: Vespers for Thomas Sunday with Bishop Kurt
- 7:00 PM: Dinner with Bishop Kurt at the Fallon Center (Ticketed Event – RSVP to Cathryn Parsons, cathrynparsons@yahoo.com )

### Sunday, April 3:

- 10:00 AM: Divine Liturgy with Bishop Kurt
- 12:00 PM: Agape Meal/Potluck (RSVP Nancy Driscoll, etss3@aol.com) Cascarones, Festivities, Music
- 2:00 PM: Divine Liturgy in Spanish

## IN MYRTLE BEACH...

*Mission Parish Observes the Great Fast*

The Blessed Basil Hopko Byzantine Mission in the Myrtle Beach area of South Carolina was honored to have Father Thomas Dansak, a retired United States Navy Chaplain and a bi-ritual priest from the Pittsburgh area, to celebrate Sunday Divine Liturgies and Presanctified Liturgies during the Great Fast. Father Thomas was a "snow bird" in Myrtle Beach for the month of February.



*Father Thomas Dansak with the Faithful of Blessed Basil Hopko Mission*

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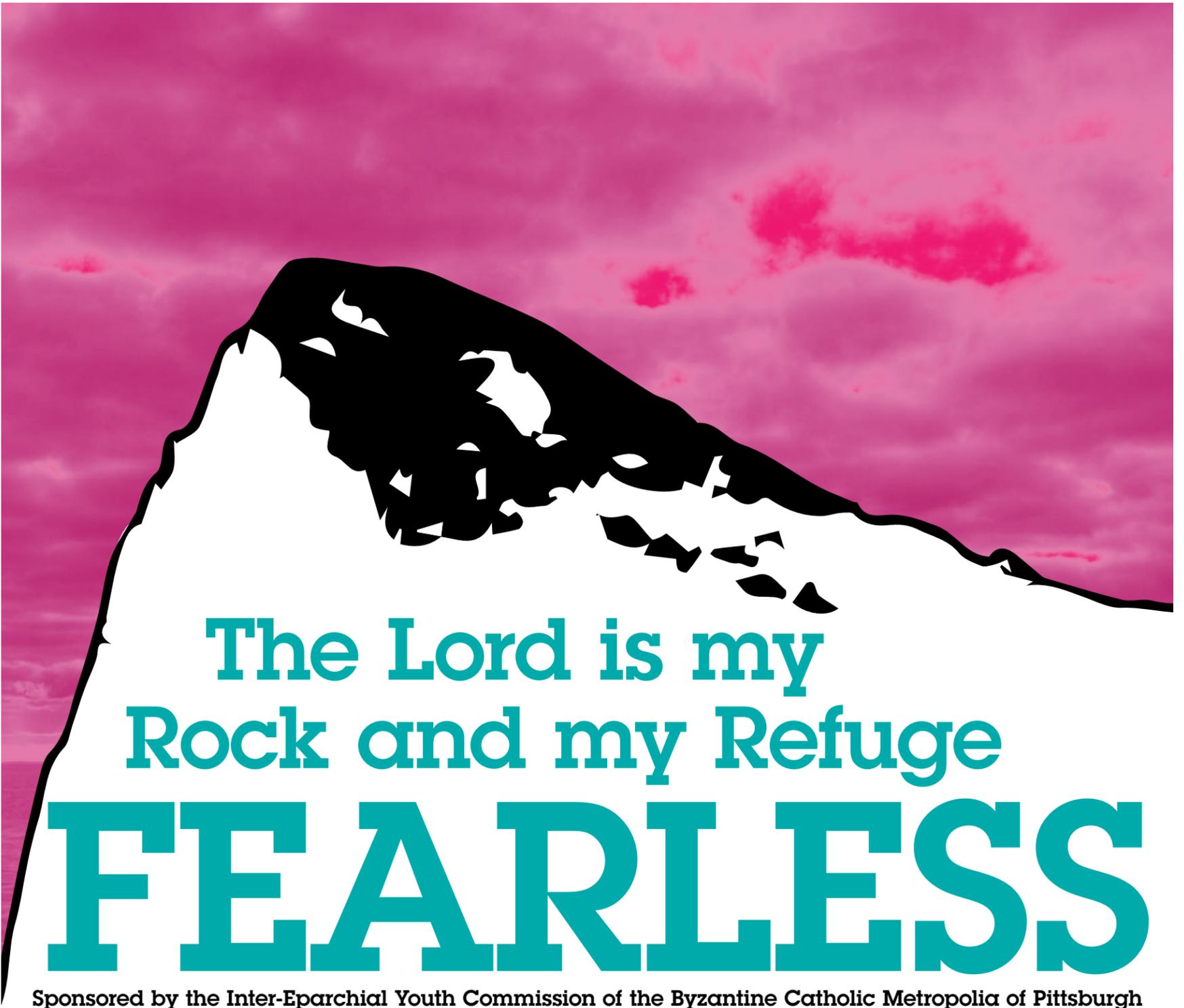
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# WHAT'S COOKING FOR PASCHA?

By Georgia Zeedick

Slavic people everywhere will be taking baskets loaded with holiday foods to church for the traditional Paschal blessing which is a *must* prior to eating those exquisite foods.

Neatly arranged in the baskets will be *sunka* (ham), *slanina* (bacon), *chrin* (beets with horseradish), salt, *pascha*, *kolbassi*, *hrudka* (*sirets*), butter, *pysanki* (ornately decorated eggs for decoration), colored eggs for eating, and *kolachi*. Some people may add candy and a bottle of wine (or other items of Lenten sacrifice) to their baskets.

After the foods are placed in the basket, an embroidered cloth cover is placed over them and a blessed candle is fastened upright near the basket handle.

For the first-timers who have never put together a Paschal basket, let alone prepared foods for it, the whole process can be mystifying. Every cook has his or her favorite way of preparing these foods and of measuring the ingredients for them, and asking for recipes can result in confusion.

To take some of the mystery out of the preparation of the traditional foods, here are a few recipes gleaned from my own experience and a few Slavic cookbooks.

## Hrudka (Sirets)

- 1 doz. eggs
- 1 or 2 tsp. vanilla
- 1 qt. milk
- ½ cup sugar

Combine all ingredients in a white enameled pan. Cook over medium to low heat, stirring constantly, until mixture curdles. Pour mixture into a colander that is lined with several thicknesses of cheesecloth. Once mixture is drained, pick it up, cheesecloth and all, and shape into a ball by twisting the top part of the cheesecloth. Tightly tie open end with string, placing string very close to top of ball. Caution: This will be hot. Hang over sink until cool. Remove cheesecloth when cool; wrap and refrigerate. (The whey from the *hrudka* can be saved and used when making *pascha*. To conserve the whey, place the colander over a large pot before pouring mixture into cheesecloth.)

## Pascha

- 3 cups scalded milk, or enough scalded milk added to whey from *hrudka* to make 3 cups
- ½ tsp. salt
- 6 beaten eggs
- ½ cup lukewarm water

- ½ cup sugar
- 1 cup melted butter
- ½ large cake yeast or equivalent portion of dry yeast
- 12 to 14 cups flour.

In a large bowl, combine milk, sugar, with butter and cool to lukewarm. Save 2 tablespoons of the eggs and add the rest of the eggs to the milk mixture. In a separate bowl, crumble yeast in water and let stand for 10 minutes. Add to above mixture. Add flour, about 2 cups at a time, until the dough can be handled.

Knead on floured board for 15 minutes. Place dough in greased bowl, grease top and let rise in a warm place for about 1½ hours.

Punch down, and let rise a second time for about 45 minutes.

After second rising, shape into four balls and place into greased pans. Small, 1½ quart enameled saucepans can be used for baking. Let rise. Brush tops with 2 tablespoons eggs to which some milk has been added. To achieve that glazed appearance on the loaves, brush

- 3 bottles horseradish (Do not use creamed horseradish.)

Grind beets, using fine grinder attachment. The juice can be saved for soup. Add horseradish to beets; mix well, refrigerate. An empty horseradish jar (washed, label removed and dipped in boiling water to sterilize it) can be filled with the mixture and placed in the Easter basket. The jar's cap can be disguised with aluminum foil, thus hiding any advertisement.

## Kolachi

(Nut and poppyseed)

- 8 egg yolks
- 8 cups flour
- ½ lb. butter
- 1 cake yeast
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 cups scalded milk
- 4 tbs. shortening

Beat eggs and sugar. Melt butter and shortening in hot milk, saving ½ cup for the yeast. Dissolve yeast in lukewarm milk and let stand for a few minutes. Combine both mixtures in large bowl.



Photo by Bob Bruce.

tops several times prior to removing them from the oven. Bake at 325 degrees for about 1 hour.

Note: Before placing dough in pans, about 1 cup of the dough can be saved and shaped into designs (plaits, crosses, etc.) and placed on top of the unbaked *paschy*. These fancy shapes can be prevented from scorching in the oven by placing aluminum foil on top of the *pascha* during baking.

## Hrin

### Beets with Horseradish)

- 8 cans whole beets, drained

Add flour and mix well with hands until dough leaves the hands. Refrigerate overnight. In the morning, divide the dough into eight balls and let rise for one hour. Roll out on floured board and spread with filling. Roll up gently, tucking in ends.

Bake at 350 degrees until brown, about 45 minutes.

Brush tops of rolls, prior to putting into oven, with an egg-milk mixture. Doing so produces beautifully browned, shiny rolls.

## Nut Filling

- 1 lb. ground walnuts
- 1 cup canned milk
- ½ cup sugar

- 2 eggs
- ½ cup honey (optional)

Combine sugar and nuts. Beat eggs and add to mixture, add honey and milk. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly. Bring to boil, remove from stove; let cool. Roll out dough to ½-inch thick; brush with butter; place filling on dough and roll up. Bake.

## Poppysed Filling

- 1 lb. ground poppyseed
- ½ cup honey
- ½ cup sugar
- 2 Tsp. butter, melted
- ½ cup milk

Combine sugar with poppyseed. Add melted butter. Then add honey and milk. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly until blended. Cool and spread over dough that has been rolled out to ½-inch thickness and brushed with butter. Roll up and bake.

## Ham

The ham is decorated and baked according to your favorite recipe. How large a ham you buy and use depends on how many people you are serving. For a 20-pound ham: Cut it in half, decorate the halves, bake them and place one of them in the basket.

## Kolbasi

Again, the amount of kolbasi purchased depends on how many eager eaters you are serving.

Place the kolbasi in a pan, cover with water and boil for about 45 minutes. Some cooks, after the kolbasi is boiled, place a few into a baking pan and sprinkle them with about 2 tablespoons of brown sugar and honey. This is then popped into the oven for about 15 minutes at 350 degrees. Cool before refrigerating.

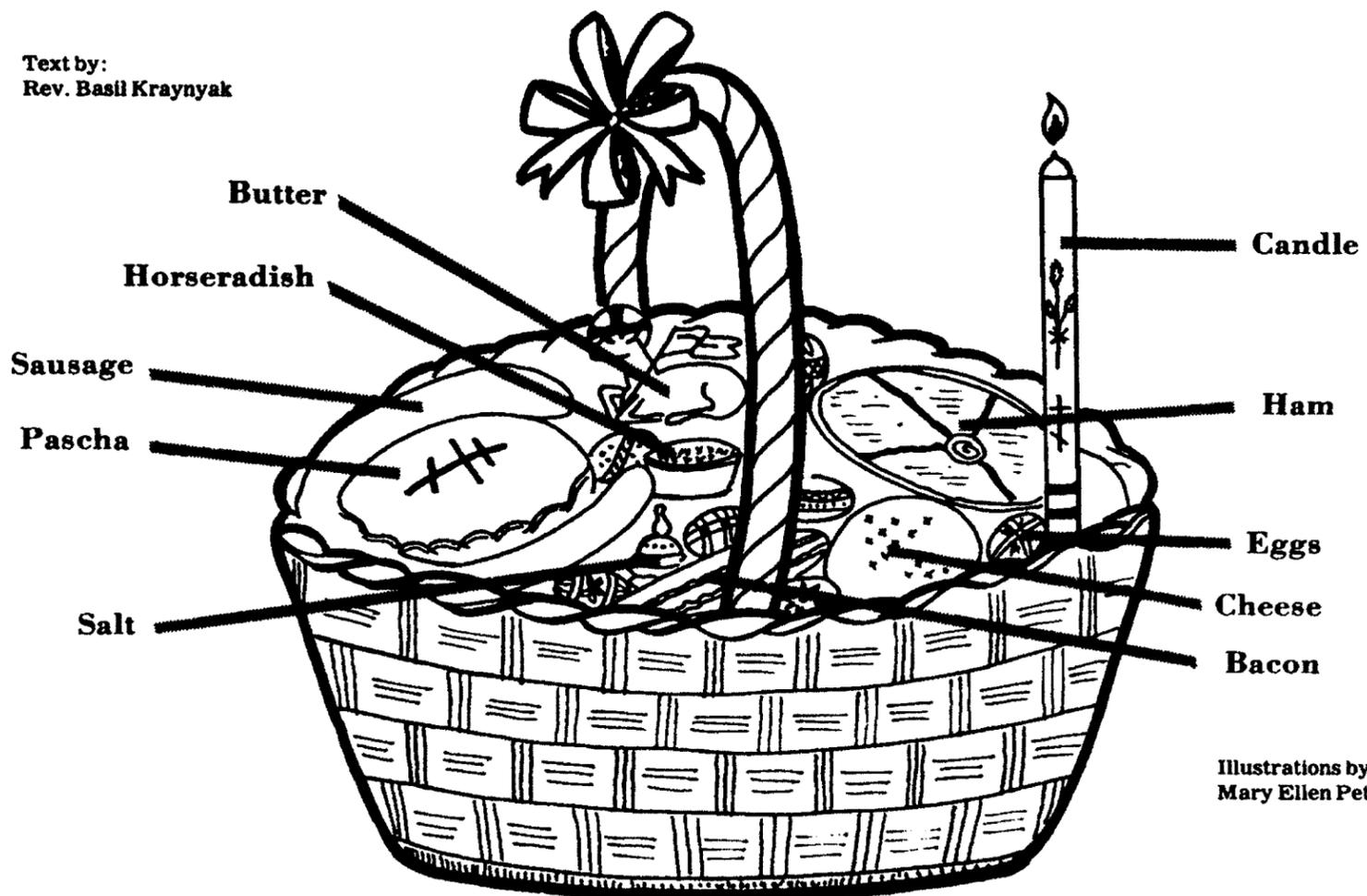
## Butter

If you prefer not to use already prepared butter for the Easter feasting, the butter can be made by whipping heavy cream. Use either one pint or one-half pint heavy whipping cream. Place in bowl and mix with hand beater until butter forms. Place sample of butter in a small fancy bowl and decorate for use in Easter basket.

(The above is a revised version of an article that originally appeared in the April 10, 1979, edition of the *Homestead, PA, Daily Messenger*.)

# How to Put Together a Traditional Easter Basket

Text by:  
Rev. Basil Kraynyak

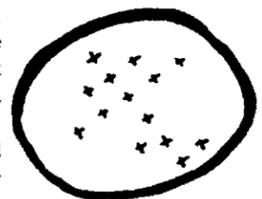


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Mary Ellen Petro

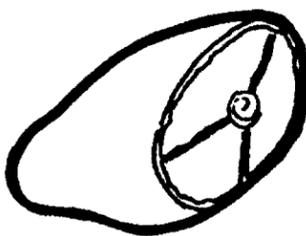


**PASCHA** - The Easter Bread (pron. pá-ska.) A sweet, yeast bread rich in eggs, butter, etc. Symbolic of Christ Himself who is our True Bread. Usually a round loaf baked with a golden crust decorated with a symbol indicative of Christ. Sometimes a cross (+) of dough is placed on top encircled by a plait giving it a crowned effect or Greek abbreviations for the name of Christ. The letters XB indicate the Slavonic for Christ is Risen.

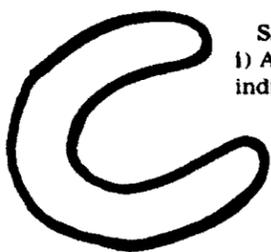
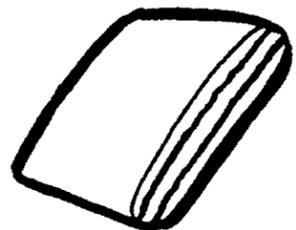
**CHEESE** (Slav. Hrudka or Sirets pron. hrood-ka or sí-rets) A custard-type cheese shaped into a ball having a rather bland but sweet taste indicative of the moderation that Christians should have in all things. Also, creamed cheese is placed in a small dish and both are decorated with symbols (see Pascha) out of cloves or pepper balls.



**HAM** (Slav Šunka - pron. shoon-ka.) The flesh meat popular with the Slavs as the main dish because of its richness and symbolic of the great joy and abundance of Easter. Some may prefer Lamb or Veal. This is usually well roasted or cooked as well as other meats so that the festivity of the day will not be burdened with preparation and all may enjoy the Feast.



**BUTTER** (Slav. Maslo pron. má-slo) This favorite dairy product is shaped into a figure of a Lamb or small cross and decorated as the cheese. This reminds us of the goodness of Christ that we should have toward all things.



**SAUSAGE** (SLAV. Kolbasi - pron. kol-buš-1) A spicy, garlicky sausage of pork products, indicative of God's favor and generosity.



**SALT** (Slav. Sol' pron. sol') A condiment necessary for flavor reminding the Christian of his duty to others.

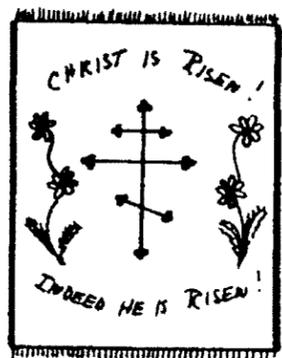
**EGGS** (Slav. Pisanki pron. pi-sún-ki) Hard-boiled eggs brightly decorated with symbols and markings made with beeswax. Indicative of new life and resurrection.



**HORSERADISH** (Slav. Chrin pron. khrin) Horseradish mixed with grated red beets. Symbolic of the Passion of Christ still in our minds but sweetened with some sugar because of the Resurrection. A bitter-sweet red colored mixture reminds us of the sufferings of Christ.

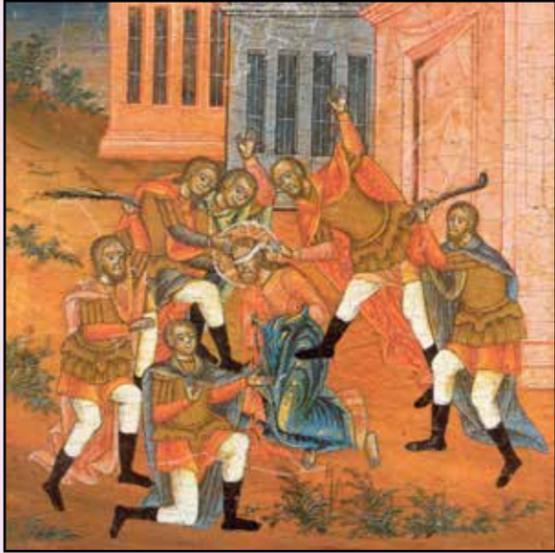
These articles are placed in a wicker basket and a ribbon or bow is tied to the handle. A decorated candle is placed in the basket and is lit at the time of blessing. A linen cover usually embroidered with a picture of the Risen Christ or symbol with the words "Christ is Risen" is placed over the food when brought to the Church.

In some places a large Easter Bread (Pascha) is made and brought separately in a large linen cloth. If the origin of the people was from a wine growing area, a sweet wine may be brought.



## CHRIST IS RISEN! INDEED HE IS RISEN!

# A JOURNEY FROM HOLY WEEK



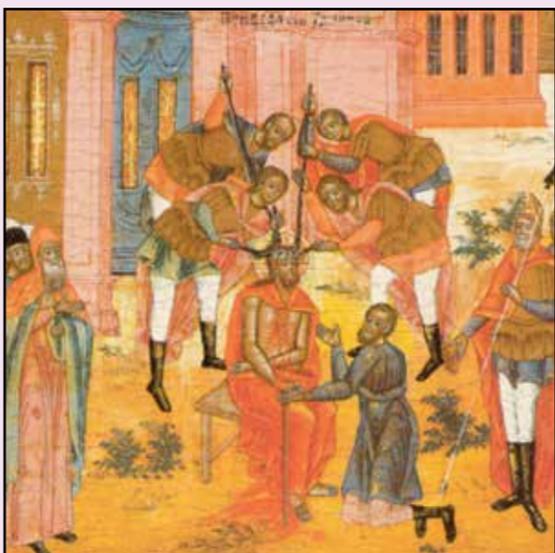
## Passion Week or Great Week

The Liturgical theme of Passion Week is the suffering and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. The services therefore reflect the terrible tragedy of Calvary. During the first three days, the Church invites us to pray in the words of the troparion: "Behold, the Bridegroom comes at midnight and blessed is the servant whom He shall find awake." Then, step by step, she leads us to every place which our Lord blessed by His presence at the end of His earthly life.

The triumphant entrance of our Lord to Jerusalem provoked the anger of the Jewish leaders to a point where they decided to put Him to death. This is why the liturgy on the evening of Palm Sunday asks us to hasten "from palm and branches to the fulfillment of the August and saving passion of Christ."

On Holy Thursday, three events are recalled in the liturgy: the institution of the Eucharist, the washing of the feet of the disciples, and the betrayal of Judas. Throughout the liturgy the following idea is repeated over and over again, as expressed in the troparion: "Receive me today, O Son of God, as a partaker of Your Mystical Supper, for I will not reveal the Mystery to Your enemies nor give You a kiss as did Judas, but like the repentant thief I will confess to You: Remember me, O Lord, in Your kingdom." "Let no one, O believers, fail to join in the Lord's Supper, let no one whatsoever approach the table, like Judas, with deceit."

The wickedness of Judas is expressed very realistically. Judas is called "law-breaker," "son of vipers," and the "murderer" who sets up for himself



the gallows of wealth and loses both temporal and divine life.

During the Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great, the bishop blesses the chrism and the antimensia. Then, before the dismissal, he washes the feet of twelve persons, usually clerics or persons with minor orders, symbolizing Christ's washing the feet of the twelve apostles. The particular ceremony is a very old one and is already mentioned by Saint Augustine (430 AD).

## Good Friday

In the morning the Matins (Office of the Sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ) is performed. The characteristic feature of this service is the reading of twelve Gospel passages selected from the four evangelists. These twelve readings describe in detail the passion of our Lord, beginning at the Mystical Supper where He conducted the holy and touching discourse with His apostles prior to His departure for Gethsemane. The entire service has its aim on stirring up in the hearts of the faithful sympathy and love for Jesus, who willingly laid down His life to reconcile man with His heavenly Father and, thus, to obtain eternal salvation for us all.

The day of our Lord's passion is universally regarded as a day of mourning and sadness. There is scarcely any other point on which such perfect agreement exists in all lands and in all periods of Christian history. In the Middle Ages, however, a discussion arose over the question as to why the days of saints' deaths were kept as feastdays, but Good Friday as a day of mourning. The answer is obvious. Christ, unlike the saints, attained a yet higher degree of glory through His resurrection. He died not for His own sake, but for our sake.

On Good Friday, the Church strives to express her mourning over the passion and death of Jesus in every possible way. She even goes so far as to forbid the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts. Because Matins have already been celebrated, the Daily Hours are altered. They are somewhat expanded with sticheras, and readings from the Old and New Testaments. They are called "Royal Hours" because usually the emperor (or king) attended them. During these, the Church asks us to read once again the history of Christ's sufferings and death as described by the four evangelists. During the Royal Hours, the psalms, readings and hymns refer to the passion of Christ.

In the evening, Solemn Vespers are performed. At the end of Vespers, the priest, vested in full priestly vestments, makes a procession around the church carrying the *plashchanitsa* and places it in the tomb made ready to receive it. The *plashchanitsa* is a winding sheet with a picture of Christ's body lying dead in the tomb. In English it may be called the "Holy Shroud." During the procession the people sing the following troparion: "The noble Joseph, having taken from the cross Your most pure body, wrapped it with pure linen and anointed it with fragrant scents, placed it in a new tomb."

As mentioned already, there is no Divine Liturgy on Good Friday. If, however, the feast of the

Annunciation should fall on the same day, then the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom is celebrated before the service just described.

## Holy Saturday

Holy Saturday is dedicated to the memory of Our Savior's entombment and to His descent into Hades to save the souls of the just and to open for them the gates of Heaven. This, too, is a day of mourning. It is numbered among the fast days, although originally in the East, no Saturday was kept as a fast. But the sadness of the day is already lightened by the approaching Resurrection. This anticipation of Christ's victory is already evident in the Liturgy.

On Holy Saturday the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great is celebrated together with Vespers. Instead of the trisagion (since formerly on this occasion the catechumens used to be baptized) another hymn based on Galatians 3:27 is substituted: "All you who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Alleluia."

The priest begins Vespers and the Divine Liturgy in dark vestments, but before the Gospel he changes into white vestments because in the Gospel of the day, Christ's resurrection is already mentioned. During the Divine Liturgy, instead of the Cherubic Hymn another hymn is sung: "Let all mortal flesh keep silence."

Having suffered for us  
Jesus Christ,  
have mercy on us.

## The Resurrection Period

For a long time, by many prayers, liturgical services and ceremonies, the Church has been preparing us for the glorious day of Christ's Resurrection, Pascha. Hoping that during Lent everybody had an opportunity to be cleansed from his personal sins, the Church now celebrates externally and with beautifully joyous ceremonies the final triumph and life-giving Resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. After the long ages of darkness brought about by the Fall, after the seemingly endless expectation of the prophets, after the thirty hidden years and the three years of public life, after the frightful passion which had seemed to be the end of all hope, after the three days in the depth of the tomb, behold: Christ is risen! The time of weeping is over; now is the time for joy. Christ's resurrection is the greatest miracle. It is the most divine and the least human, for it took place when the Man-Christ was in the grave. We now know that Christ is God and we rejoice.

## Resurrection

The festivities of Pascha begin with the Resurrection Matins. There is a procession around the church during which the people chant the

## LEK TO THE RESURRECTION

troparion: "Your Resurrection, O Christ our Savior, the angels praise in Heaven. Grant us on earth with pure heart to glorify You." Wherever it is not possible to have a procession outside of the church, it is held inside. This procession symbolizes the myrrh-bearing women who "very early in the morning, the first day of the week" came to the tomb to anoint the body of the Lord.

Following the procession, Resurrection Matins begin. Preceded by candle bearers and by bearers of the processional cross, church banners, an icon of the resurrection and the Gospel book, the priest goes to the main church doors and from outside, after incensing the closed doors, he intones: "Glory be to the holy, consubstantial and indivisible Trinity always, now and ever, and forever and ever." After the people answer with "Amen," the priest sings the glorious Paschal troparion: "Christ is risen from the dead, by death He conquered death, and to those in the graves, He granted life. After the celebrant finishes, the whole congregation bursts into a joyous, jubilant singing of the same troparion twice. But all this is only the beginning of the jubilation. The priest sings to the Risen Christ, "Let God arise and let His enemies be scattered, and let those who hate Him flee from before His face." The congregation replies spontaneously: "Christ is risen from the dead - *Christos voskrese!*" "As smoke vanishes so let them vanish, as wax

he passion for us,  
Son of God,  
cy on us!

melts before a fire," the priest continues. Again a thundering *Christ is risen!* closes the priest's intonation. "So let the wicked perish at the presence of God and let the righteous ones rejoice," proclaims the celebrant. Another *Christ is risen!* Then, "This is the day which the Lord has made, let us be glad and rejoice in it." Another *Christ is risen!* In conclusion the celebrant again sings, *Christ is risen!* As he reaches the words, "and to those in the graves He granted life," he strikes the doors with the cross. They are then opened and he enters, followed by the entire congregation. The priest in front of the closed doors represents the angel announcing the joyful news of the resurrection. The people represent the myrrh-bearing women. The striking of the doors with the cross and their opening symbolize the fact that Christ by His death on the cross opened for us the gates of Heaven.

The priest then comes to the altar and, after singing the Great Litany, begins the Paschal Canon, the Canon of the Resurrection. This Canon, composed by Saint John Damascene (675-748 AD) is a series of hymns written according to certain rules, hence its name "canon (rule)." It is a type of liturgical poetry, especially interesting because of its specific form and content. Similar

hymns appeared in the East already around the middle of the seventh century. It replaced the kontakion, a type of liturgical poetry composed of 24 short odes or strophes with the purpose of conveying to the people a certain religious message.

The Canon of the Resurrection, as any other canon, is composed of nine odes, with the exception of the second one, each containing three or four troparia, the first of which is called an "irmos." The first troparion or "irmos" contains the chief theme of the ode and serves as a model for other troparia of that particular ode. The Canon of the Resurrection is a hymn of victory, both an expression and a description of the joy and fruits of Christ's victory as crowned by His glorious Resurrection. As the Jewish Passover was celebrated to commemorate the exodus of the Jews from Egyptian captivity, so also the Christian Pascha is an exodus "from death to life and from the earth to heaven." A certain victorious atmosphere pervades the entire canon. Perhaps the third troparion of the first ode expresses this mood best: "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth exult. Let, moreover, the whole universe, both visible and invisible, celebrate; for Christ is risen, joy eternal."

The prototype of the ninth ode is the song of the Mother of God, "My soul magnifies the Lord" and recalls the Angelic Salutation: "The angel exclaimed to her, full of grace: Rejoice, O pure Virgin! And again I say: rejoice! Your Son is risen from the grave on the third day and has raised the dead. O People, rejoice!" The angel brings the joy of the Resurrection to Mary also, and this joy is indeed a double one: Her Son is risen and by His resurrection has saved others. The words of the ninth ode are a response to words of the Mother of God, in which she expresses her humility in the yard of Zachary's house: "He has regarded the lowliness of His handmaid; for, behold, henceforth all generations shall call me blessed; because He who is mighty has done great things for me." (Luke 1 :48)

The Canon of the Resurrection ends with the hymns of Lauds, which exhort us "to sing hymns to Your (Christ's) saving passion and glorify Your Resurrection." Christ must be glorified on this day for "He has endured crucifixion, overthrown death and risen from the dead." Today, "we praise Your divine condescension and sing hymns to You, O Christ! In order to save the world, You were born of a virgin without leaving the Father. You suffered as man and willingly endured crucifixion, and You rose from the tomb. O Lord, glory to You."

The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom has a slight deviation from its ordinary celebration. Immediately after the initial invocation, the celebrant sings the Paschal troparion in order to emphasize the joy and solemn happiness brought by the glorious Resurrection of Christ. The Gospel, taken from John 1:1-17, is divided into twelve verses. After reading each verse, the celebrant pauses and all the bells are rung. The Gospel is read in various languages, signifying that the redemptive work of Christ applies to



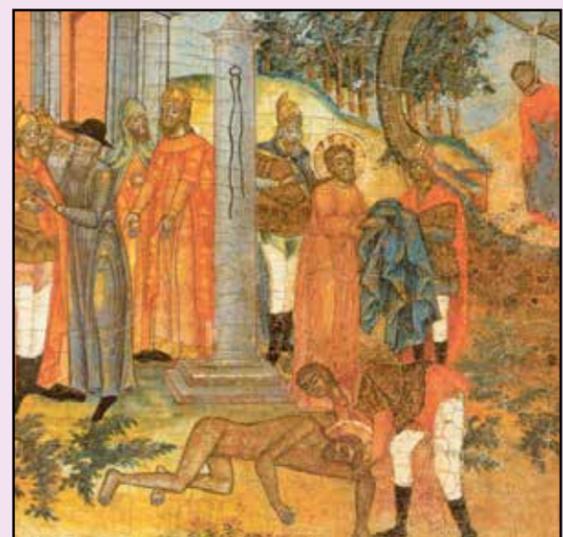
all peoples, to the whole world. During the Eucharistic commemorations, instead of the usual hymn in honor of the Mother of God, "It is truly proper to glorify you ..." the Angelic Salutation from the Resurrection Service with the irmos of the ninth ode is sung: "Shine, shine, O new Jerusalem..." After the Communion, all hymns are replaced by the Paschal troparion.

A special feature of Pascha is the blessing of the Paschal food. Cleansed in body and soul, it is only right that our food also should be blessed so that we may in every way enjoy our pasch - great, solemn and sanctified - the feast of Christ's glorious and victorious Resurrection.

During Vespers, instead of the usual introductory prayers and Psalm 103, we repeat many times the Paschal troparion because the Resurrection of Christ is the crowning point of all the prophecies of the Old Testament. During the procession around the altar the priest carries the Gospel book and after the prokimenon reads the section which describes the apparition of the Risen Christ on the evening of the first Paschal Sunday and the doubting of Saint Thomas the Apostle. At the end of Vespers, the Paschal sticheras are sung while the people kiss the cross.

Pascha is celebrated publicly as a solemn feast for three days. Liturgically, it is observed for the whole week, called "Bright Week", and its post-festive period lasts until the Ascension, that is, for 39 days.

(From: *The Liturgical Year of the Byzantine Rite* by Rev. Basil Shereghy, 1968, Seminary Press. Imprimatur: Most Reverend Stephen Kocisko, DD)





# FAITH AND COMMUNITY ISSUES

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

## THE TREATMENT OF SUICIDE

### *After an attempt and the Prevention of Suicide*

According to Comer (2011), there are two major categories of treatment: 1. Intervention after an attempt to commit suicide and 2. the prevention of suicide. While admitting the benefit of counseling for family members of suicide victims in dealing with their psychological and emotional process of the experience, Comer clarifies the perspective of this section as focusing primarily upon the treatment of the suicidal person themselves.

### *What constitutes treatment after a suicidal attempt?*

According to Comer, victims of suicide attempts often need medical care. Injuries may include severe physical injuries, brain damage and other medical problems. When dealt with and treated, psychotherapy or some psychiatric intervention may be implemented either in- or outpatient depending on the severity of the case and the state of the individual. According to Comer's research into Miret et al. (2009) and Beautrais et al. (2000), there are many suicidal persons who do not receive systematic treatment on a follow-up basis. Comer's research into Harakavy and Asnis revealed that a random survey of several hundred teens revealed that 9% of the group admitted to attempting suicide at least once and that of those 50% received some kind of psychotherapeutic intervention. Comer's research into Larsson and Ivarsson (1998) revealed that one-third of adolescents who attempt suicide have reported not receiving any help. There are cases where health care professionals are at fault, in other circumstances it's the victims themselves who refuse to take follow-up therapy.

### *Goals of Psychotherapy in Suicide Cases*

"The goals of therapy are to keep people alive, help them achieve a nonsuicidal (sic) state of mind, and guide them to develop better ways of handling stress" (Reinecke et al. 2007; Shneidman, 2001 as cited by Comer, 2011). A wide variety of therapeutic modalities can be employed in stabilizing the victim: drug, psychodynamic, group and family therapies are some that are beneficial (TARRIER et al., 2008; Baldessarini and Tondo, 2007 as cited by Comer, 2011). The research of Wenzel et al. (2009); and Ghahramanlou-Holloway et al. (2008), as cited by Comer (2011), points to a more effective modality in the cognitive and CBT (Cognitive-Behavioral Therapies) for suicidal individuals. The approach of cognitive and CBT expose the pain, negation, hopeless, helpless feelings, dichotomous thinking, ineffective coping skills that outline suicidality in the personality. In so doing, the individual is then shown alternate behaviors and thought patterns that are life-giving, healthy choices.

### *Suicide Prevention Programs*

According to Comer (2011), in the past half-

century the emphasis on suicide has shifted from treatment to prevention. The rationale, according to Comer is: "the last opportunity to keep many potential suicide victims alive comes before the first attempt" (Comer, 2011, p. 251). The first suicide prevention program, according to Comer, was founded in Los Angeles in 1955; the first in England, the *Samaritans*, was founded in 1953. Since then, there are hundreds of suicide prevention places in the US and England, and many mental health, hospital emergency, pastoral counseling, and poison control centers have on staff suicide prevention program trained workers, volunteers and professionals.

Suicide hotlines by the hundreds are staffed by paraprofessionals (persons trained in counseling but without a formal degree) supervised by a mental health professional. The orientation is in general crisis intervention, allowing the individual the space needed to gain an different, healthier, hopeful perspective so that "people see their situations more accurately, make better decisions, act more constructively, and overcome their crises" (Van Orden et al., 2008, as cited by Comer 2011, p 251).

Suicide prevention is happening across the spectrum of mental health interventions so that therapists are encouraged to look for signs of suicidal behavior and thinking and vigorously address it in addition to the original reasons for seeking treatment at this moment in their lives (Mc Glothlin, 2008, as cited by Comer, 2011). To assist in this process guidelines have been set in place "to help therapists effectively detect, prevent, and treat suicidal thinking and behavior in their work" (Van Orden et al., 2008; Shneidman & Farberow, 1968 as cited by Comer, 2011 p. 251).

Comer (2011) utilized the approach of the Los Angeles Suicide Prevention Center as an example of the kind of goals and techniques in use by clinicians and therapists. According to Comer's research, the LA Suicide Prevention Center outlines several tasks that are necessary in the initial contact with an individual contemplating suicide:

- Establish a positive relationship with the caller—trust is singularly the most important issue. The counselor must provide the caller with a sense that the counselor is client-oriented, listening actively, understanding empathically, interested in the individual and available in a non-judgmental manner.

- Understanding and clarifying the problem—It is the work of the counselor to comprehend as much as possible the full scope of the crisis which prompted the caller to establish contact in the first place. Once the counselor has a grasp of the situation, the work is toward getting the caller to discern the central issues, the temporality of the crisis and begin to identify viable alternatives to suicide.

- Assessment of the potential for suicide in the individual—a questionnaire (lethality scale) is

filled out by the counselor online with the client to estimate the potential for the caller to commit suicide it gives insight into the stress level of the caller, personality characteristics of the caller that can indicate high probability for suicide, the extent of detail in planning of the suicidal act, how grave the symptomatology appears and what helping resources are immediately available to the caller.

- Assessing and mobilizing the caller's resources—the caller may have a hopeless/helpless self-perspective; point of fact leads to the realization that the individual has both strength and resources upon which they can lean. Often it comes from relatives and friends, with the work of the counselor centering on the pointing out of those resources and activating them ASAP or immediately

- Formulating a plan—in cooperation with each other, the counselor and the caller work on a viable plan of action, a way out of the crisis that is a doable alternative to an act of suicide often including the setting-up of a counseling session series of days or weeks depending on the caller's situation at times, either over phone or the caller appearing at a treatment center for in-house therapy. Part of the plan involves personal lifestyle changes that are life-giving and positive. A non-suicidal pact or covenant is made with the individual is made basically a promise that the individual will call the counselor or a contact person before any suicidal attempt is made and at times, if the individual is capable of a promise not to attempt suicide again. Sadly, as Comer relates in the research of Rudd et al. (2006) the efficacy of these covenants has been questioned in recent years.

How effective suicide treatment programs are, what constitutes "sufficient" treatment in the care of suicidal individuals and the primary preventative for suicide will be discussed in the next installment of this series.

### *Is a victim of suicide condemned or exonerated?*

A question was addressed to this counselor by a Reader regarding the spiritual welfare of a suicide victim, basically are they condemned forever to hell because of the act of violence against self? Looking at the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the ancient "Fr McGuires' Baltimore Catechism" series, it states clearly that in order for sin to be grievous three conditions need to be met:

- The act must be a serious wrong or the individual considers it a serious wrong

- The individual must have full knowledge of the serious of the act

- There must be a full consent of the Will.

Given what we have explored thus far in our study of suicide, it can be reasonably concluded that people who commit this act are deeply troubled, disturbed individuals who cannot clearly

think through issues or discern with any accuracy the seriousness of their actions. As such, they are incapable of the full consent of the Will in their act since they are incapable of accurate discernment. His Holiness Pope Francis this very year is emphasizing the Mercy of God in our lives. It is the opinion of this writer that God's Mercy sur-

passes any activity of humanity, especially in the area of mental illness and that, rather than condemnation, there is healing and integration that is offered to the individual in the eternal realm where appearances give way to the Reality of Truth and in the light of that Loving Encounter with the Truth Solace, Healing and integration

take place. If the individual is willing to accept it, forgiveness, healing and light are given and like the prodigal son, they are welcomed into the Father's House with joy and celebration . . . **ECL**



## SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

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

### REJOICE, NEW JERUSALEM!

We all know the words by heart, probably in two languages, and we probably still get a thrill the first time we get to sing them on Pascha: "Shine in splendor, O new Jerusalem, for the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. O Zion, now dance and be glad; and you, O pure Theotokos, rejoice in the resurrection of your Son." We know we're addressing Mary and so we probably don't pay too much attention to "New Jerusalem" and "Zion." In fact, Saint John Damascene, the author of this hymn, is applying both of these place names to the Mother of God. And not just here. In the previous ode of the Paschal Canon, we have already sung: "Lift up your eyes, O Zion, and behold. See your children coming to you from the east, west, north and south. They come to you like stars of light divine, ever blessing Christ."

All of our liturgical hymns are inspired directly by the Scriptures and the saints who composed them often weave words and images from various biblical books into their new compositions. Here, Saint John Damascene takes the idea of Mary hearing the good news of her Son's resurrection, which Scripture does not record, by bringing together texts from the Old Testament prophecies of Isaiah and the New Testament book of Revelation to say something more.

We shouldn't be surprised to hear Mary identified as Jerusalem or Zion, the biblical name for the hill in Jerusalem on which King David's

fortress and King Solomon's Temple stood. For most Marian feasts, the Epistle read at Liturgy is the description of the floorplan of the Temple from Hebrews 9:1-7 because Mary is seen as a "living Temple" who contained God in her womb. It had become customary in the Old Testament to speak symbolically of Jerusalem as a woman and mother—"Daughter Jerusalem" or "Daughter Zion" (especially in Isaiah and Jeremiah but also, for example in Psalms 9:14, 73:28; Micah 4:10; Zephaniah 3:14; Zechariah 9:9, etc.). Our liturgical hymns turn that identification around so that Zion and Jerusalem become symbols for a real woman and mother: Mary.

Saint John Damascene's hymn is most directly inspired by Isaiah 60: 1-5: "Arise! Shine! For your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people. But the Lord will arise over you and His glory will be seen upon you . . . Lift up your eyes all around and see: they all gather together, they come to you; Your sons shall come from afar, and your daughters shall be nursed at your side. Then you shall see and become radiant, and your heart shall swell with joy."

For its original hearers, Isaiah's prophecy announced the end of the Babylonian exile and the restoration of Jerusalem. Although this event did occur, it was overshadowed by the subsequent Persian, Greek, and Roman domination of Is-

rael and the final destruction of the Temple by the Romans in 70AD. The Word of God spoken through Isaiah pointed beyond this temporary, political liberation to something spiritual and eternal.

Ever since the Pre-Lenten Sundays, we have been invited to see the sin in our lives as an exile from God, like Adam and Eve's exile from Paradise (Genesis 3:24), like the Prodigal's flight from his loving father (Luke 15:11-32). Christ's resurrection ends the exile of sin and the dominion of death. The children coming home to the new Zion are none other than ourselves (Hebrews 12:22-24) -- all those baptized into Christ's death and resurrection (Galatians 3:27: Romans 6:3-4). The first in line is Mary, whose "yes" to God's invitation to bear His Son (Luke 1:38) undid Eve's "no" to God's commandment in Paradise (Genesis 3). The Paschal Canon therefore imagines a second Annunciation: the angel brings Mary good news once again!

Her divine motherhood and her good example make Mary the Mother of the Church, which the New Testament calls the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21), the Living Temple (Ephesians 2:21; 1 Peter 2:4-5), and the Bride of Christ (Hosea 2:19; Revelation 21:2). In all three cases, Mary perfectly models for us what God calls us all to become. And on Pascha, we are invited to share her joy. **ECL**



## LIFE, LOVE, AND THE HUMAN PERSON

By Ann M. Koshute, MTS

### PASCHA AND DISCIPLESHIP

The "long silence" of the Great Fast is over, and once again the bells ring out and we confidently sing, "Christ is Risen!" The Fast is necessary to take the focus off ourselves, and put it on Christ and our neighbor. Depriving oneself of certain food or treats helps reset our spiritual lives and prepare us for the Resurrection. The goal toward which we strive is not indulgence in the basket of blessed food or discounted Easter candy. It is Christ, and remembering that He died so that we might live well during our earthly pilgrimage, and live eternally in the heart of Trinitarian communion.

We've "run the race" to the end of the Fast and we're celebrating Christ's victory over Death.

Rightly so! Without His sacrifice, we would be lost. Jesus did the "heavy lifting" for us, but we're part of God's plan of salvation, too. It's not about finishing off the ham and horseradish and cruising to the summer until the stores begin the countdown 'til Christmas. Jesus didn't break the gates of Hades and put Satan on notice so that we could return to old habits and old sins. Christ is Risen so that we might rise and follow him. Pascha is about Christ's resurrection and our salvation; but that's only the beginning.

We'd do well to pay close attention to the Gospel readings for each of the Paschal Sundays. They don't just tell the story of what happens when God saves the world. The whole Paschal season is

a "short course" in discipleship, lessons in how to turn our belief in Christ and His resurrection into a way of living - and sharing that way with others. The readings give us the full complement of paths to discipleship, and how God embraces us in our fear, confusion, vulnerability and boldness, making our own personal witness effective. Consider the Apostle Peter, who went from sword-wielding hot head to run-away when Jesus was arrested. He reminds me of my tendency to judge others' bad behavior and cut them down (at least in my mind), only to run away when faced with my own sinfulness. Thomas, the Apostle who wasn't in the Upper Room when Jesus appeared after the resurrection, doubted even the word of

his closest friends when they told him the Lord was alive. Perhaps his doubt wasn't born of arrogance or stubbornness but confusion, and fear for the future. Even the Holy Women who'd remained with Jesus up to the foot of the Cross found themselves paralyzed with fear at the sight of the Angel at Jesus' empty tomb; so frightened that they ignored the Angel's command to "tell the Good News," instead running to their homes.

So far, this picture of discipleship isn't a good one, but it's incomplete. Jesus forgave Peter's lack of courage and reaffirmed His love for him. Thomas experienced redemption by "going inside" Jesus' wounds so that He could absorb the fear and doubt, making Thomas a new man. Mary Magdalene summoned her courage and returned to the tomb to look for the Lord. When He appeared Mary didn't recognize Him at first – just as we don't always recognize Him in each other. Jesus called her by name – "Mary" – and she knew immediately that what the Angel said was true.

There are more examples in the Paschal Season Gospels: The Samaritan Woman, the friends of the Paralytic Man, and the Man Born Blind. Each one in their way was sinful, suffering and searching, but became unlikely (or unwitting) models of holiness. Each one is a unique example of what it means to hear the Lord's call and follow. They were changed by the encounter with the living God and inspired by their personal transformation to tell others that Christ "makes all things new." Even you and me.

Christ is Risen, and we are saved! Christ is Risen, and God's holy image in us is restored! Christ is Risen, and each of us – unsure, ill-equipped, fragile and fearful – is called to discipleship, to testify to our own personal encounter with the Lord. The witnesses of Peter and Thomas, of Mary and the Samaritan Woman, of the blind man and the friends of the paralytic teach us that we needn't be the wisest, bravest or strongest to tell what we know about Jesus. But we do have to

be open to the surprising ways in which Christ will encounter and change us. We have to say "yes" to Him, even if we don't know where that "yes" might take us. We have to be willing to take a chance: the chance that a small act of kindness or big leap of faith will make space for Christ to touch another person through us.

With the Fast we hit the re-set button and began a process of conversion. On Pascha we let go of solemnity and deprivation and rejoice in the abundance of God's merciful love. Now each one of us – right where we are, according to our abilities and with our weaknesses – are a new Peter, Thomas or Mary. We are sinners and sufferers, spouses, parents and friends. We are often weak, sometimes strong, and always in need of God's mercy. Yet each of us is personally called by our Lord to live what we know to be true: that Christ is Risen! - and He wants us to tell everyone. **BCL**



## UNDERSTANDING ICONS

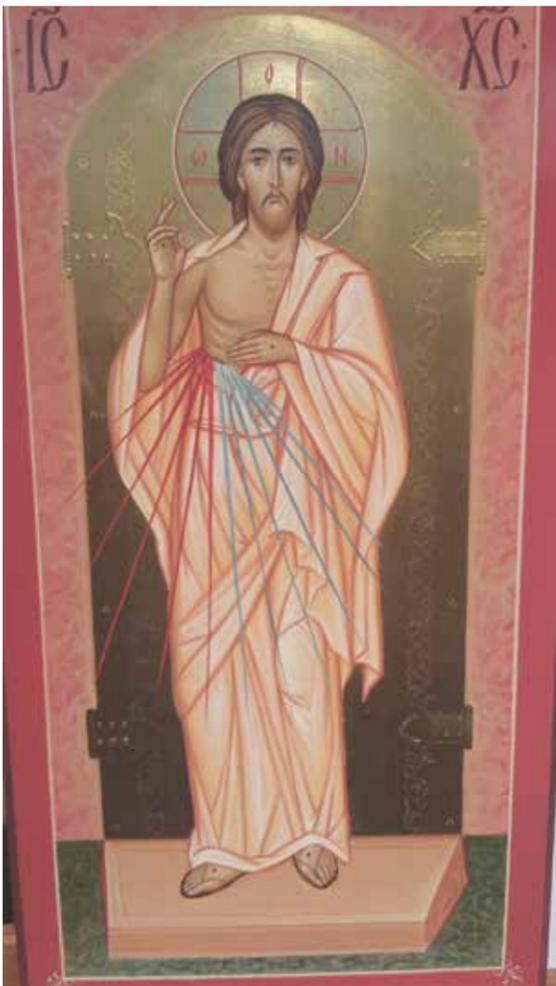
Father Joseph Bertha, Ph.D.

### THREE ICONS OF CHRIST

#### The Mercy Image/Icon of Thomas Sunday

Installment 7 of 12

Following several attempts to paint an image of Jesus in His Mercy, the frustrated Saint Faustina eventually commissioned Eugene Kazimierowski. This image was created in then Pol-



Icon of Thomas Sunday

ish controlled Vilnius, Lithuania, where Faustina and the artist spent many months in 1934 until the image was completed; however, not according to her specifications or satisfaction, this version was the only rendition she ever viewed.

In the Vilnius image, Jesus is portrayed emerging out of the dark of night background, his right

arm raised only to shoulder height blessing the viewer, while his left hand opens his garment to expose rays of pale white and red which extend from his chest. Originally intended to be displayed on an altar piece, the gaze of Our Lord is fixed downward toward the believer below. This painting hangs in the Mercy Shrine in Vilnius today.

After Faustina's death, a number of other artists painted their own versions of the image, with the depiction by Adolf Hyla being among the most reproduced. This version is displayed in the Lagiewniki Mercy Shrine near Krakow.

A significant change was made by Hyla, by showing the right arm of Our Lord portrayed above the shoulder; the background has been brightened; and the gaze of Our Lord is directly forward as if the viewer is standing before the image, rather than below.

The iconography of these images is basically the same. Through the ensuing decades little has changed. That is until the canonization of Faustina was proclaimed by Saint John Paul II in 2001. Soon afterwards, Byzantine iconographers began painting their versions of the "Mercy" image. Iconographers recognized the Faustina image as that which illustrates Thomas Sunday. What was unrealizable for a simple Polish nun from a small town, became visualized, articulated and amplified by the Byzantine icon. The personal vision of a mystic became simultaneously catholic (available to everyone) and orthodox (teaching God's mercy according to genuine Church doctrines), in the sophisticated language of Byzantine icon painting.

#### *Mercy, it's all in the iconography!*

Consistently absent during the lapse of almost seven decades is the iconographic meaning of the image/icon. This is primarily due to the vicissitudes of world war and Communist atheism. Today, almost two decades have passed and we are beginning to understand the sophisticated and



Image of the Divine Mercy from the Sanctuary in Vilnius, Lithuania

often complex meaning of this Saint's writings and image. In order to understand the intricacies of the image, we need to consider several aspects, including art history, theology, scripture, liturgy and spirituality.

First, the scriptural reading for the liturgy on Thomas Sunday, the Sunday following Pascha (Easter) also known as "Divine Mercy" Sunday in the Latin Church, is taken both in the East and West from John 20: 24-29. The Scriptures describe the Resurrection appearance to the disciples of Our Lord, with Thomas not present. One week later, on Thomas/Divine Mercy Sunday, the Lord appears even though the doors were locked; offers peace to the disciples; and allows Thomas to touch His wounds. Thomas replies: "My Lord and My God," equivalent to "Jesus I trust in You!"

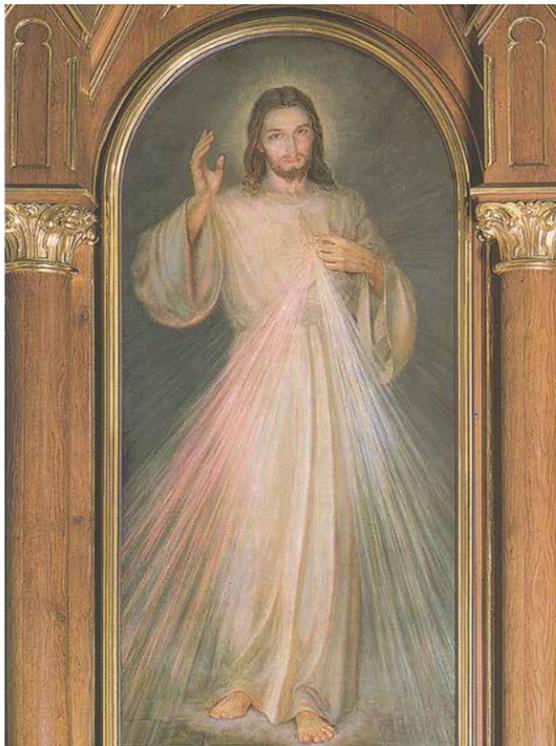


Image of the Divine Mercy by Adolf Hyla

Both the scriptural, theological and liturgical aspects of the Sunday after Pascha describe three key details in the Byzantine icon, the closed door, the wounds of Our Lord, and the inscription “Jesus I trust in You.”

In the icon, Christ is portrayed standing at the Threshold of eternity, the doorway and portal into everlasting life, the door before which the apostles cowered in fear on the Resurrection day. Jesus enters even though the doors were locked! Our Lord, through His glorious Resurrection, redeems repentant humanity by crossing through the doors of death into paradise. How sumptuously this is portrayed in the icon by the solid embossed gold detailing in the gate to heaven!

Our Savior displays His wounds, particularly the most lethal wound, His pierced side which gushed forth blood and water. In the Byzantine Church, during the Rite of Preparation, before the Liturgy, the Priest prepares the gifts of bread and wine for the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom/Saint Basil the Great. As he holds a square particle (the Lamb) inscribed with the initials IC XC NI KA (A Greek abbreviation for “Jesus Christ conquers”); he recites the scriptural prayer as he thrusts the lance into the IC portion: “One of the soldiers pierced His side with a lance and immediately flowed out blood and water; and he who saw it has borne witness and his witness is true” (John 19 34-35). We see Our Lord opening his chiton, revealing His heart rending wound issuing forth water and blood from within.

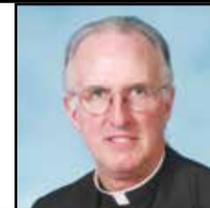
In our spirituality, our personal approach to this icon, we see a visualization of the wounds of Our

Lord. By His stripes we have been healed. Thomas, on behalf of all believers, extends his hands into the very place where our Lord suffered and died. By this wound we are brought back into union with God in His Mercy. Our personal response needs to be that of Thomas, a renewal of our faith a reaffirmation of faith, a proclamation of belief in Our Lords resurrection and great gift of mercy!

Many times throughout history, the iconography of images has been blurred by ethnic conflicts; misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the art; and by the blindness of believers who do not perceive the Mercy of God. The depiction of the Mercy of God the Father articulated in Jesus’ Resurrection appearance on Thomas Sunday, TRANSCENDS ethnic roiling, inept iconographic misperceptions, and the ravages of the damaging effects of time. What we see visualized before us in the Mercy/Thomas icon is the quintessence of God’s Mercy offered to each individual personally at the moment of death. We catch a glimpse of that fleeting passage between time and eternity gazing at the MERCY WOUND of God which through Baptism, Confession, and Eucharist transfigure us into other Christs. **ECL**

## CATECHETICAL REFLECTIONS

Father Robert F. Slesinski, Ph.D.



### OMG: A SHOUT IN THE STREET?

*The Marvel of the Mind: From Doubt to Certitude Installment 11*

In our last reflection, we expounded upon a sturdy tripod of truth as articulated by Saint Augustine, namely, “the certainly that I exist, that I know it, and that I am glad of it” (*City of God*, XI, 26). In the very act of *relishing* this personal experience of existence, knowledge, and gladness, we find ourselves *living within truth*. In the process we have a “word” to exclaim to others, however inadequately: “Truth exists and undergirds our very being!” On this note, a question immediately presents itself: Is it at all possible that the Good Lord could be appealing us to be—in the footsteps of Saint Justin Martyr—“seeds of the Logos” (*logos spermatikos/semina Verbi*), spreading the *word* of truth around?

In this possible quest, I would suggest, we need to follow the heed of Pope Francis and go to the “peripheries.” But before we can go to the ends of the world, starting with our own immediate environs, we have to plumb the depths of ourselves. Bluntly said, we need to explore ourselves, hopefully becoming “comfortable” with ourselves so that we can share the *joy* we feel about ourselves, basking in the certitude of truth, however limitedly understood by us.

In his relatively short treatise *Of True Religion*, Saint Augustine sets forth some very basic theses about truth. He begins by observing that even in the lowliest among us there is some *vestige* of truth to be found. It is always to be found from within us—again, even in our very *doubting* about ourselves and our ability to be able to bask

in the light of truth. In the plain words of Saint Augustine (xxxix, 72),

By wisdom the great Artificer knit his works together with one glorious end in view... So that no one is utterly cast away from the truth who has in him the slightest vestige of truth... Do not go abroad. Return within yourself. In the inward man dwells truth. If you find that you are by nature mutable, transcend yourself (emphasis added).

But in his counsel to get beyond ourselves, he really means to delve deeper within ourselves. Quoting him directly again, we continue his argument:

But remember in doing so that you must also transcend yourself even as a reasoning soul... What does every good reasoner attain but truth? And yet truth is not reached by reasoning, but is itself the goal of all who reason... but you reach it by seeking, not in space, but by a disposition of mind, so that the inward man may agree with the indwelling truth in a pleasure that is not low and carnal but supremely spiritual.

He only continues appealing to the same argumentation used in his *City of God* (xxxix, 73):

If it is certain that you do indeed have doubts, inquire whence comes that certainty. It will never occur to you to

imagine that it comes from the light of the sun, but rather from that “true light which lighteth every man that cometh into world” [Jn 1:9]... Everyone who knows that he has doubts knows with certainty something that is true, namely, that he doubts. He is certain, therefore, about a truth. Therefore everyone who doubts whether there be such a thing as the truth has at least a truth to set a limit to his doubt... Accordingly, no one ought to have doubts about the existence of the truth, even if doubts arise for him from every possible quarter... Reasoning does not create truth but discovers it. Before it is discovered it abides in itself: and when it is discovered it renews us,

appending the following *telling* words (xl, 74):

So the inward man is reborn, and the outward man decays day by day. The inward man regards the outward man and sees that he is base by comparison. Nevertheless, in his own kind he is beautiful and rejoices in what is convenient for the body, destroying what he converts to his own good, e.g., the nourishment he takes for the sake of his body.

Hmm, OMG!, it would seem that the learned saint is telling us that in order to find truth we must let it embrace us and transport us. More simply stated, we must be *open* to truth, it would seem, in order to enable it to dwell *within* us. **ECL**

# SEASONAL REFLECTIONS

Monsignor John. T. Sekellick, JCL



## THE AFTERLIFE

One of the concepts shared among human beings from ancient times through our own day is the notion that life continues on in some form after death. There are any number of clever mediums who claim they can communicate with the dead – for a fee, of course. Such individuals prey on the sensitivities and bereavement of people desperate to contact and communicate with deceased family members, colleagues, friends and even enemies.

Archeologists constantly discover methods of burial in ancient tombs and graves suggesting beliefs about “rebirth” into some form of existence following death. That is to say, a conviction that life does not end with death; it is somehow changed and continues in some other fashion. The Egyptian pyramids are remarkable monuments to providing for existence in an afterlife. Among the ancient Greeks, the afterworld was not an attractive prospect. The realm of the dead was usually seen in terms of a shadowy existence, a place of frightful phantoms and feelings of despair.

One of the distinguishing features of Hinduism is the concept of reincarnation whereby a person’s soul transmigrates at death from one body or being to another which results in successive deaths and rebirths. The ultimate aim for Buddhists is nirvana, which means extinction, as when a can-

dle burns down to its end. A basic premise for Muslims about death is that God, in His omnipotence, determines the span of a person’s life: He creates man and also causes him to die. Muslims share many Judaic and Christian beliefs about death, including an accountability of one’s life at Judgment before God Who consigns the soul either to everlasting bliss or everlasting torment.

In Eastern religions, death and life are not seen as mutually exclusive opposites but rather as complementary facets. Life and death are manifestations of a constantly changing reality, a pattern of arising and passing away, a type of reincarnation: “I will take birth in another body following the death of my present body.” This results in an unending changing process.

Our Christian faith, as taught in The Catechism of the Catholic Church, instructs us that “Death is the end of man’s earthly pilgrimage, of the time of grace and mercy which God offers him so as to work out his earthly life in keeping with the divine plan, and to decide his ultimate destiny. When ‘the single course of our earthly life is completed, we shall not return to other earthly lives: “It is appointed for men to die once.” (Hebrews 9:27). There is no “reincarnation” after death. (No. 1013)

Christians from earliest times proclaimed that death was vanquished by Jesus’ resurrection. His life, death and resurrection are the new model of the mystery of death. Jesus is the prototype of the salvation from death available to all those who would share in His resurrection. Standing at the tomb of His dead friend, Lazarus, He declares to his sister, Martha: “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die.” (John 11:25-26)

That compelling statement is of immense consolation to those who suffer the loss of a loved one. Everyone without exception will die, the consequence of the sin of our first parents, Adam and Eve. Jesus as the new Adam brings us everlasting life. Provided we die in His grace, we merit the happiness of heaven. The consequence of the loss of grace is the unending torment of the keen punishment of hell.

As we joyously celebrate Christ’s rising from the dead, may we as Martha at the tomb of her dead brother Lazarus, affirm with compelling faith, “I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, He Who is coming into the world.” (John 11:27) and raise our voice in our Paschal anthem: Christ is risen from the dead. By death, He trampled death, and to those in the tombs, He granted life! **ECL**



## SCHOOL OF PRAYER

Father G. Scott Boghossian

### DIVINE PROVIDENCE

The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, and His kingdom rules over all (Psalm 103:19).

The Fathers of the Desert and the spiritual writers of the Eastern Church urge us to keep God in mind constantly. They call this the “remembrance of God.” To be constantly mindful of God is one way among many to fulfill the scriptural command to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17), for as long as we have our heart and mind lifted up to God, we are truly praying. Saint John of Damascus defines prayer as a raising of the heart and mind to God. It is truly a great thing to be able to keep our heart and mind on the Lord as we go through the day, doing whatever needs to be done. Have you ever noticed that perhaps whole hours of the day pass without ever thinking of God? When was the last time that you remembered God in a spirit of love and service?

There are many spiritual methods that can be used to keep God in mind, but one of the greatest is to see all that takes place as the will of God. The Desert Fathers often used the phrase, “patient acceptance of whatever happens” to describe this prayer technique. Saint Mark the Ascetic (5th-6th Century) says: “If you wish to remember God unceasingly, do not reject as undeserved what happens to you, but patiently accept it as your due. For patient acceptance of whatever happens kindles the remembrance of God, whereas refusal to accept weakens the spiritual purpose of the heart and so makes it forgetful.”

The theological foundation of this spiritual practice is rooted in the nature of God. In the Nicene Creed we profess that we believe in “one God, the Father Almighty.” Both reason and Scripture indicate that God is Almighty, and that He governs all things. God’s governance of the universe is often referred to as Divine Providence. Everything that happens in our life, whether good or bad, happens to us because the Heavenly Father wills it to happen, or wills to allow it to happen. God never wills moral evil, but He does allow it for his own glory and for our salvation.

The Old Testament Patriarch Joseph teaches this lesson when He reveals himself to his brothers in Egypt, saying “you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today” (Gen. 50:20). Job saw the will of God in all things when He said “the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21).

The Lord reigns (Ps. 93:1) and therefore there is ultimately no such thing as luck, chance, fortune, or coincidence. No, it is God who controls how everything falls out, but in a way that always honors our free choice. This providence of God extends to the smallest details of our lives. Not an electron, not an atom, not a speck of dust or a leaf moves the slightest bit outside of the sovereign will of God. Our Lord taught that not a sparrow falls to the ground outside of the will of God (Matt. 10:29).

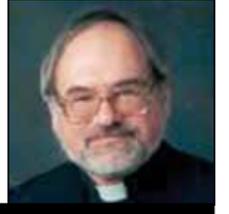
One of the greatest secrets of the spiritual life is to see and accept all that occurs in our life as the will of God for us. That doesn’t mean that if we get sick we don’t pray to be healed, go to the doctor, and take medication. We do all of these things, but we recognize that ultimately our healing is in the hands of God. When there is a problem at home or on the job, it doesn’t mean that we don’t seek to correct the problem, but that we recognize that the problem was sent or permitted by God for our growth and improvement, and we try to deal with it patiently and peacefully, without anger, frustration, fear or anxiety.

This spiritual practice goes by different names, such as, “patient acceptance of whatever happens,” “total abandonment to divine providence,” or “uniformity with the will of God.” Whatever we call it, we can be assured that to practice it will lead to true peace of mind, spiritual growth, and many blessings. Have faith in God (Mark 11:22) and remember that everything that happens in this life, whether it be pleasant or painful, comes to us from our loving heavenly Father for our highest good. If we truly believe this, then keeping God constantly in mind will not be a difficult task, because we will continually see Him working in our lives through his Divine Providence.

Glory to God for All Things! **ECL**

# THE BYZANTINE LITURGY

By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD



## UNDERSTANDING HOLY COMMUNION

When we are about to approach Holy Communion, we pray, "Accept me today as a partaker of Your Mystical Supper, O Son of God, for I will not reveal Your mystery to Your enemies, nor will I give You a kiss as did Judas." This prayer tells us that Holy Communion is truly a meal, though we receive only a small portion of bread and wine, not a meal in the ordinary daily sense of the word, but a "mystical supper." It does not fill the stomach, but the soul with the presence of God. This meal is given only to the faithful. It is not given to those who are not yet baptized, nor to those who have betrayed their baptismal commitment to Jesus by a grievous and deliberate disregard for the commandments. Holy Communion is the mystery that would be betrayed.

To understand what Communion is, we must understand what a mystery is. A mystery is a truth that is not fully understood. We may understand that the mystery of Holy Communion is the presence of God. We may understand that bread and wine become truly the Body and Blood of our Lord, but we do not understand how this comes about. Saint John Chrysostom spoke of mystery in terms of sight. He spoke about the mystery of baptism. He said that the unbeliever sees only a washing with ordinary water, but the believer sees with eyes of faith that the Holy Spirit is cleansing the soul and bringing it to life in the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Spirit. Likewise in Communion, we see only a small particle of bread dipped in wine, and we taste only the bread and wine, but we know with eyes of faith that we are truly partaking of the actual Body and Blood of our Lord. Early Christians emphasized the reality of the Eucharist so much that some pagans, hearing their faith, accused them of cannibalism. Of course, this is not true, for Communion is a "mystical supper," we do not partake of the dead body of Christ, but His risen and glorified Body, which has been transformed into glory and which gives life to all who eat of it.

The center of our faith is that the Eucharist is in truth and in reality the physical and glorified risen Body and Blood of Christ. This requires accepting it as a mystery of faith. The temptation always exists, because our bodily senses only see a small particle of bread and a few drops of wine, to take it only at face value. It then becomes like a token reward for making the effort to attend the Liturgy, and the rite of Communion becomes only a memorial of what really happened at the Last Supper. The hymns, readings from Scripture

and the preaching become the important ways in which our life is enriched, Holy Communion is just part of the ritual.

However, it is through Holy Communion that we become "partakers of the divine nature." (2 Peter 1:4) Communion is our union with God. It forgives our sins and begins eternal life in us. Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, therefore, taught the newly baptized, "The bread and the wine of the



Eucharist before the holy invocation of the adorable Trinity were simple bread and wine, but the invocation having been made, the bread becomes the body of Christ and the wine the blood of Christ." (Catechetical Lectures 19.7)

Knowing God transforms our lives. It is not possible to touch God without being changed. This is the reason why Communion has to be real. Our relationship with God is not merely intellectual or symbolic, it must affect every part of our being, including our body. Therefore, God

became a human being to be present to us and to dwell among us. This is the insight that Saint John the Theologian had in his gospel, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us ... to those who did accept him He gave power to become children of God, to those who believe in His name." (John 1:14.12)

It was Saint John who also witnessed to the reality of our Communion, "unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you do not have life within you." (John 6:53) Communion is God receiving us into His life, which begins now and will be completely fulfilled only in the life to come. Because Communion is not simply an intellectual union, even infants who are baptized can receive. God life truly changes us into a new kind of person.

Holy Communion does not only change us in our relationship with God, but it transforms our relationships with one another. If our lives are made new within ourselves, it is also renewed within the community, for God is one, and to live in God means to live in unity. Therefore, Jesus prays, "Holy Father, keep them in Your name that You have given Me, so that they may be one just as we are." (John 17:11) Holy Communion does not only bring us into union with God, but it creates the Church as one body in Christ. It could not do this if it were a merely symbolic ritual. The Christian gospel is clearly a call to the unity of all. Saint Paul was also aware of this, for he wrote, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28) Because Communion is real, it brings us into a new unity with one another, which is the completion of the human destiny. It is also why Christian marriage was sealed by the reception of Holy Communion.

The community gathered for the Eucharist, therefore, must receive Communion together, there is no system of division or gradation. Too often we have forgotten this truth. In the prayer of the Anaphora, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the bread and wine we offer becomes the Body and Blood of Christ, and we conclude, echoing the prayer of Jesus at the last Supper, "grant that with one voice and one heart we may glorify and praise Your most honored and magnificent name." Just as the Trinity is one God, so we become one people in God, Father, Son and Spirit.

ECL

THE BYZANTINE CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF PASSAIC subscribes to the

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## SPIRITUAL REFLECTIONS

Father Lewis Rabayda

### BRINGING THE RESURRECTION TO OTHERS

Christianity would not have lasted if it were not for the resurrection of Jesus Christ, because the resurrection confirms all of Jesus's teachings. The Apostles, as holy as they were, told Jesus that they would have died with Him, but during this greatest trial, all but one left Him in fear for their own lives. It seemed as if those closest to Jesus had completely lost their faith in Him and rejected everything He taught, leaving us with little hope for our own spiritual journey. However, just as Jesus had foretold, He raised from the dead on the third day. While the Apostles are hiding from the authorities for fear of being found out as Jesus' cohorts, they receive news of the empty tomb. Now, in this moment, the Apostles are relieved of their fear, fear of believing in someone who seemed to prove as false. Now, at news of the resurrection, is everything that Jesus taught confirmed as true, for never before and never since has someone been dead for three days and come back to life.

It is in this happy confirmation, this undeniable fact in which all of their faith is brought from hope to reality. The Apostles and disciples were already spreading the Good News about Jesus Christ to those they met while Jesus was still alive. But now, Jesus has specifically charged them

to go and preach to all the nations, and since He has risen, their assurance in His divinity is complete. The Apostles now desire to more urgently spread their experience of the savior of the world to everyone. And it is now at this time, after Jesus ascends into heaven, that He gives The Comforter to the Apostles to strengthen their faith even further and to supply the unbending courage they need to perform their sacred task. After receiving the Holy Spirit, the Apostles no longer exhibit confusion in Jesus's teachings but instead have complete comprehension. This comprehension and conviction led the Apostles to successfully spread that Good News of Jesus Christ and His glorious resurrection to many people, and eventually to us.

What the Apostles handed down to us is the Church of the resurrection. And we have been redeemed by Christ and have been granted entry into heaven because Christ has conquered death. Our sins have been forgiven, and now we have a direct line to God the Father, through His Son, in which we can communicate and be forgiven when we repent. This familiarity, this closeness and intimacy brings us great joy. We do not have a distant god who sits on his throne in heaven and cannot be bothered with the sorrows of his people, but we have a God who wants

to directly communicate with us, as well as through the ministers whom He has ordained through His Son Jesus, the new and final Great High Priest. But it is not only the Apostles who have been charged with spreading this good news of salvation and forgiveness, but it was the disciples as well.

Since we have this great hope, since we live in the Church of the resurrection, it should be

each persons' joy to share this hope with others. Each one has his or her ministry, ordained and lay person alike, to bring this great news to all. Indeed, we have been charged by Christ to share not only the joy of His message, but to also share a very real experience of His love and glory which the resurrection has given us with the whole world. This season of joy should not be confined to those who participate in Holy Week and Pascha services but is appropriate



for every living soul. It is our task, our duty, our charge from Christ, that we be God's messengers. As part of His Body, we are His hands, feet, mind, and mouth that proclaim His glory to the whole world, one person at a time. This Pascha, let us be overwhelmed with joy at experiencing the resurrection, that we spread that joy to everyone we meet. **ECL**

## UPCOMING EVENTS FOR APRIL

### Eparchial and Parish Events

*Christos Voskrese! Voistinnu Voskrese!*

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- 2-3 25th anniversary celebration  
*Saints Cyril and Methododius  
Parish, Cary, NC*
- 3 Thomas Sunday
- 10 Sunday of the Holy Myrrh-bearers
- 17 Sunday of the Paralytic
- 23 Holy Great Martyr George  
*Simple Holyday*
- 24 Sunday of the Samaritan Woman
- 25 Annual Eparchial Presbyteral Days begin  
*Woodland Park, NJ*