



# EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

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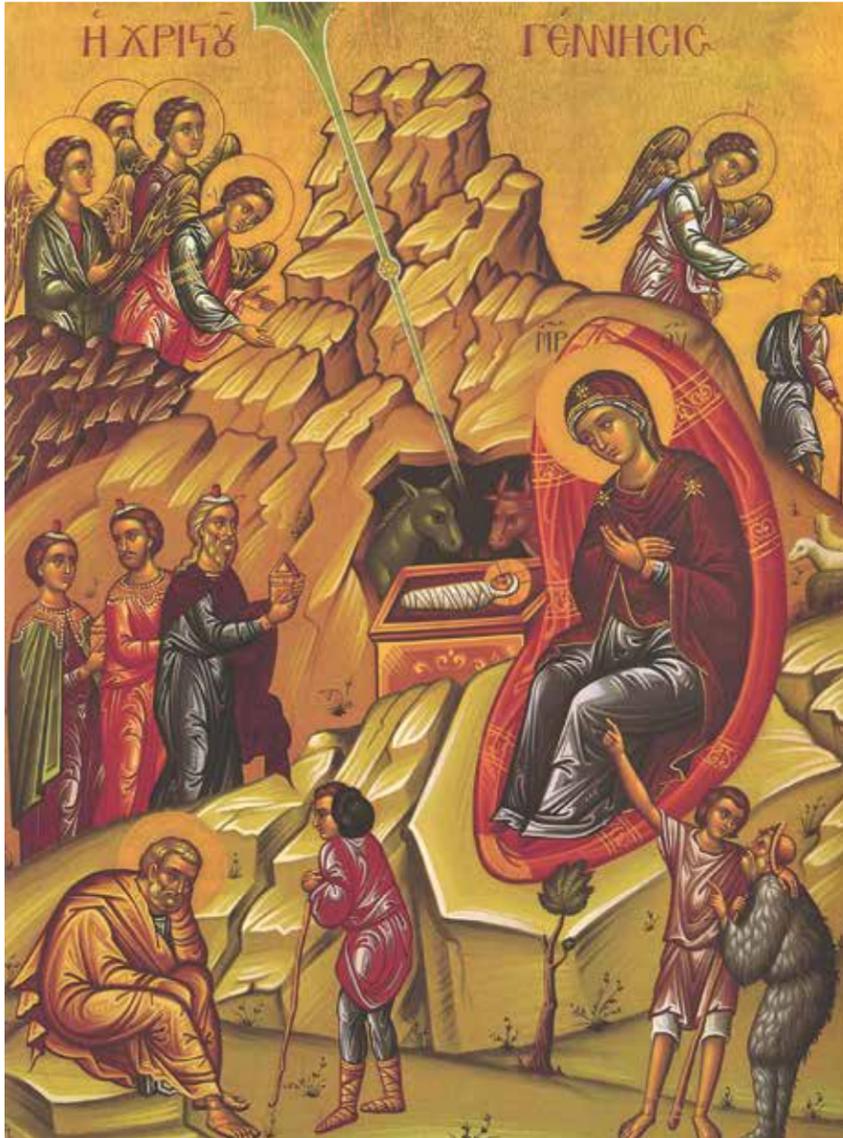
## “ENTER INTO YOUR RESTING PLACE”

Bishop Kurt's Reflection on the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord 2018

A very long time ago, at least 32 centuries ago according to archeological finds, there lived a man named Manoah with his wife. They were childless. I can't tell you her name because it's not in the Bible. They lived in the time after Joshua when the chosen people had been delivered from Egypt, but struggled in constant warfare with their neighbors, the Philistines. The Philistines were a warlike people who lived largely in what we call the Gaza strip. They might be the same invaders that the Egyptians called the "sea people" who arrived from up north and irritated the Egyptian monarchy for some centuries, although scholars don't agree.

One day, Manoah's wife was visited by an angel. When she described him to her husband, she said, "A man of God came to me, and his countenance was like the countenance of the angel of God, terrifying to behold." The angel told her that she would give birth to a son, although she was barren, and ordered her to abstain from wine and avoid impurity. He said that her son would be especially dedicated to God as a Nazirite from birth. The Nazirites were Hebrews who voluntarily took a vow of dedication to God, requiring abstention from wine and all grape products, and they also never cut their hair. The vow is described in great detail in the Book of Numbers. The Nazirite vow could be for any length of time, but the angel of God told her that her son would be a Nazirite from birth to death.

When Manoah heard his wife's account, he prayed to God that the angel might return and teach them how to care for this special child.



Icon of the Nativity of Our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ

God answered Manoah's prayer, but the angel once again appeared to the wife while she was out in the field. She ran to her husband, and together they conversed with the angel, although the scripture says that Manoah did not yet realize it was an angel. The angel warned them again that the wife must not drink wine or strong drink, and must not eat anything unclean. Manoah asks the entity to stay awhile so they can prepare a feast of a baby goat. The angel says, "If you prepare a meal, I will not eat. But I will stay if you prepare a sacrifice for God." Manoah also asks for the name of the angel, and the angel replies, "Why do

you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?" After the sacrifice was prepared, the angel went up to heaven in the flames, and the couple realized whom they had encountered and prostrated themselves on the ground. The scriptures call the sacrifice "to Him who works wonders"—what a beautiful title for God!

In time, Samson was born to Manoah and his wife. The heroic life of Samson, in many ways, prefigures the life of Jesus the Christ, the Messiah. Both births are announced by an angel of God, but twelve centuries before Christ, the name of the angel is not revealed. "Why do you ask my name,

seeing it is wonderful?" As God reveals more to us, and draws nearer to us, the name of the angel who visits Mary is revealed as Gabriel. Samson fights the enemies of God in the early days after the delivery from Egypt, and Jesus fights the demons of the possessed after His Baptism in the Jordan. Samson kills a lion with his bare hands, and Jesus is the Son of David who also killed lions and bears. Samson brought honey out of the carcass of the lion, and Jesus brought joy and sweetness out of the maw of death after his victory on the cross.

On tours of the Holy Land, many tour guides de-

scend with their pilgrims to a deep stone prison, really just a holding cell, where we believe Jesus was held during his time under arrest. Then all the lights are extinguished, and people can experience in a small way the despair of incarceration. There is no light whatsoever in this underground chamber. It evokes the cry of King David in the Psalms, "Out of the depths I have cried to you, O Lord." When Samson was captured by the Philistines, and made powerless by the betrayal of his trusted wife, his captors put out his eyes to make him completely helpless, and made him work endlessly in a mill, just as our Lord carried the cross up to the place of His execution weighed down with our sins. When John Milton wrote his poem/play *Samson Agonistes*, the Chorus describes Samson's blindness, and no doubt Milton was also singing about his own blindness:

*Thou art become (O worst imprisonment!)*

*The Dungeon of thy self; thy soul*

*(Which men enjoying sight oft without cause complain)*

*Imprisoned now indeed,*

*In real darkness of the body dwells,*

*Shut up from outward light*

*To incorporate with gloomy night*

*For inward light alas*

*Puts forth no visual beam*

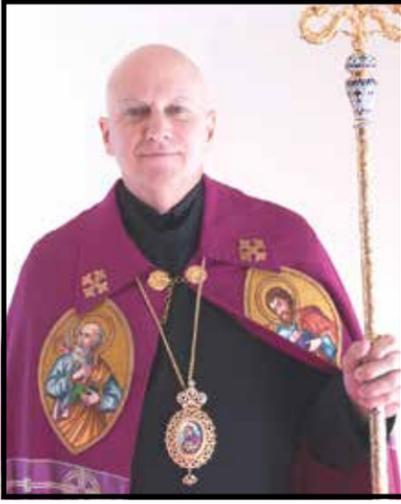
A few years earlier, Richard Lovelace wrote his own poem about prison, saying, "Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage." Milton poignantly describes his own body as his dungeon. He willingly sacrificed what was left of his vision for his religious and civic beliefs, and later found peace in his sonnet, "When I consider how my

light is spent." He considers whether he can serve God in his sightless state, and concludes, "They also serve who only stand and wait."

There are a number of miraculous births announced by an angel of God in the Bible. The angel who announced Samson will remain wondrously nameless in our life, but it was the great Archangel Gabriel who announced the birth of the Messiah. What do we know about Gabriel? There are many descriptions of angels in the Bible: there are seraphim described in the sixth chapter of Isaiah, and there is the vision of the cherubim in the stunning first chapter of the prophecies of Ezekiel. In my last parish, a woman asked me to explain the different angels that are named in our services, and so I read the passages from the scriptures during a series of homilies. She later said she became frightened during the reading about the cherubim. (So did Ezekiel.) There are three archangels who are named in our Bible, Michael which means "who is like God?", Raphael which means "God's healing," and Gabriel, which means "God is my strength." When Raphael identifies himself, he says, "It is good to guard the secret of a king, but glorious to reveal the works of God." He then says, "I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels who present the prayers of the saints and enter into the presence of the glory of the Lord." Similarly, when Gabriel identifies himself to Zechariah, he says, "I am Gabriel, who stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you, and to bring you this good news."

Gabriel appears elsewhere in the scriptures as well. In the Book of Daniel, he is Daniel's guide during

*Continued on page 2*



## “ENTER INTO YOUR RESTING PLACE”

*Bishop Kurt's Reflection on the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord 2018  
Continued from Page 1*

the terrifying phantastic visions of history; the rise and fall of the ancient empires full of murder and greed and pride; and the final victory of God, what Daniel calls his night visions. Several times Daniel loses consciousness or is paralyzed by the sights, and it is Gabriel who picks him up, encourages him, and teaches him when he has questions.

This archangel, who showed all of history to Daniel, and who stands in the presence of God, is the great archangel whom God sends to announce the birth of Saint John the Forerunner, and then the birth of His own Son, Jesus the Christ, from the Virgin in Nazareth of the House of David. When Gabriel appears in the presence of Mary, our traditional hymns describe the sense of awe that overcomes the messenger in

the presence of the one chosen by God and destined from all eternity to give flesh to the Son of God. Our hymns say, “Gabriel was rapt in amazement, when he beheld your virginity, and the splendor of your purity, O Mother of God, and he cried out: By what name shall I call you? I am bewildered, I am lost.” The archangel who showed the empires of the world to Daniel, was left speechless by the sight of Mary. Then he remembers what he was told to say, and he addresses her, “Rejoice! O full of grace.”

King David played on his harp and prophesied about this moment when he sang, “Arise, O Lord, and enter into your resting place, You and the ark of your power.” When Mary the Ark replied to the archangel, “Be it done unto me, according to your word,” the Lord fulfilled this prophecy. He entered into His resting place, the only child of Adam and Eve untouched by sin, a woman made like Eve in the image and likeness of God. The womb of Mary was His resting place in this world. Before He came forth into our tumultuous world of sin, before He came forth to the selfish opposition of sinners who were afraid to

give up their sins, before He came forth to the demon possessed, before He came forth to heal disease and pain, before He came forth to the massacre of the innocents by the proud mendacious king, before He came forth to riots and thrill seeking crowds, before He came forth to insults and denunciation by the religious experts, before He came forth to betrayal by His trusted inner circle of friends, He first spent nine months of peace and rest in the womb of Mary. One of Schubert's most beautiful love songs is called, “Du bist die Ruh”—“You are the rest.” It might have been a love song that Jesus wrote about His mother. Saint Bernard of Clairvaux said, “We find a resting place in those we love, and we in turn provide a resting place in ourselves for those who love us.”

In our modern world, we prepare for the birth of the Messiah with purchasing and partying and driving around in heavy traffic. How much better to remember the reaction of the great archangel when he came into the presence of the mother of the Messiah, rapt in amazement he cried out, “What shall I call you? I am bewildered. I

am lost. I am speechless.” The same archangel who stands in the presence of the Most High God, the same archangel who displayed all of history before the prophet Daniel, was left silent and in respectful awe.

In ancient times, Samson entered into a world of war announced by an angel, and ended his warrior life betrayed and in the prison of darkness, sacrificing his life to destroy evil. Jesus enters into our world, announced by an archangel, and brings peace and rest to those who accept it. Betrayed to condemnation by His friend, He conquers sin and death. Jesus brings unending light into our prison of darkness. As Isaiah prophesied, out of their gloom and darkness, the eyes of the blind will see. Rejoice Zebulon, rejoice Naphtali, people along the seashore and across the Jordan, Galilee of the gentiles. A people walking in darkness have seen a great light. And those who lived in the shadow of death, on them light has dawned.

+Kurt Burnette



## OPENNESS TO GOD'S WILL AT COME AND SEE 2018

*By Thomas Donlin, Our Lady of Perpetual Help Byzantine Catholic Church, Albuquerque, NM*

The first moment I entered the door of Saints Cyril and Methodius Byzantine Catholic Seminary for the “Come and See” weekend of discernment, an overwhelming feeling of peace washed over me and fulfilled my heart's desire of many years. The weekend of November 2-4, 2018, was a blend of both prayerful retreat and social interaction with time to set aside all earthly cares – for me, those cares common to a junior in college – to reflect on God's will in my life as well as to experience the daily rhythm of seminary life.

Father Robert Pipta, seminary rector, warmly welcomed the twelve “Come and Seers” representing the Ruthenian eparchies of Phoenix, Parma, and Passaic as well as the Archeparchy of Pittsburgh. The seminarians, who were also our mentors (Miron Kerul-Kmec was mine) for the weekend, answered all of our questions openly and humorously, and made each of us a part of their seminary family. Almost as if by divine design, the entire atmosphere

of the weekend changed after lunch on Saturday from a retreat of internal reflection to an experience of how each seminarian personally lives out his daily life of prayer, academic work, community, and how he travels along his faith journey sharing his personality and humanity. I glimpsed the reality of daily seminary life.

By Saturday afternoon, I did not want to leave for I had found both a place of peace and an open learning environment. On Sunday, I had the great pleasure of attending Divine Liturgy at Saint Gregory Byzantine Catholic Church in Upper St. Clair, PA. I was able to appreciate more fully all that comes with choosing to follow God's will as an eparchial priest by observing the pastor, Father Valerian Michlik. By the end of the “Come and See” experience, I realized I must be patient. Each of us has things we must work to complete first. I pray my journey brings me back to “Come and See” once again.

*Founded in 1950, the Byzantine Catholic Seminary is a free-standing, English-speaking theological seminary, forming men for priestly ordination and welcoming all men and women seeking the knowledge possessed by the Eastern ecclesial traditions. The seminary is authorized to grant graduate degrees by the*

*Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and accredited by the Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools.*



*Seminarians and “Come and See” retreatants gather in the Byzantine Catholic Seminary chapel.*

## 2019 Vigil For Life Events, Washington, DC

### Thursday, January 17, 2019

Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, DC

5:30 - 7:30 PM Opening Mass - Great Upper Church

Principal Celebrant & Homilist: Most Reverend Joseph F. Naumann, Archbishop of Kansas City, KS and Chairman-elect, USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities

8:00 - 9:00 PM National Rosary for Life - Crypt Church (lower level)

9:30 - 10:30 PM Small Compline (Byzantine Rite) - Crypt Church Celebrant: Bishop Kurt Burnette, Homilist: TBD

*Thursday evening schedule subject to change according to the Shrine organizers.*

### Friday, January 18, 2019

Epiphany of Our Lord, Annandale, VA

10:00 AM Divine Liturgy - Celebrant: Bishop Kurt Burnette, Very Rev. John G. Basarab

## WORLD-RENOWNED EXPERT ON BYZANTINE LITURGY, +ARCHIMANDRITE ROBERT F. TAFT, SJ, ENTERS INTO ETERNAL LIFE

Text from the service book for the Funeral of Archimandrite Robert, prepared by Deacon Daniel Galadza  
Photo: Courtesy of Campion Center, Weston, MA



Archimandrite Robert Francis Taft, a Byzantine Catholic priest and member of the Society of Jesus, was born on January 9, 1932, in Providence, RI (USA). After graduating from LaSalle Academy, Providence, in 1949, he entered the New England Province of the Society of Jesus, and upon completing his college studies and his M.A. in Philosophy from Boston College in 1956, he spent three years (1956–1959) teaching at Baghdad College, Baghdad, Iraq, followed by a year for his M.A. in Russian Studies at Fordham University, then four years studying theology

at Weston College in Weston, MA. In 1963, he was ordained priest in the Byzantine Slavonic (Russian) Rite by Bishop Nicholas T. Elko, Ruthenian Exarch of Pittsburgh. After completing the licentiate in Theology in 1964, he continued his studies in Europe, receiving a doctorate in Eastern Christian Studies from the Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome, in 1970, followed in 1971–72 by postdoctoral studies in Oriental Philology at the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium.

In 1970, he was appointed to the faculty of the Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome, where he served as Professor of Oriental Liturgy (1970–2002), Prefect of the Library (1981–1985), and Vice-Rector of the Institute (1995–2001). On reaching the statutory age of retirement in 2002, he became Professor Emeritus, though he continued to research, write and publish until December 2011, when he retired to Weston, MA. In addition, he was Visiting Professor of Liturgy at the University of Notre Dame since 1974, where he was Director of the Graduate Program in Liturgical Studies in 1977–1979.

He served as editor and member of editorial boards of numerous journals and series, including *Christiana Periodica* (1973–1976), *Orientalia Christiana*

*Analecta* (1981–2004), *Studia Liturgica* (1980–1987), *Anaphorae Orientales, Worship, Christian Orient* (Kottayam, India), *Kristianskij Vostok* (St. Petersburg/Moscow), *Bolletino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata* (Italy), and *Logos: A Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* (Ottawa/Toronto), to name just a few.

In addition to serving as board member and consultant of several academic and ecclesiastical bodies, Father Taft was the founder and honorary president of the Society of Oriental Liturgy; a founding member of both the North American Academy of Liturgy and of the Association of Jesuit Liturgists; and a member of the U.S. National Committee for Byzantine Studies, of the Society for Armenian Studies, and of the International Societas Liturgica. The bibliography of his publications and writings comprises over 850 works.

Father Taft's intense academic activity resulted in frequent fellowships and awards, including, among others, fellowships at the Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies in Washington, D.C. He was a Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy and a recipient of the Berakah Award of the North American Academy of Liturgy and four doctorates *honoris causa* since 1990. In 1998, Father Robert was elevated to the

rank of archimandrite by the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church.

*Perestroika* and the beginnings of democracy in the former Soviet Union soon led to numerous contacts with scholars familiar with Father Taft's works, particularly in Bulgaria, Russia, and Ukraine. But this academic life, though more measurable, is only part of the story of a Jesuit priest well known as a liturgical presider and popular preacher, consultor of the Holy See, and member of numerous ecclesiastical boards and committees. He was a confidant and advisor of hierarchs, mentor to students and others, a defender of the persecuted, marginalized, and suffering.

Archimandrite Robert Taft reposed in the Lord early on the morning of November 2, 2018, at the age of 86.

He is mourned by the Church and by universities throughout the world, in particular by the Jesuit communities of Campion Center and the Pontifical Oriental Institute, by his family, and by his students.

*May his memory be eternal!* Вѣчная память!

SAVE THE DATE

# Crowned in Love

## — A Byzantine Pre-Cana Program —

Sponsored by the Syncellate for the State of New Jersey

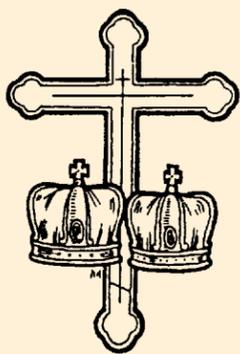
Saturday, March 2, 2019. 9am to 4pm.

Saint Michael Chapel, 415 Lackawanna Avenue, Woodland Park, NJ.

The facility is entirely handicapped-accessible.

You bring the gifts that Jesus Christ will transform to make your relationship a sacrament where He Himself is present. Discover how the "ordinary" ways you share your life as a couple and a family can participate in this mystery. A hot luncheon will be served. There will be time for individual counseling and the Sacrament of Repentance. Couples planning to marry before spring 2020 are urged to attend.

For more information, contact your pastor or call Father Jack Custer at 973-777-2553.



**SATURDAY, MARCH 2**  
**9AM – 4PM**

### Presenters



Deacon Thomas Shubeck, PhD, a father of three with Caroline, his wife of 25 years, serves at Saint Thomas the Apostle Parish in Rahway, NJ, and at Seton Hall University. Much of his 30 years as a licensed psychologist has been spent providing therapy services to married couples and families.



Michael and Lisann Castagno have been married for 24 years and have three daughters. They have been involved in marriage preparation and youth ministry in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia for many years, speaking especially about the beauty of God's design for marriage, by proclaiming the good news of Natural Family Planning.



Ann Koshute, MTS, earned a Master's degree at the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family at the Catholic University of America. She speaks and writes on marriage and family issues, has served in the Family Life ministries of several dioceses, and teaches theology at Saint Joseph's College of Maine. She and her husband, Keith, have been married for 7 years.



Father Jack Custer has prepared over 100 couples for marriage in his 35 years of priesthood. He holds degrees in Scripture and Theology and currently serves as Rector of St Michael's Cathedral.



# PEOPLE YOU KNOW

## IN BALTIMORE...

*Parish ECF Students Make Lunches For Homeless*

The students in the Eastern Catholic Formation program at Patronage of The Mother of God Byzantine Catholic Church in Baltimore, MD, assembled sack lunches after Divine Liturgy on November 11, 2018. The lunches were blessed by Bishop Kurt and then distributed by Catholic Charities to the homeless in Baltimore. Father Conan Timoney is the pastor of Patronage Parish.



*Parishioner Achieves Rank of Eagle Scout*

Patronage of the Mother of God Parish is proud to announce that parishioner and altar server, Theodore Guba, has earned the rank of Eagle Scout. On April 21, 2018, Theodore celebrated his Eagle Scout Court of Honor at Fort Smallwood Park in Pasadena, MD. Theodore, son of Richard and Lisa Guba, is a senior at Archbishop Spalding High School in Severn, MD. Theodore's Eagle Scout project consisted of constructing interpretive signage for a meadow trail at historic Fort Smallwood that described the flora and animals that are in the park.



Theodore is a member of Boy Scout Troop 450 sponsored by Saint John the Evangelist Roman Catholic Church in Severna Park, MD. Troop 450 has an outdoor program, including camping trips each month. Each year, the troop also conducts a High Adventure trip to National or Council High Adventure Bases. Theodore has hiked the rigorous Philmont Scout Ranch in July, 2015. He joined the National Catholic Committee on Scouting Saint George Trek to Philmont in July, 2017.

He also canoed at Northern Tier in Minnesota in 2016 and 2018.

Theodore is a trombone player in the Archbishop Spalding Wind Ensemble and also runs cross country and track. He plans to study chemical engineering in college. Theodore and his family have been parishioners of Patronage of the Mother God for over 17 years. Father Conan Timoney baptized Theodore in 2001.

## IN CARY...

*Saints Cyril and Methodius Parish, Cary, Thanks Epiphany of Our Lord Parish, Annandale*

Last year, Saints Cyril and Methodius Church in Cary, NC, held the parish's main fundraiser, the Saint Nicholas European Christmas Market, in a building at the North Carolina State Fairgrounds for the first time. The success at this location indicated the need to increase production of the kolachi (nut rolls) to be sold at this year's market to be held December 7-8, 2018. Marsha Puhak, president of the Ladies' Guild at Epiphany of Our Lord Church in Annandale, VA, graciously offered use of its commercial grade kitchen through the connections Marianne and Michael Sapsara had with their former home parish. In fact, Saints Cyril and Methodius was a mission church established by Epiphany in the early 1990's.



On Friday, November 9, the team from NC, including Marianne and Michael; their daughter, Michelle, and her husband, Matthew Rubush; head baker, Jane Dunbar; and assistants Phillip Tooley, Natalie McKenny, and Joseph Deaton, drove five hours to Epiphany Parish in Annandale. They were greeted by kitchen director Daria Parrell and her husband, Rick, and immediately unloaded supplies and set to work on the first stages of kolachi preparations. The work resumed bright and early Satur-

day morning at 6 AM with Jeff Nashwinter, president of the Men's Club, lending his expertise with the mixer and the ovens. The Saints Cyril and Methodius team was impressed by the number of Epiphany parishioners who came to help including Mary Ellen and Jack Kepick, Bill Fourier, Carol and Harry Katawczik, Marsha Puhak and daughter, Jennifer, Lana Ford, Jane Powanda, Kathy Karonis, Carol Ferson, Maryanne Smith, Mike Hancher, Mike Opachko, and Tom Soyka. The baking and packaging was completed by mid-afternoon which made it possible to transport the kolachi back to Cary and put them in freezers by late Saturday evening.

The team from NC enjoyed gracious hospitality during their stay in the homes of Lana Ford and Rick and Daria Parrell. A few team members then attended Sunday morning Divine Liturgy in Epiphany's beautiful church with Father John Basarab, pastor of Epiphany Parish and local syncellus. All enjoyed making many new friends in the faith!

*Prayer Vigil in Cary*

The parish council of Saints Cyril and Methodius Church in Cary, NC, called a day of prayer and fasting to entreat the Lord God Almighty to extend His protection over Father Mark Shuey in a special way on the occasion of his major surgery on November 13, and to implore the Divine Physician to guide the decision making and the hands of the doctors. A priest of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Saint Josaphat in Parma (OH), Father Mark is administrator of the parish and also pastor of the Saint Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Mission. Parishioners maintained a continuous prayer vigil in the church from 7 AM to 8 PM during which individuals and families came for an hour of intercessory prayer throughout the day and evening. Reader Anthony Blair stayed at the hospital all day with Pan'i Dawn Shuey and family. At the time of this submission, Father Mark is in



recovery after successful surgery. God grant him many years! We would be lost without our good shepherd!

# AROUND THE EPARCHY



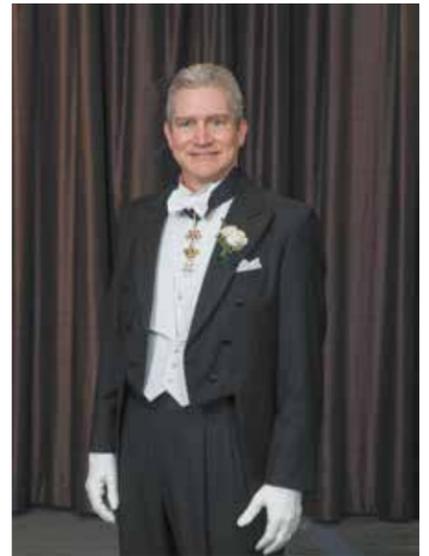
## IN HILLSBOROUGH...

Parishioner Received into the Order of Malta



Michael Bates, a parishioner of Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church in Hillsborough, NJ, was among those inducted as Knights and Dames of Magistral Grace as The Order of Malta American Association held its annual investiture of new members on October 25-26, 2018, in New York City. The two-day event included a Mass of blessing of the capes and robes on Thursday, and on Friday, the Solemn Mass of Investiture at Saint Patrick Cathedral was celebrated by the Order's Principal Chaplain, His Eminence, Timothy Cardinal Dolan, Archbishop of New York, followed by a white-tie gala dinner at the New York Hilton. His induction was preceded by a year of formation during which he participated in the spiritual activities and hands-

on work of the Order. The Order of Malta is a lay religious order whose mission is witnessing and protecting the Catholic faith and serving the poor and the sick through various humanitarian, medical, and social activities. Father James Badeaux is the pastor of Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church.



## IN WESTBURY...

Students and Staff of Roman Catholic Seminary Visit

On Sunday, October 21, 2018, forty-three seminarians, with their rector, Father George Sears, came from the Cathedral Seminary House of Formation, Douglaston, NY, to celebrate the Liturgy with Saint Andrew Byzantine Catholic Church community. Many of the seminarians had come during the Great Fast to help Father Nicholas Daddona serve the Pre-sanctified Liturgy.

Father Nicholas visited the seminary to explain the Divine Liturgy and answer questions concerning the Byzantine Catholic Church before the Sunday celebration.

An Icon of Jacob wrestling with God written by parishioner, Mary Beth Hansen, was presented to Father Sears to be placed in the seminary chapel. After the Divine Liturgy, everyone enjoyed a lunch prepared by the parishioners. The entire day was a blessing for both parish and seminarians. Father Nicholas Daddona is the Administrator of Saint Andrew Parish.

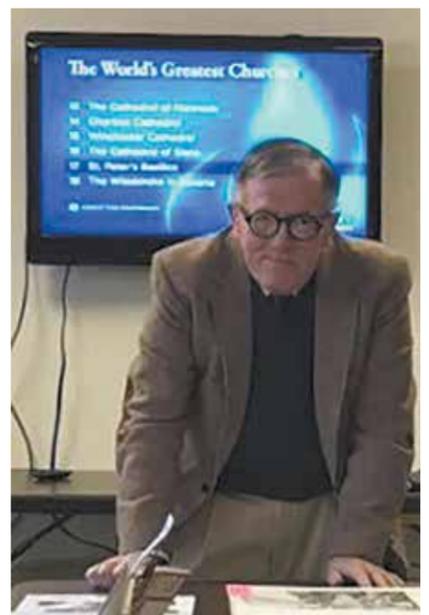


## IN WILLIAMSBURG...

Ascension Takes a Virtual Visit to Saint Peter's Basilica, Rome

After Divine Liturgy on Sunday, November 4, 2019, Ascension's own John Labanish, gave a remarkable presentation about Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome. Everyone in attendance was taken to the basilica visually with a video presentation and lecture by Mr. Labanish. This forty-five minute presentation gave everyone a glimpse of the wonders of Vatican City through an art history perspective.

Mr. Labanish holds his undergraduate degree in history and English from Saint Vincent College, Latrobe, PA, and his Master's in history from the University of Pittsburgh, PA. He was the director of the Historical Society of Pittsburgh and taught history in both Michigan and Pennsylvania. He relocated to Williamsburg in 1986, taking a position with the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation as an interpreter/historian at the Capital and Palace as well as many other educational positions there. He retired from Colonial Williamsburg in 2007. Currently, Mr. Labanish lectures for the Road Scholar Program (formerly Elder Hostel) within the Historic Triangle of Virginia. (James-

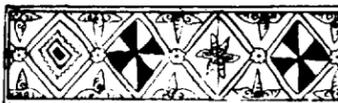


town, Yorktown, and Williamsburg) The Ascension Family is proud and honored to have him share his expertise as a historian with the parish and community.

THE BYZANTINE CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF PASSAIC subscribes to the  
**Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People**

adopted by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The Eparchy, within all its parishes, institutions and programs, is committed to assuring a safe environment in ministry for its children and young people that conforms to Charter requirements. For further information regarding the Eparchial Safe Environment Program please contact:

Father David J. Baratelli, Ed.S., M.Div. • Safe Environment Program Coordinator • 973.890.7777  
Dr. Maureen Daddona, Ph.D. • Victim's Assistance Coordinator • 516.623.6456



# PEOPLE YOU KNOW AROUND THE EPARCHY

## IN ORMOND BEACH...



Officer Colin Ventrella receiving his certificate from Sergeant Gustavo Borello



Officers Sidney Cruz and Colin Ventrella, Father Vince Brady, Sergeant Gustavo Borello

### Parishioner Graduates from Corrections Academy

On Tuesday, November 6, 2018, at a graduation ceremony held at the Tomoka State Prison Training Facility, Colin Ventrella, parish cantor and parishioner of Holy Dormition Byzantine Catholic Church in Ormond Beach, FL, successfully completed and

graduated from the Florida State Department of Corrections Academy, and is now employed as a Florida State Department of Corrections Officer. Father Sal Pignato is the Administrator of Holy Dormition Parish and Father Vincent Brady is the Assistant Pastor and priest-in-residence.



Back Row: Russell Ward, Dennis Culver, Father Vince Brady, Luis Nieves, Gregory Loya  
Front Row: Lynn Tisza, Cantor Colin Ventrella, Grand Knight Dennis Mezzanotte (Saint Paul's Council #1895), Nancy Kuba, Martha Kolman, Linda Mainello, Heather Loya, and Chairwoman and Parish Trustee, Barbara Laputka

### Parish Holds Tricky Tray Auction

On Saturday, November 3, 2018, the parishioners of Holy Dormition Parish sponsored their annual Tricky Tray Auction. The auction itself is a culmination of months of preparation, and organization. Parish Trustee, Barbara Laputka, was chairperson of the fundraiser.

There were plenty of prizes: a "money tree" (a miniature Christmas Tree decorated with dollar bills totaling \$100.00); a 55" Smart HDTV; and a toaster, that "magically turns a common slice of bread into a warm, golden piece of toast....it even included a crumb tray"—as described by parishioner and auctioneer, Luis Nieves. Pizza, hot dogs, and stuffed cabbage were sold. Homemade cakes and coffee were available at no charge at intermission. People

traveled from far and wide for the event, and everyone left with a smile and feeling like a winner. At the conclusion of the day, some of the workers stayed behind and prayed together at the Saturday evening Vigil Divine Liturgy. Father Sal Pignato is the Administrator of Holy Dormition Parish. Father Vincent Brady is the Assistant Pastor and priest-in-residence.



Parishioners Lynn Tisza and Russ Ward selling tickets



Crowd awaits as next lucky winner is called

## COME WORSHIP WITH US AND HAVE A WILLIAMSBURG CHRISTMAS

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# LIFE, LOVE, AND THE HUMAN PERSON

By Ann M. Koshute, MTS

## ARE YOU THERE?

Many of us are familiar with the nineteenth century spiritual “Were You There?,” a simple, yet profound, meditation on the Crucifixion. The hymn invites the listener to put him/herself at the Cross to contemplate the Lord’s sacrifice for us as an eye witness. Its powerful imagery draws the listener into the scene to *be with* Jesus. Music is a catalyst for personal reflection, opens our hearts to the work God wants to do in us. The same can be said for visual arts like iconography. As we prepare for and celebrate Christmas, we might take a cue from the old spiritual. Contemplating the icon of the Nativity of the Lord, let’s put ourselves in the place of each of its figures and consider our relationship with Christ, how close we’re willing to get to Him, and where that relationship takes us.

We may be surprised by how engaging our “Catholic imagination” and stepping into the scene of that night two millennia ago transforms Christmas from a solitary event to a lived experience of Christ in the world. Think about the icon of the Nativity in your parish—or take a look at it if you have one in your home. In the center is Christ, with the dark cave (representing Sin) behind Him. He is the Light of the World, born into it to transform it. Take time to look at His face, at His body swaddled so tightly and carefully in a foreshadowing of the shroud that will “swaddle” Him in the tomb. Be still with Him for a while, allowing His great love for you, expressed in His willingness to become so little and helpless, to overwhelm you.

Mary is the figure closest to the Child, reclining next to Him. She’s not shown as the doting mother, nestling Him in her embrace. Instead, Mary looks at *you*. For many of us, making eye contact is diffi-

cult and uncomfortable, but not for Mary. She wants to get our attention, to draw us into the scene and turn our gaze toward the Child. Mary conceived Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit, nurtured Him in her womb, but from the moment she gave birth to Him she began letting Him go. She always turns our attention to Him, and her stare is both an invitation and a challenge: *see* the Child, *know* that He is God and that He was born *for you* – and *take Him out into the world*.

**...once we’ve met the Lord, we can no longer travel the path we’ve been on. Now we must travel His Way.**

At the bottom of the icon sits Joseph, the humble carpenter called by God into His plan of salvation, and given the grace to protect and lead the most extraordinary little family in all of history. Joseph is pensive, and in some icons, he is met by a strange man dressed in a tunic of leaves. This man represents the devil, tempting Joseph to doubt the plan and will of God. But Joseph is humble enough to be docile to the Spirit, to trust the God who has led him this far and not abandoned him or his family. From Joseph we may draw the courage to go where God leads us, and to make a home for Christ in our hearts and in our life with others. Joseph invites us to follow him by doing what we must to provide for Christ so that He can grow in the world.

At the top of the icon we see the angels hovering, lighting the pitch-black night

sky with their heavenly glow. They’ve seen the glory of the Lord, they’re witnesses to His mysterious and wonderful plan of salvation. The angels go out into the night to announce the good news, that the Savior is born and God is with us! But their announcement isn’t simply informational, like an alert scrolling across our TV screens. The angels’ announcement is a call to action for us; an exhortation to *hear* their words, *believe* that God is with us, and *go announce* it to everyone.

Now consider the shepherds, simple young men doing their job on this bitterly cold night. They’re doing what’s necessary (like all of us) to make a living. They’re surprised to be visited by angels, and even more so to hear what is announced. Yet shock and wonder – and even their responsibilities – don’t hinder them in going to see for themselves. The shepherds are regular people with “earthly cares,” different from ours but no less significant for them, showing us that while our responsibilities are important, we cannot fulfill them without God. We must do everything with and for Him. We’ve received the news of His birth and were initiated into His family by our baptism. Like the shepherds, we must *listen* for Him, *look* for Him, and make time to *be with* Him.

The Kings approach far in the distance, not coming to “find God,” but to investigate a scientific phenomenon. We’re like them, in that we don’t always know what we seek, and we have our own ideas about who we are and where we’re going. Like the Kings, we may be surprised by what we find, where God leads us. They brought gifts for someone the stars indicated would be special, though they had no idea who they’d find. When they saw the Child in the cave, they

knew immediately that they’d been led to Him. The Kings paid him homage, and returned home by a different route. Their change of course reflected the danger they faced if they returned to Herod (who wanted to destroy the Child), but it also powerfully reminds us that once we’ve met the Lord, we can no longer travel the path we’ve been on. Now we must *travel His Way*.

The animals are there, too, sharing their bed and giving up their feeding trough so that the Son of the Most High has a warm and humble place to rest. The animals are not rational creatures; they don’t know that God Incarnate is in their midst. And yet, their stepping aside to allow Him into their space shows that all of Creation is affected by the coming of the Christ. The event of Christ’s birth is not an interesting myth, but the history-altering, life-changing entrance of God into His Creation. Nothing will ever be the same, and that’s the point. Christ *redeems* and *re-creates* each of us and the whole world.

Finally, the Star hovers over all, shining brightly and marking the place where the Child was born. The Star is not the Light but points to it, directs all of creation to the One Who brings light to every dark and lonely place. The Star beckons *us* to reflect the Light of the World – the Christ-Light – in everything we do and say, in how we work and rest, and in how we love one another. The Star invites us to be lights that show the way to *the Light*.

It’s Christmastime again, and the world still needs a Savior, still needs to hear the news and see the Light. *Are you there* to witness to the Good News of His birth, and announce it with your life? **ECL**



## Carpatho-Rusyn Society's New Branches

The Carpatho-Rusyn Society has developed branches in Georgia (near Atlanta), Western NC (Asheville), Eastern NC (Charlotte), and mini-branches in the cities of Gainesville, Lakeland, Leesburg, Boca Raton and Nokomis in the state of Florida. Meetings are held two to three times a year to learn, share, and perpetuate the Carpatho-Rusyn culture. For more information visit the website at [c-rs.org](http://c-rs.org) or contact Bonnie at [bb@c-rs.org](mailto:bb@c-rs.org).

## Byzantine Day of Spirituality At the Queen of Heaven Monastery, Warren, Oh

The Benedictine Sisters of the Byzantine Church at Queen of Heaven Monastery, Warren, OH, are offering a Day of Spirituality in preparation for the Nativity of Christ, on Sunday, December 16, 2018, from 1:30 PM to 4:15 PM. It will be held at Saints Peter and Paul Parish Center at 180 Belvedere Avenue NE, Warren, OH. To register, please call 330-856-1813 or e-mail [qohm@byzben.org](mailto:qohm@byzben.org) by Sunday, December 9, 2018.

The presenter will be Bishop Roger Gries, Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Cleveland, OH. He is a well-versed, excellent, and knowledgeable speaker and will provide us with a wonderful presentation to help us prepare for Christmas.

### EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

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Father Edward G. Cimbala, D.Min.—Pastor

Beginning Sunday, December 16, 2018, at 8:00 AM, and every Sunday thereafter, Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church, 246 East 15th Street, New York, NY, will offer the Divine Liturgy celebrated in Church Slavonic with the homily preached ponašemu. The celebrant and homilist will be Father Gregory Lozinskyy, parochial vicar of Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church in Jersey City, NJ. This Divine Liturgy is being established as an outreach for people from Eastern Europe with the blessing of Bishop Kurt Burnette, Eparch of Passaic, NJ, at the request of Bishop Milan Šašik, Eparch of Mukachevo, Ukraine. Saint Mary Parish is located on the corner of East 15th Street and Second Avenue and is easily accessible by subway. The 14th Street-Union Square Subway stop is less than a ten-minute walk. Everyone is invited. For more information, please contact Father Gregory Lozinskyy at 201-333-2975.



**SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES**

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

**THE FULLNESS OF TIME**

On Christmas Day, we hear these words from Saint Paul: “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive adoption as sons” (Galatians 4:5). That moment in time is the basis of our calendar: the turning point between “BC” and “AD.” But why was that moment the right time? In terms of world history, it was a sleepy time compared to the previous generation (Julius Caesar, Brutus, Cleopatra and all that).

The Bible often reminds us that God's time is not our time. So many of the great actors in God's plan of salvation were born at the “wrong” time, to elderly parents who had given up hope of ever having children; think of Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 18 and 21) Hannah, the mother of the Prophet Samuel (1 Samuel 1-2), Zachary and Elizabeth (Luke 1) and, of course, Joachim and Anna. Could Moses have been born at a more inconvenient time, when Pharaoh had decreed that all Hebrew boys be killed (Exodus 2)? Wasn't Jesus' own birth poorly timed by our standards, with His parents traveling and homeless (Matthew 1:18 – 2:23)?

In some of these cases, it strikes us that the Lord asks a lot of people like Abraham and Sarah when they are long past their prime. In other cases, God entrusts Himself to teenagers who seem far too young for such responsibility. The Holy Spirit guided the Prophet Samuel to reject all seven of Jesse's mature sons in his search for a king to replace Saul. God's choice was David, so young and insignificant that his father had not even included him in the meeting with the prophet (1 Samuel 16). It was the boy Joseph, the youngest of Jacob's sons at the time, whom God chose to save Israel from famine and to prepare for the Exodus (Genesis 37 ff.; see especially 50:19-20), and it was the four teenagers, Daniel, Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael, who kept Jewish faith and life alive in exile in Babylon (Daniel 1-6).

God's time and our time can feel out of synch in our own lives too. Our prayers don't get answered as quickly as we would like; it may seem to us that they don't get answered at all. Challenges and oppor-

tunities seem to arrive at all the wrong moments. Even the feasts and fasts of the Church get in the way of our schedules.

**“Behold, now is the accepted time. Now is the day of salvation” —2 Corinthians 6:2**

This is not a modern problem. Hundreds of years before Christ, the grumpy voice of the elderly King Solomon observed: “(God) made everything beautiful in its time, and He put eternity into their hearts so that a man may not find out the work God made from the beginning to the end” (Ecclesiastes 3:11). In other words, there is a time for everything (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8) but we can't always figure out when the right time is; and death, which never comes at the right time, seems to put an end to it all (Ecclesiastes 2:16).

It's true but not necessarily consoling when the Psalmist (90:4) says: “A thousand years in Your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night.” We're on a schedule—or juggling other people's schedules—whether we're trying to make a career, considering starting a family, or even just waiting to die. For us, it's all about now.

There is one “Now” in God's plan that we can rely on; it should determine every choice we make. Saint Paul recalled what the Lord said through Isaiah (49:8): “In an acceptable time I have heard you and in the day of salvation I have helped you” and then concluded: “Behold, now is the accepted time. Now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2).

Have you ever noticed how many of the tropars and kondaks on feast days begin with the word “Today”? You'll hear it on Christmas Day: “Today the Virgin gives birth to the Transcendent One” (Kondak, Tone 3). We may not understand why God's plans don't coincide with our schedule. But we can be sure that everything He has done for our salvation is available to us in the Church today, and that we can come closer to Him by the seeking and doing His will in the opportunities He offers us now. **ECL**



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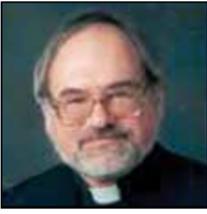
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# THE BYZANTINE LITURGY

By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD

## THE NEED FOR DIALOGUE

Before the twentieth century, relationships between separated churches could get very bitter. The language of anathema continued in Christian disputes. It was particularly strong in the debates after the Council of Chalcedon. Such rhetoric continues to the present day, and I have recently read condemnations of Orthodoxy by conservative Protestants that are unseemly. There are also groups of traditional Orthodox and traditional Catholics who consider the other side as heretics and are not sparing in their mutual anathemas. The language of mutual condemnation of the “other” has been definitely in the mainstream of theological history.

With a love for Scripture and for the tradition of the Church’s faith as expressed by its teaching authority, is there any way to “rationalize” this policy of anathema? It really should not be defended and there is another tradition also. In the Gospels, Jesus calls us definitely to love for the other, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for He makes His sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust.” (Matthew 5:43-45)

It is Jesus who calls us to unity, as a part of our deification, “I pray not only for

them, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word, so that they may all be one, as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me” (John 17:20-21), and Saint Paul who preaches, “one body and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” (Ephesians 4:4-6)

One might point out that this unity is in one true belief, and the “others” are excluded, but it also points out that we are not to condemn the others, but to bring them into unity, hopefully through dialogue and not through violence. We cannot simply “rationalize” Scripture, but we can observe that the purpose of Scripture and tradition is to strengthen our faith, to make us more committed to the truth, to have a zeal for the gospel. At the same time, we might also say that “tradition” is good, but “traditionalism” is deadly; that “zeal” is good – and scripture and tradition are about zeal – but zealotry is about hate.

The Second Vatican Council made a 180-degree turn in the matter of ecumenism. Before that, Catholics were very self-righteous. We couldn’t even attend a Protestant or Orthodox service except for the direst reasons, and then we weren’t supposed to participate actively in any way

– just sort of be present there like a lump. Some traditional Orthodox are still that way and won’t even pray with a non-Orthodox. Ecumenism is not as strong today as it was in those first enthusiastic years.

Dialogue is necessary, but is it possible? We have learned from the ecumenical movement of the last fifty years that there is one danger to be avoided. That is to conceive dialogue as “compromise.” Dialogue becomes toxic when it weakens our own love for truth. I strongly proclaim that I am not a relativist. There is truth, it is not an illusion, and there is absolute truth. As a Christian, I believe that Jesus Christ is truth. He is also love, life, wisdom, and the power of God. Dialogue is not “compromise” but a mutual and respectful “search for the fullness of truth.” However, it is not “dialogue” unless we confess the possibility of learning from one another. What we know may be the truth and, indeed, even the absolute truth, but as human beings with limitations, it may not be “all that we can know.” It is hubris to think that we cannot learn from the other. This does not compromise our faith but helps to deepen it.

The very definition of “schism” might be to grasp only a part of the total reality. In accepting inter-religious dialogue as a desirable possibility, the Vatican II Council said: “whatever good or truth is found” in other religions is “given by Him who enlightens

all men that they may at length have life.” (Lumen Gentium 16). The children of God numbers in the billions, and only a minority have come to know of Christ in an authentic way. We need the humility in faith to know that God does not abandon the people He has made in His image and likeness, that He finds ways of salvation for them all in His infinite loving providence, and therefore, we can learn from the other, all the while establishing ourselves on the right foundation of truth.

In all my work for dialogue, I reflect on the ultimate anomaly of Christian dis-unity, especially with our Orthodox brothers and sisters. We acknowledge the authenticity of the Orthodox sacraments – in the Divine Liturgy, they receive the one Body and one chalice of our Lord’s Blood, and they – at least in general – recognize the Catholic Liturgy: we, too receive the one Body of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ. But we cannot partake together of the one same Body and Blood. How can this be? Are we tearing apart the body of Christ? This anomaly cries out for healing. And, moreover, this principle applies to all believers in Christ and, indeed, to all human beings. If we pray honestly to God, we must pray for unity, as we do in every Liturgy, “For peace in the whole world, for the stability of the holy Churches of God, and for the union of all, let us pray to the Lord.” (Litany of Peace) **ECL**

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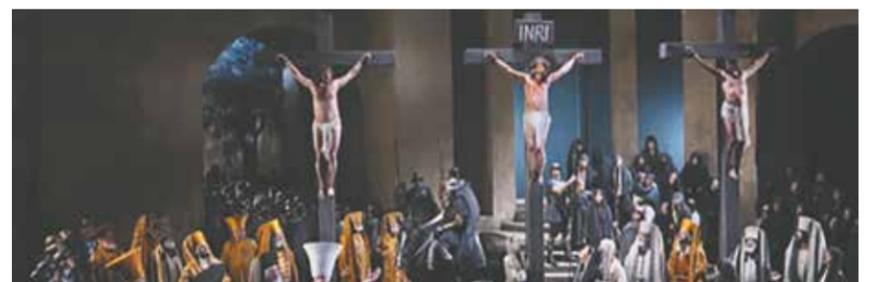
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# SEASONAL REFLECTIONS

Father Ronald Hatton



## WHEN THE FULLNESS OF TIME HAD COME...

“When Augustus became supreme ruler of the world, the many kingdoms among the people came to an end. Likewise, when You became incarnate of the Immaculate One, the worship of many gods had to cease. The cities came under a universal power, and the Gentiles believed in the on supreme Divinity. Nations were registered in the name of Caesar Augustus, and we, the faithful, were registered in Your divine name, O Incarnate One. O Lord, great is your mercy; glory to You!” (At Psalm 140, Vespers for the Feast of the Nativity)

When I read this, it struck me that I had read this sentiment elsewhere. In fact, it was in the words of Pope Benedict XVI in his little book, “Jesus of Nazareth: The Infancy Narratives.” In it, he says of the time of Jesus’ birth that “the context of world history was important for Luke.... For the first time, there is a great expanse of peace in which everyone’s property can be registered and placed at the service of the wider community.” An inscription at Priene, in Ionia, from 9 B.C. said of the birth of Augustus, “Providence, which has ordered all things, filled this man with virtue that he might benefit mankind, sending him as a Savior both for us and our descendants.... The birthday of the god was the beginning of the good tidings that he brought forth for the world. From his birth, a new reckoning of time must begin” (Chapter 3, pg. 59). Sounds very similar to our understanding of Christ at His Incarnation, doesn’t it?

The world has always looked for a savior. We look to political figures time and time again, and are disappointed when we

find that they have “feet of clay.” We put our hope and faith in socio-economic systems, from capitalism to anarchy, hoping to find peace in the world. It is no wonder that the writer of that inscription held out so much for the world because of Caesar Augustus. It is so sad that, at this season, so many people celebrate Christmas and so few actually celebrate the Nativity.

It is said that other feasts of the Church, Pascha and Theophany, are much older than our celebration of Jesus’ birth, but we should not take that to mean that Christmas is of less importance. The Incarnation is so important in making these feasts possible that the Nativity, even in the popular celebration, has taken such a deep hold in the hearts of all. No matter if a person is a believer or not, this season has become a time for thinking about others rather than ourselves, giving gifts, outreach into our communities, and so on. Food drives, clothing drives, even placing coins and bills into the pots of Salvation Army workers is a sign of a change of heart in most people, even if only for this season. The cries for peace between people and countries become louder and persistent. And at the heart of it all is not a spontaneous burst of goodwill but a deep response to the Gift given to us this season. “For God so loved the world....” God taking flesh, becoming like one of us in everything except sin, is such a profound occurrence in human history that it affects everyone whether they believe or not. This deep, abiding need for a savior is part of who we are, whether we acknowledge it or not. Saint Augustine wrote, “You have made us for Yourself, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in

You.” So, it should not surprise us that the writer of the inscription at Priene expressed the desire for a savior, and saw it in Caesar Augustus. Mirroring the words of Augustine, we go from person to person, politician to politician, movement to movement, seeking a savior, and only becoming disillusioned when they fall though. We are restless until we find rest in the True Savior of the world, Jesus Christ, God-become-man. Even if we cannot accept God’s gift to us in the Incarnation, even if we deny the existence of God or the Truth of His Church, we are still restless, and will remain so, until we accept this Gift and fall into the arms of our loving God.

It is so easy for us to want to take this season away from those who do not believe, those who mis-use it. We can look at the partying, the drunkenness, the greed for physical gifts and mourn how Christmas has been paganized, but we should realize that, whether celebrated properly or improperly, Christ’s birth is still having an impact on everyone. Even if we hear people trying to tear Christmas to shreds, we should recognize that even they cannot deny that something exceptional is happening once again this year. They may bridle when you wish them a Merry Christmas, but they cannot deny the power that is being celebrated. God has given all of mankind this season as an opportunity, year after year, to change themselves from self-centered to other-centered. It gives Christians, year after year, an opportunity to show forth the love of God to those in darkness and, hopefully, to extend their acts of mercy, kindness and love beyond defined point on our calendar. “But when the fullness of time had

come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoption. As proof that you are children, God sent the spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying out, ‘Abba, Father!’ So, you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God” (Gal. 4:4-7). **ECL**



## SCHOOL OF PRAYER

Father G. Scott Boghossian

### PATIENCE: PROOF OF PROGRESS IN HOLINESS

We spend time with God in prayer, read the scriptures, receive the sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist, but is there any evidence that we are becoming more like Jesus Christ? God forbid we are praying, reading, receiving the sacraments, but not changing. Patience proves we are making progress.

“Love for God and neighbor is the most important thing, so as long as I’m putting God first and loving my neighbor, I’m good.” Not so fast! Patience is a primary manifestation of love. Look at the “love chapter,” 1 Corinthians 13. It begins, “Love is patient...” (1 Cor. 13:4). In Galatians 5, Saint Paul lists the fruit of the Spirit, one of which is patience (Gal. 4:22). There is no Christian love without patience.

Patience consists in preserving one’s peace of mind in the midst of all the difficulties of life. It enables us to endure trials without sadness, anger, or resentment. Patience is especially called for in dealing with difficult people. Let’s prove that we are getting somewhere in the Christian life by exercising the virtue of patience.

Patience is demonstrated by not giving in to anger, or to sadness, or complaining to

other people. (Complain to God as much as you want – that’s a form of prayer (Ps. 142:2)).

Patience is required for salvation. Our Lord says, “in your patience, you shall possess your souls” (Luke 21:19). Patience will mature us according to Saint James (Js. 1:2-4). Saint Gregory the Great says that patience confers on us the merit of martyrdom. He writes, “if with the help of the Lord, we strive to observe the virtue of patience, we bear the palm of martyrdom.”

How can we develop this essential Christian virtue? Realize the necessity of patience. Examine yourself, and see where you fail. Are you short with others, easily irritated, unkind in your words and actions when the pressure is on, or when you deal with troublesome people? The fifth century Latin poet Prudentius coined the proverb: “patience is a virtue.” True, but let us say to ourselves, “Patience is THE virtue.” In other words, patience holds pride of place in manifesting our love for God and neighbor, and we now commit ourselves to developing it.

Pray for patience. “This is the confidence that we have toward Him, that if we

ask anything according to His will He hears us” (1 Jn. 5:14). Much of what we pray for we must request with resignation, saying to God, “nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done” (Lk. 22:42) because we are not sure of His will in the matter. Not so with the virtue of patience. We know, without a shadow of a doubt, that God wills for us to exercise patience. Therefore, we know that He will hear and answer our prayer. Let us pray for the virtue of patience with persistence and faith.

**Realize the virtue of patience is like a muscle. The more you exercise it, the stronger it gets.**

Consider the example of Jesus. “When He was reviled, He did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but continued entrusting Himself to Him who judges justly” (1 Pt. 2:23). “Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so

He opened not His mouth” (Is. 53:7). Call to mind the great patience that our Savior demonstrated when He suffered His bitter passion, and laid down His life for our salvation. Keep the cross of Christ in mind and strive to imitate Him.

Realize the virtue of patience is like a muscle. The more you exercise it, the stronger it gets. Take advantage of patience building circumstances. If you are in a traffic jam, or waiting in a long line, or awakened by a trivial phone call in the middle of the night, or harassed by a thousand other daily challenges, think that you are building up the power of patience, preparing yourself for more significant difficulties to come.

Finally, realize sufferings are a favor from God and to endure them patiently is a sign of future glory. Saint Augustine says, “Let man understand that God is a physician, and that tribulation is a medicine for salvation.” Saint Gregory the Great tells us that to suffer with patience is a mark of predestination.

Are we making progress on the path of holiness? Developing patience is one infallible sign that we are becoming more like Jesus Christ. **ECL**



# SEMINARIAN REFLECTIONS

Reader Paul Varchola West

## TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT

In this day and age of the 24 hour news cycle, far too often news of tragedy and suffering seems to perpetually abound. Most of the time, this tragedy is seemingly someone else's problem - an earthquake halfway around the world, a tidal wave in the South Pacific, a despotic regime taking hold of a third world nation, committing unimaginable crimes against an innocent human population. It is always somewhere else. Even when tragic events occur in our own nation, we can, for the most part, rest assured that we can go to sleep that night in a state of relative safety. More often than not, the tragedy has happened elsewhere. Even an event such as the horrific terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, can have a differing degree of severity to people living in different parts of the nation. Having grown up a mere ten miles outside Manhattan, I was shocked when I moved to Los Angeles and the anniversary of that day was hardly even mentioned. It dawned on me that the impact of a tragedy, to an extent, exists on a sliding scale in regard to the emotional toll it takes on a person. Tragedy is never a good thing, and we do feel for those affected by the horrors of this world, but it is often someone else's problem. What, then, is one to do if a tragedy not only comes too close for comfort, but it directly impacts your life? Unfortunately, last month I received my answer.

The horrific Tree of Life Synagogue shooting that took place on October 27, 2018, occurred in Squirrel Hill, a quaint suburban neighborhood just barely twenty minutes across Pittsburgh from where I live at Observatory Hill. I pass through that neighborhood with my family every time I drive to my parochial assignment at Saint John the Baptist Cathedral in Munhall. I occasionally meet a friend for coffee at a coffee shop in that neighborhood. Our children have friends who live in that neighborhood and we often go to a wonderful park located right in the vicinity of where this deplorable crime took place. We do not live in Squirrel Hill, but it is most definitely part of our Pittsburgh life. On that day, we were devastated to hear of the atrocities that took place so close to where we live. I shook us pretty badly, but, it was still twenty minutes away. It affected us personally, but not directly and those events

did not necessarily have a total and complete impact on our lives in the sense that something was taken from us. That is, until later that very evening.

As I was packing up my things at the seminary, having just prayed an All-night Vigil in our warm and safe seminary chapel, I received a text message from someone with whom I worked this summer at the hospital chaplaincy internship of which I had been a part. I was delighted to see the name pop up on my phone. Then, I read the message. One of the people who was wounded in the attack happened to be a member of the chaplaincy team where I did my internship. I did not believe it. I was in complete denial. There was no way that this was true. I was informed that he had sustained multiple gunshot wounds, was in the midst of multiple surgeries and was, needless to say, in very critical condition. Things did not look good. This news was the talk of the town and here I was, for the first time in my life, personally and deeply affected by an event that was national news. This was no longer simply a headline on a screen. Whenever the news reports came on all I could think was, "I sat next to his desk every day. We

talked frequently. I admired the pictures of his family, his children. How on earth are they going to make it through this? He is such a nice guy... why?" Here I was, having come from spending my summer consoling people who had just received devastating medical news and I was at a complete loss as to what to do with myself. As I would receive regular group text message updates as to the status of his condition, I started worrying about my own children, about following my call to a priestly vocation, about my family back home. This went on for days. What was I going to do?

For lack of anything better to do, I went into the seminary chapel, simply sat with God and cried. I just let it go. My tears became my prayer. It was in this moment that I realized that this was exactly what I was supposed to be doing. I was sharing my innermost self with God. I was not partaking in social media outrage. I was not letting the polarization of our society drag me down into the sins of anger and malice. I was finding solace in God. I cried and I prayed for all those who were senselessly murdered and wounded on that day. I prayed for the families. I prayed for us,

God's faithful followers and for those who cannot understand why we believe what we do. The answer was, and still is, prayer.

While advocacy certainly is important and paramount to exacting change, we can never, ever forget to pray. It is in these darkest times that prayer is needed most. As we enter into the season of the Philip's Fast, and the days grow shorter and darker as winter steadily approaches while we await the light of the birth of Jesus Christ, our God Incarnate, I implore each and every one of us to pray. Let us pray like we have never prayed before. Bringing God to the forefront of our lives is the only way to make it through the darkest of days. We may seem lost, helplessly swirling through a world in which tragedy is the norm. Whenever this occurs, most of all when it is too close for comfort, rest assured that God is there, waiting to comfort us when we helpless humans need it most of all. God will, as He has so often throughout the ages, see us through.

My colleague is out of critical condition and is headed down a long road of recovery. Glory to God!—*Slava Bohu!* **ECL**

### St Ann Byzantine Catholic Church

5408 Locust Lane, Harrisburg, PA

#### Parish Education Calendar 2018 - 2019

#### Join the St. Ann Parish family for these upcoming spiritual formation events

- Parish Meager Meal & Moleben Prayer Service with speaker each week, Wednesdays December 5, 12, & 19, 2018 starting in the parish hall at 5:30 PM.
- Parish Lenten Reflection given by Fr. John Zeyak: Date TBA.
- Pysanky Workshop: Sunday March 24, 2019. Registration Required.
- "Being the Hands, Feet, and Heart of Jesus." Sr. Ruth Plante, Provincial, Sisters of St. Basil, Uniontown. Parish Formation Day Retreat: Sunday May 19, 2019 following Divine Liturgy.

All programs take place at St. Ann Byzantine Catholic Church, 5408 Locust Lane, Harrisburg, PA 17109. For more details on events, location, or speakers, please contact the parish office at 717-652-1415.



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## UPCOMING EPARCHIAL AND PARISH EVENTS

### DECEMBER

- 6 Our Holy Father Nicholas the Wonderworker  
*Solemn Holy Day\*Chancery closed*
- 8 Maternity of the Holy Anna  
*Solemn Holy Day*
- 24 Vigil of Christmas  
*Chancery closed*
- 25 Nativity of Our Lord, God, and Savior, Jesus Christ  
*Holy Day of Obligation\*Chancery closed*
- 26 Synaxis of the Theotokos  
*Solemn Holyday\*Chancery closed*
- 27 Holy Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen  
*Simple Holyday\*Chancery closed*

- 28 Holy 20,000 Martyrs of Nicomedia  
*Chancery closed*
- 29 Saturday after Christmas
- 30 Sunday after Christmas
- 31 Our Venerable Mother Melany  
*New Year's Eve\*Chancery closed*

### JANUARY, 2019

- 1 Our Holy Father Basil the Great & Circumcision of Our Lord  
*Chancery closed Happy New Year!*
- 6 Holy Theophany of Our Lord  
*Holy Day of Obligation*
- 17-18 Vigil for Life  
*Washington, DC See page 2 for details*