



EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

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THE BRIDEGROOM ICON

Father Joseph Bertha, PhD. Originally appeared in the February 21, 1999, issue of the ECL

One of the most captivating and yet enigmatic icons of Our Blessed Lord is the Bridegroom (*nymphios* in Greek) icon. It is based on several interconnected Old and New Testament scripture passages. This icon is perfectly suited for our contemplation during the period of the Great Fast because it depicts Our Beloved Savior suffering the Passion in His great love for mankind.

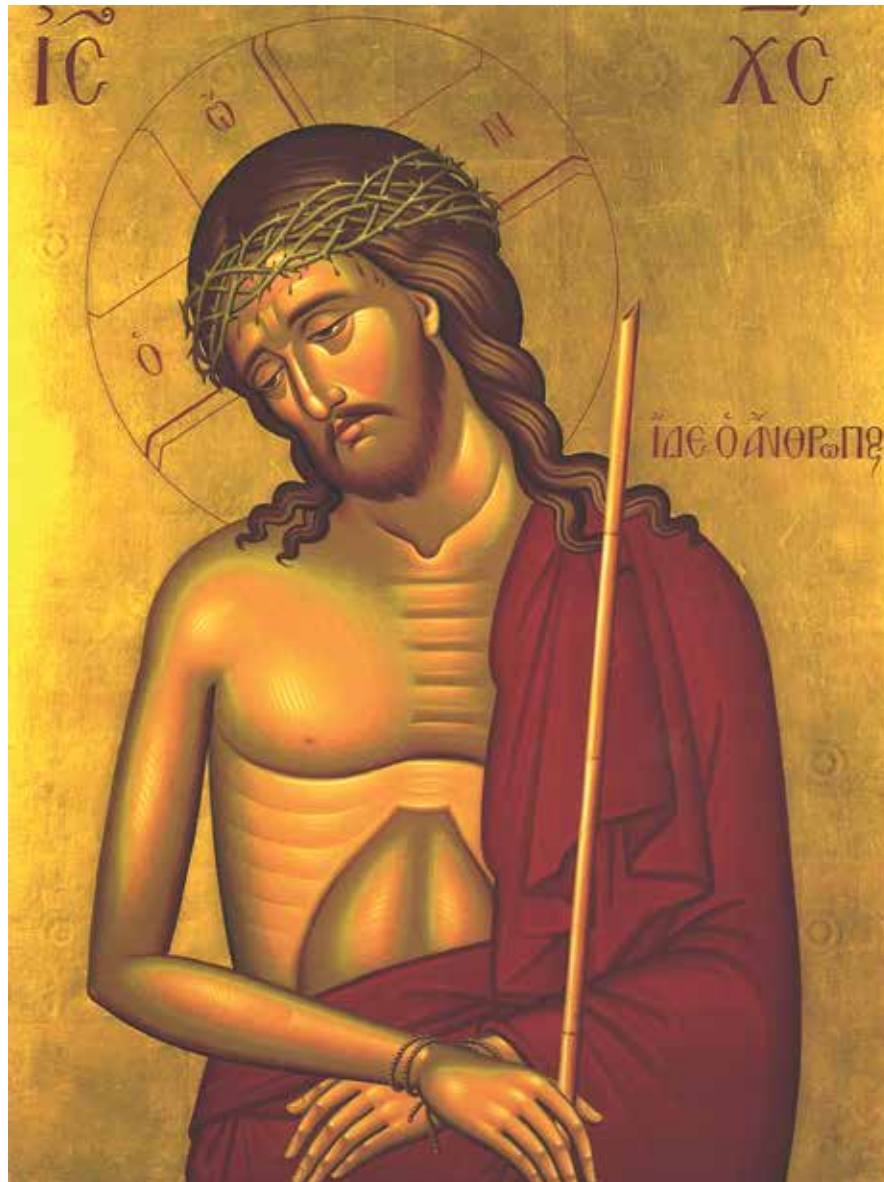
In the Old Testament, the covenant relationship between God and man is frequently described as that between a bride and a groom or as a wedding. The Prophet Hosea decries Israel's violation of the covenant with God as adulterous and prophesies about Israel's return through pardon and repentance, referring to the chosen people as a bride. "So I will allure her, I will lead her into the desert and speak to her heart." (Hosea 2:16) Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel condemn the chosen people for violating the marriage covenant with God, but anticipate the coming of the Messiah as a bridegroom to reestablish this covenant. In the great messianic oracles of Deutero-Isaiah, we read about the resplendent return of the Bridegroom, "For He Who has become your husband is your Maker. His name is the Lord of hosts; your redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, called God of all the earth." (Isaiah 54:5)

Psalm 45, subtitled the Nuptial Ode for the Messianic King, describes the Bridegroom as "fairer in beauty than the sons of men; grace is poured out upon your lips thus God has blessed you forever." (verse 3) And, "...may your right hand show your wondrous deeds," (verse 5) "a tempered rod is your royal scepter," (verse 7) "with myrrh and aloes and cassia your robes are fragrant." (verse 9)

In the New Testament, two parables found in the Gospel of Matthew continue the Old Testament wedding theme and identify Christ as the Bridegroom. The first is the Parable of the Unworthy Wedding Guest found in Matthew 22:1-14; the second is that of the Wise and Foolish Virgins in Matthew 25: 1-13. Both parables are understood by Saint John Chrysostom in his homilies on Saint Matthew to refer to Jesus Christ as the Bridegroom; the five foolish virgins and the improperly dressed wedding guest are identified as the chosen people, who have forfeited

their invitation to the wedding banquet because they are not vigilant and they mistreated and killed God's prophets and beloved Son. Our unreported sin separates us from from reception by the Bridegroom.

been married five times. Thereupon Our Blessed Savior presents Himself as Bridegroom to her and promises the fathomable waters of eternal life and salvation.



Icon of Christ the Bridegroom

The Gospel of John begins with Christ's first public miracle at the Wedding Feast of Cana, which is read at Eastern Christian weddings. This Gospel miracle prophetically prefigures the Bridegroom Christ shedding His Blood, symbolized by the wine miracle. Soon afterwards, Saint John the Forerunner refers to Our Blessed Lord as "Bridegroom." "It is the groom who has the bride. The groom's best man waits there listening for Him and is overjoyed to His voice. That is my joy and it is complete." (John 3:29)

The encounter of Our Lord with the woman at the Samaritan well reiterates the failed marriage theme of the Old Testament. In this instance, the Samaritan Woman (a non-Jew), confessed to Our Lord that she had no husband (bridegroom), even though she had

Many of these scriptural verses appear in Eastern Christian Lenten services, particularly in two: first, the Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete, which is chanted on the fifth Thursday in Great Lent and whose general theme is that of repentance and forgiveness. This service contains all of the New Testament citations quote above in Canticle 9 and portrays the covenant relationship between Christ (the Bridegroom) and the Church as a wedding. "Marriage is honorable, and the marriage bed undefiled. For on both, Christ has given His blessing, eating in the flesh at the wedding in Cana, turning water into wine and revealing His first miracle, to bring thee, my soul, to a change of life."

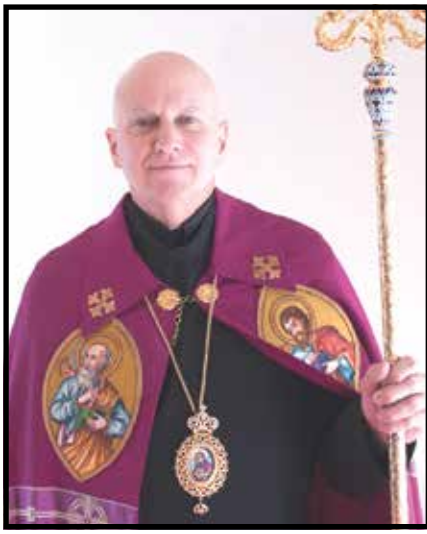
The second service is the Matins of the Bridegroom, chanted on the first three

days of Holy Week, and illustrates, for believers, Christ as Bridegroom, who comes to establish the New Covenant, His church. The Bridegroom Matins is known for the following special hymn: "Behold, the Bridegroom comes in the middle of the night, and blessed is the servant whom He shall find watching; and again unworthy is he whom He shall find heedless. Beware, therefore, O my soul, lest you be born down with sleep, lest you be given up to death, and lest you be shut out from the Kingdom. Wherefore rouse yourself and cry, 'Holy, Holy, Holy are You, our God: through the protection of the heavenly hosts, save us.'"

These many scriptural references are necessary to help explain the iconography of the Bridegroom icon. Christ is portrayed an stripped of His garments, crowned with thorns, holding a rod, in His right hand, clothed with a scarlet red cloak/himation (after being mocked and crowned by the soldiers), hands tied, but not yet pierced by wounds of the crucifixion. Under the crown of thorns, the shedding of His Precious Blood is depicted and His eyes are downcast. He does not look at those accosting Him! Our Lord's glance does not meet the viewer of the icon, but in meek humility demonstrates His obedience to the Father's will of accepting death on the cross. The Greek inscription identifies Him as Jesus Christ the Bridegroom. The cross engraved in His halo is inscribed in the Greek letters, "He Who is," (God) while the caved-in chest of Our Lord portrays Him as hardly breathing after the lashings which have been inflicted.

Contrast the Bridegroom icon of Our Lord with our own image of a bridegroom. We usually picture a bridegroom to have carefully groomed hair, to be clothed in a resplendent tuxedo, with hands untied, his head crowned with the marriage wreath, ready to meet his bride. This Bridegroom icon is closely related to, yet distinct from, the "Do not weep for me, O Mother," an icon which portrays Christ after His death and burial with His Holy Mother standing next to Him in indescribable sorrow and in a tender embrace.

This Bridegroom icon of Christ reminds us especially during the period of the Great Fast how our sins violate the covenant and inflict His suffering, passion, and death. Through our confession of our sins, our repentance, our works of charity, and fasting, we prepare our souls and await the arrival of the Bridegroom, Christ. **ECL**



I LIFT UP MY EYES...

Pastoral Reflections of Bishop Kurt



THE THEOLOGY OF THE BODY

I found his oleaginous smirking at the Holy Father so creepy that I could never stand to see him again, even to this day. I suppose the content of the news broadcast was determined by his superiors, but his delivery intended to mock the pope was surely his own.

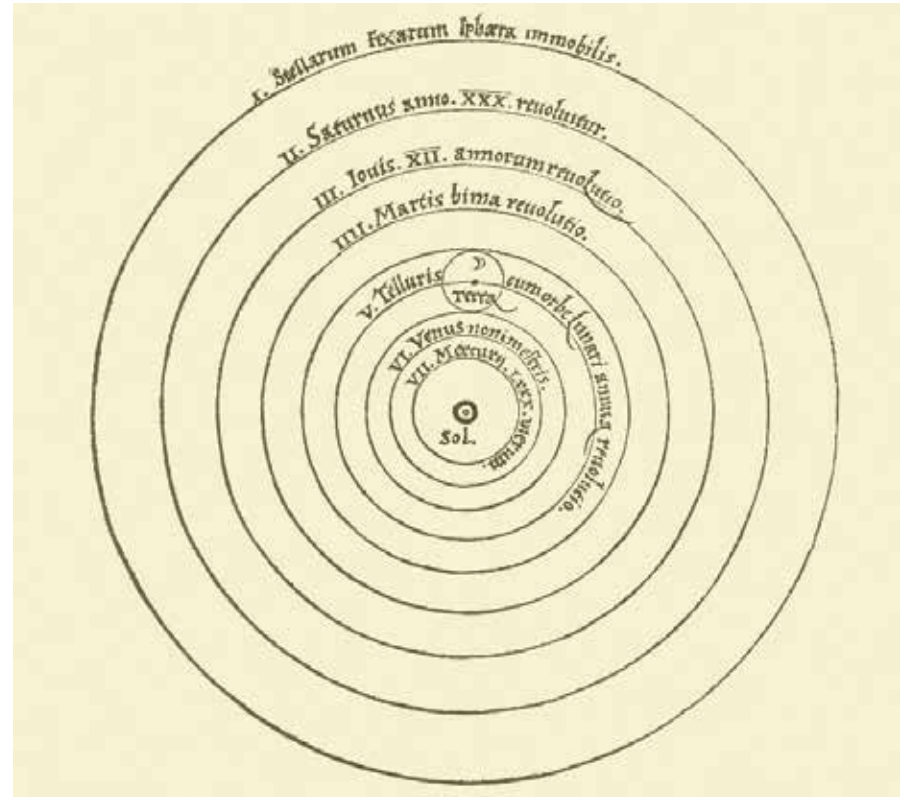
Who was this man, Pope John Paul now a canonized saint? And what was his message that the American news media set out to ridicule? Karol Wojtyła was a man born in Poland who suffered great personal tragedy in his youth and born into an era when Poland was one of the nations most tortured by foreign invaders and the satanic ideologies of Nazism and Communism. Karol was born on May 18, 1920. Only a few months later, the Red Army swept through Poland as far as Warsaw. Poland had only regained its status as an independent nation in 1919, having been partitioned in 1795. (By the way, it was a great honor to our own Tom Duch that he was chosen as Grand Marshall of the Pulaski Day Parade in New York City in 2019, the one hundredth anniversary of the new formation of the Polish state.) The Red Army was sent to make Poland a bridge to the west and establish communism throughout Europe. In the chaotic aftermath of World War I, Lenin believed there would be uprisings and revolutions throughout western Europe and England if the Red Army could capture the Polish capital of Warsaw, probably ending the new Polish state. In August of 1920, when Karol Wojtyła was a few months old, the Polish Army recovered from a series of retreats and broke the Red Army outside Warsaw in a battle called the "Miracle on the Vistula." A British diplomat wrote a book about the battle calling it the "Eighteenth Decisive Battle of the World"—considering it one of the battles that changed world history. The battle was long and complicated. After the Poles captured one of the Russian radio stations, there was only one other station and it broadcast on a fixed frequency. The Poles did not want to reveal that they had cracked the Russian codes, so they nullified that remaining station by broadcasting on the same frequency, reading the Book of Genesis continually in Latin and Polish. The inability of the Red Army to communicate was one factor in the outcome. The Polish army was unable to

follow up the victory with a complete capture of the Red Army, which would have also changed history, but they drove them out of Poland for the next 19 years.

Edmund died in an outbreak of scarlet fever when Karol was 12. Now only his father was left, an officer in the Polish army. In high school, he was an active youth, involved in sports, especially soccer, as a goaltender. In order to dif-

Around 1980 I purchased my first television because I purchased my first small computer, an Atari 800, and it used a television for a screen. Before that, if you wanted a small computer, you had to build your own. During the 1970's, I had a job at a company that made special valves for gas chromatographs, and I built a computer with a Motorola processor to run the machine shop. Before I built that, the machines were programmed by connecting aquarium hoses to compressed air. The reason that people programmed with compressed air in machine shops was that a spark might be dangerous. With the new silicon chips available, there was no danger of a spark, and our machine shop entered the electronic digital age—as opposed to the compressed air digital age. Most people probably do not know that there was a compressed air digital age. In order to manufacture a different part, the machinist only had to turn a dial on my little computer, instead of rerouting a web of air hoses. The different parts were preprogrammed on a "PROM," a stable memory chip. I don't regret buying that computer, but I do regret buying a television.

My television had the quirk that every time it was turned on, it began with Channel 2, which was CBS in Salt Lake City. Sometimes I turned on the evening news when I ate dinner, and I remember for a period of time that when I turned on the TV, the screen filled with the face of the CBS anchor, and he began the evening news by reporting on Pope John Paul II. The Holy Father was giving a series of talks at his Wednesday audiences on love, gender, sexuality, and creation. The anchorman of CBS began each Wednesday evening with an inaccurate quote from the Holy Father taken out of context, followed by a long pause while he smirked at the camera. Although at the time, I didn't have any idea what the Pope was really saying and was busy with other things,



Copernicus' Model of the Solar System

Although most of the west was complacently unaware of the disaster that was averted, Lenin gave a speech in 1920 in which he said that the Polish war, "was a most important turning point not only in the politics of the Soviet Union but also in world politics." He said that England and Germany were "seething" with revolution and ripe for the taking. The Poles had struck a "gigantic, unheard of defeat" for world revolution. He concluded, "we will keep shifting from a defensive to an offensive strategy over and over again until we finish them off for good." Indeed, this first significant defeat of the Red Army kept Bolshevism confined to the Soviet Union until it was unleashed into eastern Europe by western leaders at the end of World War II.

Into this molten crucible was born Karol, who would become one of the most influential successors of Saint Peter. When Karol was eight, his mother, Emilia, died. His only sister Olga died as an infant before Karol was born. His older brother Edmund was a physician.

fuse tension between the Catholic and the Jewish soccer teams, he often volunteered to serve as goalkeeper for the Jewish team. He remained athletic his whole adult life. I heard in Rome that soon after he became pope, he sneaked out of the Vatican with someone to go skiing clandestinely. The Italian government knew they couldn't stop him, but they asked him to at least let them know. The first girl to win the heart of the teen age Karol Wojtyła was a Jewish girl called Ginka Beer. When he finished high school, his father moved with him to Krakow so that he could attend the Jagellonian University.

The Jagellonian University was founded in 1364, and one of its notable alumni is Nicholas Copernicus. Copernicus was also orphaned as a youth, and his uncle, a Catholic bishop, looked after his education. After his time in Krakow, Copernicus was sent by his uncle to study canon law at the University of Bologna, the oldest university in the world. Copernicus himself was ordained to minor orders. He wasn't too interested in

BISHOP'S ANNUAL APPEAL 2019 Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic

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

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canon law, and spent most of his time studying astronomy instead, so it took him seven years to earn his doctorate. He was in Rome for the jubilee year of 1500, perhaps for an apprenticeship at the papal court, but instead he gave private lectures on astronomy. At the age of 30, he returned to Poland and spent the next forty years there until his death at 70. He functioned as physician to his uncle and his successor bishop and was in demand as a physician by other aristocrats. He was economist, treasurer, and military leader. It seems that by 1532, Copernicus had completed his treatise *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* which many consider the beginning of modern science, although he had shown his friends a manuscript before 1514 outlining his heliocentric theory of the solar system with his seven “assumptions.” In 1533, a German scholar presented the theory in a series of lectures in Rome attended by Pope Clement VII and a few cardinals, and the pope rewarded the lecturer with a gift. In 1536, the Cardinal Archbishop of Capua wrote to Copernicus about the new theory, entreating him with “the utmost earnestness” to publish his work for other scholars to use. Copernicus finally allowed his treatise to be published in 1543, the same year he died. The treatise was dedicated to Pope Paul III. In his book on great scientists, Stephen Hawking makes the bizarre statement that Copernicus probably delayed publication because of “fear of the Church,” showing how deeply anti-Catholic prejudice goes in English culture. Most science historians consider Tycho Brahe the “successor” to Copernicus, and I was surprised to learn that Brahe never accepted that the earth moves around the sun. Some scholars claim that 60 years after the

publication of the treatise, only 15 astronomers in Europe believed the Copernican theory of the solar system. I also learned that Tycho lost his nose in a duel after an argument at a party about who was the better mathematician. He wore a brass prosthetic nose the rest of his life, or a gold or silver one on special occasions. I don’t remember anyone at my graduate school with that kind of passion!

Let’s get back to the young man, Karol Wojtyła, at the Jagellonian University in the 1930’s. On August 23, 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union signed a nonaggression pact, which included a secret protocol (revealed at the Nuremberg trials) that included the division of Poland. (The existence of the protocol was denied by the Soviet government until 1989.) On September 1, 1939, Hitler invaded Poland, and 16 days later, Stalin invaded from the other direction. The Germans and Soviets cooperated in every way during the invasions, even holding joint military parades afterwards in places like Lviv. They also cooperated in the “purging” of resistance after the conquest. At the beginning of September, propaganda from Moscow stopped criticizing the Nazis, and reversed its stance. Western communists fell into line and began criticizing France and Britain for attacking Hitler. One might think that the parts of Poland taken by the Soviet Union were returned to Poland after World War II, but in fact they remain part of Belarus and Ukraine today.

On September 1, 1939, Karol Wojtyła left home early for Mass and confession for the First Friday. During the early Mass, they heard planes strafing the city—the beginning of the invasion.

Karol told the priest, “I must return home to be with my father” At the outbreak of the invasion, Karol and his father headed east on foot with many other Poles to escape the Nazi invasion. When news reached them of the beginning of the invasion by the Red Army, they returned to Krakow. Even the Nazis were not as frightening at that time as the communists. The new SS government announced a lecture for all the faculty and staff at the university. Many suspected a trap and avoided the lecture. Indeed, on November 6, 1939, the Nazis arrested 186 professors at the Jagellonian University and deported them to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. Sachsenhausen was where the Nazis began gassing as a form of mass execution and at least 30,000 inmates died there. After the area was invaded by the Soviet Union at the end of the war, the Soviets used it as an internment camp, Special Camp #7. About 60,000 prisoners were kept there by the Soviets, and at least 12,000 died there before it closed in 1950. In 1990 after the fall of communism, the Germans uncovered mass graves there from the Russian occupation. Only a few months after enrolling in a university in a free republic, the young Karol Wojtyła found himself at the brutal frontier between two of the most evil empires of modern times. The Nazis immediately destroyed or looted the ancient libraries and smashed the laboratories. There were special stores in town “only for Germans” with meat, bread, and butter, while the Polish population lined up at 4:00 am elsewhere hoping to get a couple of potatoes. In addition to trying to feed himself and his father, Karol needed to obtain a work card to stay in the city. Every able-bodied male between 14 and 60 had to have a job, or

else be sent to a concentration camp or executed. He found a job of manual labor, a *robotnyk*, at a quarry working for the Solvay chemical company. For the next four years he walked to work every day, using petroleum jelly in the winter to keep his face from freezing when the temperature dipped to 22 degrees below zero.

Many people living in these circumstances became cynical, understandably. They questioned the purpose of life and the providence of the Creator. During this time of bare survival under foreign occupation, and police roundups, and summary executions in the streets, Karol Wojtyła chose a different path. He first turned to a renewal of his Christian faith, learning the school of Carmelite spirituality. He then became active in the underground intellectual resistance. In a time when the invaders tried to annihilate Polish culture and faith, Karol began an underground theater movement with his friends. He wrote a series of plays and acted in them as well. For the group, he produced a new translation of Oedipus from the original Greek. These young people, while working strenuous jobs and feeding their families, found time at night twice a week for clandestine meetings and rehearsals by candlelight. As they walked to or from rehearsals, there were public notices posted of recent roundups and executions.

In addition to all the political leaders and intellectual leaders, the Nazis began arresting the priests. The priests that ministered to Karol in his youth were arrested, and some eventually executed. On February 18, 1941, when he returned from work and brought

Continued on page 8

DIRECTIVES FOR THE GREAT FAST

From the Office of the Bishop



FASTING REGULATIONS

- +All who receive Communion in the Eparchy of Passaic are required to abstain from meat on Wednesdays and Fridays of the Great Fast.
- +All adults who receive Communion in the Eparchy of Passaic are required to abstain from meat, eggs, and milk products on the first day of Lent, Monday, February 24, and on Great and Holy Friday, April 10.
- +These are the minimum requirements; however, the faithful are encouraged to do more.

Dispensation

- +Pastors and Administrators may, for a just cause, grant to the individual faithful and to individual families, dispensations or commutations of the fasting rules into other pious practices.

LITURGICAL DIRECTIVES

Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

- +All Pastors and Administrators are encouraged to celebrate the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts on Wednesdays and Fridays of the Great Fast.
- +A liturgical service at which Holy Communion is distributed may be celebrated on the other weekdays of the Great Fast.

We ask you to pray for peace throughout the world, and for the victims of war. Please remember in your prayers all those in the military who are serving our country throughout the world.

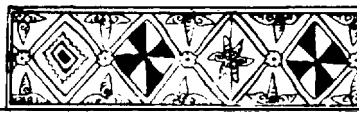
LENTEN VESPERS SCHEDULE

Wyoming Valley Protopresbyterate

- Sun., March 1, 2019..... Saint Michael, Pittston With Icon Procession
- Sun., March 8, 2019..... Saint John, Wilkes-Barre Twp.
- Sun., March 15, 2019 Saint Nicholas, Swoyersville

- Sun., March 22, 2019 Saint Mary, Wilkes-Barre
- Sun., March 29, 2019 Saint Mary, Kingston

All Vespers will start at 3 PM followed by the opportunity for private confession and light Lenten refreshments provided by the host parishes afterward.



PEOPLE YOU KNOW AROUND THE EPARCHY

IN NEWARK...

SAINT NICHOLAS CELEBRATION

Saint George Byzantine Catholic Church in Newark, NJ, held its annual Saint Nicholas celebration on Sunday, December 8, at a favorite local bistro, the Spanish Sangria, located in Newark's charming Ironbound neighborhood. Following Liturgy at noon, the parishioners adjourned to the Spanish Sangria where they enjoyed a festive dinner accompanied by strolling musicians. The parishioners are always eager to provide the guitarist and violinist with special requests. Father David J. Baratelli is the parish administrator and Mr. Kenneth Dilks is the parish cantor. Saint George Parish will be celebrating its 100th Anniversary on October 18, 2020.



IN PASSAIC...

SAINT NICHOLAS AND THEOPHANY

Children at Saint Michael's Chapel, Woodland Park, enjoyed a breakfast buffet and a visit from Saint Nicholas on Saturday, December 4, 2019.



The faithful of Saint Michael's Cathedral celebrated the blessing of the Passaic River at the Dundee Dam, Garfield, NJ, on January 6, 2020. Garfield's mayor, town manager, and chief of police were among the dignitaries in attendance.



IN POCONO SUMMIT...

SAINT NICHOLAS CELEBRATION

Members of Saint Nicholas of Myra Byzantine Catholic Church in Pocono Summit, PA, gather for the annual celebration of their parish patronal feast



IN ORMOND BEACH... BISHOP KURT VISITS PARISH FOR RIVER BLESSING



On January 12, the Sunday after the Theophany of Our Lord, Holy Dormition Byzantine Catholic Church in Ormond Beach, FL, welcomed Bishop Kurt for a pastoral visit to the parish. Bishop Kurt celebrated the Divine Liturgy with Father Vincent Brady, Associate Pastor, as con-celebrant, preached the homily, and after services, visited with parishioners during the coffee social.

Later in the afternoon, Bishop Kurt and parishioners traveled to Fortunato Park in Ormond Beach for the blessing of the Halifax River. During the celebration, a three-branched candle, symbolic of the light of Christ and the Holy Trinity, was immersed into the water three times reminding us of the Holy Trinity which is revealed at the baptism of Jesus Christ. Bishop Kurt sprinkled the people present with the newly-blessed water and

they were invited to come and drink of it. The waters were poured into the river and the service concluded with Bishop Kurt throwing a three-barred cross made of ice into the Halifax River. After the blessing of the river the group traveled to a local restaurant, where on a Sunday afternoon they ended their Christmas celebrations, quietly, over a nice dinner. Father Sal Pignato is the administrator of Holy Dormition Parish.



SAVE THE DATE

Crowned in Love — A Byzantine Pre-Cana Program —

Sponsored by the Syncellate for the State of New Jersey

Saturday, February 8, 2020. 9AM to 4PM

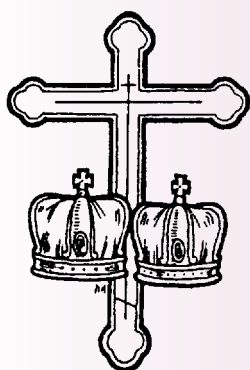
Saint Michael Chapel, 415 Lackawanna Avenue, Woodland Park, NJ.

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 2021 are urged to attend.

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

**SATURDAY, FEB 8
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 Saint Michael's Cathedral.



BYZANTINE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY IN THE VILLAGES, FL, WELCOMES BISHOP KURT



On Saturday, January 11, 2020, Bishop Kurt graced our Byzantine Catholic Community in The Villages, FL, with his presence for Divine Liturgy for Theophany, which he co-celebrated with Father Olexiy Nebesnyk. Father Olexiy prayed the Great Blessing of the Water. Adding to the splendor of the Liturgy and Blessing of Water was the singing of forty-nine faithful led by two guest cantors. The Divine Liturgy was in the 200-seat Chapel of Saint Mark the Evangelist RC Church, Summerfield, FL. At the conclusion of the Liturgy, we were grateful to hear a smiling Bishop Kurt remark "God must really love you people." Following, a luncheon was held in honor of Bishop Kurt at Glenview Country Club in The Villages.

Comments by Mrs. Barbara Chabalko, formerly of Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church, Hazleton, PA, aptly describe the day. "It was a memorable day of worship and fellowship with fellow Byzantine Catholics. It's wonderful that we are able to celebrate and worship here in Florida the way we did

back in Pennsylvania. We are grateful to Father Olexiy for travelling to meet our spiritual needs. His youth and energy are inspiring to us as worshippers. And, we are honored and thankful to Bishop Kurt for visiting our blossoming community. It was very uplifting to socialize with our fellow worshippers over lunch...There was a lot of fun and laughter comparing our life experiences growing up and practicing our faith as Byzantine Catholics in different parts of the country. It's a unique experience like nowhere else!"

Barbara's comments can be echoed every time we gather as a faith community to pray and socialize, for *God is With Us!*

The Byzantine Catholic Community is a Mission of Saint Anne Byzantine Catholic Church, New Port Richey, FL. Father Olexiy Nebesnyk serves Saint Anne as well as the Community in the Villages.

Our Byzantine Community in The Villages is comprised of members living

in the North Central Florida area. At present, members who moved to the area hail from parishes in New York, Connecticut, New Jersey, Eastern and Western Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, and Texas. We are presently in Phase 1 of our development, making our presence known to more Byzantine Catholics. A website and Facebook page are in the offing and a myriad of communication means are being employed to publicize our existence. The Villages alone has approximately 150,000 households, in three counties, and covers an area as large as Manhattan. There are four Roman Catholic Churches with 4,000 to 6,000 members each. In total, there are 240 houses of worship within the area of The Villages. With these numbers, we are seeking Byzantine Catholics. If you live in the area, full or part-time, or have relatives or friends living here, please contact Dr. Barbara Y. Lutz, Lay Representative, by phone for more information, call or text: 350-530-9631. *Christ is Among Us! He is and always will be!*

UPCOMING EVENTS

February 1: 1:00 p.m. Vigil Divine Liturgy: Encounter with Simeon, Divine Liturgy and blessing of candles. Luncheon follows.

February 15: 1:00 p.m. Vigil Divine Liturgy: Sunday of Meat Fare

March 7: 1:00 p.m. Vigil Divine Liturgy: 2nd Sunday of The Great Fast

March 21: Noon, Ethnic Pot-Luck Luncheon at Oxford Community Center

All Divine Liturgies held in the Chapel of Saint Mark the Evangelist RC Church, 7081 Hwy 42, Summerfield, FL



CELEBRATING A CENTURY OF MINISTRY

The Sisters of Saint Basil the Great, Uniontown, PA

The Sisters of Saint Basil of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Province are planning a yearlong celebration to commemorate a *Century of Ministry* in the Byzantine Catholic Church in America. Founded on January 19, 1921, the years of the Province closely parallel the years of our Church and its people.



Mother Macrina, foundress

Father Gabriel Martyak, Apostolic Administrator, invited Mother Macrina Melnychuk, who was Superior in Philadelphia at that time, to form a second branch of the Order to serve the people of Ruthenian descent. Mother Macrina and two other Sisters accepted this invitation to begin a new foundation for this purpose.

The Greek Catholic Union played a significant part in the lives of the Sisters and the Greek Catholic faithful. In order to care for the many orphans, the GCU built Saint Nicholas Orphanage in Elmhurst, PA. The Sisters responded to the call of the GCU to staff this institution. One wing became the living quarters for the Sisters. An increase in



The first convent near Holy Ghost, Cleveland, Ohio

the number of orphans and new vocations necessitated another move, this time to Factoryville near Scranton, PA.

This third location was remote from any Byzantine parishes and clergy, so

Once more, the Providence of Almighty God intervened, and this led to the final move. It is no secret that the acquisition of the Mount Saint Macrina property was made possible by the contributions of the people from what little they themselves had. The year 1934 saw the beginning of a *Phenomenon of God's Grace*, the Pilgrimage to the Shrine of



tion. As the people moved westward and the Metropolitan Church was created, the Sisters have served in all four eparchies. Their ministerial significance in the life of our Church could go on and on and on.

The first and foremost sentiment of the Sisters for this unparalleled ministry for God, His Church and His People, is immense gratitude. In being able to share so much in relationship with the hierarchs, clergy and people, they are gratefully aware that they have received much more than they have given. Through these many years, the lives of the Sisters and the people of our Church have beautifully intersected: in prayer, ministry, mutual support, and simply being together and for each other through times both good and difficult.

Sister Ruth, the Provincial, and the Sisters ask that everyone join them in thanksgiving and celebration. May God accept our efforts and our gratitude, and may He continue to abundantly bless us and everyone in His Church for the next 100 years!



Saint Nicholas Orphanage, Elmhurst, PA

The initial help for the new foundation came from Father Joseph Hanulya, pastor of Holy Ghost Church in Cleveland, OH. Father provided a ten-room house which became the first formal novitiate. As did the others who came to this new land, they immediately went to work. Initially, the small community began caring for orphaned children, later including teaching and catechesis.

spiritual benefits were lacking. Thus, the Sisters began to look for a still more suitable locality. Financially, the purchase of lands or a building seemed impossible. The money painstakingly saved by the Sisters through the years had been totally lost in the bank failure during the Great Depression.

Our Lady of Perpetual Help. Gathering people from all over the country and beyond, this event has held the Byzantine Catholic Church together, uniting her bishops, clergy, monastics and laity to a vision beyond parish or eparchy.

As schools were needed, the Sisters became professional educators to staff them. They published liturgical books with English translations from the Old Slavonic as the language changed. The Second Vatican Council instructed the Church to renew, and they participated in programs of Renewal and Revitaliza-



A new location in Factoryville, Pennsylvania

Century of Ministry Sisters of Saint Basil the Great 2020-2021 Events for the Year

- January 19: Founder's Day – begin yearlong celebration of our Century of Ministry
- March 8: Open House at Monastery for National Catholic Sisters Week and recognition of our 100th Anniversary
- May 25: Panachida on Memorial Day remembering Mother Macrina and all deceased Sisters
- July 20-24: Community Week- share stories of Community Life Invite Associates for social Pilgrimage: Sisters present Enrichment Sessions - telling our History
- October 18: Divine Liturgy and Dinner at Cathedral in Munhall, PA
- January 19, 2021: Founder's Day celebration for Sisters as we begin a new Century of Ministry

Theology of the Body

...Continued from page 3

dinner home, he found his father had died that day. All of his immediate family was gone; he was an orphan, and he had witnessed violent death all around him now for over two years. Karol continued his spiritual journey and his activity in the intellectual underground resistance. A year and half later, in the autumn of 1942, Karol walked to the residence of the Archbishop of Krakow and asked to become a seminarian.

The Gestapo worked relentlessly to cripple the seminary without closing it, and had forbidden the acceptance of new seminarians. So the Archbishop took the whole seminary underground. Seminarians were accepted secretly, studied at home, and met with professors when possible. No one knew how long the occupation would last, so the Archbishop hoped to continue the priesthood underground in this manner. Karol was now living a new kind of double life under the Nazi rule. He often went to the Archbishop's residence before work to serve Mass. In April of 1944, he showed up for Mass, but his fellow server and fellow seminarian Jerzy Zachuta did not arrive. He went by his apartment after Mass and found out that he was taken by the Gestapo that night. A few days later, Jerzy's name appeared on posters listing executions by the Gestapo.

In August of 1944, the Warsaw uprising occurred. As Germany was losing the war, and the Red Army was approaching, the Poles risked fighting the Nazis rather than fall under Soviet rule. Hitler was furious, even though he was already losing Poland to the Red Army. He ordered the complete destruction of the city. As the Red Army sat across the Vistula River and did not interfere, Warsaw was destroyed. Hitler ordered that nothing over two feet high should be left. On August 6, 1944, the Gestapo began sweeping through Krakow rounding up all young men to prevent a similar uprising. Karol made it to the Archbishop's residence with the help of a woman who walked one block ahead of him to make sure the coast was clear. The Archbishop dressed his seminarians in cassocks and said they were all "priest secretaries." When these men stopped showing up for work, the Polish supervisors helped to remove their names from the work rolls so that they disappeared. As the Pope himself said later, they were "unable to find his trail." It might be a good time to remember that the reason he survived was because God has a plan for each one of us, and He is in charge of our destiny, no matter how much the world tries to convince us otherwise.

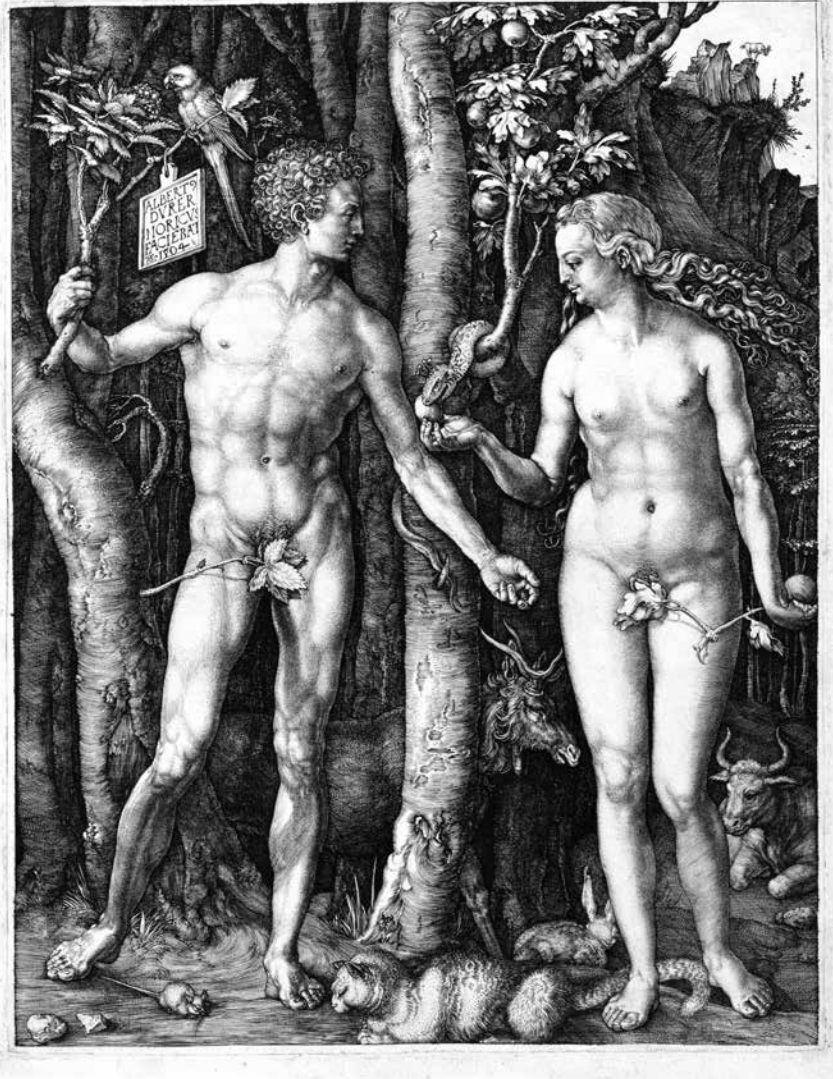
There is a saying that World War II is the war that Poland lost twice. Some years ago, everyone else celebrated the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II, but the Polish government did not participate. They reminded the world that they were abandoned into a second tyranny of atheistic terror under the rule of the Soviet communists. Under this new rule, Karol Wojtyła was ordained a priest, and sent to Rome for his doctorate. Returning to Poland, he began his life work, working especially with young families, always seeking life in the shadow of death. The Communists built one of the largest steel mills in the world and a city for workers with no church. So as a young bishop, Karol Wojtyła celebrated Mass in a field for years, while relentlessly petitioning the government for permission to build a church. The communists were very clever in their destruction of society. For example, they would create work schedules so that married couples never had time together. Learning a lesson from the Nazis, they had an endless stream of youth activities, separating them from their parents. I am told by people who lived under communism that the constant spying, and relatives reporting on each other, and children reporting on their parents, created a society in which no one trusted anyone else. Or more accurately, it destroyed human society.

Formed and then ministering in this hellish cauldron of the Nazis and the Communists, the future pope forged his gospel of life, and was an eyewitness to what he called "the culture of death."

Any reasonable observer might think that a man who defied the Nazis as Karol did, who attended rehearsals and meetings in the night while the Gestapo patrolled the city, would be a heroic figure to American intelligentsia and popular in the entertainment industry. Any reasonable person would expect the American news media to compete to have private interviews with him. Why was it that he was mocked and ridiculed so publicly by the American news networks? Even at his funeral, I was shocked by their inaccurate and biased coverage. I well remember those days in Rome. Three million people crowded into the city. The line to view his body was 24 hours long, yet for nine days people stood in line for a few seconds next to his body. In the midst of this astounding event, CNN flew in their star international reporter. She grabbed the first available microphone, looked around in disbelief at the vast crowds, and remonstrated deliriously before the camera, "It's amazing to see how these *simple* people can still find some *affection* in their hearts for this man who *hurt* them so much." It

wasn't enough for her to look down on the pope, CNN's star reporter also put down everyone who showed up for his funeral.

The Holy Father's one hundred and thirty-three (that's right 133) teachings present a vast and deep landscape of the topics of human relationships. Some



Adam and Eve by Albrecht Dürer

What was his teaching that so offended the news media? In 1960, when Karol Wojtyła was Archbishop of Krakow, he published a book that rather shocked Poland. His book, *Love and Responsibility*, talked candidly about love, sensuality, friendship, desire, gender, and sexuality, showing how these are all part of God's loving plan and His beautiful creation. Polish Catholics were astonished to see a bishop talk openly about intimate matters. It was a bestseller!

After his election as pope in fall 1978, the successor to Peter, John Paul began a series of talks at his Wednesday audiences on September 5, 1979. At the time, no one knew that a truly great teaching was being presented before the world. Over the next five years, at most of the Wednesday audiences, the pope systematically covered a complete Christian understanding of human love, sex, gender, and our divine purpose based on the scriptures, especially the Book of Genesis, the Gospel, and the Letter to the Ephesians. Whenever I gave marriage instructions, we always read together both Jesus's teaching on marriage from the Gospels and also the creation from the Book of Genesis. Reading through the talks of the Pope, I'm amazed at the details he notices that I overlooked.

years ago, a couple in my parish gave me a popular lecture series on CD's about the teachings. When I listened, my general impression was that it was a summary of what we already emphasize in our Byzantine heritage, namely, that we are made in the image and likeness of God Himself. For this column, I purchased the complete lectures in a paperback. As I read through them, I am astonished at the depth and richness of Saint John Paul's thought and learning. Beginning with the words of Christ in the Gospel of Saint Matthew when He is asked about divorce. "Haven't you read that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female, and said, for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh? So, they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no man put asunder." Then Jesus says, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning." The Holy Father takes note that Jesus says "the beginning" twice. (I never thought about that.) He makes the point that true happiness and our purpose are found by going back to the beginning... who are we? how were we made? why are we here? The Holy Father is gradually leading his general

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Roswell, GA 30076
1-770-993-0973

Saint Basil the Great

1475 N.E. 199th Street
Miami, FL 33179-5162
1-786-320-5125

Holy Dormition

17 Buckskin Lane
Ormond Beach, FL 32174
1-386-677-8704

Saints Cyril and Methodius

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Fort Pierce, FL 34982
1-772-595-1021

Our Lady of the Sign

7311 Lyons Road
Coconut Creek, FL 33073
1-954-429-0056

Saint Nicholas of Myra

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Orlando, FL 32819
1-407-351-0133

Saint Therese

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

audience, not a philosophy class, into deep metaphysics. As an aside, whenever I read this passage with a couple preparing for marriage, I always asked them if they knew that Jesus taught that his followers cannot divorce. Every couple said they were unaware of it. It's easy in America to think that it is some quirk of the Catholic denomination because all the other Christian denominations abandoned that teaching of Jesus. Every couple said they thought it was a teaching of the Catholic denomination with no idea Jesus said it.

After his exposition of Genesis and creation, the Holy Father moves on to the teaching of Jesus in the Beatitudes. He calls it the appeal to the heart. The Holy Father teaches, as did Jesus, the importance of the integrity of the person, or as we say nowadays, the holistic approach. When most people think of God's law, they think of rules, and they think of sin as actions. But even in the Old Testament, God says many times, "I want your heart." King David was "the man after God's own heart." In Ezekiel, God says, "I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh." In this part of the series, the Holy Father points out the triple attack on the heart by Freud, Marx, and Nietzsche. In a way, they represent the three urges that lead us astray when not disciplined: Freud in sexual desire, Marx in materialism and greed, and Nietzsche in self-aggrandizing pride. In true Christianity, the natural desires are a good thing and a gift from God. The desire for a mate, the desire to survive, and the desire to take healthy pride in ourselves, are all good desires. Freud, Marx, and Nietzsche taught that unhappiness is caused when we discipline these desires. Not only Christianity, but all great religions and philosophy taught that self-discipline and virtue lead to happiness. They remind me of a passage from G K Chesterton's *Orthodoxy*, his own journal of his search for truth that led him from agnosticism and suicide to traditional Christianity. He comments: "I have next to me a stack of books of modern philosophies.

Each one requires at the beginning that you stop believing something that your common sense tells you is true."

I can't possibly cover the teachings of Saint John Paul in this short column. I mainly wanted to introduce the teachings to people who are unfamiliar with them, or who are prejudiced against them by secular culture. When I purchased the complete lectures, even I was astonished at the richness and variety of his thought. It is a compendium of his thoughts about life and the truth while living his entire adult life in the kingdom of darkness under the culture of death, combined with his scripture studies and his studies of philosophy and spirituality. If the 133 talks are too daunting, there are many popular presentations, under the title *Theology of the Body*.

Saint John Paul invented the terms *Theology of the Body*, the *Language of the Body*, as well as *the culture of death*. It's no mere coincidence that Hitler dated his letter beginning the T-4 program September 1, 1939, the same day he invaded Poland. Saint John Paul identified from his lived experience under the Nazis and the communists that all the modern moral questions are linked together in a rejection of life: intentionally sterile sexual activity, unchastity, euthanasia, suicide, abortion, and so on. Together they are all part of the culture of death. The reason they are all linked in this way is because from the Garden Eden, Satan envied your special place in creation, and he works relentlessly and lies ceaselessly to convince you that you are not made in the image and likeness of God, and that we will be happier in sin than in God's eternal life. With each sin, he tells us the lie that we will be happier if we turn away from God, and after we fall into sin he tells us the lie that we are worthless and should hide from God. But as Our Lord said, "In the beginning, it was not this way."

It seems that every extended family in America is being touched today, not only by the issues I mentioned above,

but by the new "gender" movements. By the way, I am well aware that not everyone develops biologically the same way. I learned there are occasionally born people who don't have XY or XX chromosomes. Some have XYY or XXY, and of course physicians and psychologists try to help. Other people seem to have developmental issues based on the hormones they received from their mothers in the womb. It's a good reminder that we shouldn't judge anyone if we don't know all the facts. However, parents and medical workers who subject physically healthy children to permanent surgical mutilation, I cannot understand. Is there anyone among us who didn't change his mind about something important? How can they make these kinds of permanent irreversible mutilations to someone who is physically healthy based on the decision of a child? In some cases, it really isn't the decisions of the child at all, but really the parents. There are also cases in our country of government agents taking children away from their parents in order to do irreversible surgery on them before puberty. In one of my parishes, there was a girl born missing a foot, missing an arm, and with three fingers on one hand. Naturally everyone helped her to be happy and overcome her limitation. Part of helping her was to give her a prosthetic arm and a foot. But what if a physically healthy child asked to have her arm or foot cut off? What sane surgeon would participate? What sane parent would allow it?

At the root of all the bad decisions is the basic question, *what do I desire?* instead of, *what does God desire?* Aristotle said, "all men desire to be happy." Happiness results from finding out who we really are: children of God made in His own image and likeness. We find out who we are and how to be happy by seeking

the will of God and His plan for us, not by trying to satisfy our animal urges.

If you are affected by any of these issues of modern morality, I urge you to learn the Theology of the Body presented by our Saint John Paul. The teachings that the CBS news anchor mocked in 1980 have become our fortress in time of danger. If you don't want to read all his lectures, or cannot, then find another presentation somewhere; there are many. If you know someone who is affected, gently steer him or her to study the Theology of the Body. The culture of death has its gunsight trained on all young people. No matter how much the culture of death expands, no matter how hope diminishes in our time, as Christians we know that Jesus Christ died for all these sins on the cross. Every modern perversion was already known and even common 2000 years ago. Jesus Christ conquered sin and conquered death. He said, "I go ahead of you to prepare a place for you. My Father's house has many mansions." Come, Lord Jesus.

+Kurt Bunette



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MIRACULOUS “MARY, HELPER OF MOHTERS” ICON

At the initiative of Bishop Kurt, a miraculous Marian icon will make a tour of all the Byzantine Catholic parishes in New Jersey, including the state active duty military base, and Saint Nicholas Parish in White Plains, NY, throughout 2020. It is especially beloved by women who struggle with infertility or difficult pregnancies. Several miraculous births have been attributed to this icon in the Byzantine Catholic community of Albuquerque, NM, where a copy has been venerated for twenty years.

The icon, known as the *Albazinskaya* from its place of origin on the borderlands between Russia and China, is also called “Mary, Helper of Mothers.” The original icon is credited with defending the Russian Orthodox outpost against Chinese invaders on several occasions from the 17th to the early 20th century. It depicts a calm and prayerful Virgin Mother looking directly at the faithful. She displays for us an image of her Son, newly born or perhaps yet unborn, resting over her torso.

A large, hand painted icon of the Virgin Helper of Mothers will be present in each Byzantine Catholic parish in New Jersey for two weeks or more. Bishop Kurt will personally preside over a devotional service in each parish. There will be opportunities for the faithful to venerate the icon, to engage in personal prayer, and to take home holy cards depicting the Virgin Helper of Mothers.

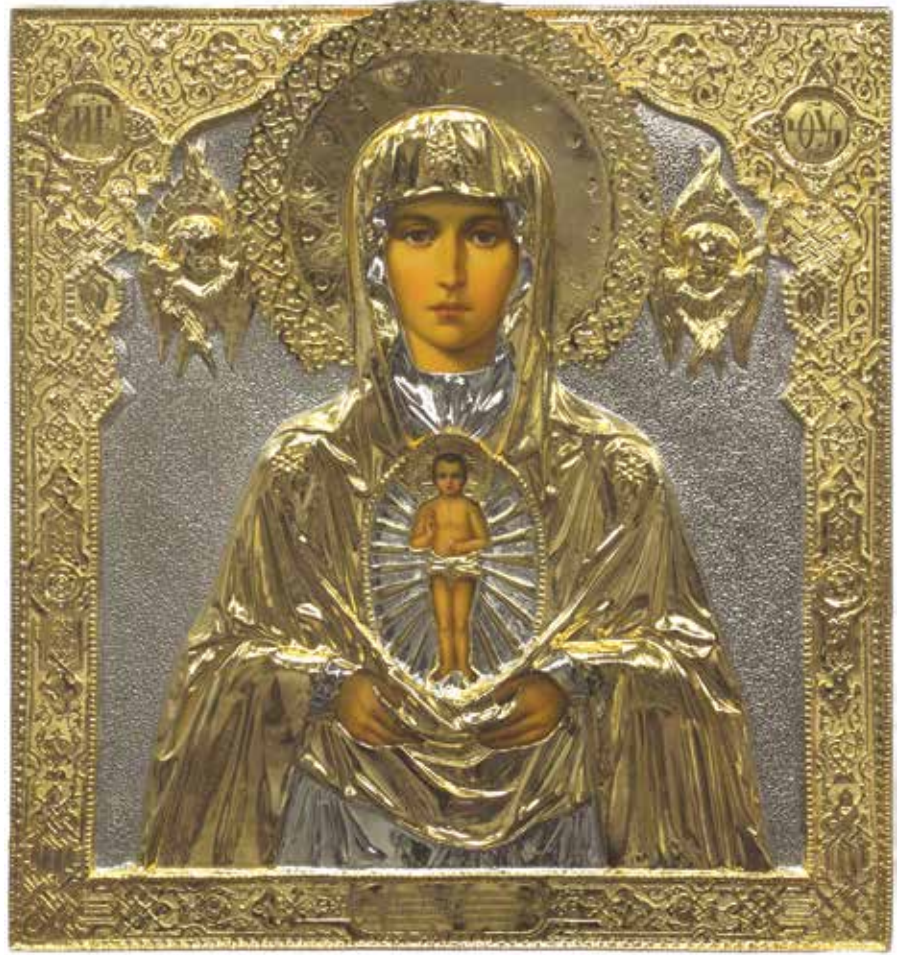
The Albazinskaya icon celebrates how God became Man, and a Virgin became His Mother. It celebrates the mysteries of conception and birth by which God has shared His creative power with married couples. It reminds us that

every human life has its origin directly from God, and it offers hope to the despondent and the oppressed.

The Byzantine Catholic parishes of New Jersey welcome our Latin Rite Catholic and Orthodox neighbors, as well as all Christians who honor the Lord’s Mother, to join in the worship service of Psalms and Scriptural readings that will be offered in each parish.

Mary Helper of Mothers will visit the following parishes:

- January 23-February 6: Cathedral of Saint Michael, Passaic • Service on Jan 29 • DINNER AT 6
- February 6-February 20: Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst Main Chapel • Service on Feb 12
- February 20-March 12: Saint Mary of the Assumption, Trenton • Service on Mar 5
- March 12-19: Saint Nicholas, Roebling • Service on Mar 17
- March 19-April 23: Saint Mary, Hillsborough • Service on Mar 31
- April 23-May 7: Saint Nicholas, Dumlenn • Service on Apr 29
- May 7-May 21: Saint Joseph, New Brunswick • Service on May 13
- May 21-June 4: Saints Peter and Paul, Somerset • Service on May 27
- June 4-June 18: Nativity of our Lord, East Brunswick • Service on Jun 16
- June 18-July 2: Saint Michael, Perth Amboy • Service on July 1
- July 2-July 16: Saint Nicholas, Perth Amboy • Service on Jul 15
- July 16-July 30: Saint George, Linden • Service on Jul 22
- July 30-August 13: Saint Elias, Carteret • Service on Aug 12
- August 13-August 27: Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Toms River • Service on Aug 14
- August 27-September 10: Saint Mary, Jersey City • Service on Sep 2
- September 10-September 24: Saint John the Baptist, Bayonne • Service on Sep 16
- September 24-October 8: Saint Thomas the Apostle, Rahway • Service on Sep 30 TRANSFERAT RETREAT
- October 8-October 22: Holy Spirit, Mahwah • Service on Oct 21
- October 22-November 5: Saint Nicholas, White Plains NY • Service on Oct 28
- November 5-November 19: Saint George, Newark • No service scheduled yet
- November 14-December 3: Saint Michael Chapel, Woodland Park • Service on Dec 2



More specific information about service times can be obtained from the individual parishes.

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Return to Me

-ISAIAH 44:22

FEBRUARY 27: WHAT IS PRAYER? A GUIDE FOR THE PERPLEXED

MARCH 5: CHEWING THE CUD: THE WORD OF GOD AND CHRISTIAN PRAYER

MARCH 12: THE MYSTERIES OF THE JESUS PRAYER PART 1: A PRAYER FOR THE WEAK DURING THE WEEK

MARCH 19: AN INTRODUCTION TO SACRED SILENCE: A PRAYER FOR THE EMPTY

MARCH 26: THE MYSTERIES OF THE JESUS PRAYER PART 2: HOW TO PRAY LIKE CHILDREN OF GOD

APRIL 2: FROM THE ALTAR TO THE ICON CORNER: BRINGING LITURGICAL PRAYER HOME

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Sunday Matins 9:30 am
English Liturgy 10:30 am

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Web www.eolmission.org
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Web www.eolbcc.org
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Web www.ascensionva.org
Sunday Divine Liturgy 11:00 am

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Phone 757-456-0809
Web www.olphvb.org
Sunday Divine Liturgy 8:00 am

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Phone 919-239-4877
Web www.sscyrilmethodius.org
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Web www.nationalshrine.org
No regularly scheduled Sunday
Liturgy.

To reserve a date and time, priests
must call the Liturgy Office and submit
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LIFE, LOVE, AND THE HUMAN PERSON

By Ann M. Koshute, MTS

WHAT THE PSALMS TAUGHT ME

People of my parents' generation gathered around their radios to listen to weekly serials, hear the play-by-play of sporting events and get caught up on the news from various warfronts. Whether eager for information on world events or hoping to find out what exactly "the Shadow knows," folks were glued to these "talking boxes" that magically brought the world to their living rooms. I grew up in the golden age of sitcoms and police and hospital dramas, and in a time when no "current event" was more important than figuring out "who shot J.R." on the nighttime soap opera *Dallas*. Nowadays, people of all ages get their fix of comedy, drama, sports and everything in between through streaming services that bring it to their televisions, computer monitors, and even their cell phones. Regardless of how technology changes and the delivery systems we choose, human beings are hard-wired to be immersed in a story. Whether to escape reality, or become more a part of it, we're attracted to stories that make us laugh, cry, and think about life more deeply. We innately seek out stories that we can relate to, just as much as we immerse ourselves in worlds that help us get away from our problems for an hour or two. This is part of the human experience: to tell our stories – and to hear, empathize with and learn from each other's.

During last year's Great Fast – and again during the Philip's Fast – I was blessed to pray the Psalms with a group of women I've never met. Social media is a mixed bag, but good things can spring from it, including opportunities for authentic community. A group of Catholic and Orthodox women on Facebook form one such community. This online group is large, but before the Fast there was a call for twenty women to pray the Psalter (i.e. the Psalms) with and for each other. I jumped at the chance to create a more disciplined prayer time, and to pray for others as they were praying for me. I had no idea I'd be entering

into the drama, exhilaration and emotion rivaling the best stories on Netflix or in my local theatre.

Praying the Psalter simply means to pray the Psalms: one hundred fifty songs by King David (and others) that are hymns of praise, cries for help, agonized lamentations and expressions of hope. If human beings are drawn to stories, the Psalms are perhaps an unexpected source of drama and emotional connection. I'm no Scripture scholar by any stretch, and there are others (one of whom has a column in this publication) who can offer an in-depth look at the Psalms that will educate and be spiritually edifying. What I want to offer here is not a historical account of when and by whom the Psalms were composed, or to "unpack" them for their meaning. Instead I want to share my personal experience of praying with the Psalms and encourage you to *encounter* them. Because, like any good story we watch in a film or series, the Psalms draw us in, make us think, wash over us, imbed themselves in our hearts, and make us want more. I don't want to oversell it, so I'll admit that when you're first reading the Psalms it may take a while to enter into their rhythm. But trust me: once you get started and begin to see the whole human experience laid out before you, you'll feel more connected to the human family and, most importantly, with God.

When I prayed with the women from the Facebook group, we were each assigned a different Kathisma (or grouping of Psalms) to start. This ensured that the entire Psalter would be prayed every day. This fact, in itself, impacted me as a laywoman living "in the world." It was as if God provided a way for "monastery life" to enter into my busy day. Twenty women praying fifteen or so minutes a day amounts to more hours than I could devote myself to in one day. The first thing that I learned praying the Psalms is that, while my vocation doesn't call me to live in commu-

nity separated from the world, it doesn't preclude me from creating a discipline of prayer and incorporating it seamlessly into my day. The Lord doesn't mind sharing morning coffee or tea with us, if it means we're talking and listening to Him. Even your kitchen table can be a monastery.

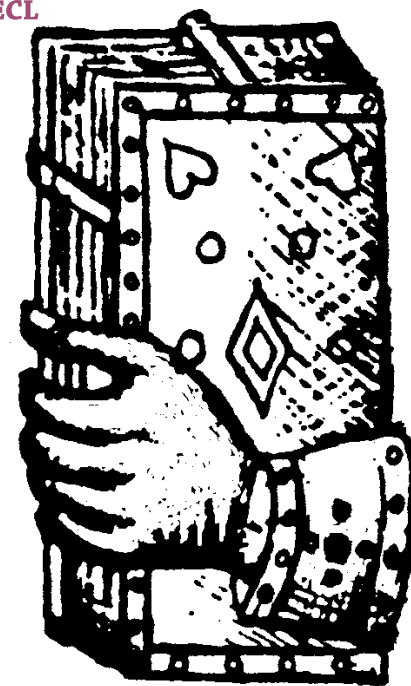
The second thing I learned is that God really does speak to us through Scripture – but we have to listen. During the Philip's Fast I co-coordinated a retreat day for women experiencing infertility. The night before the retreat I slept horribly, tossing and turning over what I'd forgotten to do, how the day would go, and whether it would be a success. In the morning I stumbled into the kitchen bleary-eyed and anxious, made a cup of tea and sat down with my Psalter. This is what I read: "It is in vain that you rise up early, rising up from rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for He gives to His beloved sleep." (Ps 126:2) I wasn't surprised by these words, because they confirmed for me that God knows what we need to hear at the time we most need it. I couldn't retrieve the sleepless hours, but I was able to proceed through the rest of the day confident that God wants what's best for me. God doesn't want any of us to live in worry and fear, or to transform legitimate care for our responsibilities into paralyzing anxiety. God most certainly speaks, and His words are personally directed to us for our good. Reading the Psalms reminded me that His words only have an effect if I sit still and really listen.

I learned much more by reading the Psalms, but I'll share one final thing: the Psalms taught me that we human beings are all connected to each other. Times change, technology progresses, and governments and kingdoms rise and fall, but at their core people don't change. We experience joy and pain, disappointment and triumph. When God proclaimed that it wasn't good for man to be alone, He meant much more than marriage. None of us is meant to

walk this earthly pilgrimage by ourselves. We're made for family and friendships, for work and for play, and to lift each other up *spiritually*. Reading the Psalms reminded me that I'm not alone in my pain. Of course, I believe that Jesus is with me in my suffering (this is one of the incredible blessings of the Incarnation, that my Lord knows suffering from the inside out). But I can relate to the emotional cries to the Lord expressed in the Psalms, and I become more empathetic toward those whose pain far surpasses mine. When the psalmist writes a hymn of praise to the Lord, my spirit soars with him, and my heart is full because I remember all the good things, and the good people God has given me. And of course, praying the Psalms in community (even a "virtual" one) reminds me that we are created for spiritual relationships that bind us in very intimate ways.

It doesn't matter whether you pray the Psalms as part of a group or on your own, use your family Bible or an online version. What's important is that you make time to discover this treasure of God's wisdom and mercy. You may not trade your Netflix subscription for a Psalter, but if you give it a chance, I promise you'll be drawn into the story of God's love, because it is *your story*.

ECL



EASTERN CATHOLIC RADIO

by Father Francis Rella

*Celebrating Eastern
Christianity and all things
Catholic*



Eastern Catholic Radio is celebrating Eastern Christianity and all things Catholic!

Eastern Catholic Radio is a 24/7 internet radio station broadcast through Live365.com. Our programming consists of continuous Eastern Christian Church

music and selections from Western Christianity. We also broadcast daily prayers, church services, sermons, podcasts, inspirational talk radio, and lectures. Lecture series produced by OLV and Eastern Christian Publications are heard daily as well as "Light of the East," featuring Father Thomas Loya.

Eastern Catholic Radio is a production of Eastern Catholic Broadcasting, a media Apostolate affiliated with the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic. With the permission of Bishop Kurt Burnette, the apostolate was founded in 2014 at Saint Joseph Byzantine Catholic Church in New Brunswick, NJ, and Saints Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church in Somerset, NJ, by Father Francis Rella. The ministry began as weekly broadcasts of the Sunday Divine Liturgy and the production of multiple videos for the Eparchy, including a full-length documentary entitled "A Time for Living." The media ministry con-

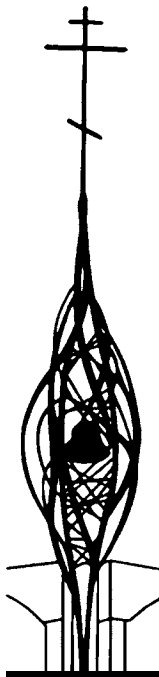
tinues with funding from Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in Toms River, NJ, and private donations. For the past 10 months, Eastern Catholic Radio has beta-tested the station, without any formal advertising and publicity. So far, over 250,000 listeners have tuned in to Eastern Catholic Radio from around the world.

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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 or contact Bonnie at bb@c-rs.org.



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SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

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

WHO IS PEACE?

The winter Pascha, the forty days from December 25 to February 2, is framed by the promise of peace. “Peace on earth” was the angels’ announcement to the shepherds in Bethlehem as the Son of God was born (Luke 2:14). More than 700 years earlier, the prophet Isaiah had predicted that Emmanuel, the “child born to us,” would be the “Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 7:14; 9:6). Psalm 72:7 expresses Israel’s fervent hope that the coming of the Messiah would be a time of “abundant peace.”

The Encounter of the Lord with the Elder Simeon in the Temple (February 2), which marks the end of the forty days of Christmas, returns to this theme. Recognizing the long-awaited Messiah in the unlikely form of a 40-day old infant, Simeon prays, “Now you may dismiss your servant, O Lord, in peace according to your word” (Luke 2:29). Saint Luke provides the backstory: Simeon is a pious old man who desperately longed to see the promised Messiah finally come. He had been assured by an experience of the Holy Spirit in prayer that he would live to see that day (Luke 2:25-26).

For all the wonder of this moment, Simeon had rather humble expectations. We do not know whether Simeon believed in the resurrection of the dead, as many Jews did although the priestly classes largely did not. Whatever political or economic good he might have expected the Messiah to do for Israel would not benefit Simeon at all. Now that he has seen the Messiah and is reassured that God keeps His promises, he asks for no more than what God had promised Abraham: “You will depart to your fathers in peace” (Genesis 15:15). Simply put, Simeon says, “Now I can die happy.”

Once you start counting, it’s striking what a prominent place “peace” holds in the Liturgy. The first litany invites us to pray to the Lord “in peace,” to ask for “peace from on high,” and “for peace in the world.” The litany before the Lord’s Prayer asks for “an angel of peace,” prays that “we may spend the rest of our life in peace and repentance,” leading to “a peaceful end of our life.” Again and again, the priest turns toward the faithful to offer a blessing of “peace.” We describe the Liturgy itself as “Mercy, peace, a sacrifice of praise.” But what

exactly is all this peace and how do we acquire it.

Peace is not a state of mind, not the result of a political system or a military victory. It is, first of all, the opposite of the sin, alienation, and death that has loomed over human existence ever since the sin of Adam and Eve. Peace is about being reconciled to God as the first step in entering into a life-giving relationship with Him. Since we could never overcome the power of sin and death on our own, peace is God’s gift to us. This explains the connection the Liturgy makes between “peace and repentance.”

“Peace” appears on the lips of our Lord especially in the time of His Passion and Resurrection. At the Last Supper, He told the disciples: “Peace I leave you; peace is my gift to you” (John 14:27). Only after His Resurrection did Jesus greet His disciples with “Peace” (Luke 24:36; John 20:19.21.26). His sacrificial death and Resurrection have made this peace possible.

The same prophet who predicted that the Messiah would be born in Beth-

lehem also proclaimed, “He will be peace” (Micah 5:5). Saint Paul fleshes out this prophecy, highlighting how Jesus’ sacrifice reconciles Jews and Gentiles and admits both into the life and love of the Holy Trinity: “He is our peace, who has made us both one ... thus making peace, ...that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross. And He came and preached peace to you who were far off and to those who were near for through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father” (Ephesians 2:14-18). Simeon also predicted the Cross (Luke 2:34-35) and recognized that Jesus would be both “a light of revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of your people Israel” (Luke 2:32).

In the end, “peace” is a person: Jesus Christ. The prayer of the righteous elder Simeon was answered far more richly than he himself expected. He has seen the face of peace; he has cradled peace in his arms. **ECL**

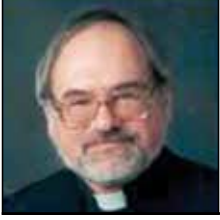


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THE BYZANTINE LITURGY

By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD

THE FRUITS OF THE EPICLESIS: COMMUNION

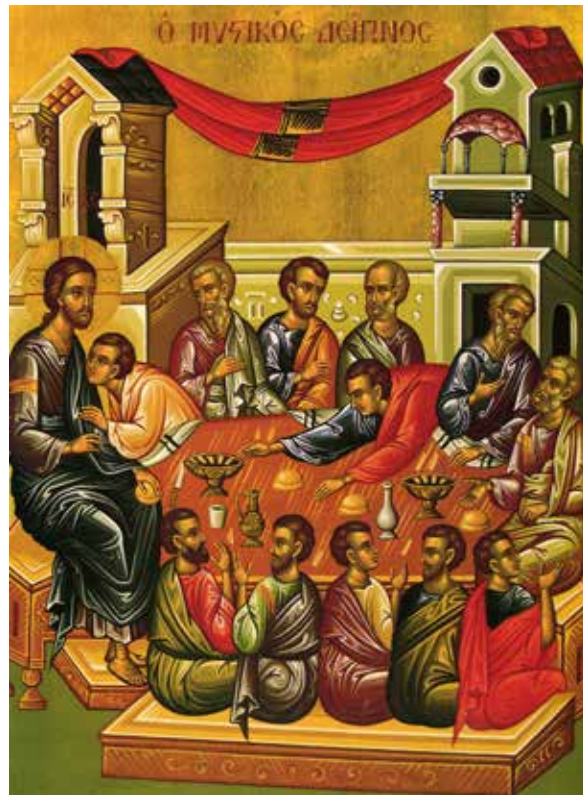
The first goal of the epiclesis, which was an invocation for those who receive the gifts, that this reception of the gifts may be for communion with one another. After all, the Liturgy does not seek the salvation of bread and wine, but of human beings, though certainly a theological case could be made that this salvation be achieved in union with all creation.

The central aim of the Liturgy is expressed in the third gift of the epiclesis in the Anaphora of Saint John Chrysostom, which is the main fruit of communion in the anaphora of Saint Basil: "...that all of us who become partakers of this one bread and cup may be united with one another in the communion of the one Holy Spirit..." The basic meaning of communion (in Greek, *koinonias*) is "association," or "connexion," and in the life of the Church is applied to "communion," or "sharing" or "participating in." It can be applied to sharing in the divine life, to participating the Eucharist, and to fellowship in the Christian community. In recent times become an important theological word, and in Greek, it has many dimensions.

Saint Irenaeus in the second century already uses it in regard to our union with God: "To as many as continue in their love towards God, does he grant communion with him, which is life and light, and the enjoyment of all the benefits he has in store." The best expression of communion may be from Saint Gregory the Theologian: "Jesus himself in an Upper Chamber gave the communion of the sacrament to those who were being initiated into the higher mysteries, that thereby might be shown on the one hand that God must come down to us,...and on the other that we must go up to him, and that so there should come to pass a communion of God with humans..."

Saint Gregory of Nyssa, in his work *Contra Eunomium* also applies communion to the mystery of the incarnation, in which Christ becomes human, and the "human weakness is changed for the better by its communion with the imperishable divine power." Communion may also mean "table fellowship," or "community life." Clement of Alexandria said that the virtue of "love," (in Greek, *agape*) is "communion in life." In the fourth century, it became a technical term for the reception of Communion. The fruit of the Liturgy, then, completes the blessing at the beginning of the eucharistic prayer, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and Father and the communion in the Holy Spirit, be with all of you." (2 Corinthians 13:13) The Divine Liturgy, then, is certainly the continuation and concrete expression of the mystery of the incarnation, by which God and humanity is united, and we are united together in community, becoming the Body of Christ. (Ephesians 1:22-23)

The epiclesis, then, is the climax of the prayer that the priest began with a blessing: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you." (2 Corinthians 13:13) In the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, this is the third gift of the invocation of the Holy Spirit, "That for those who partake of them they may bring about ... the communion of your Holy Spirit." Then, before the Lord's Prayer, we pray that receiving the gifts in Holy Communion may bring about that same blessing, "make us worthy to partake with a clear conscience of your heavenly and awesome mysteries from this sacred and spiritual table. May they bring about the remission of sins, the pardon of transgressions, the communion of the Holy Spirit."



Icon of the Mystical Supper

The most ancient forms of the epiclesis were Communion invocations, that is, we prayed that through the reception of the gifts we might be transformed or deified. However, this includes the idea that the gifts were transformed into the real body and blood of Christ, for the action of God is one, and the gifts cannot deify as bread and wine, but only if they become the body and blood of Christ. Therefore, if "these gifts are to be for a fruitful communion, they must become the body and blood of Christ. We can see in the Fathers, then, the awesomeness in which they held the descent of the Holy Spirit on the gifts. We have already seen this in Saint John Chrysostom: "The priest stands, bringing down not fire, but the Holy Spirit; and he offers prayer at length, not that a fire may be kindled above and destroy the offering (1

Kings 18:34), but that grace may fall on the sacrifice through that prayer, and kindle the souls of all."

The invocation of the Spirit should not be seen in isolation. It is a theme that runs through the Liturgy. Before the Gospel, the priest prays, "let the pure light of your divine knowledge shine brightly in our hearts and open the eyes of our minds that we may understand the proclamation of your gospel." The Spirit is not mentioned explicitly, but he is the "wisdom" of God which gives us understanding, as promised by Jesus, "but when He comes, the Spirit of truth, He will guide you to all truth." (John 16:13, cf. 14:26) In the Prayers of the Faithful, the priest looks forward to the coming of the Spirit and defines his role as the one who invokes the coming of the Spirit, "enable us, whom you placed in this your ministry through the power of the Holy Spirit, to call upon you at all times and in all places." (First Prayer of the Faithful, Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom) This is even more explicit in the Liturgy of Saint Basil, "through the power of your Holy Spirit, enable us for this service so that, standing without condemnation before your holy glory, we may offer you a sacrifice of praise." (First Prayer of the Faithful) Our common prayer, then, is offered in the Spirit, who brings us together in Communion in his love for us. **ECL**

NEW BYZANTINE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY FORMING IN GREATER CHARLOTTE, NC, AREA

A Byzantine Catholic community is forming at Saint Philip Neri Church, 292 Munn Rd., Fort Mill, SC. Please join us as we grow our community and celebrate the Byzantine Divine Liturgy. Father Steven Galuschik of All Saints Byzantine Catholic Church in North Fort Myers, FL, along with bi-ritual Deacon Ron Volek are now offering weekly Divine Liturgy in the area. This community will serve the northern part of South Carolina as well as Charlotte, NC. Please share this information with your friends and family – especially those who have moved "down South." We will be celebrating the Byzantine Divine Liturgy on Saturdays at 4:00 PM. If you would like to participate in any way, or have questions please contact Ron Somich at 440.477.6389 or ron.somich@gmail.com. Please check the website for news, upcoming gatherings, and service times at <https://carolinabyzantine.com/>

**February:
1, 8, 15, 22, 29**

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Our Liturgical year moves quickly, but it does not just drop us, cold-turkey, from one season to the next. February 2 brings us to the end of our 40-day celebration of the Incarnation. At Christmas, we celebrated our Lord Jesus Christ taking on flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. There were a number of theophanies, as He was revealed to the shepherds and the Magi, and now culminates with the great theophany as God enters the temple in Jerusalem, not in a cloud but in the flesh, entering into the place of His worship, there to be revealed to the Righteous and Just Simeon and the Prophetess Anna. After this, His life and His growth are hidden in time, until He is revealed at His baptism in the Jordan by John the Baptist.

We now enter our pre-Lenten Sundays and the beginning of The Great Fast. Our calendar eases us into this season of repentance with the Sunday of Zacchaeus. One thing you will notice is that the only thing that distinguishes this Sunday is the Gospel reading: there are no special troparia, kontakia, and so on. Even the Lenten Triodion, the book we use during the Lenten season for Matins and Vespers, we find no entry for the Sunday of Zacchaeus. We are simply “put on notice” that things are beginning to change.

We shift gears the very next Sunday, though, with the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee. Other than the Gospel reading, the only other thing we notice during the Divine Liturgy is that we sing the Kontakion for the Publican and Pharisee rather than the Resurrectional Kontakion. More important, the weekdays following this Sunday are all fast-free (one of the four Fridays that

are fast-free during the liturgical year). This is to remind us that our fasting is not a matter of pride, as it was for the Pharisee, but of humbling ourselves and disciplining the body.

The Sunday of the Prodigal Son gets a little more intense, as the Epistle reading now also relates to the coming season of the Fast. Together with the Kontakion for this day, we feel the time drawing closer.

With Meat-fare Sunday, things start really getting serious. We traditionally abstain from eating meat or meat products from now until Pascha. Although many do not follow this discipline, we cannot escape the fact that we are called for stricter control over our bodies, especially in disciplining the stomach.

Finally, we come to Cheese-fare Sunday, the day before we begin the Great Fast in earnest. Not only is there a special kontakion for the day, but the Prokeimenon is one of the most solemn that we can sing, and is a reminder that the Fast and our promises to God are not to be taken lightly: “Make vows to the Lord your God and fulfill them!” (Isaiah 19: 21b). From the Saturday night Vespers, through Matins and Vespers for this day, we are reminded both of our fallenness (this Sunday is the Commemoration of the Expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden) and of God’s great forgiveness. And so, on

this evening, we enter the season of the Great Fast by gathering together to pray what we referred to as “Cheese-fare Vespers,” singing the Stichera of Repentance. In many parishes, there is normally a ritual of mutual forgiveness between all the members of the parish, both clergy and laity, to cleanse ourselves of any lingering resentment or unforgiveness in our lives before we enter this holy season. For if we do not forgive one another fully and totally, how can we expect forgiveness from God? The text for this ritual is taken from the Office of Compline.

Thus prepared, we now enter Clean Week, with strict fast and abstinence on Monday. Traditions of services during this week may vary from parish to parish, but usually include Great Compline, and Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts. In the Typicon for our Metropolitan Province it is prescribed that the Presanctified Liturgy is celebrated on Wednesdays and Fridays of the Fast. Since the Divine Liturgy is a celebration of the Resurrection, we do not celebrate it during the weekdays, but our bishops may prescribe other services where Holy Communion can be distributed.

Last, but certainly not least, we enter fully into the season of fasting. Depending on medical conditions or other mitigating circumstances, the Typicon prescribes fasting from meat on all

Wednesdays and Fridays. Some people are able to fast completely from all meat and dairy, eating only vegetables; some have no meat until Pascha. It may be that they cannot fast from food at all and have been assigned an alternative discipline to fasting from food. The main point is that it is a time of subjecting the body to the mastery of the spirit, thus reminding us that we must subject ourselves to God. Whatever the case, we must keep in mind the admonition that the holy Apostle Paul gives in his letter to the Romans: “One person believes that one may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. The one who eats must not despise the one who abstains, and the one who abstains must not pass judgment on the one who eats; for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on someone else’s servant? Before his own master he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand. ... whoever eats, eats for the Lord, since he gives thanks to God; while whoever abstains, abstains for the Lord and gives thanks to God. ... Why then do you judge your brother? Or you, why do you look down on your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God” (Romans 14: 2-10). May our time of the Great Fast be profitable, and may we attain our salvation through our humility to our Lord. **ECL**

SEASONAL REFLECTIONS

Father Ronald Hatton



FROM INCARNATION TO SALVATION



SCHOOL OF PRAYER

Father G. Scott Boghossian

SPIRITUAL HUNGER

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied” (Mt. 5:6).

Created by God and for God, our hearts desire God. Even before we come to a conscious understanding of our Catholic Faith, there is something in our hearts that searches for and desires a fulfillment and satisfaction that is eternal, infinite, and unlimited. Because of original sin, concupiscence, and the passions, our desire for God gets derailed into pursuing material satisfactions, leading to misery. If only we would remember that “only God satisfies.”

Events in the life of Our Lord speak to our innate desire for God. At the Wedding of Cana, the new wine miraculously provided by Jesus speaks of the thirst-quenching gift of the Holy Spirit. Jesus promises the Samaritan Woman living water that will quench her deepest thirst and enable her never to thirst again. The many miracles performed in response to desperate cries for heal-

ing and deliverance point to how Jesus alone, through the gift of His Spirit, can soothe, heal, and deliver our shattered souls in their yearning for the Absolute. When Jesus offers to feed us with His own Body and Blood, He is addressing our deep inner hunger for the Divine.

Look at how the Saints expressed an intense desire for God. King David prays, “O God, You are my God; earnestly I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh faints for You, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water” (Ps. 63:1). In Psalm 143, David prays, “I stretch out my hands to You; my soul thirsts for You like a parched land.” The Spirit-inspired psalmist who composed Psalm 42 prays, “As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?” (Ps. 42:1). Saint Paul expresses his intense yearning for Christ in these words: “Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suf-

fered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ...” (Phil. 3:8). Throughout the history of the Catholic Church, the martyrs joyfully embraced suffering, torture, and violent death, hungering and thirsting to be united to Jesus Christ in Paradise. The Fathers and Mothers of the desert, and monks and nuns up until our day, leave the world and vow poverty, chastity, and obedience, to find God more perfectly, intimately and completely than can be accomplished in the world. They do this because they desire, hunger, and thirst for God.

Do we desire God? Do we hunger and thirst for His presence as did the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, and monks? If we pray or read at all, is it done out of a sense of obligation, accomplished somewhat grudgingly? Let’s take a different attitude towards our holy religion. Imagine praying, reading, attending the Divine Liturgy and other services of the church, not out of a sense of obligation, but out

of an intense desire for God! What a difference such a shift in our attitudes would make. We would accomplish our religious duties with a new enthusiasm that would be contagious and attract others to the love of God in Jesus Christ.

Did you ever notice how many people sit all the way in the back of the church? Or how many want the service to be over as soon as possible? How few people read the Bible and spiritual books or pray with any regularity? Where is our enthusiasm, where is our zeal, our hunger, our spiritual thirst, and intense desire for the God who alone satisfies? Let’s change today. Pray for an intense desire for God.

O Most Holy Trinity, ignite within us an intense desire to know, love, and serve You with all our hearts. Grant us that same spiritual hunger and thirst that drove the martyrs to the scaffold, the monks and nuns to the solitude of the desert, and holy people of all ages to pursue You and seek Your face without reserve in prayer, spiritual reading, and self-denial. Amen. **ECL**



SEMINARIAN REFLECTIONS

Subdeacon Timothy Fariss

SEMINARY AND THE CHURCH

This past summer, I shared so many experiences with parishioners from across the eparchy. It made me reflect about staying in the moment while I am still here in seminary. All those experiences in parish life are what I hope for in my future vocation, but right now, my vocation remains here in Pittsburgh and in seminary to learn all the things necessary to preserve my future vocation but also to care for the people in a parish and/or ministry.

I'm sure I've shared the story of entering and finishing my first year of seminary and what it was like changing from an accounting desk job promising myself I'd never go back to school... only to go back to school in to take Master's courses in Theology. This is truly God's sense of humor. Now that I am going into the last few months of my school, I have been reflecting on all the experiences from course work and weekend assignments to summer assignments, to returning home and seeing friends going into their next life steps and nieces and nephews growing up. All this, both classroom work and life experiences, the stress and challenges, the support of family, friends, and the many wonderful people I have met in my travels and the joyful outcomes have hopefully prepared me in the best ways to discern my vocation to the priesthood.

I was recently asked, "what happens behind those closed doors of the semi-

nary?" and "what goes into the discernment of the priesthood?" To those who don't have a priest in the family or as a family friend it seems that it dawns on a man to walk into the doors of the seminary and the next time he is seen, he is walking out those same doors with a collar. I cannot capture four years of seminary and two-three years of prior discernment in an article but hopefully I can convey what a unique and awesome experience it has been to seek God's will for myself to then do his will. I added that I got to see my friends reaching their next life steps because they too sought God's will which led to Holy Marriage, mutual support and love to lead their spouse to holiness, and the raising of children in the sacraments.

In the two years prior to seminary I contemplated what was my personal path to holiness, discerning "how was God calling me to live my life?" In the midst of this several people told me that they saw me as a priest or as someone who should attend seminary. I sought a priest's advice and he agreed with them. I visited the seminary and it felt like I needed to make a jump, to leave the comfortable world I knew and become dependent on God leading a path I could not fully see. While at seminary, the formation faculty focus on growing us in the four pillars of formation: Academic, Spiritual, Pastoral, and Human pillars.

The Academic Pillar includes classes in Liturgy, Scripture, Dogmatics, Pastoral Care, Canon Law, Church History, and a few other courses. Some of these even overlap like the historical development of the Divine Liturgy, or perspectives on how Canon Law is not just a rule book but is for the pastoral care of the people of the Church. Every semester, we take about 5-6 academic classes which are added to Liturgical Practicum classes. In these classes we learn the rubrics of the priest, deacons, servers, and cantors for the various ritual services. One class was on the Divine Liturgy, but then there were also Matins, Vespers, the Sacraments of Initiation, Confession and Anointing, as well as funerals. We do not just learn the rubrics but learn why they are for the spiritual benefit of us Christians. God has chosen to grace us through the sacraments and called us to pray as one, in the liturgical services, for our salvation.

The Pastoral Pillar includes these practicum classes as well as the summer assignments and a list of various pastoral experiences, like sitting in on a Sunday school classes, or interviewing a prison chaplain. Both the academic and pastoral pillars have spiritual dimensions but at the seminary we also have a rule of prayer. Every morning we gather for prayer to begin our day. Every other Monday and at lunch during the Great Fast we gather for spiritual readings. Sundays are fully loaded in a spiritual

sense. We pray Vespers on Saturday Evening and Matins with Divine Liturgy.

The last unique aspect of seminary is community and fraternal support. Just like how every church gathers for the Divine Liturgy our community is tightly bound in daily prayer and activities. Training to sing together, studying for classes together, and, well, doing pretty much everything together which has a of building a strong brotherhood. In my travels I got to witness and was encouraged by the sense of community in our parishes. In many ways the seminary acts like a church only with a strange charism of inheriting members from parishes around the nation. With each new seminarian that enters, all the care his parish vested into him becomes a gift to the seminarian community and the building up of another generation of the church. The seminary is a special kind of church that receives from your local church to serve your local church.

That being said, if you know someone in your local church that you think might make a good priest or may have a calling, be encouraging. There are steps if they are interested in learning more. Father Michael Kerestes is the Vocations Director and a great resource for discernment. The seminary coordinates "come and see" visits and hosts a retreat every fall semester. Your encouragement does not mean one day a young man is a parishioner and the next he is a priest. Encouragement is a reminder to a young man that he is called by God and that you see holiness in him and maybe even a pastoral gift to one day serve the church through the sacraments. **ECL**

Theosis in Action 2020 events Save the dates!

Facebook.com/theosisinaction • attheosisinaction@gmail.com

March 14

Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church in Hillsborough, NJ; Lenten afternoon of recollection

July 31-August 2

summer retreat (location TBD)

November 15

Philip's Fast afternoon of recollection (location TBD)

December 12

Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church in NYC; Christmas social Open to all young adults ages 18-35.

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UPCOMING EPARCHIAL AND PARISH EVENTS

FEBRUARY, 2020

- 2 The Encounter of Our Lord with Simeon
Solemn Holy Day
- 9 Sunday of the Prodigal Son
- 15 First All Souls' Saturday
- 16 Sunday of Meatfare
- 17 President's Day
Civic holiday • Chancery closed
- 23 Sunday of Cheesefare
- 24 Clean Monday
First Day of the Great Fast

MARCH, 2020

- 1 First Sunday of the Great Fast
Sunday of Orthodoxy
- 7 Second All Souls' Saturday
- 8 Second Sunday of the Great Fast
- 14 Third All Souls' Saturday
- 15 Third Sunday of the Great Fast
Sunday of the Veneration of the Cross
- 21 Fourth All Souls' Saturday
- 22 Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast
Sunday of the Ladder of Divine Ascent
- 25 Holy Annunciation of the Theotokos
Solemn Holy Day • Chancery closed
- 28 Akathistos Saturday
- 29 Fifth Sunday of the Great Fast
Sunday of Saint Mary of Egypt