



EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

Official Publication of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic

VOL. LVI, NO. 3

MARCH 2020

FATHER ABRAHAM AND THE SACRIFICE OF ISAAC

Father David Petras, SEOD. Originally appeared in the March 21, 1999, issue of the ECL

On Friday of the Fifth Week of the Great Fast, the Church reads the story of Abraham and the sacrifice of his son, Isaac, at the evening Pre-Sanctified Liturgy. This is a pivotal story of the Great Fast, which contrasts the roles of father, exercised by God and by Abraham and looks forward to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

The demand made by God on Abraham seems impossibly difficult. After granting a son to the aged Abraham and Sarah after they had lost all hope of every having children, God then asked for this gift back, "Take your son, Isaac, your only one, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah. There you shall offer him up as a holocaust on a height that I will point out to you." (Genesis 22:2) By tradition, Moriah was the site

of the temple of Solomon, therefore the traditional place of sacrifice for the people of Israel.

God now asks a terrible sacrifice from Abraham. In the faith of Israel, Abraham was to exemplify all that a father was. The rich man in hell was to call out, "Father Abraham, have pity on me." (Luke 16:24) In the Liturgy, God is frequently addressed as the "God of our fathers," meaning, "of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." Before this terrible sacrifice, Abraham had bargained with God for the lives of the people of Sodom (Genesis 18), but here, the father, who has the charge of loving, raising, and nourishing his children, says nothing and does not raise even a whisper of rebellion. Without a word, he obeys

Continued on page 6



Icon of the Sacrifice of Isaac

U.S. EASTERN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CELEBRATE LITURGY AT TOMB OF SAINT PETER

By Cindy Wooden Catholic News Service CNS Photo/Vatican Media, and CNS Photo/Paul Haring



Pope Francis welcomes Bishop Kurt

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Faith is not something people put on like a piece of cloth that is easy to change, but is more like skin, which "is inseparable from us," said Bishop Mikael A. Mouradian, leader of the Armenian Catholic Eparchy of Our Lady of Nareg, which covers the United States and Canada.

Looking for guidance or for a model, a person naturally looks to one who has the most experience and expertise; for Catholic bishops, the first model is Saint. Peter, prince of the apostles, said Bishop Mouradian in a homily Feb. 18 at the apostle's tomb in Saint Peter's Basilica.

The Armenian Catholic bishop presided at the Divine Liturgy concelebrated with the other Eastern Catholic bishops of the United States as part of their visit "ad limina apostolorum," literally to the tomb of the apostles.



Pope Francis welcomes Metropolitan William

Wearing their own rites' mainly gold and white vestments, the Ukrainian, Ruthenian, Maronite, Melkite, Syriac, Syro-Malabar, Armenian and Romanian Catholic bishops were assisted at the liturgy by a small choir of Armenian seminarians and by an Armenian deacon who gave a running commentary of the Armenian-rite liturgy and indications to the concelebrants about which prayers to recite.

In his homily, Bishop Mouradian said bishops are called to guide their people to faith as the church sails amid "troubles, difficulties, hardships, challenges," but they must remember "none of us -- not me or any of us -- is the captain of this boat. The captain is Jesus Christ."

"Yes, sometimes as he was with the disciples on the sea (of Galilee), perhaps we feel that he is sleeping," the bishop said. But as Saint. Paul said, "we don't preach only Jesus Christ the crucified one, but we preach Jesus Christ the living one, the eternally living God."

"As bishops we are called to fix our gaze on him," the bishop said. "He is the one who called Saint. Peter, an ordinary fisherman, to become a fisher of men."

"Each one of us has the same calling as Saint. Peter," Bishop Mouradian said. "As bishops, archbishops, we are the successors of the apostles, and we know that all the apostles gave their lives to witness to the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ."

"In front of the tomb of the prince of the apostles, Saint Peter, let us renew our faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," he said. "Let us tell him that we trust in him, the merciful Lord, because he will guide us, he will help us live our Christian faith regardless of the difficulties and hardships we have in our lives."

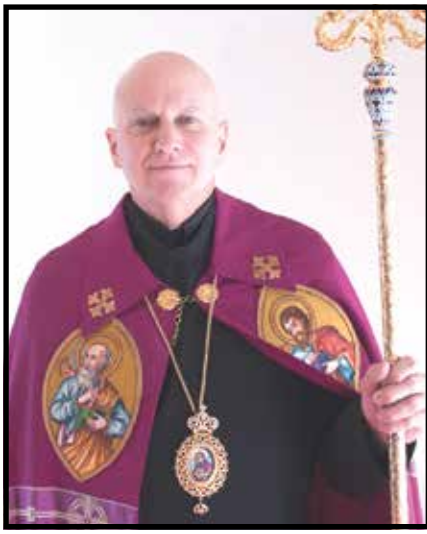
The bishops, like the 14 groups of US bishops that preceded them on their "ad limina" visits, recited the creed and paused in silence before Saint Peter's tomb.



Pope Francis welcomes Bishop Milan



Bishop Kurt and Bishop Mikael Mouradian



I LIFT UP MY EYES...

Pastoral Reflections of Bishop Kurt



AD LIMINA APOSTOLORUM VISIT 2020

In the plaza before Saint Peter Basilica in Rome, there are two great statues of Saint Peter and Saint Paul. One of them is pointing down, and the other is pointing out. A monsignor there used to tell me the joke that they symbolize the principle, “We make the rules here, and you keep them out there.” In 1585, Pope Sixtus V ordered that bishops should visit the Pope of Rome every three years. In 1909, the law was revised to require a visit every five years, ten for bishops outside of Europe. More recently, the law was changed to require all the bishops in the world to visit the Pope every five years, to venerate the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul, and to give an account to the Holy Father of the pastoral situation in their dioceses and eparchies. Well, the law says every five years, but we can’t just show up and walk into the Pope’s office. Instead, it is up to the bureaucracy in Rome to arrange the visit for the over 5,000 bishops in the world. For the United States, the last visit to the Holy Father was 2011-2012. It was eight years before the next visit. That’s why I began with the joke, “We make the laws here (in Rome), and you keep them out there.”

The visit is called *ad limina apostolorum*, which means “to the thresholds of the apostles.” You might be familiar with the word *limina* from the English word “liminal” which is used to mean at the threshold of something, such as liminal consciousness. The last time our Eparchy was called to the Holy Father was while there was no bishop, and our Administrator, Father Ed Cimbala, visited Pope Benedict XVI on behalf of our eparchy. This time, three priests were able to visit the Holy Father with me, but more on that later.

Saturday evening, February 15, we took off from Newark airport. United cancels its direct flight to Rome from Newark during the winter, so I booked on Lufthansa through Frankfurt. One reason I

chose Lufthansa is because they still fly 747’s to Germany. United has discontinued all of its 747’s and I don’t know how much longer they will be flying. The first time I flew to Europe in 1973 was on a 747 from Houston to Amsterdam. I remember how enormous the plane looked, and it still does. They used to call it the Queen of the Skies. I was in high school, and my parents convinced me to use the money from my summer job to take a high school sponsored bicycle trip across northern Europe. We flew to Switzerland and bicycled to Holland (somewhat downhill). I also purchased a good bike with the money. I don’t know what became of that bike.



The mighty Boeing 747-8i, Lufthansa flight 403 to Frankfurt

I enjoyed flying across the Atlantic with my window seat but didn’t get much sleep. The man next to me turned on a movie, and the bright screen kept me awake, though he slept like a baby through it. It was just dawn as we landed in Frankfurt, and the sky was streaked with dark red. I booked a long layover in Frankfurt to break up the trip, and we tried to find the train into the center of the city. We decided to take a taxi instead. The taxi driver was from Pakistan and offered to pick us up later when we asked him how to find a taxi downtown. You know, the Germans have a lot of laws, and they also observe them, so we were worried about finding a taxi since we had a plane to catch.

We found the great cathedral of Frankfurt, which is dedicated to Saint Bartholomew. In Germany, the cathedral is called the “Dom.” To be honest, I fell asleep for an hour in the airport, so by the time we got downtown, the 10:00 Mass was letting out. It sounded like it was a beautiful Mass with good music, but we missed it. So, we took a walk on the river for a while. The ducks and

the geese there are easy to recognize as ducks or geese, but they are definitely different from ours. I couldn’t get any good pictures to show you because it was so overcast. Though, for Germany in February, it was mercifully temperate. As we returned by the Dom, the bell was ringing, and when we entered it was packed for another Mass, one that wasn’t posted on the schedule. I figured it would be a long service because the priest preached a pretty fair sermon before he even started. When he made the sign of the cross at the beginning, I almost thought he was using Church Slavonic, but then it went off the rails. So, we knew immediately it was a Slavic language—in fact, it was



Dawn—Landing in Frankfurt

the Polish Mass. We stood through the whole Mass because the church was packed. It was fun to try to understand as much as possible from words I know from our liturgy. I could understand words like “God,” and “holy,” and “reading,” etc., and fill in some other words.

By the time it was over, and we made it outside, we saw our Pakistani taxi driver waiting for us, and headed back to the airport. Somehow, I set off the alarm at security and was rather thoroughly searched at the airport. Of course, we were fighting to stay awake by that time of day, but soon we were in the air headed to Rome. Although it was overcast most of the way, there was just enough of a break to see some of the Alps. After two hours, we landed in Rome. The airport in Rome is now named Leonardo da Vinci, but it was originally named Fiumicino, which is what most people call it, and that is why the code for it is FCO. I’m accustomed to taking a taxi, but the college had arranged cars for the bishops coming to *ad limina*. When I was living in Rome, the government passed a law that guaranteed a fixed price for taxi rides into the city,

because they were tired of tourists complaining that they were ripped off. The fixed price then was 40 euro. I remember once when I took a taxi, I asked the driver, how much to the center of the city. He replied 60 euro. I said (in Italian), isn’t there a fixed price? He said, 50 euro. I stared at him for a moment, and he grinned and said 40 euro with no embarrassment, as if he had just realized I meant the other “fixed price.”

The Pontifical North American College hosted almost all the American bishops for this round of visits. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops is divided into geographical regions, 1 through 14. Ten or so years ago, they created a 15th region for the eastern bishops. In previous years, each eastern bishop visited the pope along with the Latin rite bishops of his area. I am told we were like the poor step-cousins. The last *ad limina* visit was the first time the eastern bishops visited in a group, and this was the second time. The College was a great help to us, providing rooms and meals, and arranging all the transportation for us as a group. That also made it easier to get into the more secure areas at the Vatican.

The Pontifical North American College was founded in 1859 by Blessed Pope Pius IX, the longest reigning pope in history. He suggested that the American bishops establish a college in Rome for the training of American priests as early as 1855, but they didn’t take the hint. So, the Pope himself purchased a property and gave it to the American bishops. Pius IX was familiar with a convent at the foot of the Quirinale Hill, just a short roll down from the pope’s palace, because he served there as an altar server when he was a boy. It was originally a convent for Dominican nuns, and the chapel is beautifully furnished in dark red marble. The nuns originally were from the aristocratic families of Rome. The statues are all of female saints in white marble. I remember thinking when I lived there how much great art there is in Rome. In this chapel there were six or eight statues of higher quality than anything in the whole state of Oregon, and in Rome it was just another small chapel. The American Civil War broke out just as the first class of seminarians began.

BISHOP’S ANNUAL APPEAL 2019

Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic

Change of Address or New Donor?

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Parish: _____

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:

<input type="checkbox"/> \$5,000.00	<input type="checkbox"/> \$2,500.00
<input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000.00	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 500.00
<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 250.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: \$ _____


___ Check enclosed **OR** ___ please bill me (*five monthly payments)
*Your five monthly payments must be paid in full by May 31, 2020.

Please make all checks payable to:

“EPARCHY OF PASSAIC” and return by mail to:
445 Lackawanna Ave., Woodland Park, NJ 07424

or:
PLEDGE ONLINE at www.eparchyofpassaic.com

RETURN THIS FORM TO THE EPARCHY BY DEC. 31
Monies received after Dec. 31 will be credited to 2020 tax year.





Saint Peter Basilica at sunset

More Americans were killed in that war than all other wars combined. The seminarians from both sides of the war agreed not to talk about the war while in Italy. Otherwise, they could not have lived together.

When Pius IX was elected during the democratic upheaval of the 19th century, he was at first the most popular man in Italy—young and progressive. As often happens once someone is in authority, the crowds turned against him. The flashpoint was when he refused to declare war on Austria. At one point, he fled to the south and was received on an American naval ship on August



Frankfurt Cathedral—Dom Sankt Bartholomäusfurt

1, 1849, the USS Constitution, off the coast of Gaeta near Naples. The captain of the ship would probably have been disciplined by his authorities for interfering in Italian politics had he not died soon after from gastritis. The pope's re-

ception on the ship is commemorated in a painting by the contemporary artist Tim Freeman. It shows the pope in white climbing a ladder to the ship with all the sailors in white, even at attention on the yards. The ship is flying the Stars and Stripes and the Vatican flag.

In 1870, the Italian revolutionaries entered Rome. The American seminarians offered to fight for the Pope, but he told them they were supposed to be studying, not fighting, and he refused their offer. After the revolution, the new Italian government seized most of the church property in Rome, and many buildings owned by aristocratic families. Interestingly enough, our own President Chester Arthur sent a letter to the new government in 1884 and informed them that the American College was for Americans and they were not to touch it—and the new government left it alone. The Holy Father went into self-imposed exile in the Vatican enclave, and no pope set foot outside until the Italian government made peace with the Pope in 1929 and signed a treaty recognizing the Holy See as a sovereign government.

Although our college was a stone's throw from the Pope when he lived on the Quirinale Hill, after he moved to the Vatican, he was quite a bit farther. So, in 1926, the American bishops purchased land on the Janiculum Hill overlooking Saint Peter Basilica and the Vatican. By the way, neither the Vatican Hill nor the Janiculum Hill is one of the seven hills of Rome. I only mention that because some fundamentalist preachers make

claims about the Vatican based on the seven hills of Rome, but the Vatican is outside of ancient Rome.

After World War II, there was a surge of vocations to the priesthood in the United States, and the bishops built a new much larger seminary on the Janiculum Hill. They kept the original building by the Quirinale Hill, a block

ate. After one year, the College hired Father Ron Barusefski as Director of Apostolic Works, and he now lives at the Janiculum where he is finishing his fourth year of work. "Apostolic Works" means the pastoral works that all seminarians are required to do. It might include prisons, hospitals, catechism, homeless ministry, and so on. Father Barusefski oversees these ministries for all 200 seminarians at the NAC (North American College) and is also an advisor to 25 individual seminarians. Imagine trying to supervise those kinds of works in a foreign country!

After we arrived at the College from Frankfurt, we were greeted by Father Barusefski, and had our first dinner in Rome. We knew it would be a very early start the next morning. Our first appointment in Rome was a visit to the tomb of Saint Paul the Apostle. His resting place, near to the place where he was beheaded, is called "Saint Paul Outside the Walls." The ancient Romans did not allow executions or burials inside the sacred boundaries of the city, so both Saint Peter and Saint Paul were executed and interred outside of Rome itself. The bus would get us "early in the morning before dawn" to take us to venerate the tomb of Saint Paul, to pray for our dioceses, and to celebrate



The Alps—heading south to Rome

from the Trevi Fountain, and use it now as a house for diocesan priests who are studying in Rome for an advanced degree. Most people call the old campus "the Casa Santa Maria," and the new campus "the Janiculum." I lived at the Casa when Archbishop Skurla sent me to study canon law in 2004, and Father Ron Barusefski lived there for one year when he went to finish his doctor-

the Holy Eucharist according to one of our eastern traditions. I'll leave off here and being again in the next month's issue.

+Kurt Burnett

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.

DIRECTIVES FOR THE GREAT FAST

From the Office of the Bishop

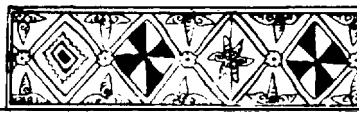
LITURGICAL DIRECTIVES

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.





PEOPLE YOU KNOW AROUND THE EPARCHY

IN ORMOND BEACH... CONGREGATION FAIR

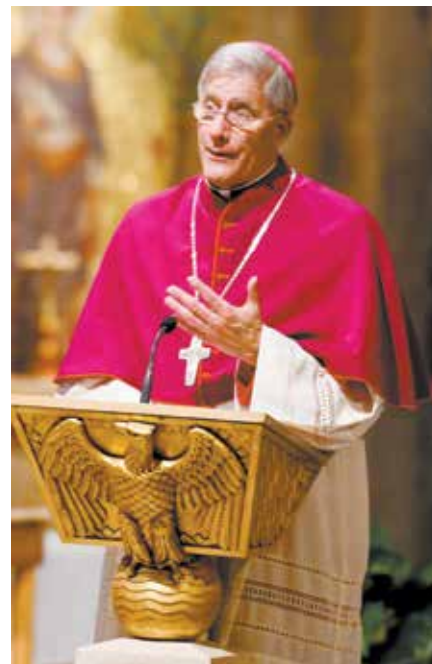
Holy Dormition Church, Ormond Beach, FL, was invited by the students of Embry Riddle University, to participate in their Congregation Fair. The Congregation Fair is an event that is held every semester at the university allowing the students to become familiar with the religious congregations in the local area.

Pictured are parishioner Lynn Tisza and Father Vince Brady, Associate Pastor of Holy Dormition. Father Sal Pignato is Administrator of Holy Dormition Parish.



IN WASHINGTON, DC... COMPLINE FOR LIFE

Bishop Kurt celebrated Small Compline in the Crypt church of the National Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC, on the eve of the 2020 March For Life. Bishop Joseph Kopaz of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Jackson, MS, was the guest homilist, and the Slava Men's Choir of Epiphany of Our Lord Parish in Annandale, VA, sang the responses of the Compline.



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

Greater Hazleton Protopresbyterate

- Sun., March 1st. Saints Peter & Paul, Beaver Meadows, PA - 3 PM
- Sun., March 8th Saint Mary, Shepton, PA - 4 PM
- Sun., March 15th Saint Mary, Hazleton, PA - 3 PM
- Sun., March 22nd. Saint John, Hazleton, PA - 3 PM
- Sun., March 29th Saint Mary, Freeland, PA - 3 PM
- Sun., April 5th. Saint Michael, McAdoo, PA - 3 PM

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

When traveling to the South, please visit our churches

All Saints
10291 Bayshore Road
North Fort Myers, FL 33917
1-239-599-4023

Epiphany of Our Lord
2030 Old Alabama Road
Roswell, GA 30076
1-770-993-0973

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

Our Lady of the Sign
7311 Lyons Road
Coconut Creek, FL 33073
1-954-429-0056

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

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

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

Saints Cyril and Methodius
1002 Bahama Avenue
Fort Pierce, FL 34982
1-772-595-1021

Saint Nicholas of Myra
5135 Sand Lake Road
Orlando, FL 32819
1-407-351-0133

IN SMITHTOWN...

Father Vlad Celebrates His Birthday for the First Time in the United States

Father Vladyslav Budash celebrated his birthday (February 8) on February 9, 2020, at The Church of the Resurrection in Smithtown, NY. Father Vlad and his family celebrated his birthday at a surprise birthday party given in his honor by the parishioners, with whom he shared his birthday cake. Parishioner Marge Modlewski stated, "Father Vlad's arrival has renewed our parish with hope and purpose."



Making the Meatballs for the Annual Spaghetti Dinner

On February 9, 2020, The Byzantine Catholic Church of the Resurrection celebrated its 40th Anniversary Spaghetti Dinner. Father Vlad hit the ground running when he helped in making meatballs for our event.

Hosts Jo and Joe Andrews and our fellow parishioners prepared 750 meatballs and forty pounds of pasta for everyone to enjoy. There was also salad and homemade desserts to be enjoyed, as well. Parishioner Cindy Ottesen says that "(the reason) I help make the meatballs every year is because its enjoyable and I enjoy working as a team."

Entertainment was provided by singer Tony Della who wowed the crowd with his vocal stylings of songs by Frank Sinatra and Tony Bennett. There were sixty baskets at a raffle auction. A splendid time was had by all.

Smithtown Parish Welcomes Father Vlad!

The Church of the Resurrection in Smithtown, NY, proudly welcomes Father Vladyslav Budash, his wife, Natalia, and their sons, Ilia, Bohdan, and Ludimir, to our parish family. Father Vlad was born on February 8, 1983, in Chernihiv, Ukraine. After graduating from school, he entered Saint Thomas Aquinas' Higher Institute of Religious Sciences in Kyiv and graduated with a Master of Religious Sciences. Subsequently, Father continued his studies at the Saint Nicholas Institute of Ecumenical and Patristic Greek - Byzantine Theology in Bari, Italy. After completion of the interactive and licentiate courses, he graduated with a License in Sacred Theology (*Licenza in Sacra Teologia*). On December 19, 2009, Father Vladyslav received diaconal ordination from Bishop Milan (Shashik), Bishop of Mukachevo. On September 25, 2010, Father Vladyslav was ordained a priest, also by Bishop Milan (Shashik).

Father Vladyslav began his ministry as Parochial Vicar of Holy Trinity Parish in Uzhorod, Ukraine. From 2011 to 2019, he was the Pastor of Saints Princes Vladimir and Olga Parish in Uzhorod. From 2012 to 2019, he was the Notary of the Eparchial Judicial Tribunal of the Eparchy of Mukachevo. From 2012 to 2014, he was the chaplain of the Regional Clinical Center of Neurosurgery in Uzhorod. From 2014 to 2019, Father Vladyslav was the chaplain for the 4th infantry battalion of the National Guard of Ukraine in Uzhorod. From 2015 to 2019, he was the Pastor of The Compassion of The Theotokos Chapel. At the invitation of Bishop Kurt, Father Vladyslav arrived with his family at the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic. First, he was the Parochial Vicar of Saint Ann Parish in Harrisburg, PA, and beginning on January 8, 2020, he has been serving at Resurrection Byzantine Catholic Parish of Smithtown, NY.



FATHER ABRAHAM AND THE SACRIFICE OF ISAAC

Continued from page 1

God, saddles his donkey, collects wood, and sets out for the place God pointed out to him. When he gets close to Moriah, he leaves his servants behind, and takes his only son, Isaac, to the place of sacrifice. There he binds Isaac, places him on the altar he had built, and takes out a knife to kill his only son. At this point in the story, God intervenes. He was only testing Abraham's faith, and Abraham had passed. God told him, "I know now how devoted you are to God, since you did not withhold from me your own beloved son." (Genesis 22:12) He then revealed a ram, caught by its horns in a thicket, and told Abraham to sacrifice it in his son's place.

From this experience, Abraham learned something. The love of God surpasses all understanding and is the absolute value of our existence, more important than life itself. The faith and trust in God was stronger than the human bonds of relationship between father and son. As cruel and as terrifying as God's demand seemed, Abraham received the same insight as Paul later would, when he wrote to the Romans, "I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38-39)

This was also the wisdom that the martyrs received, for they realized it was better to die for Christ than to live for themselves. As Christians, having the hope of resurrection, an unconditional faith like Abraham's is easier, for he did not yet know of the resurrection. The ambon prayer for the Holy Martyr Stephen says, therefore, "By Your life-giving death, You gave [the weakness of our flesh] courage against death.

Because of this, Your holy martyrs preferred to die for You rather than to live." Saint Paul was to commend Abraham's trust in God, "What then can we say that Abraham found, our forefather according to the flesh. For what does the scripture say, 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.'" (Romans 4:1-3)

Through his faith, Abraham received the hidden gift of resurrection, as Jesus observed, "Concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?' He is not the God of the dead, but of the living." (Matthew 22:31-32) If we still say that the story of Abraham and Isaac is terrible and incomprehensible, we must observe that in the end, God did not demand the sacrifice of Isaac, and substituted a ram for the boy.

We now see that on an even deeper level, the story of Abraham reveals the depth of God's love for us, for what the heavenly Father did not demand of Abraham, He does not spare Himself, revealing to us the true dimension of Fatherhood. Isaac was the only son of Abraham when God demanded his sacrifice. Likewise, Jesus was the only-begotten Son of the Father, for "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but might have eternal life." (John 3:16)

Isaac was the beloved son of Abraham. Likewise, Christ was the beloved Son of the Father. At His baptism in the Jordan, "a voice came from the heavens, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, with Whom I am well pleased.'" (Matthew 3:17); and on Mount Tabor, when Jesus was transformed into glory, "from

the cloud came a voice that said, 'This is My beloved Son with Whom I am well pleased; listen to Him.'" (Matthew 17:5)

God the Father spared the son of Abraham, but he did not spare His own Son. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup (the passion and death) pass from me, yet, not as I will, but as You will." (Matthew 26:39) In this, we see the fulfillment of Abraham's unconditional obedience to God. This was not out of cruelty, but out of love for all His people, for the death of Christ on the Cross reunited God and His human creation and brought the life of the resurrection to all.

On the cross in Jerusalem, which was Moriah, Christ revealed the fatherly love of God. It was a creative act of God, one in the Holy Trinity, and of the human will of Jesus in our behalf. In this way, Jesus replaced the ram pointed out to Abraham, and redeemed us by His own blood, as the Epistle to the Hebrews teaches, "Christ entered once for all into the sanctuary, not with the blood of goats and calves but with His own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption." (Hebrews 9:12)

The death of Jesus on the cross, therefore, fulfills the sacrifice of Isaac, and the hopes of Abraham. It was accomplished through a terrible sacrifice, which brought an infinitely greater blessing, resurrection, glory, and our adoption as children of the eternal Father.



*The angel intervenes as Abraham prepares to sacrifice Isaac.
Engraving by S.A. Bolswert, c. 1620*



CROATIA WITH A SEVEN DAY CROATIAN ISLAND CRUISE

**with Fr. Ed Cimbala
and Fr. James Spera**

**12 DAYS
June 16-27, 2020**



For More Information Contact:
Select International Tours at
800-842-4842 jane@select-intl.com
www.selectinternationaltours.com

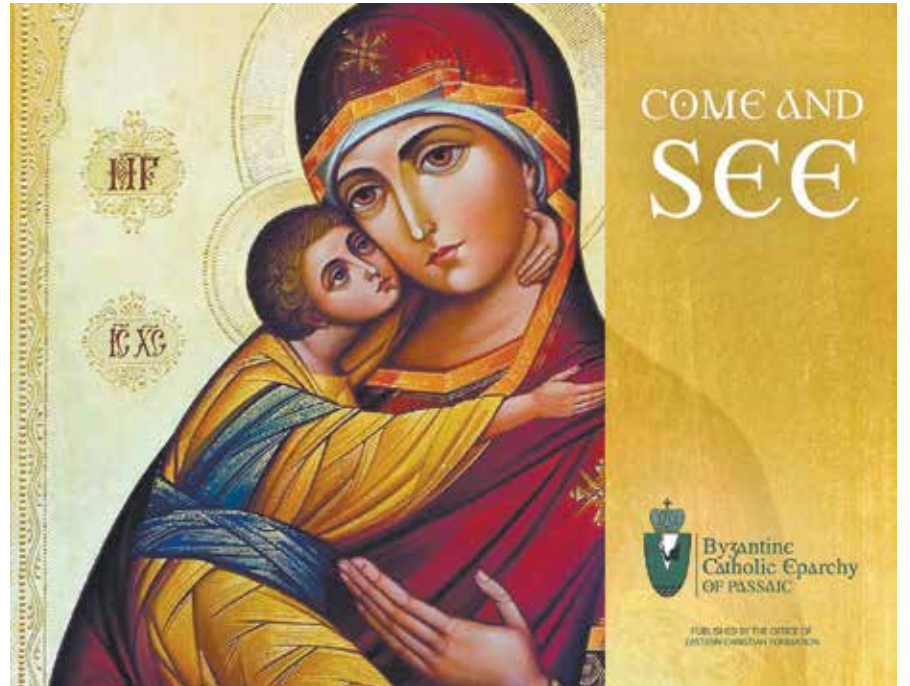
COME AND SEE EPARCHIAL INQUIRY PROGRAM

Life presents us with many challenges and great questions. In our continuous efforts to bring religious education of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic to a new level, which would correspond to the demands of today and to the needs of people, we are excited to share with you the news about completion of the Eparchial Inquiry Program, "Come and See."

It is a resource, which aims to share the Good News – the transforming message of the Gospel within the context of the Byzantine Catholic Tradition and which was designed with a two-fold goal in mind: 1) to be beneficial to all the existing Byzantine Catholics and serve them as the ABC's about our Church and Tradition, 2) to invite all those who are in search of a new spiritual home, who want to learn more about God and build a lasting personal friendship with Him. It is an introduction about who we are and what we believe and it aims to grow awareness and participation in the great Christian richness of our Byzantine Tradition and speak about its practices. It is an invitation to a journey to experience the Mystery of God.

Bishop Kurt, in his welcoming message to the Program says: "... If you are seeking Caesar Augustus and the powers of this world, then go elsewhere. If you are seeking the God who lay as a child in a cave in Bethlehem, then you are welcome here. Jesus remains with us today in his Body which is the Church. We begin every Eucharist with the words, "In peace, let us pray to the Lord." If you are searching for a place to pray to the Lord, "in Spirit and in Truth", if you are seeking a place where you can find inner peace, "the peace of God that surpasses all understanding," then welcome to our church."

We hope this work will help you to find answers to life questions you were looking for, will strengthen your faith, will educate you about Byzantine Catholic Tradition, but the most important thing – will ultimately help you to grow closer to God and to develop/strengthen your personal relationships with Him. It is the invitation we are sending to you to meet personally with Jesus through the prayers, Sacraments, parish life, serving others and living your vocation.



If this work helps at least one person to discover the meaning of life and of vocation; if it helps at least one person to remain faithful to his/her call; if it brings at least one person closer to God; or if it helps at least one person to find his/her path to the Church and to God, to answer important life questions – it will fulfill its purpose.

You may order a copy of the "Come and See" program from your nearest Byzantine Catholic parish within the Eparchy of Passaic or by contacting the ECF Office at: directf@eparchyofpassaic.com.

SEMINARY EARNS AN "A"

Byzantine Catholic Seminary receives 10-year reaccreditation from Association of Theological Schools

By Father Robert Pipta and Helen Kennedy

Father Robert Pipta, Rector of the Byzantine Catholic Seminary, has received from the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) a letter stating that their Board of Commissioners "voted to reaffirm the accreditation of Byzantine Catholic Seminary of Saints Cyril and Methodius for a period of ten years." This news was received after an ATS evaluation team conducted a 3-day comprehensive evaluation of the seminary in November 2019.

Father Robert stated, "The visit from the ATS comprehensive evaluation team was an uplifting and affirming experience which left me thankful to God for such talented seminary leadership and faculty. The team spoke of our seminary community as hospitable and congenial. I couldn't be more delighted with the outcome."

Ten years is the longest period ATS affirms accreditation to a theological school. The Seminary previously held accreditation for seven years. The importance of being an accredited institution, according to ATS, is to "ensure that institutions of higher education function according to standards of institutional and educational quality." ATS grants accreditation to theological schools in the United States and Canada. The mission of ATS is to promote the improvement and enhancement of theological schools to the benefit of communities of faith and the broader public.

Included with the ATS Board report was the approval for the Master of Divinity and Master of Arts in Theology (MAT) degree programs. The MDiv

degree program currently has 12 seminarians, three of whom are married. The MAT program currently has 21 students enrolled, most of whom take all of their courses online.

Father Christiaan Kappes, Academic Dean stated, "I cannot overstate how pleased I am. Not only were the professionalism and scholarship of our academic program affirmed, but the mature collaboration of our administration and faculty was praised as a Seminary hallmark. I could not have tranquilly welcomed our visitors save for the fact that our faculty, administration, and students were already living in a culture of transparency and collaborative assessment."

During the visit, the ATS team met with the MDiv students and stated they were impressed by their maturity and centeredness. Timothy Farris, student representative said, "I had the opportunity to share my four years' experience of growing through the Seminary with the evaluation team. It was interesting to hear the experiences they brought

from visiting other seminaries. In return, I shared some of the recent developments that occurred in the master's program and seminary life."

Metropolitan William Skurla announced the Seminary had "passed another milestone by completing the Association of Theological School audit." Metropolitan William also stated, "everyone at the Seminary worked hard for two years preparing for this visit."

Mrs. Helen Kennedy, Director of Accreditation, led the two-year preparatory efforts. The Seminary was required to complete a comprehensive self-study. This was accomplished with the dedication of three sub-committees working with dedicated laity, students, faculty, alumni, staff, and administrators. Seminary professor, Dr. Matthew Miner, who was the primary reviewer of the report, stated, "My work editing and organizing the content of our Seminary's self-study helped me see a truly encouraging fact: we have deeply integrated the various requirements of ATS through this process of accreditation.

In looking at the results of the shared labor of all those who were involved in drafting our self-study it was edifying to see a unified picture of the spiritual, academic, and professional policies in place here, and I am heartened that the health of our institution has been recognized by ATS in this manner."

The ATS Board report also identified other distinctive strengths of the Seminary including its commitment to be a center of learning for the Eastern Catholic Churches that encourages collegial, ecumenical, and collaborative engagement; and the implementation of a culture of comprehensive, data-driven assessment, committed to quality improvement across all sectors of seminary life.

Mrs. Kennedy stated that "during these past seven years, the Seminary has shown significant scholarship and commitment to excellence. These qualities reflect the commitment of Father Robert Pipta, Father Christiaan Kappes, and all the staff and faculty." The next comprehensive evaluation visit is to occur in fall 2029, one term before the period of accreditation expires on March 31, 2030.

"Coinciding with the beginning of our 70th anniversary year, this announcement reminds us that we are forever accountable," stated Father Robert, "and I'm eager to work with our team to develop a new strategic plan that will challenge and strengthen us over the next decade. I desire that BCS be second-to-none when it comes to preparing future leaders for Eastern Catholic parishes in America."



Seminarians, staff, and their guests pause after a delicious meal to reflect on their journey of discernment and formation

SAINT MARY BYZANTINE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN MANHATTAN CONTINUES SLAVIC CHURCH MUSIC PROGRAM

Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom For Male Choir By János Boksay

Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church, 246 East 15th Street, New York, NY, continues their program of classical Slavic Church music on Sunday, March 29, 2020, at 6:00 PM, with the Divine Liturgy for male choir composed by János Boksay. This may be the first time that this liturgy is sung in its entirety in the United States. At the turn of the 20th century, Greek Catholic sacred music held sway over much of the music scene of Sub-Carpathia, in the northeastern part of Hungary. A great many members of the Byzantine-rite Rusyn clergy, as well as Hungarians, were well-versed in music, which was put to use in maintaining high artistic standards in the daily liturgy. One significant master of this period was Ioann (János) Boksay (1874 - 1940), a Greek Catholic priest, composer, and church choirmaster. His output includes pieces for piano, dramatic incidental music and children's operas, but his most important works are considered to be his ten Divine Liturgies of Saint John Chrysostom, four of which have survived. The most widely known one is the *Divine Liturgy in C major*,

composed in 1900, whose simple and pure melodies have earned it folk-hymn status among the Greek Catholics in the Munkacs (Mukachevo, Ukraine), Eperjes (Presov, Slovakia), and Hajdudorog eparchies.

A special part of this program will be the presentation of personal reflections about the composer by his grandson, Dr. Istvan Je Boksay, MD, prior to the Divine Liturgy at 5:30 PM. Dr. Boksay is a noted physician/psychiatrist in New York City.

Saint Mary Parish's program of the great Slavic composers is presented within the context for which they were written—as the music of the Divine Liturgy, giving the congregation the opportunity to be immersed in the experience as part of their worship. The Divine Liturgy will be sung in English and Church Slavonic. Father Edward G. Cimbala, D. Min, pastor of Saint Mary, is celebrant and homilist of the Divine Liturgy. A reception follows the Divine Liturgy.

The music will be performed by Saint Mary's choir-in-residence, *Theoria Chamber Choir*, made up of eight male voices, directed by Andrew Skitko, Artistic Director/Conductor. Skitko earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in Music at Westminster Choir College and has performed with the world's leading conductors and orchestras at venues such as Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center. Cantor Skitko sings regularly with the Opera Philadelphia Chorus, The Philadelphia Symphonic Choir, and The Same Stream Choir, and participated in The Oxford University Choral Institute as a member of the Grammy-nominated ensemble, Williamson Voices. He is a cantor for the Byzantine-Ruthenian Church, and also the artistic director of *Theoria Chamber Choir*, which performs Slavic choral repertoire. He is an alumnus of the *Studium Carpatho-Ruthenorum* of the University of Presov, Slovakia, having completed courses in Carpatho-Rusyn history, language, and culture. He has also studied Russian choral music and conducting at Saint Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary with maestro Vladimir

Gorbik, musical director and conductor at the Moscow Church of the Holy Trinity-Saint Sergius Monastery, and has participated in the PaTRAM Russian-American Music Institute. Additionally, Cantor Skitko is an assistant producer, singer, and member of the Ukrainian Art Song Project board.

The backdrop for the choral event is sure to be just as inspiring. Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church is one of the most unusual religious buildings in Manhattan and provides a beautiful venue for the program of Slavic Liturgical Music.

For more information, call 212-677-0516 or visit www.stmarybccnyc.org.



Choral Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom

For Male Choir
Composed by János Boksay

Sunday, March 29, 2020
at 6:00 pm

St. Mary's Byzantine Catholic Church

246 E. 15th St.
New York, NY

www.stmarybccnyc.org

Sung by the Theoria Chamber Choir
Andrew Skitko,
Artistic Director/Conductor

Personal reflections about the composer presented by his grandson, Dr. Istvan Je Boksay, MD, prior to the Divine Liturgy at 5:30 pm

Free and open to the public -
all are welcome!



ST. MARY BYZANTINE CATHOLIC CHURCH - Corner Grand and Malone St. - Trenton, NJ 08611

ST. NICHOLAS BYZANTINE CATHOLIC CHURCH - 191 Norman Ave - Roebling, NJ 08554

For more information, call (609) 394-5004 or email stmarybyzatholic@gmail.com

PREPARE YOUR HEART FOR EASTER...

EASTER SPIRITUAL RETREAT

LIVING OUR FAITH IN A MODERN WORLD

March 20-22, 2020

FRIDAY, March 20, 2020

12:00 – Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts (Trenton, NJ)

TOPIC: *Noah: Blessed are those who listen to the word of God (Why listen to God in today's world)*

7:00 PM - Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts (Roebling, NJ)

TOPIC: *Divine Liturgy – Mystery of Mysteries – Creating a Domestic Church.*

SATURDAY, March 21, 2020

9:00 AM – Divine Liturgy (Roebling, NJ)

TOPIC: *Iconography of The Holy Cross*

4:00 PM – Divine Liturgy (Trenton, NJ)

TOPIC: *Eucharist: The Fountain of Life and Holiness.*

SUNDAY, March 22, 2020 - 4th Sunday of the Great Fast

8:00 AM – Divine Liturgy (Roebling, NJ)

TOPIC: *Mystery of Confession – moving beyond repeated sins.*

10:00 AM – Divine Liturgy (Trenton, NJ)

TOPIC: *The Mystery of the Cross: Understand the incomprehensible or Moving beyond Anger*



Guest Speaker: Fr. Thomas J Loya, STB, MA is currently the pastor of Annunciation of the Mother of God Byzantine Catholic Parish in Homer Glen, IL. He is also the host of "Light of the East Radio" heard on EWTN Radio affiliates, Ave Maria Radio, and The Guadalupe Radio Network. He is member of the Tabor Life Institute (www.taborlife.org) for the education and formation in the theology of the body and he is a conference speaker for TOBIA (Theology of the Body international Alliance, www.theologyofthebody.net.) Fr. Loya writes a monthly column in the HOMER HORIZONS newspaper and he also writes a bi-monthly column for the HORIZONS newspaper for the Eparchy of Parma which is also carried in the Eastern Catholic Life newspaper for the Eparchy of Passaic. Fr. Loya is one of the founders of www.easternchristianmedia.com and www.oltv.tv which are resources for information on the Eastern Catholic Churches.

Please join us for these retreat and bring a family member or a friend! This is promised to be a great spiritual experience!!!

SGT. MICHAEL STRANK, BYZANTINE CATHOLIC WHO PLANTED THE FLAG ON IWO JIMA, HONORED AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE MARINE CORPS



*You are Cordially Invited to Attend
A Celebration of Remembrance
The Anniversary of the 100th Birthday of*


Sergeant Michael Strank, USMC
(November 10, 1919 – March 1, 1945)

Sunday, November 10, 2019
National Museum of the Marine Corps
18900 Jefferson Davis Highway, Triangle, Virginia

10:00 a.m. - Divine Liturgy (Mass) - Semper Fidelis Memorial Chapel
11:30 a.m. - Luncheon - Medal of Honor Second Deck Lobby

Please RSVP to Kathy (Strank) Kasper by October 15 at clevelandcg10@yahoo.com




Zuzana Čaputová
prezidentka Slovenskej republiky

Bratislava 18. októbra 2019

Vážená pani Strank Kasper,

s radosťou som prijala správu, že sa mimoriadne aktívne angažujete v úsilí pripomenúť si 100. výročie narodenia Vášho strýka Michaela Stranka v Národnom múzeu námorného zboru vo Virgínii.

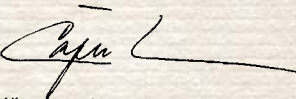
Michael bol rusínsky chlapec, syn ťažko pracujúceho imigranta v Spojených štátoch amerických pôvodom z chudobného slovenského regiónu. Keď na ostrove Iwo Jima spolu so svojimi spolubojovníkmi dvíhal víťaznú americkú vlajku, netušil, že bude písať dejiny. Posledné okamihy jeho života, zvečnené do slávneho Pamätníka americkej námornej pechoty pri Arlingtonskom národnom cintoríne vo Virgínii, nám všetkým budú navždy pripomínať hrdinstvo každého jedného človeka odhodlaného bojovať proti zlu a nespravodlivosti.

Výročie narodenia Michaela Stranka nám dáva tiež príležitosť pripomenúť si prepojenosť našich krajín a naše spoločné úsilie stáť na strane slobody, ľudských práv a demokracie. Verím, že Slovenská republika a Spojené štáty americké budú naďalej pozitívne rozvíjať svoje vzťahy na bilaterálnej úrovni aj v rámci transatlantického partnerstva.

Vážená pani Strank Kasper, ďakujem Vám, aj všetkým zainteresovaným, za úsilie zorganizovať spomienkové podujatie o Michaelovi Strankovi. Michael je pre nás dnes hrdina, lebo v rozhodujúcom momente dokázal svoju občiansku povinnosť a morálny postoj povýšil nad svoj vlastný mladý, nenaplnený život.

Čeť jeho pamiatke.

S úctou



Vážená pani
Kathleen Strank Kasper
Naples, Florida
Spojené štáty americké

(Courtesy translation)

Zuzana Čaputová
The President of the Slovak Republic

Bratislava, October 18, 2019

Dear Ms. Strank Kasper,

I have received with pleasure the message that you are actively involved in an effort to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the birth of your uncle Michael Strank in the National Museum of the Marine Corps in Virginia.

Michael was a Ruthenian boy, a son of a hard-working immigrant in the United States of America, originating in a poor Slovak region. When he was raising the victorious American flag on the Island of Iwo Jima – together with his brothers-in-arms – he did not know he would write the history. The last moments of his life – immortalized in the famous US Marine Corps War Memorial near the Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia – will remind all of us forever the heroism of every person devoted to the fight against the evil and injustice.

The anniversary of the birth of Michael Strank also provides us with an opportunity to remind ourselves the interconnection between our countries and our joint effort of supporting liberty, human rights and democracy. I believe that the Slovak Republic and the United States of America will continue to develop their relations at the bilateral level, as well as in the framework of the transatlantic partnership.

Dear Ms. Strank Kasper, let me thank you and all involved for your effort to organize a commemorative event for Michael Strank. Michael is a hero to us, because – in the decisive moment – he preferred his civic duty and moral posture to his own young and unfulfilled life. May his memory be honored.

Respectfully,

Dear Ms. Kathleen Strank Kasper
Naples, Florida, USA

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

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

MIRACULOUS “MARY, HELPER OF MOTHERS” 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.

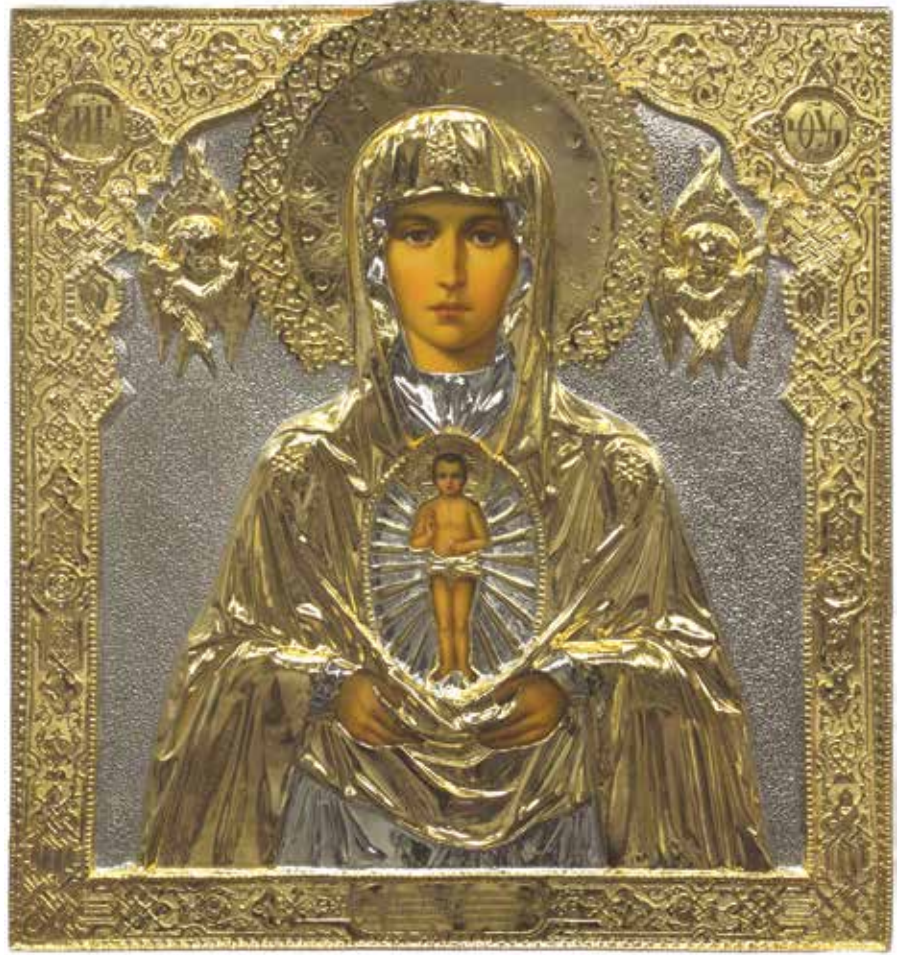
The Albazinskaya icon celebrates how God became Man, and a Virgin became His Mother. It celebrates the mysteries of conception and birth by which God has shared His creative power with married couples. It reminds us that

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:

- February 20-March 12: Saint Mary of the Assumption, Trenton • Service on March 5
- March 12-19: Saint Nicholas, Roebing • Service on March 17
- March 19-April 23: Saint Mary, Hillsborough • Service on March 31
- April 23-May 7: Saint Nicholas, Durnellen • Service on April 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 June 16
- June 18-July 2: Saint Michael, Perth Amboy • Service on July 1
- July 2-July 16: Saint Nicholas, Perth Amboy • Service on July 15
- July 16-July 30: Saint George, Linden • Service on July 22
- July 30-August 13: Saint Elias, Carteret • Service on August 12
- August 13-August 27: Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Toms River • Service on August 14
- August 27-September 10: Saint Mary, Jersey City • Service on September 2
- September 10-September 24: Saint John the Baptist, Bayonne • Service on September 16
- September 24-October 8: Saint Thomas the Apostle, Rahway • Service on September 30
- October 8-October 22: Holy Spirit, Mahwah • Service on October 21
- October 22-November 5: Saint Nicholas, White Plains NY • Service on October 28
- November 5-November 19: Saint George, Newark • No service scheduled yet
- November 14-December 3: Saint Michael Chapel, Woodland Park • Service on December 2



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

AN ONLINE SCHOOL OF PRAYER

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

FEATURED SPEAKERS:



MARK THERRIEN



DEACON CYRIL KENNEDY



MOTHER CECILIA
OF CHRIST THE BRIDEGROOM MONASTERY

FROM FEBRUARY 24 TO APRIL 10:

TUESDAYS @ 5 P.M.: OFFICE OF THE JESUS PRAYER
WED @ 6 P.M.: PRESANCTIFIED LITURGY
BEFORE ALL SERVICES: SILENT JESUS PRAYER

ST. MARY BYZANTINE CATHOLIC CHURCH
2011 CLARK STREET | WHITING, INDIANA
WWW.STMARYWHITING.ORG

SIGN UP FOR THE WEBINARS: THURSDAYS @ 7 P.M. CST AT STMARYWHITING.ORG/RETURNTOME

Seek him who seeks you first

The Council of Hierarchs of
the Byzantine Catholic
Church Metropolitan
Church of Pittsburgh, USA



Archbishop William Skurla
Bishop Kurt Burnette
Bishop John Pazak
Bishop Milan Lach

*invite you to participate in pilgrimage celebrating the
375th anniversary of The Union of Uzhorod and the
250th anniversary of the founding of the Eparchy of Mukachevo*

Poland, Slovakia, Ukraine, and Hungary

Krakow-Prešov-Litmanova-Košice-Užhorod-Mariapócs-Budapest

June 21 - July 1, 2021

Join us as we celebrate the
375th anniversary of The
Union of Uzhorod and the
250th anniversary of the
founding of the
Eparchy of Mukachevo.

Coordinated by Fr. Ed Cimbala
and Fr. Yuriy Oros

To receive more information
as plans are confirmed this
summer, please contact
Fr. Edward G. Cimbala, D.Min.
at fredcimbala@gmail.com or
call 908-872-2928 at St. Mary
Byzantine Catholic Church,
246 East 15th St.
New York, NY 10003

Join us for the pilgrimage of a lifetime!

When traveling to the Mid-Atlantic, please visit our churches

**Maryland—
Patronage of the Mother of
God**

1265 Linden Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21227
Phone 410-247-4936
Web www.patronagechurch.org
Sunday Divine Liturgy 9:15 am

**Patronage at Abingdon
meeting at:
Stone Chapel at Saint Francis
de Sales Church**

1450 Abingdon Road
Abingdon, MD 21009
Sunday Divine Liturgy 5:30 pm

**Patronage at Hagerstown
meeting at:
Saint Ann Catholic Church**

1525 Oak Hill Avenue
Hagerstown, MD 21742
Saturday Vigil Liturgy 6:45 pm 2 per
month
Call Baltimore for schedule

Saint Gregory of Nyssa

12420 Old Gunpowder Road Spur
Beltsville, MD 20705
Phone 301-953-9323
Web www.stgregoryofnyssa.net
Sunday Divine Liturgies
Church Slavonic 8:00 am
Sunday Matins 9:30 am
English Liturgy 10:30 am

Epiphany Mission

9301 Warfield Road
Gaithersburg, MD
Web www.eolmission.org
Sunday Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am

**Virginia—
Epiphany of our Lord**

3410 Woodburn Road
Annandale, VA 22003
Phone: 703-573-3986
Web www.eolbcc.org
Sunday Divine Liturgies 8:00 am &
10:30 am

Ascension of our Lord

114 Palace Lane
Williamsburg, VA 23185
Phone 757-585-2878 (rectory)
Web www.ascensionva.org
Sunday Divine Liturgy 11:00 am

Our Lady of Perpetual Help

216 Parliament Drive
Virginia Beach, VA 23462
Phone 757-456-0809
Web www.olphvb.org
Sunday Divine Liturgy 8:00 am

**North Carolina—
Saints Cyril and Methodius**

2510 Piney Plains Road
Cary, NC 27518

Phone 919-239-4877
Web www.sscyrilmethodius.org
Sunday Divine Liturgy 10:00 am

**District of Columbia—
Byzantine Ruthenian Chapel
Basilica of the National Shrine**

400 Michigan Avenue, NE
Washington, DC 20017
Phone 202-526-8300
Web www.nationalshrine.org
No regularly scheduled Sunday
Liturgy.

To reserve a date and time, priests
must call the Liturgy Office and submit
a current letter from their eparchy's
Safe Environment Office.



LIFE, LOVE, AND THE HUMAN PERSON

By Ann M. Koshute, MTS

SEARCHING FOR WHAT'S ALREADY REVEALED

The community bulletin board of your local coffee shop is a treasure trove of information and services. On it you can find everything from math tutors to wedding photographers; exercise classes, trips to casinos, and everything in between. Such bulletin boards are a great way for local businesses and entrepreneurs to advertise services we need and activities to enjoy. But among notices for babysitters and local fundraisers may be other advertisements that seem harmless but hide real dangers to those who are unaware. Notices offering “energy work,” reiki, and re-aligning “chakras” have emerged from their places in the New Age section of bookstores and are taking up residence in health and wellness circles. Stroll along the boardwalk of any shore town in America and you’ll be met with a number of storefront psychics offering to tell your fortune and get rid of “bad energy” if you follow their advice and pay up. Even if you’ve never visited a psychic or had tea leaves or tarot cards read (if you haven’t, good!) the occult has become mainstream enough to present itself in ways that disguise its true appearance. I’m no expert, but there are lots of good resources available on the dangers of New Age and occult rituals, notably by Catholic author Susan Brinkmann. Underneath the cloak of health, wellness and self-fulfillment lies a wolf that poses a serious threat to our eternal salvation.

The saints tell us that the devil is no match for Christ, and his power isn’t as great as he pretends it is. A faithful Christian in a state of grace who has just received the Eucharist can bat away Satan like she does a fly. Of course, what Satan lacks in power he makes up for in cunning and deviousness, and he works hard to make danger look delightful, and sin an “opportunity to live up to our potential” (just ask Adam and Eve). A spa day enjoying a

pedicure and massage is relaxing and restorative; but if the professional suggests you have some “bad energy” they can work out of you, tell them to stop. If a visit to the chiropractor or physical therapist includes having your “energy” manipulated or cleared, or if they use terms like *chakras* and *qi*, that’s a warning sign and you should get out. Fast. A well-meaning friend offers a red string or bracelet made from crystals to “collect” and protect you from negativity? Politely decline and discourage them from wearing it, too. What might seem like harmless techniques or jewelry, even from well-intentioned people who claim to be Christian, are actually dangerous openings to a world of spiritual darkness that can entrap us and threaten our souls.

Oftentimes people search out natural, alternative therapies and treatments to avoid the undesirable effects of some medications. This is completely valid, and generally a good thing. My own general practitioner prescribes medicines when absolutely necessary, but also works with my husband and me on diet, natural supplements and lifestyle changes to address certain health concerns. When we’re able to work with our bodies and minds to achieve optimum health, we should do so. We don’t have to immediately discount ancient wisdom and experience when seeking to live a healthier life, either. For example, Saint Hildegard of Bingen, an eleventh century nun and mystic, actually studied and wrote on the use of herbs and botanicals in treating illnesses. But when we’re advised that so-called “ancient wisdom” tells us to rely on “the god within,” or suggests we harness energy from the universe to heal illness (or become wealthy and successful), we’re facing serious spiritual peril. Hildegard herself has been unjustly “co-opted” in an effort to cast her as a “Christian New Age” practitio-

ner. This is an absolute contradiction in terms (since there is nothing of *Christ* in New Age practices), and it misleads faithful people into practices that endanger the soul.

Why are things like “energy work” and Transcendental Meditation (which is *not* a form of prayerful contemplation, but draws our focus inward, not toward Christ) so trendy and appealing? Why are we intrigued by channeling (the idea that a spirit or ancient, long-dead being can speak through the channeler), reincarnation, and those television “mediums” who promise communication with a deceased and desperately missed loved one? Because we are human beings who experience pain and discomfort and seek relief. We fear the unknown, and we want answers. We experience the finite world while having a desire for the Infinite. We know we will die, and we want to escape death. When the serpent tempted the Woman in the Garden he appealed to her senses (the fruit *looked* good, would *taste* good, would make her *feel* good). But what finally sold her on taking the fruit God instructed her not to eat were two (false) promises: that she *would not die*, and that she’d *be like God*. The lie that prompted the first sin is the same one that drives all our sins, even if it doesn’t seem obvious at the time.

Each one of us is an *icon* of the living God, marked with the sign of His love and the innate desire to seek Him. We want God! We’re not *compelled* by some unseen force that possesses us or overtaken by an impersonal “energy” that wants to engulf us. God does not hide Himself from all but the “enlightened.” There is no special knowledge, ritual or code to unlock the “best version” of ourselves. While there is much we don’t understand, God is not hidden from us. He freely became man in the Incarnation, making Himself *known*

to us. Yes, we are finite beings, subject to suffering, pain and loss. Our bodies will eventually fail us, and no amount of success, money or knowledge will spare us from death. But we Christians of all people know that while life has its share of excruciating moments, it is so much more. Our finite existence is a prelude to the *infinite* promise of life with God. Jesus left us the *Holy Mysteries* not merely as “sacred symbols,” or rituals to appease His wrath or gain His favor. They are concrete and generously given means by which we meet the living God face to face, and through which we receive healing and strength to sustain us in our earthly pilgrimage. No magic, no secrets; just the sanctifying embrace of the God who has revealed Himself to us.

Don’t be afraid to get a summer pedicure, have the tension eased from your muscles or having your vertebrae realigned. All of that will probably leave you feeling good. But when esoteric techniques or wearable talismans are part of the service, don’t allow it. Don’t waste time searching for “mysteries wrapped in enigmas.” Trust that everything we need has been revealed and given to us by God. “What eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and what has not entered the human heart what God has prepared for those who love Him, this God has revealed to us through His Spirit.” (I Corinthians 2:9-10) **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-

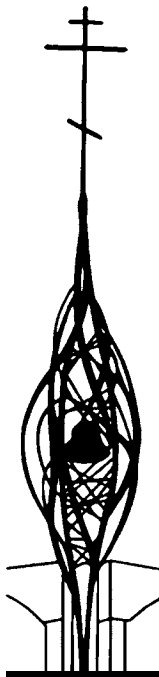
tinues with funding from Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in Toms River, NJ, and private donations. For the past 10 months, Eastern Catholic Radio has beta-tested the station, without any formal advertising and publicity. So far, over 250,000 listeners have tuned in to Eastern Catholic Radio from around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

The easiest way to listen to Eastern Catholic Radio is through the free Live365 app. or on your computer or smartphone at www.easterncatholicbroadcasting.com or Live365.com.



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.



Visiting New York City?

Come Worship With Us!

Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church

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

246 East 15th Street, Manhattan, New York

212-677-0516

Sunday Divine Liturgy

10:00 AM

6:00 PM



SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

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

THE GOSPEL IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Our English word “Annunciation” doesn’t quite say it all. We’d need to invent a word like “Good Newsing” to match how the original Greek (*Evangelismos*) and the Slavonic (*Blahovišćenije*) describe Archangel Gabriel’s announcement to the Virgin Mary (Luke 1:26-38; celebrated on March 25). Another way to say it might be “Gospeling.”

The Church did not invent the word “Gospel.” Neither did Jesus. When He began to announce, “The Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe the good news/Gospel,” (Mark 1:15), he was using an Old Testament term with a rather specialized meaning.

The Hebrew word behind “Gospel” or “good news” begins to appear in the Old Testament only when God gave in and allowed the Israelites a human king. Military victory (2 Kings 7:9; Psalm 68:11), the enthronement of a new king (1 Kings 1:42), or the defeat of his enemies are all called “good news,” even if not everyone welcomes it. In fact, events like the death of King Saul and his sons (1 Samuel 31:9; 2 Samuel 1:20; 4:10; 1 Chronicles 10:9), or the death of King David’s rebellious

son Absalom (2 Samuel 18) remind us of what the elder Simeon meant when he predicted Jesus would be a “sign of contradiction...destined for the rise and fall of many in Israel” (Luke 2:34). These events are only good news for those whose plans and preferences coincide with God’s.

In the prophets, the good news of a victory that saves God’s people from a human enemy gradually gives way to the announcement of a greater, permanent salvation (Joel 2:31; Nahum 1:15). Psalms 40:4-9 and 96:2 teach us that the proper response to such good news is to sing “a new song.” The newness of such good news becomes even clearer in the prophecies of Isaiah. The prophet’s whole tone changes beginning in chapter 40, where he announces the end of the Babylonian captivity and proclaims “comfort” to the Lord’s people.

Much of Isaiah’s message in the following 26 chapters is addressed to “Zion”—Israel imagined as the Lord’s bride and the mother of His people. The “good news” for Zion is that the Lord God Himself is coming (Isaiah 40:9-10). A little further on (Isaiah

52:7), Zion is told: “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion: ‘Your God reigns.’” Most striking of all is Isaiah 60, where Zion is told that “the glory of the Lord is risen upon you...the Gentiles will come to your light...the wealth of the Gentiles shall come to you...the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come, bringing gold and incense and proclaiming (the good news of) the praises of the Lord.” This chapter is the basis of our Paschal irmos: “Shine in splendor” but it is also easy to see details of Christmas in the lines just quoted: the appearance of the Lord’s glory, the angelic message of peace, and the coming of the Magi with their gifts (Luke 2:9-14; Matthew 2:11). Mary fulfilled what the image of “Zion” predicted: she received and accepted the good news that the Savior, the Son of God, would be born of her to be among us as a man.

Jesus first public message was: “The Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe the good news” (Mark 1:15). In the synagogue of Nazareth, He read

the prophecy of Isaiah 61:1: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because He has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor...” He then announced to the congregation: “Today this prophecy is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:14-21). Jesus did not simply preach good news; He IS the Good News. Mary did not merely hear good news from the Archangel; she conceived and gave birth to the Good News.

The Old Testament prepares us to hear the Good News of Jesus Christ correctly: as an announcement about a king and a kingdom, which demands a response and changes our lives when we hear it, whether we like it or not. Mary’s life-changing response to the good news brought by the Archangel Gabriel is a model for us to imitate.

ECL

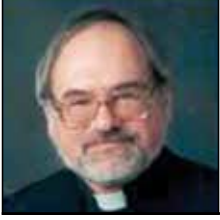


SAINT MARY'S
Byzantine Catholic Church

YOUNG ADULT LITURGY AND SOCIAL

LAST SUNDAY OF EVERY MONTH @ 6 PM

COME JOIN US!
246 E. 15th St. NYC
www.stmarybccnyc.org



THE BYZANTINE LITURGY

By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD

THE FOURTH AND FIFTH GIFTS OF THE EPICLESIS

The fourth gift of the Holy Spirit in the Epiclesis is “the fullness of the heavenly kingdom.” This action of the Spirit transforms the people who partake in the Liturgy both as individuals and as a community, and empowers them, both as individuals and as a community, to similarly transform the world. The earliest manuscripts have only “the fullness of the kingdom.” The word “heavenly” was added later, and obscures somewhat the meaning, since the “fullness” of the “heavenly” kingdom cannot come until the *second coming of our Lord*. In the prayer before the Our Father, we ask for the “inheritance of the heavenly kingdom,” here properly in the future.

The “fullness of the kingdom” here, then means that the Church might fulfill all its potential for salvation in the world in which we live, through the power of the Holy Spirit. In Saint. Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians, it is applied to the Church, as fulfilling all thing in Christ: “And He put all things beneath His feet and gave Him as head over all thing to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of the one who fills all things in every way.” This same concept is found in Colossians 2:9: “In Christ the fullness of deity resides in bodily form. Yours in a share of this fullness, in Him who is the head of every principality and power.” Thus, we are praying that the Church become completely Christ, which is symbolized by the Eucharist itself, and that it become full in numbers, encompassing every human being, and that it become complete in its mission to sanctify the world. Athanasius links it with John 1:16: “From his fullness we have all received, grace in place of grace.” The “grace” of the Lord Jesus Christ, His “gift” to us, is the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we “have the grace of the Spirit, receiving it from [Christ’s] fullness.” (*Oratio contra Arianos* 1.51) In his commentary on the Liturgy, Saint. Maximus the Confessor says that “in the [Holy Spirit] are found the fullness of all goodness and the treasures of knowledge and the secrets of wisdom.” (*The Church’s Mystagogy* 7) “Fullness” translates one of the richest Greek theological concepts, the *pleroma*. We will meet it again in the Liturgy, for at Communion time, when the celebrant unites the body with the cup, he says, “The fullness of the Holy Spirit.”

It should become abundantly clear that one who receives communion in the Holy Spirit cannot be a wimp. The Spirit is the wisdom and the power of God. He drives out all sin, purifies the soul and conscience and empowers the mission of the Church to bring about the fullness of all creation. We no longer live in fear and doubt. The Anaphora is the commemoration of the resurrection of the Lord, which filled the apostles with confidence after the fearful days of the passion and burial. The Acts of the Apostles describes the effect this had on the disciples, “And now, Lord, take note of their [Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles and the people of Israel] threats, and enable Your servants to speak Your word with all boldness, as You stretch forth [Your] hand to heal, and signs and wonders are done through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.” (4:29) Thus, the last gift we pray for in the Epiclesis is for “boldness,” or “confidence,” (Greek, *parrësia*). For the Fathers, “confidence,” was one of the gifts of Adam in Paradise, and which was lost by sin. With the coming of Christ, this confidence is regained. Thus Saint. Paul wrote: “In Christ and through faith in him we can speak freely to God, drawing near him with confidence.” (Ephesians 3:12) *Parrësia* is often identified with “freedom of speech.” The Christian is the one who fearlessly proclaims the truth and salvation of Christ.

The gift of “confidence” is often connected with the Lord’s Prayer. In Christ, we can now “make bold” to call God our Father. So *parrësia* is also needed to pray the “Our Father.” The Byzantine Rite introduces the Lord’s Prayer with the words, “And make us worthy, O Master, that we may with confidence, without condemnation dare call you “Father,” God of heaven, and say.” A similar introduction is found in almost all rites. The Epiclesis now ends with the words, “and not for judgment or condemnation.” This negative petition seems to be in apposition to the final fruit, “confidence.” Father Juan Mateos thinks that it was originally in the Our Father introduction, and was added later into the epiclesis. The epiclesis in the Anaphora of Saint. John Chrysostom is exactly paralleled by its Prayer before the Our Father. I think this is because the Lord’s Prayer was added into the Liturgy later, and

the Epiclesis prayer, ending with a petition for “confidence,” was naturally seen as a good introduction to it. However, I think “not for judgment or condemnation,” may be original here. Saint. Basil’s Epiclesis has the same idea, “that none of us partake of the holy Body and Blood of Your Christ for judgment or condemnation,” and may be founded on Saint. Paul’s admonition, “who eats and drinks without recognizing the body eats and drinks a judgment on himself.” (I Corinthians 11:29)

The epiclesis, then, is certainly one of the most significant points of the Divine Liturgy. It is found in some form in the most ancient liturgical texts we have, because they are based on Jewish prayer form, which always included an invocation. Theologically, of course, all actions of God toward his Creation are the work of the Trinity. **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/>

**March:
7, 14, 21, 28**



EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE (USPS 165-600) (ISSN 0894-9786)

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

News and Photo Services:
Member of the Catholic Press Association of America.

Published monthly by the
Eastern Catholic Press Association

445 Lackawanna Avenue
Woodland Park, NJ 07424
Phone: 973-890-7777 Fax: 973-890-7175

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

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:
Eastern Catholic Life

445 Lackawanna Avenue
Woodland Park, NJ 07424

Most Reverend Bishop Kurt Burnette
President and Publisher
Father James Badeaux, *Editor*
Father Ronald Hatton, *Associate Editor*
Father Lewis Rabayda, *Layout Editor*

Mrs. Diane Rabiej, *Copy Editor*
Mrs. Maureen French, *Circulation Editor*
(mfrench@eparchyofpassaic.com)

E-Mail us at:
ECL@eparchyofpassaic.com

Eparchial Website:
www.EparchyofPassaic.com

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

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

Father David J. Baratelli, Ed.S., M.Div. • *Safe Environment Program Coordinator* • 973.890.7777

Dr. Maureen Daddona, Ph.D. • *Victim’s Assistance Coordinator* • 516.623.6456

SEASONAL REFLECTIONS

Father Ronald Hatton



THE PRAYER OF SAINT EPHRAIM THE SYRIAN

A Prayer for All Seasons

As we enter into the time of the Great Fast, our prayers take a more penitential turn. Our liturgical cycle becomes more penitential, as we anticipate the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil on Sundays, Presanctified Liturgies during the week, with other services such as Lenten Moleben, Paraklesis, and other prayers that help our focus to stay on Lenten disciplines. The most famous prayer during this season is the Prayer of Saint Ephraim the Syrian:

Lord and Master of my life, spare me from the spirit of indifference, despair, lust for power, and idle chatter.

Instead, bestow on me, Your servant, the spirit of integrity, humility, patience, and love.

Yes, O Lord and King, let me see my own sins and not judge my brothers

and sisters; for You are blessed forever and ever. Amen.

It is a corporate prayer of the Presanctified Liturgy, yet it is a deeply personal and individual prayer. And although it is one confined to the Lenten season, it should be a prayer that we keep on our lips and in our hearts at all times and in all places. Each line serves to teach us, to humble us, and to lead us to a closer walk with God. The main point of this prayer is to focus on our own sins, our own shortcomings, and our own spiritual walk. Each sentence is accompanied by a prostration, as we totally humble ourselves before God.

First, seeing how broken we are as human beings as we stand before God, we ask Him to spare us from the sins of indifference to our spiritual state as well as in our relationships with one another. This is followed by a petition that we not despair as we try to more closely imitate our Lord Jesus Christ and His saints. Next we ask that we not be blinded by a desire for earthly acclaim, or for temporal riches and

honors. Lastly, we ask for the grace to keep us from gossip and talk that serves no heavenly purpose.

In place of all these, we ask our Lord for personal integrity in what we say and do; that our actions mirror our words. We know it when we say that someone doesn't "practice what he preaches," but do we apply that to ourselves as well? We ask for humility, which washes away all pride. In Paul's letter to the Philippians, he encourages us to "[d]o nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others." (Phil. 2:3,4) To the Romans he writes, "...love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor." (Rom. 12:10) In just these two passages, we can see the practical application of how to have the spirit of humility.

Ephraim further exhorts us to pray to God for the spirit of patience, one of the Seven Spiritual Virtues. With humility, patience can follow, patience in situations, patience in deal-

ing with others. It is easy to see how patience stems from pride and self-centeredness, because we are thinking of ourselves, our desires, our expectations, and putting ourselves before others. And ultimately, if we are humble and patient, it is then that we can truly love others.

In the last sentence of this simple prayer, we find the fruit of all that has come before. "Let me see my own sins, and not judge my brothers and sisters." In our spiritual life, nothing can be more important in seeking to be conformed to the image of Christ. If we are so caught up in looking at what bad sinners other people are, if we are constantly comparing ourselves to others like the Pharisee in the parable: "God, I thank You that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector," (Luke 18:11), then we will be unable to attain our salvation.

So, the Prayer of Saint Ephraim is not merely a prayer for the Lenten Season, but a prayer for all seasons. May it always be in our hearts and on our lips. **ECL**



SCHOOL OF PRAYER

Father G. Scott Boghossian

THE GLORIES OF PRAYER

An internet search will reveal books entitled, "The Glories of Mary," or the "Glories of the Sacred Heart of Jesus," "The Life and Glories of Saint Joseph," "The Glories of the Precious Blood," "The Glories of Heaven," and "The Glories of Calvary." All these works were composed to explain and describe the greatness, splendor, beauty, or magnificence of some particular person, place or thing. Maybe someday someone will write a book entitled, "The Glories of Prayer."

Prayer is "the lifting of the heart and mind to God" (Saint John Damascene), "communing and conversing with God" (Saint Gregory of Nyssa), "talking with God" (Saint John Chrysostom), and according to the 1917 Catholic Encyclopedia, prayer is "the application of the mind to Divine things, not merely to acquire a knowledge of them but to make use of such knowledge as a means of union with God."

Saint John of the Ladder expounds of the glories of prayer in these words: "Prayer by reason of its nature is the converse and union of man with God, and by reason of its action upholds the

world and brings about reconciliation with God; it is the mother and also the daughter of tears, the propitiation for sins, a bridge over temptations, a wall against afflictions, a crushing of conflicts, work of angels, food of all the spiritual beings, future gladness, boundless activity, the spring of virtues, the source of graces, invisible progress, food of the soul, the enlightening of the mind, an axe for despair, a demonstration of hope, the annulling of sorrow, the wealth of monks, the treasure of solitaries, the reduction of anger, the mirror of progress, the realization of success, a proof of one's condition, a revelation of the future, a sign of glory" (28:1). We can't say much more about prayer than that, or can we?

The creation of the universe was birthed out of prayer, when the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity, decided (through mutual agreement in their eternal communion) to bring the cosmos into being. The Father spoke His Word in the Spirit (Gen. 1:2,3). It was prayer that brought mankind into existence, when the three Divine Persons spoke (prayed) to one another saying "Let us make man..." (Gen. 1:26). Foreseeing mankind's fall

into sin and death, the Three Eternal Persons counseled together to effect the eternal plan of redemption. Saint Ignatius of Loyola has us imagine how "the Three Divine Persons looked at all the plain or circuit of all the world, full of men, and how, seeing that all were going down to Hell, it is determined in Their Eternity, that the Second Person shall become man to save the human race, and so, the fullness of times being come, They sent the Angel Saint Gabriel to Our Lady" (SE, 107). This internal communication within the life of the Trinity, effecting the creation of the universe, the formation of humanity, and the plan of redemption were all the common work of the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity. Therefore, everything was in some sense birthed out of prayer, or God's communication with Himself and within Himself. Even before creation, from eternity past, there has been prayer, that is, an intimate communion and communication between the three eternally distinct Persons of the Trinity. God was never alone and never lonely. He was always one God in Three divine and eternally distinct Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Dare we say it? Because of the Triune nature of God,

because from before all time God was communing and communicating with God, then in some sense God is prayer, and prayer is God!

If this is true, then let us consecrate ourselves to prayer, communion, and communication with God. This was the essence of the life of Jesus Christ on earth. Jesus Christ is prayer Incarnate. After Our Lord, the Blessed Virgin Mary, is essentially prayer. We can say that same in a lesser way about all the saints in heavenly glory. What do they do in heaven? What will we do forever in heaven? They and we will commune with God, communicate with God, be in an eternal and unbreakable union with God, that is to say, they and we will forever pray!

Prayer is a divine activity and the most excellent action of our lives. Let us give ourselves to prayer, even while we go through the actions of our busy day, by always lifting our hearts and minds to God, and always conversing with God. Let us look to prayer as the solution to all our problems and demonstrate in our daily lives the glories of prayer. **ECL**



SEMINARIAN REFLECTIONS

Deacon Paul Varchola West

“...BUT DO WE PRAY?”

Recently, I have been thinking a lot about my guitar professor from my freshman year of college. I remember, very vividly, being in music school for the very first time. I was terrified. Here I was, a classical guitar major, and all I knew was rock ‘n’ roll. I wondered how I even passed the audition to get in! For the first couple of weeks, I would sheepishly keep to myself, ignoring everyone and everything they had to say. After a bit of warming up, I started listening in on their conversations. Every single conversation was this strange Darwinian display of musical machismo in which all the guys were flexing their muscles to see who knew, or at least who thought they knew, the most.

Discussions would occur almost hourly about who could play the most complex scales or intricate melodies, who knew the most elaborate chord progressions, whose recording of *Giant Steps* was the best, arguments over who was a better player: Django Reinhardt or Joe Pass. I had never heard those names in my life! I felt very out of place.

One Friday afternoon like every other, we were all gathered in the little recital hall in the extremely small music building for guitar practicum; a class in which we took turns showcasing what we were working on in our lessons and being constructively critique by the staff and our peers. The typical conversations ensued, and I was once again sitting on the periphery listening in.

As our Brooklyn native guitar professor walked into the room, he stared at the group of guys flexing away and said, very loudly, “That’s great...but can you read???” I have never seen a group of guitarists become that silent that quickly before or since.

What my professor meant was, “Can you sight read music?” In other words, are you able to sit down with an unfamiliar piece of music and simply begin to read it and play it with a relatively high level of proficiency? Laced in between his few, very loud words were a very telling sentiment: “Sure, you guys might be able to play all these fancy things, and talk shop really well, but do you know the fundamental aspects of musicianship? What good are all those flashy, external aspects of music if, at the very core of your musicianship, one is lacking a basic skill?” I enjoyed the silence of the room that day very much, and clearly, I also enjoyed the lesson taught in that moment as it has stuck with me all these years.

As we continue our journey through the Great Fast, it is easy to get caught up in all the externals of the fasting season, no matter how hard we try. If we are trying to follow a more traditional fast in which we frequently, or perhaps daily, abstain from meat and dairy, perhaps we slip up and sneak a burger here or there. If we have chosen to give up chocolate, coffee, cake, or some other lovely treat, do we find ourselves sneak-

ing to the kitchen when no one is looking? If we have made our Lenten sacrifice one of prayer and have chosen to do something such a regularly attend Presanctified Liturgy during the week, have we gotten too wrapped up in the prostrations and exotic melodies? Regardless of “how it is going,” do we find ourselves talking incessantly about “our fasting” with friends? Are we comparing ourselves to others? I know that as I journey through my own fast, the voice of my guitar professor of blessed memory echoes through my head, frequently asking me, “but do you pray???”

Just as with music lessons I learned so long ago, the external aspects of our fast only matter to the extent that the fundamental, internal aspects are taken care of first. With all that the Great Fast has to offer, do we pray? Are we truly making the time to engage in personal prayer every single day, even if for a few minutes? Are we making time for God during the Fast? Sure, we are denying ourselves of food or activities that we enjoy, we are giving alms, we are attending liturgical services... but do we pray? Without prayer, these externals are just that, external. In order to make our fasting truly fruitful, we need to offer our sacrifices to God each and every day through personal prayer and reflection.

This can be accomplished rather simply. Perhaps taking a look at the Byzantine wall calendar and noting the saint of the

day, taking a minute or so to read about their life on the reverse side of the page to see how we may better exemplify the Christian life through their example. Keep a Bible on the bed stand or table where you place your keys and read a few verses before bed or before going to work. Keep a copy of the Psalter handy and read a psalm or two throughout the day. These little exercises in prayer will teach us the fundamental aspects of reading our soul. It is through this prayerful reflection that we can make our fast truly something to talk about, something to talk about with God each and every day. **ECL**



Theosis in Action 2020 events Save the dates!

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.

Facebook.com/theosisinaction • attheosisinaction@gmail.com

Eastern Catholic Life

Circulation Department
445 Lackawanna Avenue
Woodland Park, NJ 07424

Next Issue:
April, 2020

Copy Deadline:
March 20

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

UPCOMING EPARCHIAL AND PARISH EVENTS

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

APRIL, 2020

- 5 Flowery Sunday
- 6 Great and Holy Monday
- 7 Great and Holy Tuesday
- 8 Great and Holy Wednesday
- 9 Great and Holy Thursday
Chancery closed
- 10 Great and Holy Friday
Chancery closed
- 11 Great and Holy Saturday
- 12 PASCHA * THE GREAT DAY
The Holy Resurrection of Our Lord
- 13 Bright Monday
*Solemn Holy Day * Chancery closed*
- 14 Bright Tuesday
Simple Holy Day