



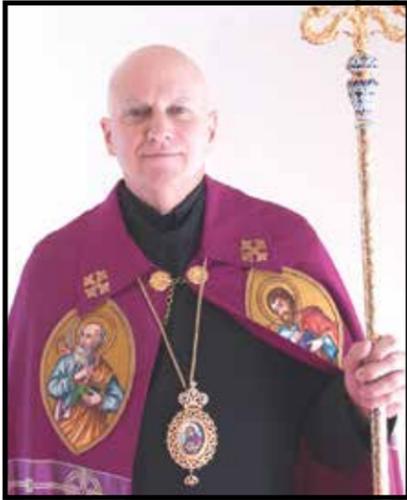
EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

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CHRIST IS RISEN! INDEED HE IS RISEN!



This is a previously published article with the addition of one new paragraph.

In the center of Los Angeles, CA, is a plaza, and in the plaza is the oldest church in Los Angeles, called, Our Lady Queen of the Angels, *Nuestra Señora Reina de los Angeles*. Indeed, the original name of the city was *Pueblo de Nuestra Señora Reina de los Angeles del Rio Portiuncula*, a thoroughly Franciscan name! The church is usually called *La Placita* by Hispanics in southern California, and is still considered their mother church, a popular place for baptisms. When I moved to California in 1989, *La Placita* was a place where Hispanics took their infants for baptism with no questions asked, and no classes for the godparents. This arrangement irritated the pastors of the other churches so much that the Archbishop of Los Angeles finally ordered the priest there to stop baptizing infants unless they came with a letter from their own pastor. One evening when I drove up to my rectory, two women were lying in wait for me. An elderly woman from Mexico who spoke no English, and a middle aged Mexican-American woman who was bilingual. She explained that the woman from Mexico needed urgently to have her grandchild baptized at *La Placita*, but the harsh Latin Rite pastor refused to give her a letter unless the godparents first took some classes on the basics of the Christian religion. The translator had the air of a confident laywoman who knew how to manage clergy. I thought that perhaps God had sent them to our parish as an act of mercy and decided to give them a letter after asking a few questions. I pretended not to understand Spanish and told the translator I would write a letter if she answered a question. I said, "Ask her who is Jesus Christ?" She translated the question into Spanish, and the old woman thought very hard, and then

said (in Spanish), "Jesus Christ is the son of Jesus." At this point, the atmosphere changed. You might say the situation was polarized, and the polarity flipped. The translator stopped talking to me as if I were the enemy and began lecturing the other woman in Spanish. She seemed to realize that there was a reason that the local pastors were re-

of the skyscrapers of Los Angeles, and the enormous economic pressure of the greatest real estate development in history, the answer lies back in the Middle Ages, seven hundred years before the United States took Alta California away from Mexico. One of the most terrifying phrases in European history is "the Black Death," a memory

great influenza outbreak of exactly 100 years ago. Although people are commemorating the end of Great War 100 years ago, there isn't much talk of the "Spanish Flu," a plague that killed far more people in a shorter period of time. Fifty to a hundred million people died in this outbreak worldwide, 3 to 5% of the world's population, predominantly



Icon of the Resurrection

quiring at least a minimal knowledge of our faith before baptism, and they left without asking me again for the letter.

If you might wonder how this little plaza, *La Placita*, survived in the midst

of one of the most severe plagues in human history. In our Divine Liturgy, and other prayers, we pray for protection from plague, an infectious disease that sweeps through a society. Probably the most recent severe plague was the

young adults. I became aware of this plague in high school when a woman in her eighties told me her memories. She said she remembered her uncle's funeral, and her mother warned her, "Don't

Continued on page 2

Pastoral reflections of Bishop Kurt Continued from page 1

talk to Bob, because Bob was with Tom,” and a week later, Bob was dead too. I wondered why we learned all about World War One in history class, and the memory of the Spanish Flu was erased. Perhaps it is because we imagine we control wars, and we don’t like to think about things we don’t control.

Six hundred years before the Spanish Flu, the population of the Earth was a fraction of what it was in 1918, and yet the Black Death killed more people. Experts estimate that the number was between 75 million to 200 million people worldwide. Actually, the plague had already ravaged Europe in the time of the emperor Justinian, killing 40% of the population of Constantinople, and 25 million to 50 million people worldwide, perhaps 13% to 26% of the world population, and perhaps half of Europe’s population. (That is probably why we pray for protection from plague at every Divine Liturgy today.) It is believed to have revived in the 1300’s in Mongolia, but Europe was spared for a while because of disruption in the Silk Road. It is believed that a Mongol siege on an Italian outpost on the Crimean peninsula brought the plague to Europeans, and it arrived in Italy then in January of 1348. From 1348 to 1351, it swept through almost every part of Europe, killing so many people so swiftly that it caused major social upheaval. Some people reacted with the attitude that we should party today because we might be dead tomorrow. Other people blamed outsiders and especially Jews. Some of the worst massacres of Jews in the Middle Ages took place as the terror of the Black Death spread. At least 510 Jewish communities were annihilated. In Strasbourg, 2000 Jews were burned alive on February 14 of 1349, the “St. Valentine’s Day Massacre.” Pope Clement tried twice to stop the massacres of the Jews with two papal bulls, on July 6, 1348 and September 26, 1348. The Holy Father said that anyone who blamed the Jews had been “seduced by that liar the devil,” and he encouraged the clergy to protect the Jews.

In addition to the Black Death, Europe was in constant warfare in the 1300’s. As a professor of medieval history said once, death was always over the next hill. In Norfolk County, England, six years before the arrival of the plague, a girl was born who would bring the light of the Gospel into the darkness. Growing up in this world of sudden death and hopelessness was a remarkable woman who came to be called Julian of Norwich. At the age of 30, she contracted a severe illness, and after three days was believed to be dying. On May 8, 1373, the priest administered all the final sacraments to her in presence of her family, and she prepared for death. She began to go blind, but a priest was holding a crucifix at the foot of her bed, and as she gazed on it, she reports that it began to bleed. She then had a series of sixteen visions that she calls “shewings.” By May 13, she was recovered, and she wrote down her visions immediately in a book called, “Revelations of Divine Love in Sixteen Shewings.” This text, together with a much longer

expansion written a few decades later, is the oldest book that we know of written in English by a woman.

After these life changing events, Julian became an “ anchoress.” An “ anchorite” is an early form of religious life. It resembles the life of a hermit, because the anchorite lives alone, rather than in a community. However, the anchorite lives in a single sealed cell, usually attached to a church or even the cathedral. Food and water are handed through a small window, and the anchorite never leaves the cell. Anchorites take a vow of stability, and the rite of consecration resembles the funeral rite. Canonically they are attached to the local bishop who consecrates them and is their only authority. Placed in a cell next to the cathedral or other church, these remarkable people were available through the window for prayer and for spiritual counsel with anyone in need.

The writings of Julian of Norwich are remarkable for their moving visions of the passion of Christ, and for their profound theological interpretation of the visions. For example, the first of the visions was of the placing of the crown of thorns on Jesus, or as she calls it, “the precious crowning with thorns.” She says that by the placement in the Divine flesh of this woven device “there-with is comprehended and specified the Trinity and Incarnation, and unite betwixt God and man soule, with many faire shewings of endless wisdom and teaching of love.” She adds that all the other shewings and theological elaborations are grounded in this first one. What a deep theology! Most of see the Crown of Thorns as a painful part of Christ’s suffering and perhaps a renunciation of the worldly pride associated with crowning, but Julian in her visions sees the perichoresis of the Trinity in the woven intertwined “garland,” and the Incarnation as the thorns pierce the flesh of Jesus the perfect Man, and she sees our own union with God. Before the visions, she felt all of her body dying, and as she went blind, a light started to come from the crucifix. She says everything besides the crucifix seemed to her ugly, and the darkness behind it was the demons or “fiends.” After the visions, all her pain vanished, and she felt all her flesh miraculously healed. From then on, she only desired to live in order to love God and to suffer with Christ. In another vision she saw the Virgin, as she says barely “waxen” (grown) above a child, at the message of the arrival of the Angel Gabriel. The overarching theme of her writings is quite simply love, the love of God. I counted the word “love” appearing well over 500 times in her “Shewings.”

Julian of Norwich is remembered as the great Evangelist and Apostle of Love in this dark century of plague, the concomitant massacres, and unending war. Indeed, the first sentence of this lengthy work says, “This is a Revelation of love that Jesus Christ, our endless bliss, made in sixteen Shewings or Revelations particular.” The third book begins, “And for the great endless love that God has to all mankind,

He makes no separation in love betwix the blessed soul of Christ and the least soul that shall be saved.” The book ends with, “And you to whom this book shall come, thank halely and heartily our Savior Christ Jesus that He made these shewings and revelations for you, and to you, of His endless love, mercy, and goodness, for your and our safe guide and conduct to everlasting bliss; the which Jesus might grant us. Amen.” Julian of Norwich is popularly considered a saint but was never recognized officially by the Catholic Church. Some people believe (incorrectly) that the reason she was not canonized is that she wrote so monolithically of the love of God and of God’s unquenchable desire for universal salvation, that she didn’t believe in hell for anyone. She wrote, “For I saw no wrath except on man’s side, and He forgives that in us.” What a remarkable woman, to write so single-mindedly and pure-heartedly of God’s love in the midst of the sufferings of the fourteenth century. What a blessing it would be to have a woman like her writing in our own time! It’s true that popular writers nowadays write endlessly of love, but it is usually a cheap love, a love that costs nothing. The goal of contemporary psychology or philosophy is to eliminate pain and sacrifice and to aggrandize the self. Even for many Christian preachers, the message is one of cheap love, of the elimination of sacrifice and pain, and of the aggrandizement of the self at the expense of others. For Julian of Norwich, love was the most expensive thing the world. True love was inseparable from the suffering of the Son of God in his human nature, his flesh, mind, and soul. The love that she shared with the stream of ordinary people who came to her window for prayers and wisdom and consolation, that boundless love sprung from uniting herself to the passion of her dear Lord Jesus.

In our Liturgy, we often pray that God will protect us from plague and other catastrophes. You might think that the bubonic plague is lost in the centuries since the middle ages, and perhaps all of us who survived are now immune. As a matter of fact, it is very much present today, even in the United States. While hiking in California, I occasionally saw signs from the public health department warning us that it was recently found in the wilderness rodents, and we should be especially vigilant if our pets picked up fleas in the area. In World War Two, the Japanese used plague as a biological weapon, first doing experiments on live humans, then dropping bombs full of fleas causing outbreaks.

The plague arrived in the United States on ships from China docking in San Francisco harbor in 1899. At first the plague was confined to Chinatown, but in 1907, partly because of the great earthquake of 1906, it spread outside of Chinatown to the rest of the population. For a while it looked as though San Francisco would be ravaged as in medieval Europe. In 1894, a Japanese scientist isolated the bacterium that causes plague, and then researchers were finally able to show that fleas and rodents were the primary vector of the

disease. At first these explanations were rejected, but by 1908 they were widely accepted, and by 1909, San Francisco eradicated plague in the city by controlling the rat population.

Unfortunately, the bacterium was by now present in wild animals and slowly spread throughout California and other western states, which brings us back to La Placita, the little church in the little plaza in the middle of Los Angeles. In late September of 1924, 51-year-old Jesús Lujan found a dead rat under his house and threw it away. Within a few days, he was suffering from a severe fever and a painful lump in his groin. Soon after, his 15-year-old daughter, Francisca, came down with a severe fever and respiratory problems. The physician misdiagnosed her as having lobar pneumonia, and her father as having venereal disease because of enlarged lymph nodes. Experts now believe that Jesús had bubonic plague, and his daughter had pneumonic plague which spreads easily from person to person. On October 26, 37-year-old Guadalupe Samarano was admitted to County Hospital with what appeared to be lobar pneumonia. He died that day. One week earlier he had attended the funeral of his wife, Luciana. Within two weeks, twelve of the mourners from her funeral were dead. On October 29, six members of the family were admitted to the County Hospital and were misdiagnosed with meningitis. That same day, Francisca Loujon died in that hospital.

Some medical professionals believed it was a recurrence of the Spanish Flu, still fresh in everyone’s mind. But the first physician involved did not believe all the symptoms matched, and after his insistence, the first autopsy confirmed that the deadly plague bacillus was back among us. Once the truth was known, the officials acted quickly, and the area was quarantined and a program of rodent extermination was implemented, including burning some structures. A serum to treat plague had been developed after the San Francisco outbreak, but it arrived in Los Angeles too late to help. The outbreak was fully contained by the middle of November.

The people who were trapped in the quarantine area were not told the reason. For the people who were taken to the hospital, the officials burned down some of their homes. When some of them returned from the hospital, their homes were destroyed, and they received no compensation because it was a public safety measure.

Just as in the past, God raised up a great saint in the midst of these trials. The parish priest at the little church, Our Lady Queen of the Angels, Father Medardo Brualla, was the one who first contacted a physician and asked for help when Jesús Lujan, patient zero, became ill. Father Brualla visited the family because it was unusual for Mr. Lujan to miss Sunday Mass. The local physician often worked with the priest because he was bilingual. Father Brualla is not mentioned in most accounts of the outbreak available, unless he is listed as one of the victims. It was

remarkably difficult to find accurate information about Father Brualla for this article. Most secular sources do not mention his role, except to say that Mexicans were better than the Chinese at getting help because of the role of the Sacraments. The most thoroughly researched book was written in the form of a novel to make it more readable, so it was difficult to winnow out the facts from that form of writing. The author of that book talks about the many difficulties in recognizing the plague and coordinating treatment because of the political infighting and the racism, but he considers the priest and his physician friend as the true heroes who stopped the plague with only 30 deaths. In fact, it was Father Brualla's devotion and persistence that brought the medical establishment into the situation immediately, perhaps saving thousands or even tens of thousands of lives. He ministered to many of the people in the neighborhood both at their homes and at the hospital. He performed the first funerals with bravery and disregard for his own peril. He then contracted the plague himself, and was one of its vic-

tims, laying down his life for his sheep. He is interred at the San Gabriel Mission, east of Los Angeles.

There was a media blackout in Los Angeles to try to save the reputation of the ambitious metropolis, but other media in the United States reported the outbreak. After word came out that the area around La Placita was "plague city," there was no growth for many years, and that is why the area is still a plaza with an old church in the midst of the real estate craze of the City of Angels.

Some of the striking parallels between the outbreak of bubonic plague in Los Angeles in 1926, and today's pandemic, are that they both arrived here from China, and both were made worse by secrecy. The plague arrived on ships from China, and festered in the Chinese community in San Francisco because the local community did not trust the local government. By the time the extent was uncovered and eradicated, it had entered the wild life of California where it lives to this day. As I mentioned, you can see signs in

the California wilderness today from the health department warning people about plague in the wild animals which can be brought home by fleas on pets. The 1926 outbreak was swiftly contained by the heroic actions of the local doctor and the Catholic priest. As for the current pandemic, there are reports that the government in China initially tried to stop news of the infection, and even punished the two physicians who were reporting the outbreak. On the other hand, the local Chinese medical workers and medical administrators acted swiftly and with remarkable competence to recognize and identify the microbial agent, to try to shut down the source, and to communicate their findings. Only history will tell whether swifter action and more openness would have stopped the pandemic.

In every age, especially during crises, God raises up spiritual heroes to remind us that He has not abandoned us, and this world is not our permanent home and we are not its masters. Our purpose in life is not to acquire valuable property, only to leave it someone else

when we die, nor is it to be comfortable all the time, or spend our energy for mortal pleasures. As Our Lord says, "Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it lives alone, but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit." And at the Last Supper he said, "Greater love than this has no man than to lay down his life for his friend." About these things St. Peter says, "In this you rejoice, although now for a little while you may have to suffer through various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that is perishable even though tested by fire, may prove to be for praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Although you have not seen him, you love him."

+Kurt Brunette



ETERNAL MEMORY, FATHER PAUL TIGYER 1925-2020

Father Paul Tigyer, a retired priest of the Eparchy of Passaic, fell asleep in the Lord on Monday, March 2, 2020, in Jessup, PA. The son of Michael Tigyer and Anna Lesko, he was born on October 27, 1925, in Portage, PA, and baptized and chrismated on November 8, 1925, at Saints Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church, Portage, PA.

After completing his primary and secondary education in Portage schools, he graduated Portage High School in 1944 and entered Saint Procopius Seminary in Lisle, IL. Later, he attended Saints Cyril and Methodius Byzantine Catholic Seminary, Pittsburgh, PA. He was ordained to the Priesthood of Jesus Christ at Mount Saint Macrina Macrina, Uniontown, PA, on May 31, 1944, by Bishop Danial Ivancho.

During his years of active priestly ministry, his assignments included service to the parishioners of Saints Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church, Erie, PA; Saint John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church, Hawk Run, PA; Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church, Clarence, PA; Saint Mary Byzantine

Catholic Church, Taylor, PA; Saint John Byzantine Catholic Church, Scranton, PA; Holy Ghost Byzantine Catholic Church, Jessup, PA; Spiritual Director of the Byzantine Catholic Seminary of Saints Cyril and Methodius, Pittsburgh, PA; Saint Michael Byzantine Catholic Church, McAdoo, PA; Transfiguration of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church, Clark's Summit, PA; Saint Nicholas of Myra Byzantine Catholic Church, Mount Pocono, PA; and Saint Nicholas Shrine and Carpathian Village, Canadensis, PA, until his retirement in 1995.

Visitation was from 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM on Sunday, March 8, 2020, at Holy Ghost Byzantine Catholic Church, 313 1st Ave, Jessup, PA. Parastas was

celebrated at 6:00 p.m. on Sunday at Holy Ghost Byzantine Catholic Church, Jessup, PA.

The Office of Christian Burial for a Priest was celebrated on Monday, March 9, 2020, at 10:30 AM at Holy Ghost Byzantine Catholic Church, Jessup, PA.

Interment was at Holy Ghost Parish Cemetery, Jessup, PA.

In blessed repose, grant, O Lord, eternal rest to the soul of Your servant, the Priest +Paul, and render eternal his memory!

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 disease, especially covid-19. Please remember in your prayers all medical personnel who are on the front lines fighting disease.



LENTEN VESPERS SCHEDULE

Greater Hazleton Protopresbyterate

Sun., April 5..... 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.



PEOPLE YOU KNOW AROUND THE EPARCHY



IN ANNANDALE... MEN'S CLUB GUEST

With summer warmth coming soon, Epiphany of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church's Men's Club, in Annandale, VA, featured Clif Castleman, Director of the Center for Wilderness Safety & Founder of TickSafety.com, as speaker at their March meeting. The printer of the EMC "Thank You" certificates was away on vacation, so Castleman was happy to accept a tasty Epiphany nut roll in appreciation for his talk! Pictured, left to right, are Men's Club President Jeff Nashwinter, Clif Castleman, and Father John Basarab, pastor of Epiphany Byzantine Catholic Church.

THEOSIS IN ACTION... YOUNG ADULTS GATHER FOR LENTEN AFTERNOON OF RECOLLECTION

On Saturday, March 14, some of the young adults of Theosis in Action, the young adult ministry of the Eparchy of Passaic, gathered at Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church in Hillsborough, NJ, for a Lenten Afternoon of Reflection. Deacon Tim Kennedy led the young adults in a thoughtful discussion on Matthew 19:21 where Jesus urges the rich man to give up his possessions and follow Him, for only then will he find treasure in Heaven. This discussion could not have been more timely. Over the past week, people of all ages around the world have been forced to give up the simple pleasures of life that we too often take for granted. Whether it is going to school, attending a long-awaited concert or sporting event, or simply meeting a friend for coffee, we have all been called to shift our focus to the common good of humanity. As Deacon Tim asserted, Lent is about reconnecting with the God who makes all things possible. And now, in this time of stillness, we can reflect and ask ourselves, "What is it that I have to give away in order to follow Him?" In this time of fear and uncertainty, let us strive to "set aside



all earthly cares" and unite in prayer for the world. The afternoon was concluded with an opportunity for the Holy Mystery of Penance and the celebration of the Divine Liturgy for the Third Sunday of the Great Fast with the parishioners of Saint Mary Parish. After Liturgy, supper was served and there was an opportunity for the young adults to socialize.

COME AND SEE EPARCHIAL INQUIRY PROGRAM

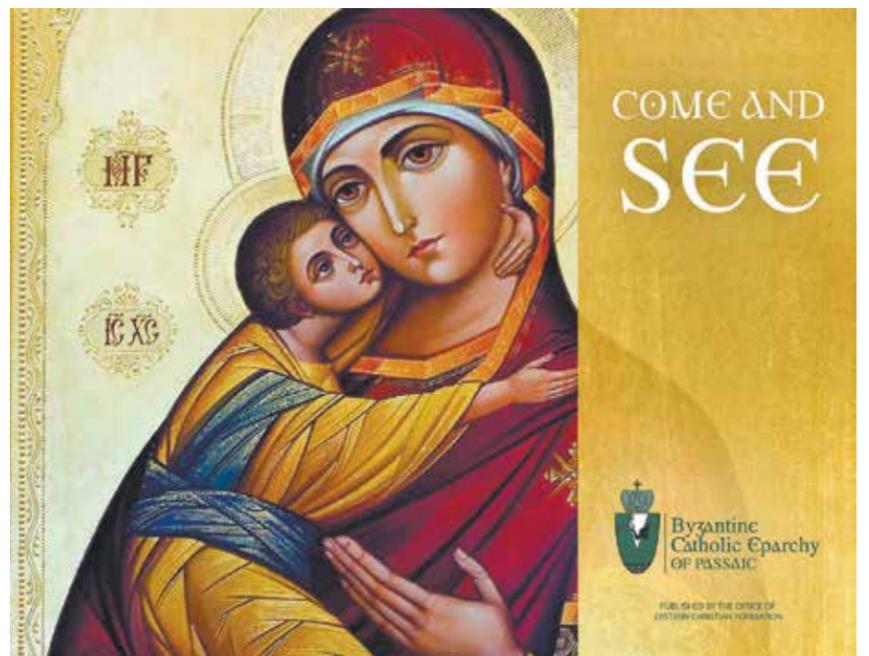
Life presents us with many challenges and great questions. In our continuous efforts to bring religious education of the Eparchy of Passaic to a new level, which would correspond to the demands of today and to the needs of people, we are excited to share with you the news about completion of the Eparchial 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) it is also an invitation to all those who are in search of a new spiritual home, who want to learn more about God and build 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 experi-

ence 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, and/or if it helps at least one person to remain faithful to his/her call, or 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 ques-

tions – it will fulfill its purpose.

You could order a copy of it from your nearest Byzantine Catholic parish within the Eparchy of Passaic or by contacting the ECF Office at: directf@eparchyofpassaic.com.

WALKING THE STREETS OF ASSISI

By Father Nick Daddona

On Wednesday, February 19, 2020, while our bishops attended a meeting at the Vatican, Father James Hayer, Father Andrew Deskevich and Father Nicholas Daddona hired a transport and explored the city of Saint Francis (Assisi). The day started with our driver Atilio skillfully maneuvering through the crowded streets of Rome with morning traffic.

Atilio was not only driver, but also guide, to the various buildings and his-

the three of us prayed in this holy place the friars were preparing to say the *Angelus*. It was a very moving and peaceful experience for all.

Upon leaving this peaceful setting, we began to explore the streets of this town and we find a lovely trattoria for lunch. As we were eating, a group of Italian Capuchin friars arrived to have their daily cup of coffee. Father Nick introduced himself and told the goodly friars that we were Byzantine Catholic



Basilica di Santa Chiara (Saint Clare)

tory of the Eternal City. As we drove on the Via Appia he explained how all roads lead to Rome and lead out from the center of the city. As we proceeded on the *autostrada* we viewed the beautiful countryside of Umbria dotted with meadows and farm lands.

priests and that the next day we would be seeing the Holy Father. As they left, one of the friars asked Father Nick to say hello to the Pontiff for them. The next stop was at the Church of Saint Clare, which houses the cross of San Damiano, through which God spoke to



Piazza Del Comune

Before getting to Assisi we passed the Medieval town of Tontillo. Medieval cities were built high on hills to keep invaders away and keep the people safe from harm.

Soon we arrived at the peaceful town of Assisi. Our first stop was the Church of San Damiano where Saint Clare established her community. It was here that the body of Saint Francis was brought so that Saint Clare and her Sisters would bid the poor man goodbye. It was in this church that Saint Clare died. The walls displayed many beautiful paintings from the medieval period.

Our next stop was at the tomb of Saint Francis. Here, in the crypt of the basilica, lies the body of the blessed saint. As

Saint Francis telling him to rebuild His Church. We prayed for the entire eparchy that the Good Lord will assist our bishops in rebuilding and strengthening the entire Eastern Church. The last stop was at Saint Mary of the Angels. This church houses the *Portiuncula*. It was in this little chapel that the Franciscan Order was established. It was also the place where the Lord, through the San Damiano cross, spoke to Saint Francis. After the final stop, we were in our car again and drove back to the North American College, having experienced a day of joy, peace, and enrichment.



Basilica di San Francesco D'Assisi



Via San Francesco



Oratorio dei Pellegrini on the way to the Saint Francis Basilica

WHAT'S COOKING FOR PASCHA?

By Georgia Zeedick

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

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

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

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

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

Hrudka (Sirets)

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

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

Pascha

- 3 cups scalded milk, or enough scalded milk added to whey from *hrudka* to make 3 cups
- ½ tsp. salt
- 6 beaten eggs
- ½ cup lukewarm water
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 cup melted butter
- ½ large cake yeast or equivalent

portion of dry yeast
12 to 14 cups flour.

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

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

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

After second rising, shape into four balls and place into greased pans. Small, 1½ quart enameled saucepans can be used for baking. Let rise. Brush tops with 2 table-spoons eggs to which some milk has been added. To achieve that glazed appearance on the loaves, brush tops several times prior to removing them from the oven. Bake at 325 degrees for about 1 hour.

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

Kolachi

(Nut and poppyseed)

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

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

Add flour and mix well with hands until dough leaves the hands. Refrigerate overnight. In the morning, divide the dough into eight balls

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

Poppysed Filling

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

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

Ham

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

Kolbasi

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

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

Butter

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

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



Photo by Bob Bruce.

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

Hrin

(Beets with Horseradish)

- 8 cans whole beets, drained
- 3 bottles horseradish (Do not use creamed horseradish.)

Grind beets, using fine grinder attachment. The juice can be saved for

and let rise for one hour. Roll out on floured board and spread with filling. Roll up gently, tucking in ends.

Bake at 350 degrees until brown, about 45 minutes.

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

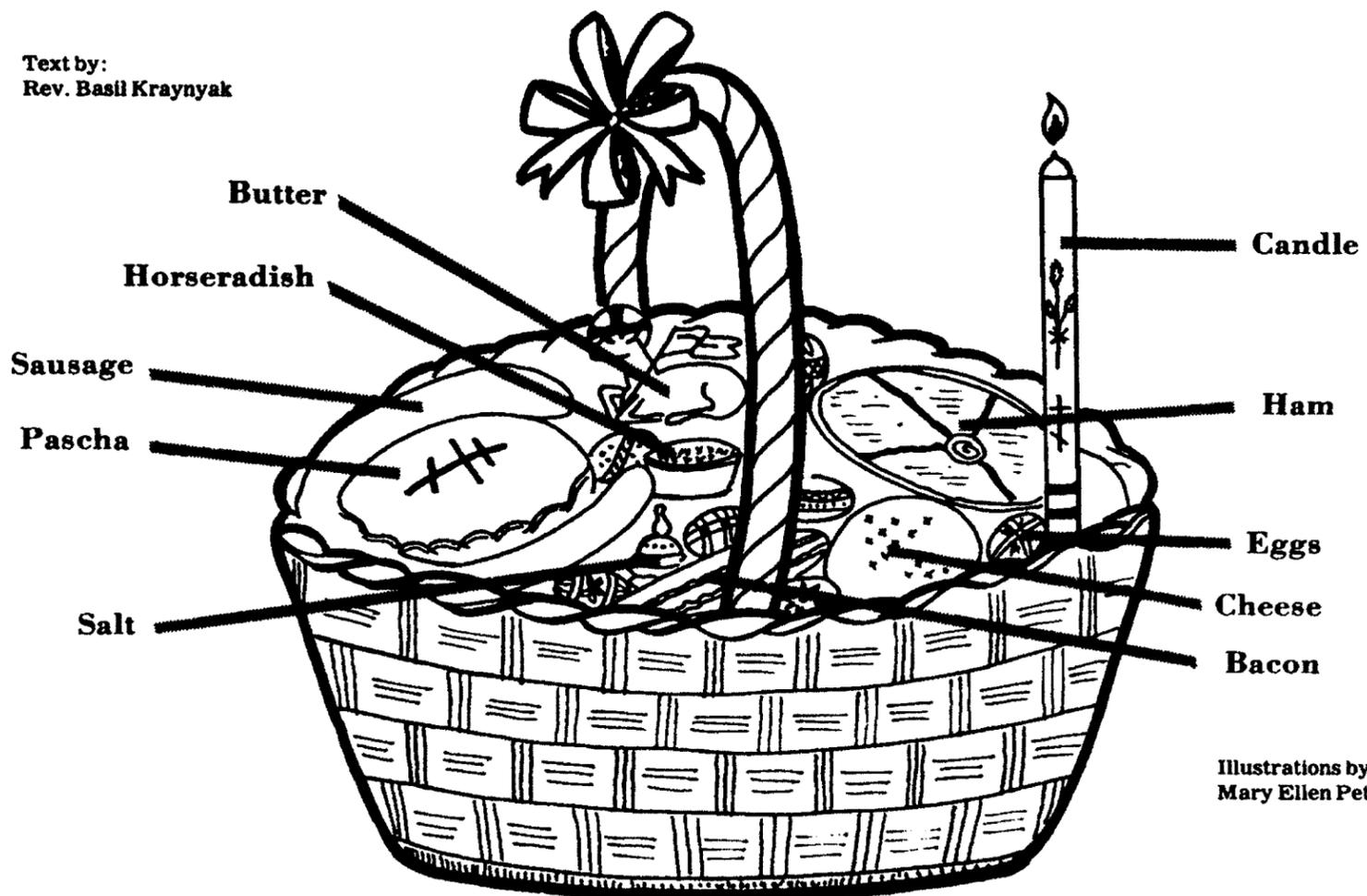
Nut Filling

- 1 lb. ground walnuts
- 1 cup canned milk
- ½ cup sugar
- 2 eggs
- ½ cup honey (optional)

Combine sugar and nuts. Beat eggs and add to mixture, add honey and

How to Put Together a Traditional Easter Basket

Text by:
Rev. Basil Kraynyak

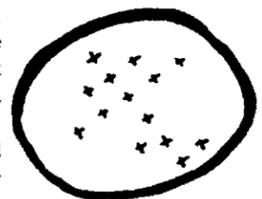


Illustrations by:
Mary Ellen Petro

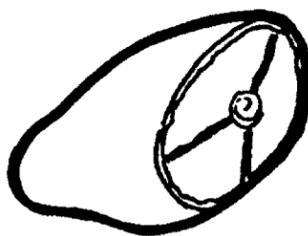


PASCHA - The Easter Bread (pron. pá-ska.) A sweet, yeast bread rich in eggs, butter, etc. Symbolic of Christ Himself who is our True Bread. Usually a round loaf baked with a golden crust decorated with a symbol indicative of Christ. Sometimes a cross (+) of dough is placed on top encircled by a plait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

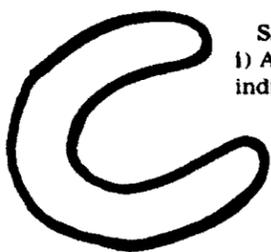
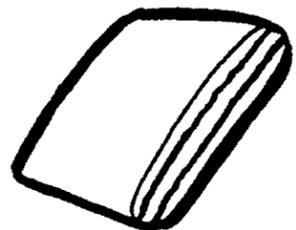
CHEESE (Slav. Hrudka or Sirets pron. hrood-ka or sí-rets) A custard-type cheese shaped into a ball having a rather bland but sweet taste indicative of the moderation that Christians should have in all things. Also, creamed cheese is placed in a small dish and both are decorated with symbols (see Pascha)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



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



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



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



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

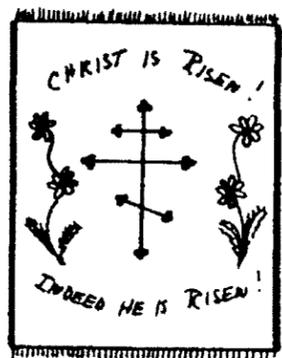
EGGS (Slav. Pisanki pron. pi-sún-ki) Hard-boiled eggs brightly decorated with symbols and markings made with beeswax. Indicative of new life and resurrection.



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

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

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



CHRIST IS RISEN! INDEED HE IS RISEN!

A JOURNEY FROM HOLY WEEK TO THE RESURRECTION..



Passion Week or Great Week

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

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

On Holy Thursday, three events are recalled in the liturgy: the institution of the Eucharist, the washing of the feet of the disciples, and the betrayal of Judas. Throughout the liturgy the following idea is repeated over and over again, as expressed in the troparion: "Receive me today, O Son of God, as a partaker of Your Mystical Supper, for I will not reveal the Mystery to Your enemies nor give You a kiss as did Judas, but like the repentant thief I will confess to You: Remember me, O Lord, in Your



kingdom." "Let no one, O believers, fail to join in the Lord's Supper, let no one whatsoever approach the table, like Judas, with deceit."

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

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

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

Good Friday

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

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

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

In the evening, Solemn Vespers are performed. At the end of Vespers, the priest, vested in full priestly vestments, makes a procession around the church

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

As mentioned already, there is no Divine Liturgy on Good Friday. If, however, the feast of the Annunciation should fall on the same day, then the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom is celebrated before the service just described.

Holy Saturday

Holy Saturday is dedicated to the memory of Our Savior's entombment and to His descent into Ha-

Having suffered to
Jesus Christ,
have mercy

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

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

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

The Resurrection Period

For a long time, by many prayers, liturgical services and ceremonies, the Church has been preparing us for the glorious day of Christ's Resurrection, Pascha. Hoping that during Lent everybody had an

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

Resurrection

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

Following the procession, Resurrection Matins begin. Preceded by candle bearers and by bearers of the processional cross, church banners, an icon of the resurrection and the Gospel book, the priest goes to the main church doors and from outside, after incensing the closed doors, he intones: "Glory be to the holy, consubstantial and indivis-

ize the fact that Christ by His death on the cross opened for us the gates of Heaven.

The priest then comes to the altar and, after singing the Great Litany, begins the Paschal Canon, the Canon of the Resurrection. This Canon, composed by Saint John Damascene (675-748 AD) is a series of hymns written according to certain rules, hence its name "canon (rule)." It is a type of liturgical poetry, especially interesting because of its specific form and content. Similar hymns appeared in the East already around the middle of the seventh century. It replaced the kontakion, a type of liturgical poetry composed of 24 short odes or strophes with the purpose of conveying to the people a certain religious message.

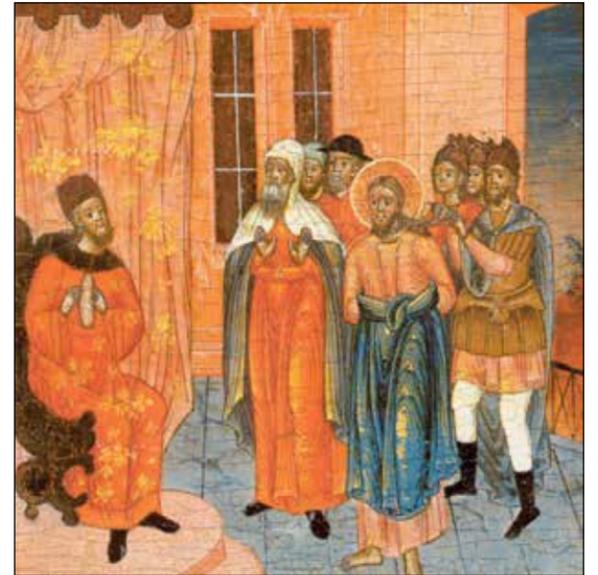
The Canon of the Resurrection, as any other canon, is composed of nine odes, with the exception of the second one, each containing three or four troparia, the first of which is called an "irmos." The first troparion or "irmos" contains the chief theme of the ode and serves as a model for other troparia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

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

The Canon of the Resurrection ends with the hymns of Lauds, which exhort us "to sing hymns to Your (Christ's) saving passion and glorify Your Resurrection." Christ must be glorified on this day

for "He has endured crucifixion, overthrown death and risen from the dead." Today, "we praise Your divine condescension and sing hymns to You, O Christ! In order to save the world, You were born of a virgin without leaving the Father. You suffered as man and willingly endured crucifixion, and You rose from the tomb. O Lord, glory to You."

The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom has a slight deviation from its ordinary celebration. Immediately after the initial invocation, the celebrant



sings the Paschal troparion in order to emphasize the joy and solemn happiness brought by the glorious Resurrection of Christ. The Gospel, taken from John 1:1-17, is divided into twelve verses. After reading each verse, the celebrant pauses and all the bells are rung. The Gospel is read in various languages, signifying that the redemptive work of Christ applies to all peoples, to the whole world. During the Eucharistic commemorations, instead of the usual hymn in honor of the Mother of God, "It is truly proper to glorify you ..." the Angelic Salutation from the Resurrection Service with the irmos of the ninth ode is sung: "Shine, shine, O new Jerusalem..." After the Communion, all hymns are replaced by the Paschal troparion.

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

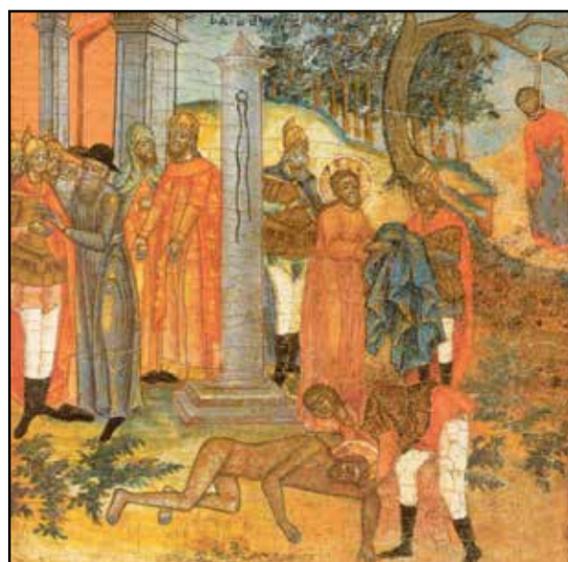
During Vespers, instead of the usual introductory prayers and Psalm 103, we repeat many times the Paschal troparion because the Resurrection of Christ is the crowning point of all the prophecies of the Old Testament. During the procession around the altar the priest carries the Gospel book and after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

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

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

the passion for us,
son of God,
glory on us!

ible Trinity always, now and ever, and forever and ever." After the people answer with "Amen," the priest sings the glorious Paschal troparion: "Christ is risen from the dead, by death He conquered death, and to those in the graves, He granted life. After the celebrant finishes, the whole congregation bursts into a joyous, jubilant singing of the same troparion twice. But all this is only the beginning of the jubilation. The priest sings to the Risen Christ, "Let God arise and let His enemies be scattered, and let those who hate Him flee from before His face." The congregation replies spontaneously: "Christ is risen from the dead - *Christos voskrese!*" "As smoke vanishes so let them vanish, as wax melts before a fire," the priest continues. Again a thundering *Christ is risen!* closes the priest's intonation. "So let the wicked perish at the presence of God and let the righteous ones rejoice," proclaims the celebrant. Another *Christ is risen!* Then, "This is the day which the Lord has made, let us be glad and rejoice in it." Another *Christ is risen!* In conclusion the celebrant again sings, *Christ is risen!* As he reaches the words, "and to those in the graves He granted life," he strikes the doors with the cross. They are then opened and he enters, followed by the entire congregation. The priest in front of the closed doors represents the angel announcing the joyful news of the resurrection. The people represent the myrrh-bearing women. The striking of the doors with the cross and their opening symbol-



MIRACULOUS “MARY, HELPER OF MOTHERS” ICON

Services may be canceled or re-scheduled due to the COVID-19 pandemic

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.

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.

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.

Mary, Helper of Mothers, will visit the following parishes:

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.

- March 19-April 23: Saint Mary, Hillsborough • Service on March 31
- April 23-May 7: Saint Nicholas, Dumlupinar • 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

The Albazinskaya icon celebrates how God became Man, and a Virgin became His Mother. It celebrates the mysteries



- 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. *Due to quarantine for coronavirus, this schedule is subject to change.*

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

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MARK THERRIEN



DEACON CYRIL KENNEDY



MOTHER CECILIA OF CHRIST THE BRIDGROOM MONASTERY

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LENT IN THE BYZANTINE CATHOLIC TRADITION

By Deacon John Harden

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent for most Catholics, (and even many Protestants). But for many other Christians, including Byzantine Catholics like myself, Lent began on Clean Monday. This is just one of the many fascinating characteristics of Lent in our Byzantine Catholic tradition. So, what is Byzantine Catholic Lent like? Why does it start on a different day? What else is different about it? Let's take a look!

The Forty Days (and More) of the Great Fast

Lent, which we also call the Great Fast, begins with a forty-day period from Clean Monday until Lazarus Saturday, that is the Saturday before Palm Sunday, (five weeks plus five days equals forty). We count each day in this period as a day of the Fast, including Saturdays and Sundays, although our disciplines are relaxed on those days. Lazarus Saturday and Holy Week, which we also call Great and Holy Week, are strictly speaking not part of the Great Fast itself. But those days are a continuation of our preparation for Easter Sunday in which our prayers and disciplines are intensified. (Latin Catholics also have forty days of Lent, but Sundays are not counted, and Holy Week is. So, six weeks of six days each equal thirty-six. Add for more days for the half-week beginning on Ash Wednesday, and that's your Lent!).

Penitential Practices During the Great Fast

Why do we call our first day of Lent Clean Monday? One reason comes from what our Lord teaches us about fasting:

... when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you."

So, we are reminded to approach Lent in humility, not taking pride in our acts of penance. (While Byzantine Catholics don't receive ashes at the beginning of Lent, this is in no way a critique of

Ash Wednesday, which is a praiseworthy practice that reminds the faithful to prepare themselves for death.)

The first day of Lent is also called Clean Monday because of what would traditionally be removed from our homes. Just as a faithful Jew would cleanse his house of all leaven in preparation for Passover (see 1 Corinthians 5:7), so we cleanse our houses of all meat, eggs, and dairy in preparation for Lent. (This is why the two weeks before Lent are called Meat Fare and Cheese Fare. It's on those weeks that we say goodbye to those foods). While the practice of abstaining from meat, eggs, and dairy throughout the entire Fast is not required by Church law, it is what has been traditionally expected of all Byzantine Christians. What is required in most traditions is fasting and abstaining from meat, eggs, and dairy on Clean Monday and Great and Holy Friday (Good Friday). Abstaining from meat is also required every Wednesday and Friday of Lent. (Vegans would love our traditions. I'm talking to you, Joaquin Phoenix.)

Liturgy During the Great Fast

If you've attended a Good Friday Service at a Roman Catholic Church, you may have noticed that it's not actually a Mass. There is no consecration of the Holy Eucharist, but there is distribution of Holy Communion that was consecrated at the Holy Thursday Mass. In a similar way, Byzantine Catholics have *aliturghical* weekdays during Lent. The Divine Liturgy is Celebrated on Saturday and Sunday, and after the Sunday Liturgy, the Eucharist is reserved for distribution at the Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts during the week. And, on most weekdays, the Gospel is not read in the Liturgy. Instead, we read through the books of Genesis, Exodus, Proverbs, Job, and Isaiah.

The Liturgy on Sunday is different, too. While we don't omit singing Alleluia, we do celebrate the Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great rather than the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, which would normally be celebrated on Sundays. These two different Liturgies are akin to the different Eucharistic Prayers of the Roman Catholic Mass. The Liturgy is largely the same, but the Anaphora (the Eucharistic Prayer) is different. It

is longer ... by quite a bit. But it is also rich in its imagery and theology.

When it comes to liturgical colors, we generally follow one basic rule: bright colors for days of celebration, dark colors for fasts and funerals. Like Roman Catholics, violet is often the color of choice on the weekdays of Lent; red is also used. Interestingly, bright colors like white and gold are used on Sunday, not dark colors, because Sunday is always a celebration of Christ's Resurrection, even during Lent!

The Beautiful Diversity of the Catholic Faith

There are many, many more distinguishing characteristics of the Byzantine Great Fast. I share these differences, not to critique—and certainly not as a boast—but to show how beautifully rich in diversity our Church is! The Apostle John concludes his Gospel saying, "there are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be

written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written" (John 21:25). In a similar way, our Catholic beliefs and practices cannot be contained in a single liturgical or spiritual tradition. What unites us is our communion with Christ and his Church. As you continue your Lenten journey, may you abide ever more deeply in Our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ.

Glory to Jesus Christ!

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



Archbishop William Skurla
Bishop Kurt Burnette
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LIFE, LOVE, AND THE HUMAN PERSON

By Ann M. Koshute, MTS

SOCIAL DISTANCE, DIVINE NEARNESS

Considering the non-stop news coverage, self-isolation, and social upheaval of the last number of weeks, it seems silly to ignore the topic that is on everyone's lips, in every language and country across the world: the global pandemic caused by Covid-19, or the Coronavirus. The world is a different place now. Our routines have been radically upset, many of our jobs (if we still have them) have been reimagined as virtual workspaces, and interaction with family and friends has been severely limited. The change in lifestyle, coupled with the anxiety and fear generated by something we cannot see but which can spread quickly and become deadly, is like nothing we've ever seen. The Oxford Dictionary, which updates their word entries quarterly, will certainly add the term "social distancing" to its lexicon, as it's now been added to our way of life.

This crisis shines a bright light on the worst in humanity: selfishness, disregard for the good of others, and the choices we make to give into our base appetites, abandoning the art of self-discipline in favor of instant self-gratification. And yet, with all the stories of people hoarding everything from toilet paper to disinfectant spray, more stories emerge showing the best in us; the acts of kindness that foster community in a time of distancing, and love for others in the midst of self-centeredness. A recent trip to the grocery store demonstrated the complex of human emotion and behavior brought on by a health crisis that has so changed our lifestyle. The store wasn't overly crowded, but I noted that turning down a smaller aisle

prompted one woman to look at me and quickly turn her cart around. As I passed another woman and smiled, she kind of scowled and quickly moved on. Such encounters are disconcerting, but overshadowed more by displays of kindness and brief, friendly comments. Exiting the store, a woman was waiting for her husband. Not paying attention, she walked in front of my cart and I nearly bumped her. She apologized and made a joke about "social distancing" and we laughed. She said this "distancing" was the hardest of all for her. "I'm a hugger!" she told me with a wide smile. Then she blew me a kiss, which I caught and returned, and we said goodbye. It was the strangest, sweetest and most wonderful thing to happen in a grocery store in a time of anxiety, when people look on each other with suspicion – especially when someone coughs or sneezes. That "air kiss" was a beautiful gesture and reminded me that "social distance" cannot – must not – mean *spiritual distance* from each other. Love of neighbor is not optional, even in the midst of a pandemic.

This brings me to the title of this column, and an important lesson for us in what seems like the worst of all circumstances. That this pandemic reached its peak during the Great Fast is providential. By this, I'm not suggesting that God caused it or that Coronavirus is His chastisement being visited on us. But God brings good from evil, and His grace is poured out in abundance where sin and death appear to have the upper hand. This year, the Fast called us to greater sacrifice in ways we could never have predicted. The loss of Di-

vine Liturgy is particularly painful, and some even lashed out against those in spiritual authority who made difficult decisions, but whom God has called us to obey. Instead of beating our breasts in despair over the "unfairness" of our situation, God has given us an unprecedented opportunity to draw near to Him. On the Cross, Jesus was radically separated from those He loved, and He freely chose separation from the Father in order to penetrate the darkest places of human experience, so that He could illuminate them. We have the chance to be intimately united with Christ as He is present with us in these dark times. Social distance is difficult and lonely, but it need not separate us from God. As part of His self-emptying sacrifice on our behalf, Jesus willingly distanced Himself from the Father in order to fully take up the sins of the world and carry them to the Cross. But He does not distance Himself from us. He is there in the silence and loneliness; in the separation from family and friends, and the anxiety over our health and well-being. God is with us! But the voices in our heads – and from our televisions and social media – speak only of fear and isolation. Our challenge and our task is to turn down the noise and rest in the knowledge that God has not abandoned us.

The woman in the grocery store who blew me a kiss did more that day than make me smile or renew my faith in humanity. She taught me that keeping our distance to avoid spreading a virus doesn't mean we stop loving each other. If it isn't possible to visit someone (especially those most vulnerable)

a phone call is a simple but meaningful gesture toward someone who might otherwise be alone. Leaving groceries or cleaning supplies on a friend or neighbor's front porch keeps us safe but shortens the distance between us. And prayer, that often overlooked or cavalier gesture ("I'll pray for you!" – but, do we?), is a powerful way to keep us connected as the Body of Christ, and hold up those whose strength is failing under the strain. Prayer miraculously binds us together, though we are physically set apart from each other.

Social distancing has entered our vocabulary and our psyches, and after this crisis is over it will prove to have changed us. The question is whether that change will be for our good, or if it makes us more jaded, suspicious, and doubtful of God's presence. We who are believers, who worship and *know* the one, true God must show others by our example that He is with us! Though we believe we're also subject to doubt and fear and must be attentive to the signs of His mercy and love. God's divine nearness may not appear in grand, miraculous displays, but in small gestures, like connecting for a moment with a stranger in the grocery store. It is in those moments that God *blows us a kiss*. Let's be ready to catch it and kiss Him back. **ECL**

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

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

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/>

April: 4, 11, 18, 25



Carpatho-Rusyn Society's New Branches

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



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SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

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

HADES

We Byzantines often mention “Hades” in our Resurrection hymns, especially during Pascha. The Bible actually has a lot to say about this place—the dead end of human life after original sin and before Christ’s sacrificial death and resurrection.

Psalm 88 calls Hades the depths, the pit, a bed in darkness. There is nothing left of ordinary life, no hope of interaction. “The dead in Hades are so cut off that they cannot even praise God. Hades has bars and gates and there’s no escape (Psalm 107:16; Isaiah 45:1-2; Job 38:17).

Here’s how Job (10:21-22) describes it: The place of no return ... the land of gloom and utter darkness ... to the land of deepest night, of utter darkness and disorder, where even the light is like darkness.”

Picture an elevator that starts at the grave and only goes down. Once you get there, it’s all over. And this is all that human beings, left to ourselves, can hope for after death (Ecclesiastes 9:6-10). The most negative and hopeless of the Psalms (88:10-12) asks God bitterly: “Will you work your wonders for the

dead? Will the ghosts arise and praise you? Will your love be told in the grave, your faithfulness in the land of destruction? Are your wonders known in the dark or your righteousness in the land of oblivion?” These are rhetorical questions. The expected answer is “no, of course not.”

But already 800 years before Jesus’ sacrificial death and resurrection, God asked a different question through the prophet Hosea: “Shall I ransom them from the power of Hades (in Hebrew, *Sheol*)? Shall I redeem them from death? O Death, where are your victory? O Hades, where is your sting?” (Hosea 13:14). God’s answer is Christ’s Resurrection, a resounding “Yes!” That “yes!” Saint Paul insists, is the very heart of the Gospel (2 Corinthians 1:19). And so, even those bronze gates and iron bars that admit no escape can be smashed when the Lord leads the captives out of Hades (Psalm 107:16).

That is exactly what Jesus did when He descended to death and raised up Adam and Eve and the righteous men and women of the Old Testament (1 Peter 3:18-20). And that is exactly what we pray Jesus will do for us when

we say in the Creed: “I expect the resurrection of the dead.”

The truly interesting thing about all those references to Hades in Job and Psalms is that they’re the words of people who are not dead. They are actually describing lives that feel like the depths, the darkness and death. On the Sundays of Pascha, we hear several accounts of people whose lives were like living death until they met Jesus or heard the Good News from the Apostles. Jesus meeting someone whose life is like a living death: Aeneas the paralytic (Acts 9:32-35), the paralytic at the Sheep Pool (John 5:1-15), the man born blind (John 9). Add to these the widow Tabitha, whom Saint Peter actually raises from the dead (Acts 9:36-42).

In each of these accounts, the persons have break out of their passivity and respond. And it is no coincidence that the word “arise” keeps appearing. The paralyzed man has to do what he hears Jesus say: “Arise, pick up your mat and walk” (John 5:9). He has to take that first step in faith. Even the dead Tabitha has to take Peter’s hand and rise (Acts 9:40). She might well have said, Don’t be ri-

diculous, I’m dead.” The well-known icon of the Resurrection reminds us that, even in Hades, Adam and Eve had to take the hand of the risen Lord. They had to believe the Good News that he, another dead man in Hades, came to announce.

Where is the Hades in our life? Where is the pit, the darkness, the captivity, lack of light, the absence of movement and growth and hope? Where is the passivity that comes from fear, shame or despair? How might we like the paralytic by the sheep pool whose own superstition and negativity keep him from ever being cured in the place where healings were supposed to happen?

The very first time He appears in the Book of Revelation, Jesus reminds us that He holds the key to death and Hades. And on the very last page of the same book, describing the glorious ending of God’s plan, Saint John tells us that death and Hades were destroyed, thrown into the lake of fire for ever (Revelation 1:18; 20:13-14). That victory is ours to claim but it requires our active response to the Good News that Christ is risen. **ECL**

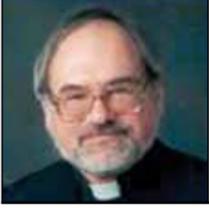


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THE BYZANTINE LITURGY

By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD

THE ANAPHORA OF SAINT BASIL: OUR CATECHESIS

The Anaphora of Saint Basil is read in the Divine Liturgies of the Great Fast and also on the Great Feasts of Christmas, Theophany, and Pascha. The reason for this is that it is the most sublime statement of faith in our Liturgy. In it, the whole story of our salvation in Christ is told, and, hearing it, we learn the basic message of the gospel. I've entitled these articles "our catechesis," but they are more properly what is called "mystagogy," the proclamation of faith by baptized, committed Christians. In the most holy times of our liturgical year, we tell how God has brought us salvation. It is more than instruction; it is our worship and confession of life in Christ. In the next few articles, I want to show how this story is told.

After we sing the Hymn of Victory ("Holy, holy, holy ..."), the celebrant prays in our name, "Taking clay from the earth, You formed man and honored him with Your own image, O God. You placed him in a delightful paradise and promised him immortal life and the enjoyment of eternal blessings through the observance of Your commandments. But man disobeyed You, the true God Who created him; he was led astray by the deceit of the Serpent, and by his own transgressions was subjected to death. In Your righteous judgment, O God, You banished him from paradise into this world and returned him to the earth from which he had been taken, but provided for him the salvation of rebirth in your Christ."

The story of Adam and Eve in Eden as told in the Book of Genesis is often called the "proto-gospel," that is, it is the story of how it all began. This is not history in the ordinary sense of the word, but it is a parable illustrating a profound truth: that God made us in his image and likeness, but that we erred and rejected his plan for life, "led astray by the deceit of the serpent."

Genesis tells us that there were two trees in Eden: "Out of the ground the Lord God made grow every tree that was delightful to look at and good for food, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." (Genesis 2:9) The tree that Eve ate from in disobedience to God's commandment was not an apple tree or a fig tree but the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil." This might puzzle us; is it wrong to know good and evil? Most of the time, when I asked parents why they want their children to learn catechism, they say, "I want my child to know the difference between good and evil." But that is not what the Hebrew means: the tree is symbolic, and "to know good and evil," meant that Adam and Eve wanted to decide for themselves what is good and what is evil, and not listen to God, Who, in His loving-kindness, tells us what is good for our lives and what is dangerous to our souls. That is why the serpent tempts Eve with the biggest lie ever told, "your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods, who know good and evil." (Genesis 3:5) We see

here how evil lies can be. The two trees were bound together, and so eating in disobedience to God of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they were deprived also of the tree of life, and death entered the world, God telling Adam those terrible words, "For you are dust, and to dust you shall return." (Genesis 3:19)

We are no longer innocent. Every time we sin, we make the decision to decide for ourselves what is good for us, and to ignore God's warnings. Sometimes we identify sin with impurity, but there are other sins: anger, envy, injustice to others, lying, cheating, stealing, and Saint Basil even notes, "When someone steals another's clothes, we call them a thief. Should we not give the same name to one who could clothe the naked and does not? The bread in your cupboard belongs to the hungry; the coat unused in your closet belongs to the one who needs it; the shoes rotting in your closet belong to the one who has no shoes; the money which you hoard up belongs to the poor." All of these sins bring death, all these are "eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."

The Anaphora, however, continues, "provided for him (Adam, the human being) the salvation of rebirth in your Christ." We see this liturgically in the Great Fast. The exile of Adam and Eve from the tree of life because of their sin is now reversed. Jesus did not do this by bringing us back to paradise, but by

bringing paradise to us. The Kontakion of the Sunday of the Holy Cross speaks of the tree of life: "No longer does the flaming sword guard the gates of Eden, for the tree of the cross has come to quench it wondrously. The sting of death (which Saint Paul calls "sin," in 1 Corinthians 15:56) and the victory of Hades have been driven out. For you, O my Savior, stood and called out to those in Hades: Enter again into paradise." Adam and Eve were turned away from the Tree of Life, but Christ has opened the Tree of Life for us again. The tree of life is the wood of the cross.

This is reaffirmed frequently in the Liturgy of the Cross, especially in the Divine Praises. On Friday, in Tone 2, we sing, "On the tree of the Cross, you become the second Adam, you have come to find your flock that was lost and to give life to the world." On Friday in Tone 3, we sing, "On the pine, the cypress and the cedar, you are lifted up, O Lamb of God to save those who in faith venerate your voluntary crucifixion." This is from the tradition that our Lord's cross was made up of wood from three different trees. Finally, on Friday in Tone 8, we sing: "In the middle of Eden, a tree brought forth death, in the middle of the earth (referring here to Jerusalem) a tree brought forth life. By tasting the former, we fell into corruption, from the latter, we received the joy of immortality." **ECL**

SEASONAL REFLECTIONS

Father Ronald Hatton



WHAT A DIFFERENCE THREE DAYS MAKE

As I write this, we are unsure whether or not we will be able to celebrate Pascha together in our parishes. I am sure that your pastor is ruminating over what is going to happen and how can we deal with the possibility of empty churches for Palm Sunday and Pascha. Do we wear nitrile gloves while handing out our palms and pussy willows through car windows? Will we have our Good Friday and Resurrection processions? Whatever happens, I think one thing is certain: this pandemic is a test of faith, as we, if we examine our hearts closely, see in a very stark way whether we believe what we say we believe. Because, even if we have to do it in front of computer screens or mobile devices, we will soon be crying out: "Christ is risen from the dead! By death He trampled Death, and to those in tombs He granted life!" The grand thing is to think that, if we get to sing this together in our parishes, we will be singing it until our lungs give out! But

even if we can't, it is a time of proclaiming it as the bedrock of our faith. Either way, we will use this as a time to find refuge in faith, hope of the fulfillment of all God's promises to all Mankind, that He has conquered, and will conquer this crisis. I offer you this reflection from April of 2017, and pray that you find comfort, solace, and a real sense of victory over this pestilence. What a profound difference these three days can make!

"An awesome and glorious mystery occurs today: the One Who cannot be contained is now restrained. He, Who freed Adam from the curse, is bound. The Searcher of Hearts and Souls is questioned unjustly. He who confined the deep, is now confined to prison. In front of Pilate now stands the One before Whom the heavenly powers tremble. The Creator is struck by the hand of a creature. The Judge of the Living and the Dead is condemned to the cross. He, Who conquered Hell, is sealed in a tomb.

O innocent Lord, Who graciously suffered for all things and saved all Mankind from the curse, glory be to You!" -From the Stichera for Great and Holy Friday

Our services for Holy and Great Friday include a number of traditional services: *Strasti* (Matins of the Passion) with its twelve gospel readings; the Royal Hours; and, finally, Burial Vespers. The tone of all these services are somber, with dark vestments and low lighting. Although the tones for the *Stichera*, etc., are the usual ones for the particular services, they sound more somber. At Burial Vespers, in imitation of Joseph of Arimathea, the priest takes the burial shroud of Christ on his shoulders and processes, with all present, around the church and places the shroud in the tomb. Saturday continues the tone of heaviness of heart as we pray the "Lamentation" Matins, and the Hours. With the Vespers with the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil, we see the shroud

in the tomb, but a subtle change can be noted, especially with the clergy changing from dark vestments to bright, and singing hymns promising the Resurrection.

"Let us rise at early dawn and bring to our Master a hymn instead of myrrh; and we shall see Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, Who enlightens the life of all. When those bound by chains in the realm of Death saw Your boundless mercy, O Christ, they hastened to the light with joy, praising the Eternal Pasch. Bearing torches, let us meet the bridegroom, Christ, as He comes forth from His tomb; and let us greet, with joyful song, the saving Pasch of God." -Ode Four, Matins of the Resurrection

Come the morning, as we "rise at early dawn," we experience a profound change: this time, in imitation of the Ointment-bearers, we process around the church to the entrance of the "tomb," this being the closed doors of



Icon of the Descent into Hades, Church of Chora, Istanbul

the church. We may hear the proclamation of the Gospel selection from Mark, chapter 16. We then begin the Matins of the Resurrection, singing the odes, and proclaiming, "Christ is risen from the dead. By death He trampled Death, and to those in the tombs, He granted life." At the climax of the hymns, the priest sings this proclamation while knocking on the doors. The doors open, and we see, like the Ointment-

bearers, that the tomb is now empty; instead of purple or red altar cloths, we see white; instead of dimmed lights, every light and candle in the church is lit. "Christ is risen! Indeed, He is risen!" We process in and, instead of canons of penitence and mourning, we sing the Canon of Saint John Damascene, the canon not of death and despair, but of life and hope and forgiveness! Instead of mourning our sins, we rejoice that

sin has been conquered and that we have been redeemed, reborn, and can spend eternity with our Lord.

What a difference three days can make! From darkness into light; from sin to forgiveness; from death to life. The Church, through her services, hymns, prayers, and readings, leads us from sin to salvation, and from death to eternal life in Christ. She shows us God's ultimate plan for us, and if we take all this for granted, it can lose all significance for us. Instead of The Pasch being "the Lord's Passover, since Christ our God has brought us from death to life and from earth to heaven," it becomes merely Easter, with eggs, chocolates, jellybeans, and over-eating. The Church gives us Lent, Holy Week, Good Friday, and the Feast of Feasts to help us attain the salvation that she proclaims all year long. Lent teaches us to give the spirit power over the body in fasting; to

give alms "to the least of My brethren," to pray, not only in the words given to us in prayer books and formal services, but in a way that opens a conduit between us and God, that we may know and do His will for us. Through these services, we spiritually join with the disciples as Christ enters into Jerusalem to the cries of the Hebrew Children; to break bread with Him and ponder the words, "Take; eat; this is My Body;" to see His betrayal, not only by Judas, but also by the other disciples as they flee at His arrest, and Peter when he denies he knows his Best Friend. We stand with John and the Blessed Mother at the foot of the cross. We endure the silence of His burial. But then? We stand with the Ointment-bearers in front of the empty tomb. We cry out with joy at the words of the angel. Indeed, what a difference three days make, not only for us, but for all Mankind. **ECL**



SCHOOL OF PRAYER

Father G. Scott Boghossian

PRAYER AND ILLNESS

There are popular presentations of the Christian message today that are gravely misleading. One such presentation filling "mega-churches" and promulgated all over television and radio is the false "health and wealth" Gospel. This false Gospel says that it is never God's will for His children to be sick, and Christ always wants everyone to be healthy and well. If we are not always healthy and well, it is due to a lack of faith and a form of spiritual failure. We Catholic Christians do believe that God hears and answers prayer. We know that miracles are real, and God continues to confirm the truth of the Gospel by signs, wonders, and healings throughout the world today. But we do not believe that it is always God's will for us to be healthy and well.

The greatest saints were frequently ill. Two of the most well-known saints in the Catholic world today, Saint Francis of Assisi, and Saint Teresa of Avila seemed to be almost always sick! An unknown author writes that Saint Teresa bore the following pains: "A continuous, severe headache and frequent trembling of the head. Severe pains in the jaw. Her teeth are completely ru-

ined, causing her immense pain. Her stomach was so bad that, throughout two years, she vomited bile. even daily. Intensive pain and palpitation in the heart. The fever remained with her throughout her life, plus fainting ruined joints and bones, gout, back pain, and problems with the liver and kidneys. The pains got stronger in the last years of her life. Shortly before her death, at the age of 67, a medical examination could not determine the center of the pains, because "all the body is a repository of diseases." Her death was caused by a very strong internal bleeding – according to a plausible hypothesis, as a last phase of a uterine metastasis. Saint Teresa of Avila was a tremendous saint who constantly lived in the realm of the supernatural and to whom the spiritual world was an open book. Yet, such an advanced saint suffered terrible illnesses. God forbid any Catholic Christian would think that he or she is in some way a spiritual failure because of frequent and serious illness.

Amma Syncretica said, "If illness weighs us down, let us not be sorrowful as though, because of the illness and the prostration of our bodies, we could

not sing, for all these things are for our good, for the purification of our desires. Truly fasting and sleeping on the ground are set before us because of our sensuality. If illness then weakens this sensuality, the reason for these ascetic practices is superfluous. For this is the great asceticism: to be self-controlled in illness and to sing hymns of thanksgiving to God."

If we are afflicted by illness, let us keep the following things in mind. First, God is in control. In some sense, our illness comes to us from God. At least we can say that He has willed to permit it and could have easily prevented it. He allows it for our salvation and our highest good. While we strive to recover and receive proper medical care, we need to be resigned to the will of God. With Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, Let us pray, "Father let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not my will, but your will be done" (Mt. 26:39).

Let us pray during our illness. We might not be physically able to say all our regular prayers. But we can always lift our heart and mind to God. We can say in the midst of our sufferings, "Glo-

ry to you, O Lord!" or "Lord, have mercy," or "Thy will be done." Let us talk to Our Lord in the form of a familiar conversation, asking Him for His help and healing and thanking Him for the many blessings and graces we receive in the midst of our suffering.

Finally, let us be a good example to others in our trial. We can influence others toward faith in Jesus Christ by suffering with confidence, resignation, patience, and joy. May our doctors, nurses, and caretakers see in us a wonderful likeness to Jesus Christ and Our Lady who suffered so patiently for our salvation.

If you are suffering illness today, be convinced that God has not forgotten you, that Jesus Christ has not forsaken you. Remember, the greatest saints suffered tremendous physical illnesses and afflictions and that God wants to make you a great saint by means of the illnesses He sends you. If you are a suffering illness today, be confident that you are the apple of God's eye (Ps 17:8) and that He is sharing with you His greatest gift, a participation in the Cross of Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:10). **ECL**

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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:

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SEMINARIAN REFLECTIONS

Subdeacon Timothy Fariss

TREADING WATER

Whenever I share the fact that I never learned how to swim, I am met with a barrage of questions that ultimately leaves me to think that people are wondering how have I lived this long. Luckily, I spend most of my time on dry land and, if necessary, I can manage to tread water for a short time. Treading water became a popular phrase that managed to transcend aquatic activities. I've heard it used when referring to studying for final examinations or playing a sport against a difficult opponent. Treading water is not a term that refers to success or failure but just barely maintaining the status quo.

Scripture has many themes and lessons about being in, on, and around water. In the past few weeks, the scripture readings included the passages of Noah. Noah prepared building the ark well before any rain threatened him because the Lord requested it. If he had waited for the poor weather, there would not have been enough time to build the ark. Noah's faith got to work fulfilling the Lord's request. As it rained for 40 days and nights the ark kept everyone safe from the violent waters that cleansed the earth. Imagine, just a little ark of shelter around a world of turmoil. This sounds quite relatable considering our recent quarantine, lockdown, social distancing, or whatever new terms are being thrown at Covid-19.

I remember the first news reports about a curious fever that was spreading from Asia, jumping from country to country. Borders started shutting down, cruise liners were prevented from docking, toilet paper suddenly became a hot ticket item. Insanity seemed to grip the nation as imaginations ran wild and fear amok. Covid-19 certainly has been no picnic, but after the first week of panic the world seemed to settle down. People started realizing the hard work of doctors and nurses, truckers, delivery drivers, and manufacturers. Employers began rolling out sick-leave packages. Stores recognized the needs of the elderly and at-risk individuals. My favorite response was learning how beer

distilleries began brewing hand sanitizer and companies like Ford Motors manufacturing face masks. It showed true resolve to serve the masses. Everyone recognized the need to surface for air. Thrashing our arms in the water was helping no one and even prevented our own rescue.

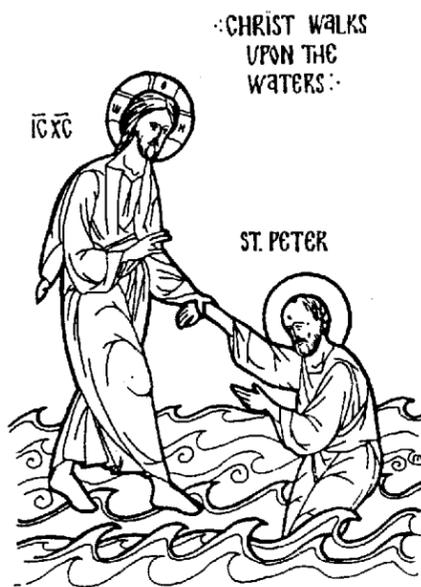
This reaction reminds me of the passage of Peter in the boat (Matthew 14). When Peter saw Christ walk on the water, Peter desired to walk out to meet him. Peter got out of the boat and began to walk on the water. However, when Peter's attention was diverted from the Lord and he noticed the crashing waves and strong winds, he began to sink into the water. Peter cried out to Christ "Lord, save me!" (v. 30). Christ replied, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" Peter's request, with what Christ described as "little faith," was life-saving. This might remind us of the boy's father in Mark 9:24, who upon asking for healing of his son replied, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" When we see Christ as our bedrock the troublesome waters are stilled, and we see our God more clearly.

Let us not just tread water.

As I live-streamed into my first online Divine Liturgy I saw hundreds of other computers log in to virtually sit in with me. The prayers of the Divine Liturgy

not just permeated out households, but also our homes. Our parishes and priests have been tasked with changing how they minister and care for the faithful. Many, for the first time, equipped their parish with the power to extend our prayers outside of the four walls of the church. To me this is an incredible feat for our small parishes to stay connected while in quarantine. In one morning, I sat in Hillsborough NJ, while checking in on my friends in Georgia and Florida. I visited my previous pastor in NYC and even spent some time in a parish on the West Coast. I, in my own basement, seemed even more connected with Catholics everywhere because of the hard work our parishes invested to keep our focus on Christ in the midst of this storm.

As we pray that we can celebrate Pascha in our home parishes, let us take this time igniting a life of prayer within our homes. If you are watching a live-stream on Sundays, put your phones in another room to prevent distractions, log-in 10 minutes early and say a short prayer to prepare ourselves to come into the presence of God. Stand for the prayers of the Liturgy even if it feels a little awkward standing in your own living room. Sing along with the cantors and most importantly, keep your focus on God. **BCL**



Theosis in Action 2020 events Save the dates!

July 31-August 2
summer retreat (location TBD)
November 15
Philip's Fast afternoon of recollection (location TBD)

December 12
Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church in NYC; Christmas social
Open to all young adults ages 18-35.

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UPCOMING EPARCHIAL AND PARISH EVENTS

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
- 13-18 Bright Week
Chancery closed April 13 and 14
- 19 Second Paschal Sunday (Saint Thomas)
- 26 Third Paschal Sunday (Holy Myrrhbearers)

MAY, 2020

- 3 Fourth Paschal Sunday (Healing of the Paralytic)
- 6 Mid-Pentecost
- 10 Fifth Paschal Sunday (Samaritan Woman)
- 17 Sixth Paschal Sunday (Man Born Blind)
- 20 Leave-taking of Pascha
- 21 Holy Ascension of Our Lord
Holy Day of Obligation•Chancery closed
- 24 Seventh Paschal Sunday (Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council)
- 25 Memorial Day
Civic holiday•Chancery closed
- 31 Pentecost - The Descent of the Holy Spirit