



EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

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Bishop Kurt lays his hands on Deacon John Harden

The newly ordained Deacon John Harden offers the petitions of the litany

NEW DEACON ORDAINED IN MONT CLARE, PA

Ordination of Deacon John Harden

Axios! Subdeacon John Harden of Saint Michael Parish in Mont Clare, PA, was ordained to the holy diaconate on February 1 by Bishop Kurt. Concelebrating were Saint Michael administrator, Father Andriy Kovach, Father John Cigan, Father James Badeaux, as well as Deacons John Reed and Richard Terza. Father Ed Higgins served as master of ceremonies. Also in attendance were Father Nicholas DeProspero, Deacon

Ed Quinn, Subdeacon Ryan Liebhaber, and Deacon John's father, Deacon Richard Harden.

Many years of preparation and formation led to this joyous occasion. Father Deacon John was beaming with joy. He expressed his heartfelt gratitude for his wife, Meghann, his family, clergy, choir, and parishioners who have supported him throughout this journey.



Bishop Kurt with newly-ordained Deacon John, his parents, wife, Pan'i Meghan, and children

20TH ANNUAL SAINTS CYRIL AND METHODIUS LECTURE SPONSORED BY THE BYZANTINE CATHOLIC SEMINARY TO BE DELIVERED THROUGH LIVE-STREAM ON MAY 7

The Byzantine Christian tradition reads the Gospel of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist John the Theologian throughout the paschal season. This is no accident. The annual celebration of the Resurrection seems to have originated in the circles around John. Looking again at this gospel in the light of Pascha, Father John Behr of Saint Vladimir Seminary, in a live-stream on May 7, 2020, will consider what is meant by Christ's last word from the cross – "It is finished" – and show how the mystery of the incarnation includes us today.

Father John Behr has published numerous monographs with Oxford Univer-

sity Press and Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press (S.V.S.P.), most recently a new critical edition and translation of Origen's *On First Principles*. He has also published various works aimed for more general audiences, such as his more poetic and meditative work entitled, *Becoming Human: Theological Anthropology in Word and Image* (S.V.S.P. 2013).

Father John is currently preparing to deliver through live-stream the 20th annual Saints Cyril and Methodius Lecture of the Byzantine Catholic Seminary. He has selected as his topic: "*The Gospel of Saint John as a Paschal Gospel.*"

The public is welcome to tune into this lecture on Thursday, May 7 at 7:00 PM, via the seminary website at www.bcs.edu. The same website will also archive the recorded lecture for future access by the public.

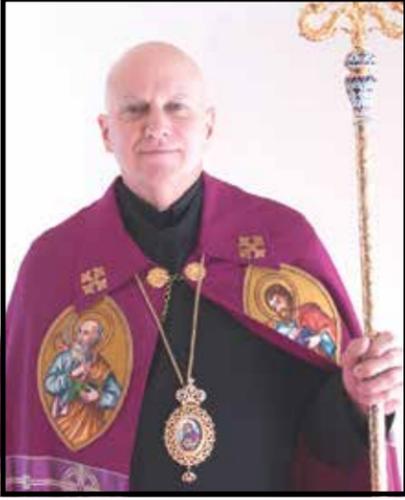
Saints Cyril and Methodius in Pittsburgh, PA, is a community of mentors, teachers, and students forming leaders for the Church in an environment of Christian unity, integrity, and missionary spirit, with a commitment to ecumenism. The seminary is currently celebrating both its 70th Anniversary and its reaccreditation by the Association of Theological Schools. All students, including seminarians, are currently taking their courses online due to serious precautions related to the coronavirus pandemic. Both the seminary's online courses and on-campus courses are fully accredited, thus maintaining the same content and quality across the curriculum.



Father John Behr

Founded in 1950, the Byzantine Catholic Seminary is a free-standing, English speaking theological seminary, welcoming all those seeking the knowledge possessed by the Eastern ecclesial traditions. The seminary is authorized to grant the Master of Arts in Theology and Master of Divinity degrees by the Commonwealth of PA and is accredited by the Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools.





I LIFT UP MY EYES...

Pastoral Reflections of Bishop Kurt



AS SMOKE VANISHES

God, our God controls the passageways of death

The word I hear most often these days is the word “strange.” Almost everything is described as strange. Going to the grocery store, staying home, wearing masks, even church services are strange. Even the times are strange. People in other parts of the country see the news about New Jersey and New York and ask how everything is. In the hospitals, from what I hear, it is like a war zone, like a science fiction movie. But for the rest of us, it’s like a strange vacation that doesn’t end. In many households, even though everyone is home, some people are separated from other people. Our landscaper is isolating from his wife. She tested positive for “the virus” and was quite sick, so she is in her room with the door shut, and they haven’t seen each other for two full weeks. They talk through the door or text each other. The pictures we have seen from plagues in the olden days are nothing like our own day. We know there are sick and dying, but they are separated somewhere else, and most of us are healthy and sitting at home by order of the governors. It seems like we should be doing something to help, but even pastors aren’t allowed into the hospitals. People are dying by the thousands with no contact with anyone they know, only health care workers who appear for a shift and they disappear and are replaced with other strangers. Husbands and wives die without seeing each other or touching each other. The

better at Easter. Indeed, I checked the daily deaths in New York, which people call the epicenter, and the dying began during the first two weeks of Lent, then death grew in an awful crescendo with a grim mound during Holy Week, and indeed began to drop precipitously on the Feast of the Resurrection of Our Lord. In the New York City area, more than a thousand people died each day, and the last of these terrible days was Good Friday. On those three days of doom, it must have seemed to the heroic and brave healthcare workers, and to the people carrying away the bodies, that the terror would never end. Then on Holy Great Saturday, the toll dropped, and then dropped further on Easter Sunday. There was one final sharp peak a few days after Easter on April 15—perhaps some people were blessed to die during Bright Week, or perhaps death was respecting Orthodox Easter a week later. Nevertheless, at least in the United States, the so called “curve” really did seem to coincide with Lent and relent at Easter.

Throughout history, there have been places where the Church was under especial persecution, and people were forbidden to meet, even under pain of arrest, execution, or sentencing to Siberia. A Ukrainian émigré in my Portland, OR, parish told me that when she was a little girl, a big truck pulled up to their Catholic Church in Ukraine on a Sunday morning, the police loaded everyone in church into the truck, and no one ever saw the again. Although she was in two Nazi slave labor camps, she judged the Communists much worse. Today, in this strangest of all Easters, the Catholic Church across the entire

first disappearing into the court system, and then leaving behind His flesh. This year, this somber ritual of the Roman Catholics seemed to have been carried out by Divine Order all over the globe, and not just for 24 hours, but for much longer. I’m pretty sure the strangest day of my life was a few weeks ago when I ordered all our churches to close on advice from medical experts. The Russian Orthodox Church in Russia scoffed at us, but by Easter, even they had closed, their clergy celebrating their elaborate and solemn mysteries in gorgeous empty temples.

While the disciples were asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane, the enemies of Jesus were awake and busy. When Jesus wakes up the disciples for the second time, He says to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.” During this time that our churches were closed by the government, and many hospitals around the country were bankrupted by the cancellation of most surgeries, what was open: liquor stores, marijuana stores, and abortion clinics? The grocery stores and liquor stores were really quite crowded, while people were forbidden to pray together, even when spacing out or staying in their automobiles. One governor proclaimed triumphantly that he and his team saved us from the plague—not God, not faith! That same governor, who claims to be Catholic, signed a law allowing babies to be murdered by medical workers after they are born. Another governor signed a law making abortions as frequent as possible, abolishing informed consent, expanding people who can perform them beyond qualified physicians, abolishing other medical safeguards, allowing children to be killed on their way out of the womb, to make sure as many children are sacrificed as possible—and he signed the law on Good Friday! That’s right, he deliberately signed the death warrant of so many innocent children on Good Friday, like a modern Robespierre celebrating his perverted liturgy to reason in the desecrated Notre Dame in Paris. When our Lord took His disciples to the Garden with Him to meet His betrayer, He said to them, “Pray, that you do not fall into temptation.” When He woke them up, He told them again, “Stay awake. Pray, that you do not fall into temptation.” And today, our Lord says to us all, “Stay awake. And pray, that you do not fall into temptation.”

Two thousand years ago, it seemed that things could not get any worse. The chosen people were completely dominated by pagan rulers. When the Messiah, the Son of David, finally appeared, their own king and religious leaders collaborated with the pagan governor to execute Jesus like a pagan criminal.

His disciples, who saw Him work every conceivable miracle, and heard Him teach peace and love, and watched Him live an unselfish life for no worldly gain, saw Him killed before their eyes. Even the Roman soldier, a pagan, when he saw that Jesus had died proclaimed, “Truly this man was the Son of God.” All of the crimes that were committed by the sons of Adam were made insignificant next to this greatest of all crimes. The Lawgiver was judged by the sinners, the Life-giver was killed by ones who received life from Him. Even the earth shuddered at the enormity of the crime, and the sun hid its face.

“You, oh hell, have been troubled by encountering Him below.” But while it seemed to be the world’s darkest hour, the Son of God was already reaping the fruit of the new tree of life. As His body lay in the grave, His soul was descending into the realm of death, just as He is present in the hospitals today, and retrieving the souls of those who had fallen asleep in death waiting for the Messiah. In one of our beautiful hymns, the earth speaks as if it is conscious, and it says in confusion, “I have taken corpses for thousands of years, and they are mine, but this last one that I took is stealing my victory and robbing me of my treasure. He refused to stay dead and He is giving life to the others.” In our beautiful hymns, we sing of Saint Joseph, dying before Jesus, going into the underworld, and telling Kind David, “Rejoice, for your son, the Messiah, has been born,” and telling the Prophet Isaiah, “The virgin you foretold has given birth to the Son of God.” And now after the Crucifixion, Jesus Himself appears in the underworld, bringing Divine Light into the never-ending gloom, bringing life into the realm of death, and bringing freedom into the prison of sin and evil. “Hell was in an uproar because it was done away with. Hell was in an uproar because it was mocked. Hell was in an uproar because it was done away with. Hell was in an uproar because it because it was annihilated. Hell was in an uproar because it was made captive.”

“Arise, Oh God, and let your enemies be scattered!” In our church we all know Psalm 67 by heart, at least the beginning of it. Arise, in Greek, is the same word as the word for Resurrection, “Anastasis.” When we sing that ancient psalm, we proclaim that Jesus rose, and also that Jesus is God. “Arise, Oh God!” I am told that this psalm is actually one of the most ancient. Originally, the experts say, it was a Canaanite military poem, improved then by the Israelites as artists are wont to do. The ancients had special songs they sang going into battle. I remember a passage from the *Anabasis*, where Xenophon describes the remarkable scene of the tiny but plucky force of Greeks marching fearlessly to do battle with a much larger army, and he says the scene

“When this began, I thought many of our churches would disappear after a month without public services, and with no collections. Many people have worked hard to make our services available on the internet. Most of our priests are touched and even overwhelmed with the generosity of the people who are continuing to support the parish. Thank you to everyone who has stepped up. In addition, many of our people are stepping up to help elderly parishioners who cannot leave their houses for food. God will reward all of you for your generosity in these times of difficulty.”

bodies are taken away by strangers and buried. They suffer through their final torments alone, die alone, and are buried alone. And meanwhile, the healthy people are sitting at home. The sum of everything that is horrible and everything mundane are in parallel a few blocks apart. Really the only word to describe it is “strange.”

One of our senior priests commented to me that it seemed as though the whole world was afflicted with this plague during Lent, and then everything got

globe closed its doors for the great Holy Days, not in a single country, but around the entire globe. The Roman Catholics have a custom in Holy Week, that we do not have, that on Holy Thursday the tabernacle is emptied out and the Blessed Sacrament is not in the Church until the Easter Vigil. For about 24 hours, the Blessed Sacrament is out of the Church all around the globe. It is a very impressive ceremony when Jesus is removed from the Church and hidden away, just as He seemed to disappear from His disciples 2,000 years ago,

was so inspiring that even the prostitutes who followed the military camps were singing the battle hymn with lively abandon. Whoever composed this battle hymn a thousand years before Christ, could he have known that someday it would be the battle hymn of the Christian people, celebrating the resurrection of the Son of God? Celebrating the victory over death itself?

“Let His enemies be scattered and let those who hate Him flee from before His face.” Although physical death is all around, at least here in the northeast,

we have no need to fear evil, as long as we follow the admonition of Jesus, “Stay awake, and pray that you do not fall into sin.” The evil that is around is scattered by the Risen Christ, and those who hate God will flee from before His face. Jesus has conquered evil, and we have no need to fear it as long as we stay close to Him. If we should fear anyone, another psalm says, “Make vows to the Lord your God, and perform them. Let all around Him bring gifts to Him who is to be feared, who cuts off the breath of princes.”

“As smoke vanishes, so let them vanish, as wax melts before the fire.” The words in this psalm describe an enemy army disappearing from the battlefield, as the organized ranks retreat in confusion and chaos. And when the enemy army has fled, we look around, and our fear is gone. Soon enough, the virus will vanish as smoke disappears. We will look around and remember these strange times. Farther in this psalm, the prophesying poet says, “God, our God, controls the passageways of death.” We do not fear death, because we know that we came into the world at a time

chosen by God, and we will leave at a time chosen by God. Jesus said about himself, “I lay my life down, and I take it up again.” In a like manner, God gave me life, and after I die, Jesus will raise me up again. Neither the virus, nor the governor, has the power to take my life nor to give it back to me. But God has the power to do both. “Let no one fear death, for the death of our Savior has set us free.”

+Kurt Burnette

EPARCHIAL PARISHES LIVE-STREAM THE DIVINE SERVICES

Below are just a few examples from around our Eparchy



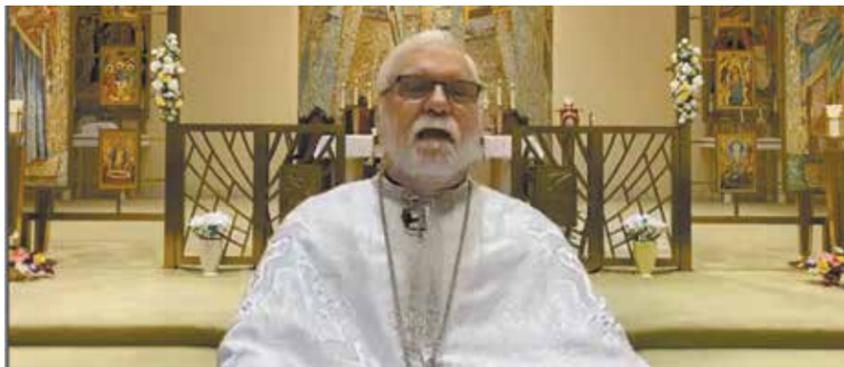
Father Ronald Hatton
Saint Nicholas Parish, Danbury, CT



Father James Badeaux and Deacon Nicholas Sotack
Saint Mary Parish, Hillsborough, NJ



Father Lewis Rabayda
Epiphany of Our Lord Parish, Roswell, GA



Father Edward Cimbala
Saint Mary Parish, New York, NY



Father Iaroslav Korostil
Nativity of Our Lord Parish, East Brunswick, NJ

Below is a list of many of the Parishes of the Eparchy of Passaic which are Live streaming Divine Liturgy on Saturday, Sunday, and Holy Days. You may access the links to their streaming sites (Facebook, Youtube, etc.) on our Website: www.eparchyofpassaic.com.

CONNECTICUT

Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church—Danbury, CT

NEW JERSEY

Cathedral of Saint Michael the Archangel—Passaic, NJ
Assumption of the Virgin Mary (St. Mary's)—Trenton, NJ
Our Lady of Perpetual Help—Toms River, NJ
Our Lady of Perpetual Help—Toms River, NJ—Radio
Saint Michael Byzantine Catholic Church—Perth Amboy, NJ
Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church—Hillsborough, NJ
Saints Peter & Paul Byzantine Catholic Church—Somerset, NJ
Saint Mary Byzantine Church—Jersey City, NJ
Saint John Byzantine Catholic Church—Bayonne, NJ
Nativity of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church—East Brunswick, NJ

NEW YORK

Saint Andrew Byzantine Catholic Church—Westbury, NY
Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church—White Plains, NY
Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church—New York, NY
Holy Spirit Byzantine Catholic Church—Binghamton, NY

PENNSYLVANIA

Saint Michael Byzantine Church—Mont Clare, PA
Saint Mary Byzantine Church—Wilkes-Barre, PA
Saint Mary Pokrova—Kingston, PA
Saint John Byzantine Church—Wilkes-Barre, PA
Saint John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church—Lansford, PA
Saint John Byzantine Church—Wilkes-Barre, PA
Saints Peter & Paul Byzantine Catholic Church—Bethlehem, PA
Saint Nicholas—Old Forge, PA
Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church—Taylor, PA

“Thank you to everyone who has made our Liturgies available on the internet. If your parish does not have its services available online, please ask the priest what you can do to help make it happen.”

Saints Peter & Paul Byzantine Catholic Church—Minersville, PA

Saint Michael's Byzantine Church—Dunmore, PA

Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church—Hazleton, PA

Saint John Byzantine Catholic Church—Hazleton, PA

Holy Dormition Friary—Sybertsville, PA

Holy Ghost Byzantine Catholic Church—Jessup, PA

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Byzantine Catholic Church—Levittown, PA

Saint Mary's Byzantine Catholic Church—Scranton, PA

Saint Ann Byzantine Catholic Church—Harrisburg, PA

GEORGIA

Epiphany of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church—Roswell, GA

VIRGINIA

Ascension of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church—Williamsburg, VA

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Byzantine Catholic Church—Virginia Beach, VA
8:00 AM

Epiphany of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church—Annandale, VA

FLORIDA

Saint Nicholas of Myra Byzantine Catholic Church—Orlando FL

Saint Anne Byzantine Catholic Church—New Port Richey, FL

Saint Cyril & Methodius Byzantine Catholic Church—Fort Pierce, FL

SOUTH CAROLINA

South Carolina Mission at Fort Mill, SC

MARYLAND

Patronage of the Mother of God—Arbutus, MD



LIFE, LOVE, AND THE HUMAN PERSON

By Ann M. Koshute, MTS

THE MASKS WE WEAR

We're all feeling fatigued as the Covid-19 global pandemic continues to upset our routines and restrict our movement. All the restrictions placed on us carry a kind of double-edged sword, protecting us and frustrating us all at the same time. The longer it goes on the more difficult we may find it to stay peaceful. I'm as anxious and tired of this situation as many of you are, but I'd like to propose that we look for the ways in which God is teaching us and providing opportunities for graced moments at this difficult time, in ways we might not expect.

In an effort to help stop the virus' spread, some state and local leaders have mandated that people wear masks when they leave their homes to grocery shop, pick up food at a restaurant, or even go outside for some exercise. Wearing a mask, for those of us who are not healthcare professionals, feels strange and a little disconcerting. It's odd to be *seen* and yet *hidden* from others, and for them to regard us in a similar way. We may find ourselves trying to be more expressive with our eyes, struggling to show with them a smile that can't be seen. The masks require us to *look* at people, in the eyes, rather than just brush past them or ignore them altogether. Wearing a mask has forced us to meet each other at a distance, but face-to-face. Before the pandemic and this upheaval in our way of living, how often did we look a stranger in eye? How often did we make our way through daily life without paying much attention to those around us? How

often do we really see those we love, are truly present to them even if we're in the same room together? It's all so extraordinary, how being *hidden* can reveal so much about us – the good in us, and our shortcomings.

The truth is, we wear masks all the time, only they are invisible ones. We act a certain way depending on the "audience" around us, often conforming to the expectations of others. Of course, we should always be polite and speak and behave appropriately; but so often we adopt personas for fear of not being accepted and loved for ourselves. We fear rejection, ridicule, and being left out. Such desires to fit in may even lead us into sin. In this case, too, our masks reveal much more than they hide: our need for God's grace, His steady guidance in doing what is good, and to continually work on strengthening our relationship with Him. The masks that hide our faces from the world do not shield us from God's sight. This is the hard lesson our First Parents learned. When they sinned and realized what they'd done, they immediately covered their bodies with anything they could find. They hid themselves, now suspicious of the other's motives and the possibility of being hurt. And they hid from God, afraid that their disobedience would result in that threat of "death" God predicted when He commanded them not to eat the fruit of one tree in the Garden. When they heard His voice calling to them, they were afraid and took cover, hoping He would not find them. But God sees us in all of

the places we hide, in the fleeting comfort we take when we sin, and in the shame we feel when we recognize and feel sorry for it. We hide from Him, but He always finds us. Just as He did in the Garden, God calls our name, calls us back, calls us out of hiding.

If the bandana, surgical mask or home-made face covering is annoying or makes you feel uncomfortable, you're not alone. But consider how the mask, the self-isolation, physical distance from others, and even the separation from Divine Liturgy and the Eucharist, can become opportunities for deeper self-reflection, and greater appreciation for all of the gifts we may take for granted; a way to come *out from hiding*. If we are separated from our parish families, let us grow in gratitude for a community of believers where we find refuge and spiritual support. Instead of anger and resentment, not receiving Jesus in the Eucharist for the time being can enkindle in us a deep desire for His presence, one that we may not have experienced when He was so "easily accessible" to us. The loss of Divine Liturgy is difficult, but it gives us the opportunity to practice humility with trust and obedience to those in spiritual authority over us. We may also better appreciate the faithfulness of those persecuted Christians living under oppressive regimes who are not separated from public worship for weeks or months, but sometimes for their whole lives. The pain of being physically separated from our parish church should inspire us to invest in our *domestic church*, making it a

place of prayer and peace. If there is no icon corner, create one. If the old Bible is gathering dust, brush it off and open the Word of God in your home. When boredom sets in, stop for a few moments of quiet reflection, thanksgiving and praise. Give thanks at mealtimes, examine your conscience before bed, and if you watch a live stream of Divine Liturgy, stand to worship just as you would if you were physically there. Creating, or fortifying, our domestic churches now will help us to worship more intentionally when we return to our parish, and to bring the spirit of the Liturgy back home with us.

The masks we wear for the time being protect us from the contagious coronavirus and are meant to aid in stopping its spread. The other masks, the invisible ones – we put them on to protect ourselves from being hurt by others, to hide from them, from God, from ourselves. In this time of pandemic, when our world is turned upside down, we might put on masks of anger and self-righteousness, frustration, anxiety, and fear. We live with such uncertainty now, but there is one thing upon which we can rely: that God is with us, He is faithful, and He has not abandoned us. We wear the protective masks for the time being to stop the spread of disease. Let's take away the other ones that prevent us from authentic and selfless love, generosity, patience, humility, and trust in the Lord who never hides His presence from us. **ECL**

SPIRITUAL REFLECTIONS

Father Lewis Rabayda



WHO HAS MORE POWER: MOTHER NATURE OR JESUS CHRIST?

Trick question. The tragedy we encounter here lies in the fact that we even give some credibility to the concept of "Mother Nature." But we can ask several questions: what is "Mother Nature?" Does she have a mind? Does she have power to effect change? Can she hear, or be interacted with? We may not even realize it, but the idea that "Mother Nature" is an actual entity that can think and feel and act as an unified body has been supplied to us since our youth. But this concept has not been taught to us by the Church, but by a secular society, or even worse, Pagan elements within that society. Odds are that we have never even questioned "her" validity, but we have accepted that "she" is a force that has effect in the world.

Yes, through human history humans have the propensity to personify inanimate objects, or in this case a concept

which describes the totality of life on our planet. And, take it or leave it, often times the personification of nature or of a nurturing entity is viewed in the feminine because women give birth to life, and men protect life. This ancient archetypal imagery applied to the planet and it's systems shows us that the earth is our mother, and we are it's sons (mankind), who should protect and take care of our mother at all costs. And building on this archetypal demand, us sons (mankind/humanity) are warned that we should listen to our mother when she cries out to us and when she corrects us, or suffer destruction by "her" hand.

I am no student of Greek Mythology or ancient Mesopotamian religions, but anyone who reads them for just a snippet will not see perfect divine behavior coming down from above, nor will they see perfect applications of justice. Rath-

er, a running theme through these stories applies human emotion, behavior, and flaws onto the gods, or in our case here, onto the natural planet systems. So, whatever perceived punishment may be due to us by our neglect of our "mother" cannot be a correct interpretation of true justice meted out.

This brings us back to our true question: where does true power reside? Who has the authority to meet-out true justice? To answer these questions, we need to look no further than the totality of Scripture, confirmed by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, whose Apostles and Church attest to His truth and power through the ages. Those who profess other "truths" (ideas) attempt to show that there are other powers at work in the world, and that all of these intersecting powers somehow coexist with some sort of agreement between them to share the

space of the world. But we know that Christ has no agreement with "other powers" because He is the conqueror of all evil.

By Christ's self-sacrificial act of love on the cross, and by His going down to Hades to raise up to Heaven the captives held bound there, He broke the bonds of sin, conquered Satan, and brought all of humanity to the Kingdom of Heaven. But how could Jesus Christ have accomplished this act? Because He is the creator of the all that is, the Word that spoke EVERYTHING into existence, and now by conquering the only thing He did not create—evil—He now has power over EVERYTHING.

There is a wonderful theme that the Church Fathers offer to us on Great and Holy Friday in the stichera of the Entombment Vespers which constantly attest to this reality. The theme begins

with: "The whole creation was transformed with fear, when it saw you hanging on the Cross, O Christ. The sun grew dark and the earth's foundations were shaken. All things suffered along with you, who made all things." Here, we read and sing that the earth is reacting to One reality, One Lord, it cries out in tandem, not of its own will, but it cries because it is suffering with its

Creator. The elements are not acting according to arbitrary input, but they are in complete unity with the One who created them, and they are suffering along with Him. This theme from Vespers continues to properly label Jesus Christ as: "the Life of All, the Creator of the World," "the Creator and God of all," and "the King of creation." This is why we read on Pascha morning from

the beginning of the Gospel of John, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." We cannot therefore, assume that there is such an entity as "Mother Nature," since nature itself is a creation of the Word of God,

and is therefore subservient to His direction or His permissive Will. As we pray in the Anaphora of Saint Basil, "so that in all things, He might have preeminence over ALL." There is only ONE power in existence, and that power, is the power of the Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. **ECL**



SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

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

MARY, EVER-VIRGIN

Have you ever noticed the three stars on icons of the Mother of God: one on her forehead and one on each of her shoulders? These stars express the doctrine that Mary was a virgin when she conceived the Son of God and remained a virgin in giving Him birth and for the rest of her life. All this is summed up in the title "Ever-Virgin" (*prismod'iva*).

Isaiah predicted the virgin birth of "God with us" more than seven hundred years before it occurred: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and call his name Emmanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). Both Saint Matthew and Saint Luke take pains to make clear that Mary's conception involved no human father (Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38).

Why would the Church insist on Mary's intact virginity even in the moment of giving birth? The travails of childbirth (what Saint John calls being born "of blood;" John 1:12) are a consequence of the sin of Eve (Genesis 3:16). Such pain has no place when a virgin "full of grace" (Luke 1:26) gives human birth to the perfect Son of God who is like us in every way except sin (Hebrews 4:15).

Once again, it is Isaiah (66:7) who foresees this fact: "Before she goes into labor, she gives birth; before the pains come upon her, she delivers a son." In this final section of his prophecies, Isaiah frequently addresses "Zion" as both "bride" of the Lord and "mother" of His people. Extravagant promises are made about Zion which were never fulfilled in the history of Jerusalem as a place or Israel as a nation. Clearly, no other woman has ever claimed to give birth as Isaiah describes. The Church refers these prophecies of Zion to Mary as both Mother of Jesus and Mother of His Church (John 19:27). Mary herself seems to quote Isaiah 66:2 when she responds to the Annunciation by saying, "He (God) as looked with favor on his lowly servant."

A further prediction of Mary's perpetual virginity can be found in Ezekiel's vision of a Temple more perfect than was ever built in the earthly Jerusalem. The Lord tells Ezekiel regarding its eastern gate: "This gate is to remain shut. It must not be opened; no one may enter through it. It is to remain shut because the Lord, the God of Israel, has entered through it. The prince himself is the only one who may sit inside the gateway to eat in the presence of the Lord. He is to enter by way of the portico of the gateway and go out the same way"

(Ezekiel 44:2-3). The last Temple in Jerusalem was reduced to rubble in 70 AD; the Lord's word to His prophet must describe something else that remains true even today. Mary, who bore God in her womb, is the full and final meaning behind what Scripture says about the mere Temple building.

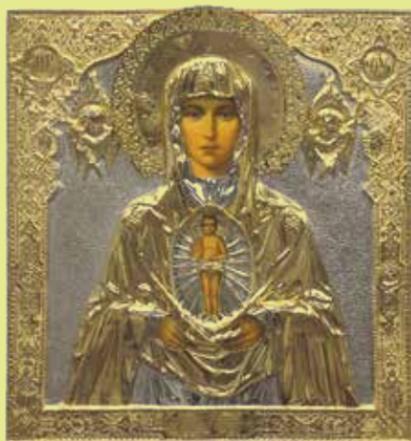
People who deny the triple virginity of the Mother of God will cite Matthew 1:25, which says that Mary "had no relations until she brought forth her first-born son," seemingly conceding that she did have such relations afterward. In fact, Matthew neither affirms nor denies anything about the aftermath of Jesus' birth. At this moment in the Gospel, Saint Matthew's focus is on a conception and birth that literally fulfills Isaiah's prophecy about the virgin (7:14). Furthermore, "until" has a broader meaning in the languages of Scripture. In English, "until" marks the point at which something changes: "I won't sleep until I finish all my work" implies that as soon as the work is done, I will sleep. There are other places in the Bible where the Hebrew or Greek words translated as "until" do not mean that the situation before "until" changed afterwards. One good example is 1 Corinthians 15:25, where Christ obviously continues to reign after the subjection of all His enemies (confirmed by Luke 1:33).

The other potential challenge to Mary's perpetual virginity is Saint John's vision of "a great sign" in heaven: "a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth" (Revelation 12:1). Two observations help clarify this text. First, Saint John calls his vision a "sign," not a prophecy nor a description of historical fact. Signs can convey multiple meanings. The complete text of Revelation 12:1-6 describes two different births simultaneously (just as Saint John does in the Gospel: 1:12-14). The heavenly woman is a sign of the Virgin who bore the Son of God. She is also a sign of the Theotokos as Mother of the Church (John 19:27) which gives rebirth (John 1:12; 3:5) to disciples. The cause of her travail is the Dragon who always threatens to devour reborn Christians (Revelation 12:4-6). We see this very same alternation between giving birth to one and giving birth to many in Isaiah's prophecy about Zion. Immediately after describing painless birth of one son, the prophet continues: "Yet no sooner is Zion in labor than she gives birth to her children" (Isaiah 66:8). **ECL**

MIRACULOUS "MARY, HELPER OF MOTHERS" ICON

Services will resume
when permitted

- 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



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

Divine Liturgies at the Byzantine Catholic Mission of Fort Mill, SC for the month of May will be broadcast online. Please contact Ron Somich by email at ron.somich@gmail.com for the link and dial in information. <https://carolinabyzantine.com/>

May: 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

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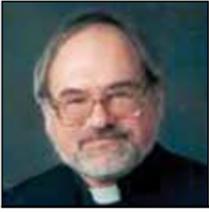
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THE BYZANTINE LITURGY

By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD

THE ANAPHORA OF SAINT BASIL: THE COMING OF OUR LORD

The Anaphora of Saint Basil tells of the whole story of our relationship with God. The story of the Garden of Eden reveals that as human beings, we have not trusted God, but instead thought that we could achieve glorification by our own efforts. By being unfaithful to the divine plan, “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.” This attitude afflicts the human race to this day, as Frank Sinatra crooned, “I did it my way.” Despite this, God has remained completely faithful to his creation, and “did not turn away from your creature forever.” The first part of the Anaphora tells how God acted to restore is in “his merciful loving-kindness,” by sending prophets and angels and giving “the Law as an aid.”

The Anaphora, however, makes clear that this was not the fulfillment of God’s loving-kindness. Though we struggled for communion with God through sacrifice, the full union would not come until Jesus, our Lord and the Messiah. The Epistle to the Hebrews explains, “But in those sacrifices there is only a yearly remembrance of sins, (10:3-4),” but in the sacrifice of Christ, “through the blood of Jesus we have confidence of entrance into the sanctuary by the new and living way he opened for us through the veil, that is, his flesh, and ... we have “a great priest over the house of God. (10:19-21)” To

accomplish this, God, in his only-begotten Son, had to take on the human nature, to become flesh and blood as we are, only without sin. (Hebrews 4:15)” The Anaphora of Saint John Chrysostom expresses this by quoting John 3:16, “You so loved your world that you gave your only-begotten Son so that everyone who believes in him should not perish, but have life everlasting.” This mystery of the incarnations, therefore, in the very foundation of our faith - not a an assent to certain propositions, but as the very being of our life, and we live and act in the grace of God, which is his transforming love.

The Anaphora of Saint Basil, then proclaims this same mystery in greater detail, basing himself on the Letters of Saint Paul. The coming of Christ in human nature was when “the fullness of time had come. (Galatians 4:4).” On the mountain, Moses spoke to God face to face, as a person speaks to a friend, (Exodus 33:11)” yet adding, “you cannot see my face, for no one can see me and live. (Exodus 33:20)” In Jesus, however, God spoke to through his only Son, “the very one through whom [he] created the ages.” In quoting Hebrews and the Letter to the Philippians, Saint Basil formulates the mystery of the Incarnation in one beautiful paragraph, “Although he is the reflection of your glory and the express image of your person, sustaining all things by his powerful word, he did not deem equality with you, God and Father, something

to be grasped; rather, while remaining everlasting God, he appeared on earth and lived among men.”

Having proclaimed the mystery of the Incarnation, the Anaphora then describes the consequences of this act, quoting the same Letter of Saint Paul to the Philippians, “ In becoming incarnate from the holy Virgin, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, conforming himself to the lowliness of our body, that he might conform us to the image of his glory. (Philippians 2:7; 3:21)” To state more simply, the Son of God became to human people to serve us like a slave. Slavery was not exactly the same thing then as it later became, but it was still the form of a servant without individual freedom. Jesus himself reaffirmed this, “For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. (Mark 10:45)” He gave an example of service by washing the feet of his disciples at the Last Supper, as an example, “I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do. Amen, amen, I say to you, no slave is greater than his master nor any messenger greater than the one who sent him. (John 13:15-16)” Again the Anaphora proclaims that the Incarnation was for service to us, to free us from sin, “it pleased your only-begotten Son to be born of a womanto be born under the Law (Galatians 4:4), to condemn sin in his flesh (Romans 8:3), so that those who are dead

in Adam might be brought to life in him, your Christ.” Jesus, as Son of God, took upon himself the punishment for sin, which is death, so that he could give us life in his resurrection.

This entire mystery is proclaimed in the assembly of the Divine Liturgy because it tells us how we, as Christians, should live in Christ. If the Son of God so humbled himself, so too, we should live in humility and in a spirit of service to others. This is Jesus’ teaching, “whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all. (Mark 10:43-44)” For our Lord, his greatest hour of glory was his death on the Cross in order to give us life. The Letter to the Philippians tells us that humility is the path to glory, “[Christ Jesus] humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, (Philippians 2:8-9)” This is true for all of us, as Jesus reiterated many times, “Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted. (Matthew 23:12, also Luke 14:11 and 18:14)” Therefore, whenever we pray the Anaphora with the priest who pronounces it aloud, we again reaffirm our faith in Christ, who alone gives us life and glory, and we promise to walk in the path he has sown us by becoming one of us. **ECL**

SEASONAL REFLECTIONS

Father Ronald Hatton



BE EXALTED ABOVE THE HEAVENS, O GOD!



“And when [Jesus] had said this, as they were looking on, He was lifted up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as He went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, Who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven.’” (Acts 1:9-11)

“The Lord ascended into heaven to send the Comforter into this world. The heavens prepared His throne and clouds were His ladder; the angels marveled at the sight of a man more exalted than themselves. Today, the Father receives again in His bosom the One Who was in Him from all eternity, and the Holy Spirit gives a command to all the angels: Lift up your lintels, O you gates! O you nations of the earth, clap your hands, for Christ ascends to the place He had been from all eternity!”

“O loving Jesus, while You lived on

earth, You were God inseparable from the Father, and You truly shared our humanity. Ascending in glory today from the Mount of Olives, through Your great love You lifted up our fallen nature and enthroned it with the Father on high. Therefore, the bodiless powers were amazed and filled with awe at seeing Your great love for Mankind. Together with them, we who live on earth are glorifying Your condescension to us and Your ascension away from us. Now we implore You, saying: Through Your ascension You have filled Your apostles and Your mother with a joy that surpasses every other joy, and through their intercession make us worthy of the joy of Your elect, for You are rich in mercy.” –Stichera for Vespers of the Ascension.

As we continue to endure isolation and even quarantine, it is difficult for us to maintain the Paschal joy. We feel locked in our little tombs, awaiting the day when our “stones” are “rolled away” and we are able to see family and friends

without a window or a computer screen between us, to be able to hug one another without fear. As we hear daily reports of the number of “positives” and deaths, we find it hard to exclaim “By death He trampled Death, and gave life to those in the tombs,” when the walls of our houses seem to be closing in on us instead.

For some, the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ is very difficult to understand or accept. We believe that Christ physically died and rose in the flesh to conquer sin and death for our salvation. We are caught up in crying out “Christ is risen” for forty days after Easter; most homilies for this time are centered on, or at least refer in some way to, the Resurrection. But, come the Feast of the Ascension, we start to lose that sense of “foregone conclusion.” Many years ago, I was in a conversation with a non-Catholic professor who taught seminarians at the theological seminary attached to the college I attended, and at one point he stated, “I can’t believe that the last thing the disciples saw of Jesus was the bottoms of His feet.” I was so taken aback that someone who was teaching future ministers did not believe in the physical ascension of our Lord that I had no answer for him. I believe that if we deny that Christ physically “ascended into heaven and

is seated at the right hand of the Father,” (cf. the Profession of Faith), we deny His Incarnation as surely as if we denied His physically taking flesh from the Virgin at His birth, or truly and physically rising from the dead on the third day. “Now if Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied.

“But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.”

(1 Co 15:12–23) If we do not believe in His Ascension, we call the Apostles liars and charlatans. As St. Paul says: “Therefore it is said, ‘When He ascended on high He led a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men.’ (In saying, ‘He ascended,’ what does it mean but that He had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is He who also ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)” (Eph 4:8–10).

Yes, our finite minds cannot picture heaven, the throne, His physically being lifted from the sight of the disciples, and taking His seat in heaven, yet we know by faith that it is true. The “how” is beyond our understanding, but we believe it to be true, just as we believe that He was born, taught us, suffered for us, and rose from the dead for us. We see it in His encounter with the two disciples at Emmaus. We see it in His appearance to Mary Magdalene at the Tomb. We see it in His appearance to the Ten and, eight days later, in telling Thomas to touch the nail prints in His hands and to place his hand into His side. “And he [John] who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe.” (John 19:35)

So, even as we believe all this by faith

during this Paschal Season, so too we believe that all that He has promised is true. This includes His promise that He is with us always, even as we go through this time of trial.

Yes, all this has been testified to, so that we may believe. “Remembering, therefore, this saving command and all that has come to pass in our behalf: the cross, the tomb, the resurrection on the third day, the ascension into heaven, the sitting at the right hand, and the second coming in glory...” (Anaphora, Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom), we embrace and hold fast to the fact of His physical ascension into heaven, and to His physical return on the Last Day. Let us rejoice and be glad in it! **ECL**

“A special thanks and appreciation to all the health care workers, ambulance workers, and funeral directors who are risking their lives for the sick and dying. May God bless you and your loved ones abundantly and keep you safe!”



SCHOOL OF PRAYER

Father G. Scott Boghossian

DO NOT DESPISE THE CHASTENING OF THE LORD

“**M**LORD’s discipline or be weary of His reproof, for the LORD reproves him whom He loves, as a father the son in whom He delights” (Prov. 3:11, 12). Recently a high-ranking cleric, perhaps unwittingly, declared this verse of Sacred Scripture as well as the entire biblical narrative to be sheer nonsense. This accomplished philosopher and theologian boldly proclaimed, “Divine punishment does not exist. It is an incorrect view of Christianity.”

On the contrary, throughout salvation history, God disciplines, chastises, and corrects humanity. After the sin of our first parents Adam and Eve, God cast them out of the Garden of Paradise (Gen. 3:24), God cursed Cain for murdering his brother Abel (Gen. 4:11), sent the world-destroying Flood in the days of Noah (Gen. 6:7), rained fire and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:24), poured out terrible plagues on Pharaoh and the Egyptians (Ex. 7-12), condemned Moses and the generation of Israelites who left Egypt to die outside of the Promised Land (Dt. 3:26), ordered the Levites to slay three thousand men who had worshipped the Golden Calf (Ex. 32:27),

slew Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:2), opened the earth and cast Korah and his followers into Hell (Sheol) while they were still alive (Num. 16:33), and that is just the beginning. God chastened King David severely for adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband Uriah the Hittite (2 Sam. 12:10).

The references to God’s punishment in the Psalms are almost innumerable. Psalm 88:7 reads, “Your wrath lies heavy upon me, and You overwhelm me with all thy waves.” If the People of God go astray, God promises to punish them, saying, “if they violate My statutes and do not keep My commandments, then I will punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with scourges” (Ps. 89:31, 32). In the Prophets, (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Joel, etc.), we continually see God calling His people to repentance and threatening them with punishment if they fail to return to Him. “Behold, I am bringing evil upon this people, the fruit of their devices, because they have not given heed to My words; and as for My law, they have rejected it” (Jer. 6:19).

A beginner in the Faith might say, “but that’s the God of the Old Testament. God (or our understanding of God) has changed. God never punishes His children.” But the Bible says that God does not change. “I the LORD do not change (Mal. 3:6). “Every best gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no change, nor shadow of alteration” (Js. 1:17 DR).

The New Testament assures us that God is love (1 Jn. 4:16), and that God is merciful (Rm. 9:15). For our good, if we go astray, our Father in heaven will chastise, discipline, and punish us to save us. Imagine for a moment that our parents never corrected or disciplined us when we misbehaved as children. What would we be today? Perhaps thieves, murderers, and the worst of criminals. God our Heavenly Father also disciplines His children. “Endure suffering as discipline. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons (Heb. 12:7, 8). Another translation reads, “if you be without chastisement, whereof

all are made partakers, then are you bastards and not sons” (Heb. 12:8 DR). If God loves us as His children, then He will punish us to bring us to repentance.

Saint Paul warns us never to receive the Eucharist in an unworthy manner, lest we “eat and drink judgment” upon ourselves. What is the judgment of which he speaks? “That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.” Why does God judge so severely? He tells us why: “We are chastened so that we may not be condemned...” (1 Cor. 12:32). We are punished so that we may be saved. Our Lord Jesus Christ says, “Those whom I love, I reprove and chasten; so be zealous and repent” (Rev. 3:19).

Let us accept trials, difficulties, and sufferings as the Lord’s discipline (Heb. 12:7). Abba Sisoës said, “whatever the trial is which comes to a man, let him say, ‘This happened to me because of my sins.’ Don’t be deceived. God does not change. Our Heavenly Father will chasten us for our salvation. “Do not despise the chastening of the Lord.” **ECL**

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

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

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

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



SEMINARIAN REFLECTIONS

Deacon Paul Varchola West

THE JOY OF THE RESURRECTION

It goes without saying that we all miss going to church right now and I am sure we are all praying for the day that we can once again congregate and worship together as a full community. With all that has been happening in the world, many of us have had to “re-define,” so to speak, what “going to church” means. Perhaps we question if church will ever “go back to the way it was” or will things ever be “normal” again? Fortunately, after four years of seminary formation and running in and out of my family’s life as a ship passing in the night, I have had the experience of spending the past month in isolation with my wife and children in a house nearly a century and a half old, nestled on the side of a cliff in a neighborhood called Observatory Hill. While much of this time has been spent filled with anxiety and worry, thoughts of missed visits with family, and fear for the safety of those back home. There have also been many uplifting moments that have helped me gain valuable insight into the questions mentioned above. Fittingly enough, the most precious and insightful of these moments occurred the morning of Pascha!

Early on the morning of Pascha, our family rose to pray Resurrection Matins. We all went downstairs and went outside to begin the service and sing *Christos Voskrese*, very eager to break our fast and usher in the Resurrection of Christ. After the ending of the prayers, we entered the house to

venture up to the make-shift chapel I had devised up in the third-floor attic space. It was there, at the empty tomb of Christ, that my eyes were opened to what constitutes “church.”

On the previous evening at around midnight, I tiptoed my way up the squeaky stairs to have much needed quiet time with Christ in the tomb prior to praying the *Midnight Office of Pascha*. At the conclusion of the prayers, I moved (what can be considered) our *Plaschanitsa* from the tomb and placed it on our icon stand. I then strategically moved the few potted plants we have to make it clear that the tomb was empty, and Christ was no longer there. Our children were unaware that I did this. The next morning, as we briskly entered the house, our daughter bolted up the stairs with sheer jubilation yelling “Christ is Risen” all the way up the stairs to the third floor. She then ran back down and met us, yelling with all the joy in her heart, “Daddy, Daddy; I went to go say ‘Hi’ to Jesus in the tomb and He wasn’t there... He’s gone... He’s risen!” My breath escaped me as I watched her, the moment felt like it lasted an hour. As this little Myrrh-Bearing woman exclaimed the joy of the Resurrection to me, it all became clear.

Spending so much time with my children lately has helped me to remember to think like a child, which is a good thing. In that moment of joy, I could not help but think of Dr. Seuss’ *How*

the Grinch Stole Christmas. This green creature, living all alone on a mountaintop, has the arrogance to think he could stop Christmas from coming. Of course, we all know that he couldn’t. It is the same with COVID-19. A microscopic virus might have altered our lives for the foreseeable future, but it has not altered Christ in the least. Pascha came and Christ is Risen! It came without incense. It came without bells. It came without flowers, or pussywillows, or ham! Christ is Risen! Pascha came; it came just the same. Just as the Grinch realized that fateful Christmas morning, standing with his feet ice-cold in the snow, that the trimmings and trappings are just that, I, too, realized this Easter Sunday that Pascha, and even church, perhaps, mean something a little bit more.

If we think of the disciples, the Myrrh-Bearing Women, the Mother of God; we need to realize that they, too, after the crucifixion, were terrified, quarantining themselves in their homes and fearing the unknown; however, on that fateful Sunday morning it was made clear to all of creation that no matter what we fear in life, we need to understand that nothing, absolutely nothing, can contain, inhibit, impede or change Jesus Christ and the unbounded grace of God. The strongest army in the world, the best trained guards, all the “hush money,” and an immovable stone could not stop the Resurrection. The same applies today. Just because we

were not physically in a church building, that does not stop the Resurrection. Just because we were unable to worship this year as we always have, that does not mean the celebration of the Resurrection of Christ simply did not happen this year.

Missing the various sensory aspects of church is a normal thing. Having a yearning to receive the Eucharist is certainly painful; however, this will not be forever. We need to realize that, by praying in our homes, we are not missing out on God in any way, shape or form. If anything, we are inviting a guest into our home that is not bound by social distancing restrictions. We can miss family, friends and physically being in church, but we must never miss God as he is never absent. Church is not all about the external, it is about the internal realization that, no matter what, God is with us. I urge each and every one of us, during the coming weeks, to pray like we have never prayed before. We must invite God into our homes, have Him over for dinner by praying before every meal. Have Him attend all our *Zoom* meetings by praying before work. Have Him spend the night by praying *Compline* before bed. This is the time we need God more than ever, and he is certainly with us. Just as the woman discovered at the empty tomb, the tomb is empty because life has been fulfilled. While we all may feel isolated right now, and even lonely, we must remember in our fear and sadness that we are never alone. For Christ is Risen!

ECL

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.

Facebook.com/theosisinaction • attheosisinaction@gmail.com

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UPCOMING EPARCHIAL AND PARISH EVENTS

MAY, 2020

- 3 Fourth Paschal Sunday
- 6 Mid-Pentecost
- 10 Fifth Paschal Sunday/Mother’s Day
- 17 Sixth Paschal Sunday
- 20 Leave-taking of Pascha
- 21 Holy Ascension of Our Lord
Holy Day of Obligation•Chancery closed
- 24 Seventh Paschal Sunday
- 25 Memorial Day
Civic holiday•Chancery closed
- 31 Pentecost - The Descent of the Holy Spirit

JUNE, 2020

- 1 Pentecost Monday
- 7 Sunday of All Saints

- 24 Nativity of John the Baptist
Solemn Holy Day
- 29 Holy Prime Apostles Peter and Paul
Holy Day of Obligation•Chancery closed

“The virus is especially dangerous to the elderly. If your priest is older, I ask all the people, do not put your priest in danger by asking to receive communion or confession unless it is an emergency.”