



EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

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LOAVES AND FISHES—JESUS FEEDS THE MULTITUDE

Lenten Pastoral Reflection of Bishop Kurt



Many of us, perhaps most of us, lost a family member or a friend in the last two years. Not only did the virus wipe out a large number of people, but many others also died indirectly in one way or another from the inactivity and isolation. Government statisticians are studying the increase in deaths of all age groups, not just the elderly who were most vulnerable to the virus. Many of the deaths among the young were from drug overdoses, but the evidence is not yet a complete picture. It might have seemed that the Pale Horse from the Apocalypse was making an exploratory trip across the planet. Each time one of our loved ones moves on to the next life, we remind ourselves that we do not have a permanent home here. We are on a journey!

We are on a journey, but we are not alone on our journey; we are not without a guide and a traveling companion. Much of salvation history is journeys. Having fallen into sin, Adam and Eve were sent from the Garden. The first murderer, their son, Cain, went into exile. “Then Cain went away from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod, east of Eden.” After these first journeys of punishment, journeys of hope begin to appear already in the Book of Genesis. Noah’s journey in the ark saves humanity from extinction. Our own history of spiritual salvation begins with the journey of our spiritual father Abraham who leaves behind his family, his people, and his land. Centu-

ries later, the descendants of Abraham were liberated from slavery with a forty-year journey through the wilderness to the promised land, the land flowing with milk and honey.

With the birth of Jesus, the Son of God, all of the nations are invited on the same journey of salvation, the journey from the slavery of sin and evil through the wilderness to the promised land, the land flowing with milk and honey. But as Christians, we have a traveling companion in Jesus, who says, “I no longer call you servants, but friends,” and, even more, through whom we are adopted as sons and daughters of the most-high God.

The life of Jesus involved journeys from his childhood on. His public life begins with a journey and is a life of constant traveling, a journey that ends at the holy city of Jerusalem where he embraces his “end,” as he calls it. So, the public life of Jesus begins with his move to the Sea of Galilee, as Saint Matthew informs us, to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah. His public life, and the great journey that is our salvation, begins with his preaching, “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!” “Repent” is the most popular translation in English, but it is not the most accurate. The Greek word that is recorded in the Scripture is “Metanoiete!” The word that Jesus uses means, change your mind, or change your heart. In our tradition, we often use the word, “metanoia,” which literally means “a change of mind.” Maybe

“change of heart” is closer to what Jesus meant because throughout the Old Testament scriptures, when God calls to conversion, he says, “change your heart.” Sometimes He says, “I don’t want your deeds. I want your heart!” Since conversion seems to be so difficult for us to stick with, God even tells us, “I will take out your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.” It is as if God says, “Don’t worry about it. You can’t convert yourself, but I can do it for you if you let me.”

As an example to us, before Jesus began His great public journey for our salvation, He first spent forty days in the wilderness, just as Israel spent forty years in the wilderness. By the way, the fourth book in the Bible is actually called, “In the Wilderness” in Hebrew, though we know it by its Greek name, “Numbers.” Following the example of Jesus, we also undertake a forty-day period of penance each year to prepare ourselves to journey with Jesus to Jerusalem, and to hear the Good News proclaimed, “Christ is Risen from the dead, by death trampling death, and to those in the tomb, He granted life!”

Because of our hope for the future life, and our faith in Jesus our traveling companion, we truly believe His message, the Good News or Gospel. In our optimism, we should never lose sight of a sobering part of the message. The first word out of the mouth of Jesus in His public preaching was, “Metanoiete!” — “Change your heart!” — “Repent!” Simply to begin the journey with Jesus means that we have already had some kind of change of heart, however small. We are dissatisfied with what the world has to offer, and we want to journey with Jesus to someplace better. But we can’t seem to leave it all behind. We keep going back across the Jordan, into the wilderness, even though we have seen the promised land. The fact is that the “change of heart” takes a lifetime. The “change of heart” happens throughout our earthly journey.

During His public life, Jesus often entered the wilderness Himself, and the crowds followed Him. During our journey in this life, we also go into the wilderness, the place of dryness and lifelessness. We find ourselves falling into pits along the way. When the crowd was in the wilderness with Jesus two

thousand years ago, He did not send them away, but worked some of His most spectacular miracles. Although there was no food there, He provided them with nourishment in two great miracles, just as He provided the chosen people with bread, meat, and water in their journey across the great desert of Sinai.

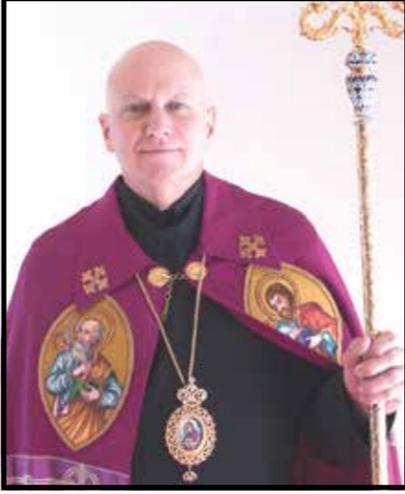
In the first miracle, all four Gospels tell us that Jesus fed a crowd of five thousand men, not counting the women and children, with only five loaves of bread and two fish. Jesus had them sit down in groups of hundreds and fifties, perhaps so His disciples would know how big the crowd was for our benefit. When they all finished eating, the disciples collected twelve baskets of leftovers. Saint John adds the detail that the loaves were barley loaves.



Sometime later, though only two Gospels record this event, Jesus was again in the wilderness with a crowd. This time He Himself says, “They have been with me for three days. If I send them away hungry, they will faint on the way home.” This time the crowd numbered four thousand. There were seven loaves of bread and “a few fish”. After the whole crowd were fed, there were seven baskets of leftovers.

Many times in the Scriptures, numbers symbolize something. Sometimes, I think, numbers don’t symbolize anything, and some people go off the deep

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I LIFT UP MY EYES

Pastoral Reflections of Bishop Kurt



LOAVES AND FISHES—JESUS FEEDS THE MULTITUDE

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end trying to find hidden meanings in unimportant details. Do the numbers in these miracles mean anything? In this case, they probably do mean something because Jesus himself points it out to them. In fact, he points out the numbers to them at a time when they are discouraged and puzzled. He says to them, “Don’t you remember how I fed five thousand with five loaves? How many baskets were gathered? And when I fed four thousand with seven loaves? How many baskets were gathered?” They answered twelve for the first miracle and seven for the second. In our own journey through the wilderness, do these numbers mean anything to us?

Since there were two separate crowds, with separate numbers, they might have two separate but related meanings. In the first miracle, there is the number twelve. In our faith the number twelve has a clear meaning, Jacob or Israel had twelve sons who gave birth the twelve tribes of Israel. Of course, you might also think of the twelve apostles, but there are twelve of them because there are twelve tribes of Israel. So, the first miracle could signify God’s care for His chosen people, the physical descendants of Abraham. In the context of the chosen people, the number five usually refers to the five books of Moses, the Torah. So, God fed His chosen people with the Torah, just as He does to this day. The other number that appears in the first event is the number of fish, that is, two. Does the number two mean anything in the Old Testament? It might mean “the law and the prophets.” Jesus is the fulfillment of the law and the prophets.

In the second event, the number of the crowd is four thousand. What is symbolized by the number four? There are several things that come in fours in our tradition, but the most common meaning of the number four in the ancient world was “the world”. In the world there are four directions, and in ancient times they believed that everything was made of four elements. So, the number four often symbolizes the world. (As an aside, Aristotle speculated that the firmament where the heavenly bodies stayed was made of some “fifth element” because they didn’t behave like things on earth. That is where we get the word “quintessence” and “quintessential”.) Nevertheless, the number four is often a symbol of the whole cosmos. So, it seems that when Jesus fed five thousand it symbolizes Him feeding the chosen people, and when He feeds the four thousand, it symbolizes Him feeding the rest of us, the gentiles, the spiritual descendants of Abraham. Indeed, in Christ’s journey He has just been in the pagan territory of Tyre and Sidon, miraculously curing people so that the pagans “glorified the God of Israel.” It seems from the Gospel itself that this crowd of four thousand were gentiles who followed Him into the wilderness after these miracles.

If the second great miracle is all the nations of the earth, not just the chosen people, what are we to make of the number seven? There are many things that come in sevens, such as the days of the week, but for Christians in our journey through the wilderness, we must think of the seven sacraments or, as we call them, the seven mysteries: Baptism, Chrismation, Holy Eucharist, Confession, Anointing of the Sick, Crowning in Marriage, and Holy Orders.

When Jesus walked on earth in the flesh, He sometimes used physical things to work His miracles. He touched people. One woman was cured by touching His clothing. He breathed on people. He

even used spit, something from inside His body. The words spoken from His human body are also a physical thing, pressure waves traveling through the air, by which He both cured and even raised from the dead. How much we wish we could be in those ancient times and see and hear Him ourselves! He promised to be with us after His Ascension. Indeed, He left behind physical things to make Himself present to us today and to work even greater miracles giving eternal life! He sanctified water so that in Baptism it removes the sin of Adam. He blesses oil so that we can receive the Holy Spirit. He left us His own flesh and blood hidden in the appearance of bread and wine—the greatest miracle of all. He left the power to heal sickness by anointing with oil and prayer. He changed the natural institution of monogamous marriage into a divine sacrament, a symbol of His own marriage to the church which is His body. He left behind men who would bring these blessings to anyone willing to accept them in the institution of Holy Orders. The first apostles laid their hands on successors and so on to this day, so that by the physical touching with hands, the sacraments for forgiving sins and feeding with the flesh and blood of Jesus are passed on from generation to generation. It is a great miracle that the body and blood of Jesus are hidden in bread and wine, even the most imperfect bread and wine. It is an equally great miracle that the sacrament of Holy Orders is hidden in the imperfect and sinful flesh of the ministers of the Church, the bishops, the priests, and the deacons. Indeed, Jesus chose two of the greatest sinners for his greatest apostles. He chose Peter who denied Him at His crucifixion, and He chose Paul who worked tirelessly to have the first Christians executed. It is an equally great miracle that He chooses an imperfect man and an imperfect woman for His miracle of the sacrament of marriage, forming in them a mystical kingdom and new life.

In our journey through life, sometimes easy and sometimes difficult, sometimes with others and sometimes alone, sometimes with pleasure and often with pain, as Christians we are on our journey with our Lord Jesus who made a similar journey and walks with us in ours. He is there to hear our prayers, and also with us when we forget to pray. We can meet Him up close when we read the Scriptures. Our most intimate, even physical, contact with Him is in the seven sacramental mysteries. Just as He fed the crowds in the wilderness, first the chosen people and then the rest of us, He is in the wilderness with us. He offers us His body and blood for food. He offers us forgiveness for our sins and healing for our physical illnesses. He offers us His presence in our marriages. He offers us the ministry of the priests who take away our sins and bless us. He is with us on our deathbeds.

Each year during Lent, we remember that life is a journey. We reenact the forty-year journey from slavery to freedom. We unite ourselves with sweet Jesus when He fasts for forty days before His journey for our salvation. During Lent, not only do we fast, but we spend time with Jesus in the Scriptures. We can unite ourselves more closely with Jesus in the seven sacramental mysteries in a physical way. We recommit to our baptism, rejecting evil and embracing God’s mercy. We pray for the anointing of the Holy Spirit—our Advocate and our Comforter. We confess our sins as commanded in the scriptures and ask God for a change of heart. Miraculously, we consume the flesh and blood of the Son of God, a greater miracle than feeding a crowd with a few loaves and fishes. Jesus offers Himself to us in the great miracles of the Scriptures and the Sacramental Mysteries. Let us run to embrace Him during Great Lent!

+Kurt Burnett

DIRECTIVES FOR THE GREAT FAST

From the Office of the Bishop



FASTING REGULATIONS

+Our Tradition is to abstain from meat after Meatfare Sunday and from dairy products after Cheesefare Sunday until Easter. *The following are the minimum requirements:*

+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 28, and on Great and Holy Friday, April 15.

Dispensation

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

LITURGICAL DIRECTIVES

The Divine Liturgy of Saint Gregory, the Pope of Rome, also called the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts.

+All Pastors and Administrators are encouraged to celebrate the Divine Liturgy of Saint Gregory on Wednesdays and Fridays of the Great Fast.

+On other weekdays during the Great Fast, Holy Communion may be distributed at other liturgical services.

We ask you to pray for peace throughout the world, and for the victims of war. Please pray for those suffering from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and other diseases, as well as the health care professionals, family members, and others who are caring for them. Please remember also in your prayers all those in the military who are serving our country throughout the world.

BISHOP KURT MAKES PASTORAL VISIT TO SAINTS CYRIL AND METHODIUS PARISH, CARY, NC



Children of the parish lined up to greet Bishop Kurt and present him with traditional gifts of bread, salt, and flowers.

Bishop Kurt made a pastoral visit to Saints Cyril and Methodius parish in Cary, NC, on the feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos, Sunday, November 21, 2021. This was Bishop Kurt's first visit since Father Vasyl Sokolovych was assigned as Parochial Administrator of Saints Cyril and Methodius Parish in July of 2020. Father Vasyl had previously served as the Parochial Administrator of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Levittown, PA before being transferred to Saints Cyril and Methodius.

Bishop Kurt previously visited Saints Cyril and Methodius on several occasions, with the most recent being the sorrowful occasion of the funeral of Father Richard Rohrer, the beloved former pastor of the parish. Father Richard fell asleep in the Lord on July 14, 2019, with Bishop Kurt presiding at his funeral on July 30, 2019.

Bishop Kurt's visit was especially joyous on this occasion as he baptized, chrismated, and administered the Holy Eucharist to Theodore Gregory Liebhaber, newborn son of Deacon Ryan and Pan'i Niccole Liebhaber. Deacon Ryan, an active-duty Army officer, was assigned to Saints Cyril and Methodius this past July after being transferred by the military to nearby Ft. Bragg, NC. Deacon Ryan previously served at Saint Mary Parish in Trenton, NJ.

The Liturgy was celebrated outside to accommodate the entire parish, which cannot comfortably fit into the church building when fully convened due to COVID-19 social distancing protocols. The weather was beautiful, feeling more like spring than late fall, with temperatures in the mid-60s. After vesting in the church, Bishop Kurt, Father Vasyl, Deacon Ryan, and the altar servers processed to the site of the Liturgy outside. During the procession, Bishop Kurt was greeted by the children of the parish, who presented him with the customary gifts of bread, salt and flowers. Preceding the Liturgy were the rites of Baptism and Chrismation for baby

the topics of baptism, the Old Testament Ark of the Covenant, and Mary's unique role as the Ark of the New Covenant. At Communion, baby Theodore was first to receive the Eucharist, administered by Bishop Kurt. Upon conclusion of the Liturgy, a luncheon took place where the parishioners visited with each other and interacted with the bishop. Father Vasyl and Pan'i Olena hosted the bishop for dinner that evening, and Bishop Kurt returned to New Jersey the following morning.

Father Vasyl, Deacon Ryan, and the entire parish family of Saints Cyril and Methodius would like to sincerely thank Bishop Kurt for his gracious and memorable visit to their parish. The parish looks forward to hosting him again soon!



Baby Theodore is baptized by Bishop Kurt

God With Us ✠ ONLINE ✠

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All courses are offered as live webinars, free of charge. Register at EasternCatholic.org/Events.



IMAGE & LIKENESS

St. John of Damascus on the Holy Icons

Rev. Nathan Symeon Adams

Wednesday, February 23 @ 8 - 9:30 p.m. ET

Join us as we study our Holy Father John of Damascus' fierce and powerful defense of the importance of Holy Images, that we may approach the anniversary of the restoration of icons to the churches after the iconoclast heresy with renewed faith in their power to ingrain the truth in our souls.



THE WAY OF THE PILGRIM

Unlocking the Jesus Prayer

Rev. Hieromonk Maximos Davies

Mondays, March 7 - 21 @ 8 - 9 p.m. ET

"Pray always," St. Paul exhorts us (1 Th. 5.17). And yet, how do we achieve this? The ascetics of the Church have long extolled the Jesus Prayer as the most powerful means to achieve unceasing prayer. Join us as we explore this rich, but simple prayer of our Eastern Christian tradition, seeking to "remember God more often than [we] breathe."



ENTERTAINING ANGELS

The Ascetical Practice of Hospitality

Rev. Michael O'Loughlin & Mother Natalia

Monday, March 28 @ 8 - 9 p.m. ET

In the Old Testament, Abraham and Sarah served three strangers not knowing they were messengers of God, setting an icon for us to demonstrate that in serving our neighbor, we serve the one who came to save us. Join us as we explore the importance of hospitality to others in our Christian life.



O DEATH WHERE IS THY STING?

The Biblical Roots of the Paschal Homily

Rev. Sebastian Carnazzo, Ph.D.

Wednesday, April 27 @ 8 - 9 p.m. ET

St. John Chrysostom's renowned Paschal homily, proclaimed during the celebration of Pascha each year, helps us grasp the great mystery enunciated when we sing: "Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and to those in the tombs, bestowing life!" Join us as we study the rich Biblical background of this powerful text.



HEAVEN ON EARTH

The Beauty & Symbolism of the Divine Liturgy

Rev. David Anderson

Wednesdays, May 4 - 18 @ 8 - 9 p.m. ET

When pagans of Kiev entered Hagia Sophia and first experienced the Divine Liturgy, they famously said: "We knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth, for surely there is no such splendor or beauty anywhere on earth." Join us as Fr. David Anderson guides us to understand what the beauty of the Divine Liturgy reveals to us.



PEOPLE YOU KNOW

IN CARY...

Christmas Market Celebrates 14th Year

Before the doors opened for the 14th Annual Saint Nicholas European Christmas Market, Father Vasyl Sokolovych, parochial administrator, led the volunteers in prayer, blessing the venue with a generous sprinkling of holy water. The parishioners of Saints Cyril and Methodius of Cary, NC, brushed off their aprons and put on their warmest smiles to welcome shoppers. Would they return in person to the NC State Fairgrounds, after last year's drive-through and pick-up only event at the parish? Soon, the strains of music and the aroma of grilled kielbasa filled the air, as people searched for that special gift in the vendor village, watched the dancing group in the entertainment section, or learned about Eastern Catholic traditions at the parish booth. Saint Nicholas, with his helpful ByzanTeens, posed for *selfies*, as nearby, the line for the pirohi wound its way to the lunch counter. Pan'i Olena's jars of Old World sauerkraut joined the standard lineup of nut rolls and homemade cookies, and sold out before the event ended. The December 2021 event turned out to be the most successful fundraiser so far, a blessing to help Saints Cyril and Methodius Parish in its plans for the future!



Andrii S. walks with Father Vasyl as he blesses the market



Dan P. and Max T. with satisfied customers



Avaleigh B. and Stephen C. give Saint Nicholas a hand



Sophia T. and Gianna T. are happy to serve



Above: Joe Deaton and Deacon Ryan Liebhaber speak with guests



Right: The Little German Band gets the crowd moving

IN SAINT PETERSBURG...

Saint Nicholas Celebration

On Sunday, December 12, 2021, Saint Therese Church in Saint Petersburg, FL, had a Saint Nicholas Celebration. The day started with the children leaving their shoes in the church entrance (though they did not believe they could take their shoes off!) followed by the Divine Liturgy. After the Gospel, the children were invited to join Father for questions and answers by the icon of Saint Nicholas. A delicious lunch buffet was served. The children provided a singing program and a visit from Saint Nicholas. One parishioner commented, "Let's do it again next week!" Father Robert Evancho is pastor of Saint Therese Parish.



AROUND THE EPARCHY



IN WESTBURY...

Parishioners Visit Saint Josaphat Monastery

On Saturday January 15, members of Saint Andrew Parish Westbury, NY, made a visit to Saint Josaphat Monastery in Glen Cove, Long Island, NY. The monastery is the home of the fathers and brothers of the Order of Saint Basil. The order celebrates Christmas on both the Gregorian (new – December 25) and Julian (old – January 7) calendars. The members of the parish visited the chapel, a brief talk by the members of the order and shared lunch with them in the refectory. Although the weather was icy cold, the visit enriched and warmed the souls and the hearts of both the members of the order and the members of the parish. Father Nick Daddona is the administrator of Saint Andrew Parish in Westbury.



IN HILLSBOROUGH...

Seminary professor brings students to Divine Liturgy

On Tuesday, January 18, Father James Badeaux, pastor, and the parishioners of Saint Mary Parish in Hillsborough, NJ, were honored to welcome Dr. Margarita Mooney, Ph.D., a parishioner of Saint Mary Parish, and professor at Princeton Theological Seminary in Princeton, NJ, together with her students, all of whom are studying for various forms of ministry in Protestant denominations, to the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Dr. Mooney was teaching a seminar on Mariology and wanted her students to experience how the Christian East expressed its devotion to the Theotokos and how Marian prayers are integrated into the Divine Liturgy. After the Divine Liturgy, Father Jim answered the seminary students' questions, and explained the meaning of various parts of the Divine Liturgy where the Theotokos is mentioned, as well the meaning of many of the various icons in the church. After the Divine Liturgy and Q & A session, the parishioners invited Dr. Mooney and her students to a reception in the fellowship hall.



Adult Education Program Begins

On Sunday, January 2, Father Nick Daddona began his adult education program at Saint Andrew Church in Westbury, NY. Each month a speaker will be invited to give a talk to the parishioners on a variety of topics. The first speaker was Father Pavlo Vyshkovskiy from Ukraine. He spoke with the help of Sister Katarina, OSB, on his life in Ukraine under communist oppression. Many members of the parish related to Father's talk due to the fact that their families experienced and survived the same type of injustice. Father Nick, the administrator of Saint Andrew Parish, is hoping to have a different speaker each month until after Pascha.



IN PHILADELPHIA...

Saint Nicholas Visits Holy Ghost Church in Philadelphia

On Sunday December 19, 2021, Holy Ghost Parish of Philadelphia, PA, held its annual Saint Nicholas Celebration. Holy Ghost is currently under the Parochial Administration of Father Edward Higgins. The day began with the celebration of Typika by Deacon Edward Quinn (Saint John the Baptist, Pottstown, PA). Following Typika, parishioners, family and friends enjoyed a luncheon sponsored by our Holy Ghost Byzantine Catholic Choir and welcomed a visit from Saint Nicholas, who met with adults and children, sharing a gift with each person and stayed to take family and group pictures. Helene Prehatny and Luke Hopkins provided duet piano background music during Saint Nick's visit.

We were additionally blessed with our choir's annual Christmas Concert and a visit from the *Gubi* (Bethlehem Carolers). The video recordings of these activities can be found on our Holy Ghost Byzantine Church Choir Facebook page.

Holy Ghost Memorial Scholarship Committee member, Barbara Bachovin, announced two awards to Elizabeth Danovich and Dylan White for their life-long

participation in the parish and college studies in medical fields. Committee member Dennis Donahue announced how the fund has distributed 54 awards since its inception in the early 90s.

Deacon Ed extended his congratulations to all of us for having a parish, though not in normal times, still have 20+ people who come out and serve in the choir, and noted how blessed our parish is, in having dedicated people.



IN RAHWAY...

River Blessing Reminds Faithful of God's Holy Purpose

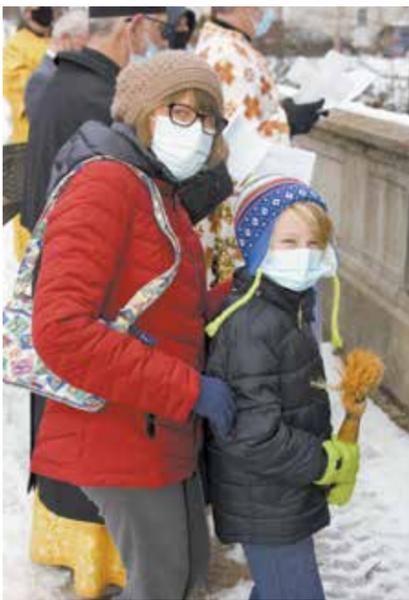
By David Brighthouse

On Sunday, January 9, members of Saint Thomas the Apostle Byzantine Catholic Church in Rahway, NJ, took part in the parish's annual river blessing. Following the Divine Liturgy on the Sunday after Theophany, the frozen, yet faithful parishioners proceeded to the nearby Robinson branch of the Rahway River, braving cold temperatures, snow, and slick conditions.

Upon arrival at the bridge overlooking the river, Father James Hayer, pastor of Saint Thomas Parish, offered the prayers of blessing for the sanctification of water, followed by the tossing of the custom-made ice cross into the river.

"The blessing of the local tributary on the Sunday following Theophany is part of our faith tradition, a reminder that all of creation belongs to God and has a holy purpose," Father Jim explained. "The public procession to the river provides a very inspiring witness of the faith of a few praying for the good of all."

Saint Thomas Church is served by Archpriest James Hayer, with the ministry of Father Thomas Shubeck and Deacon Charles Laskowski.



Walking with Christ: A Desert Pilgrimage



If you struggle with infertility, you may feel like you're on a lonely, desert pilgrimage. But you are not alone! During the season of Lent, the Springs in the Desert Team invites you to join us as we reflect on those Saints and friends of Christ who walked with Him and witnessed His Passion: from the Blessed Virgin Mary to Mary Magdalene; Simon of Cyrene to Veronica; and the Women of Jerusalem to the Centurion.

Each Thursday evening during Lent (from March 10-April 7) we will meet virtually at 8pm Eastern to pray, listen to a brief reflection, and build community through small group sharing. This FREE event for women and couples struggling with infertility is a chance to enter more deeply into the Lenten spirit while gathering in prayer with others on this same path. Visit www.springsinthedesert.org for information and to register. Questions? Email Ann Koshute, ann@springsinthedesert.org

Pledges accepted through June 30, 2022

**BYZANTINE CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF PASSAIC
2021 BISHOP'S ANNUAL APPEAL**

Please pledge online at eparchyofpassaic.com or mail check payable to Eparchy of Passaic in the envelope provided.

As challenges continue to affect us, please take care of yourself, your family and your parish first.

- \$2,500.00 \$1,000.00 \$500.00
- \$250.00 _____ Other \$ _____

- full payment enclosed
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The 2021 Bishop's Appeal will run through December 31, 2021. Contributions will be accepted through the fiscal year ending June 2022.

New Address or Correction

Name: _____
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Crowned in Love

A Byzantine Pre-Cana Program



Sponsored by the Syncellate for the State of New Jersey
 Saturday, March 5, 2022, 9AM to 4PM, Via Zoom

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

Couples planning to marry before spring 2023 are urged to attend. The cost is \$75.00 payable to St Michael’s Cathedral Syncellate.

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

Presenters



Father Thomas Shubeck, PhD, a father of three with Caroline are navigating the pandemic with a young adult daughter and a teen-aged son. After many years of diaconal ministry at St Thomas the Apostle parish in Rahway and at Seton Hall University Fr. Thomas will be ordained to the priesthood in December 2021. Much of his more than 30 years as a licensed psychologist has been spent providing therapy services to married couples and families.



Michael and Lisann Castagno were married in 1994 and have three daughters. They have been involved in marriage preparation and youth ministry in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia for many years, speaking especially about the beauty of God’s design for marriage, by proclaiming the good news of Natural Family Planning.



Ann Koshute, MTS, earned a Master’s degree at the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family in Washington DC. She teaches theology at St Joseph’s College of Maine and co-founded Springs in the Desert, an infertility support ministry. She and her husband Keith have been married for 10 years.



Father Jack Custer has delighted in preparing couples for marriage over four decades of priesthood. He holds degrees in Scripture and Theology and currently serves as Rector of St Michael’s Cathedral.

The Carpathian Cookery cookbook for sale

The Carpathian Cookery cookbook, has entered its 19th printing, having sold over 17,500 copies, is available for sale. This cookbook was requested by the Library of Congress to be in their ethnic cooking collection. The 330-page cookbook has a new look and features a protective plastic cover. The book includes sections on Christmas and Easter customs and recipes, traditional Rusyn and Slavic foods, other ethnic dishes, and many other tried-and-true recipes of St. John’s pa-

rishioners. There is a variety of paska bread and kolachi (filled roll) recipes, as well as meatless dishes and Lenten recipes, suitable for the Great Fast, as well as the Pre-Christmas Fast. The cost of the cookbook is \$14.00 plus \$4.00 postage and handling (\$18.00). If ordering from Canada, please send a \$28.00 U.S. Postal money order payable in U.S. dollars to reflect the difference in the exchange rate and postage cost. To order please send a check or money order to: Ethnic Craft Club, St. John Byzantine Catholic Church, 201 E. Main Street, Uniontown, PA 15401, or call 724-438-6027 (M-F 9AM-3PM – leave message), for more information. You may contact us at: carpathiancookery@gmail.com.



Byzantine Catholic Outreach The Villages, Florida

Served from Saint Anne Byzantine Catholic Church, New Port Richey, Florida

“A loving, praying community giving
 Glory to Jesus Christ!”

VIGIL DIVINE LITURGY EVERY SATURDAY, 2:00 P.M.
 HOLYDAYS OF OBLIGATION ON THE HOLYDAY, 12:00 NOON
 Served by Father Oleksiy Nebesnyk

Location: Saint Alban Church, 625 W. Lady Lake Blvd, Lady Lake, FL
 Next to the American Legion, CR 466 & Rolling Acres Road

MEET, GREET, AND MUNCH FOLLOWING ALL LITURGIES

Slavic dinners being planned
 Outreach Contact /Phone: 352-530-9631

Dr. Barbara Yastishock-Lutz, Lay Representative, drbylutz@comcast.net

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LIFE, LOVE, AND THE HUMAN PERSON

By Ann M. Koshute, MTS

DOING THE HARD THINGS WITH LOVE

“Jesus was not *nice*.” The look of shock on the classroom of my nursing students was priceless. All of them were non-traditional students, meaning that they were already years into their careers, or starting a new chapter in their professional lives. All of them were at least nominally Christian, some Catholic, and, a few, actually practicing. Every one of them looked up (or woke up) at my words, and their shocked expressions were mixed with panic. After all, if Jesus isn’t *nice*, then He must be truly mean at heart, and then we’re all in real trouble! To be clear, we should all strive to be nice, that is, polite, kind, deferential toward others, and attentive to their concerns. Jesus most assuredly was attentive to the needs and concerns of others (after all, He healed the sick, forgave the sinner, and conversed with people from all walks of life during His years in active ministry). My students – and maybe some of us – can easily fall into the trap of an old heresy that views the God of the Old Testament to be different (and significantly “meaner”) than the merciful, gentle, and “nice” Jesus. This is a big mistake, because it makes God like us: petty, sometimes two-faced, and with an ego that is easily offended. The Old and New Testaments tell one, continuous story of God’s love, our disobedience, and His patience in bringing us along in a plan of salvation that culminated in the Incar-

nation, Passion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The one, true God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – is not merely “nice.” He is all-merciful, “everywhere present and filling all things,” powerful, glorious and He who holds all things and people in being, in an act of pure generosity and infinite love.

All of this came to mind as I worshipped on the eve of the feast of the Theophany of Our Lord (His baptism and the revelation of the Trinity). One of the prayers the priest says in the Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great, following the Consecration of the Eucharist, is generally not heard by the people, who are usually still chanting the hymn of praise. On this evening, the singing had been completed and for the first time I heard these words as Father prayed: “Preserve the virtuous in your virtue and, in your kindness, *make those who are evil good*” (my emphasis). The power of those words knocked me off balance, and highlighted just how feeble my attempts to “be nice” are, when they are mostly directed to people I know and like, or are made through gritted teeth as I begrudgingly smile and offer pleasantries to those with whom I disagree, or simply don’t like. Think about what our priests pray in the Liturgy for themselves, and on our behalf: first, that we would be steeped in *virtue*, that is, gifts of grace bestowed on us directly by

God Himself (faith, hope and love), or those habits of behavior that, with the help of God, make us more like Him (for example, prudence, fidelity, obedience, to name a few). To live virtuously, we need God! And we should be praying to Him constantly to help us to live as His *icons*, and to treat others that way, too.

The second part of the prayer is much more challenging, and may shock us more than the thought that Jesus isn’t “nice.” For all His mercy, His patience and the very gift of His life on the Cross, Jesus pulls no punches in calling us to radically love God, our neighbors, and even our enemies. Jesus asks us to do the hard work of loving as He loves, and becoming more and more conformed to His image and likeness. Jesus isn’t “nice” when telling hard truths about the sacredness of marriage and lifelong fidelity (Matthew 19:4-5, 8-9); the duty to forgive, again and again (Matthew 18:21-22); or our obligation to love even those who do not love us (Matthew 5:43-47). What Jesus asks of us is revolutionary, in many ways so counter to our fallen nature, and utterly impossible – for us. Jesus commands that we be “perfect, just as [our] heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matthew 5:48) He recognizes that we are incapable of such perfection on our own, but assures us that “What is impossible for human beings is possible for God.” (Luke 18:27).

And so it is that through our prayer and perseverance, and our willingness to generously make sacrifices for the good of others, that we might beseech the Lord to “make those who are evil good.” It’s a tall order, and in the end, only God’s grace and a willingness on the part of the individual can break through the hardness of heart that causes some to cling to evil thoughts and deeds. But if we don’t take seriously the frightful thought that some can and do choose evil over good, Satan over our loving God, then we ourselves may become too proud and self-assured, letting down our guard and making ourselves more susceptible to the evil one’s deceptions. Being *nice* is ultimately only superficial. Being *Christ-like* is loving generously and self-sacrificially, especially when it’s hard. Let’s all heed Saint Paul’s warning to “watch carefully then how you live, not foolish but as wise, making the most of the opportunity, for these are evil days.” (Ephesians 5:15-16). The road to salvation may not be *nice*, but it’s one that is clearly marked, has many stops along the way for refreshment (the outpouring of God’s grace in the Holy Mysteries), and is led by the Good Shepherd who desires all to follow Him into His Kingdom.

That actually sounds pretty *nice* after all. **ECL**

PRIESTLY REFLECTIONS

Father Paul Varchola West



“PAYING IT FORWARD”

I am not certain if this happens everywhere, or just where I am, but when someone sees my car parked in front of the church, they often find it necessary to come into the church and offer me unsolicited advice about God, religion, spirituality, and the like. These folks aren’t parishioners, just people coming in off the streets. Many times, they say, “I was driving by and saw a car in the lot, so I thought I’d come in and check it out.” The conversations go one of several ways.

“I used to go to church, but...”

“I’m spiritual, but not religious.”

“I talk to God, but I don’t need to go to church to do that.”

A couple weeks ago I got a new one: “I believe in God, but I don’t go to church... I’m thinking of maybe

starting to.” This person then went on to tell me how they want to come to church but have had a life-long struggle with the “riches and opulence” of the Catholic Church. Having grown up with relatively simple means, this person felt conflicted that “so many people are starving, yet the Church, specifically the Vatican, has so much wealth.” Then they followed up with their entire plan about how the Vatican should essentially “liquidate all its assets, feed the world, and stop being hypocritical.”

Of course, I politely listened. We had a nice little exchange, and this person went on their way. Later that evening, I got to thinking about my interaction with this person and what they said. My train of thought was not what I expected.

“Ok... so if the Vatican sold what essentially can be considered priceless works of art, religious and otherwise, who would be buying them? Obviously, people who could afford it, people who have lots of extra money. High profile art collectors and antique dealers, artifact dealers, business tycoons, billionaires, hobbyists... the list can go on and on. Clearly, in this mode of thinking, the ‘riches of the world’ exist not in the Vatican, but rather with those who possess the funding for the Vatican to take on such a task through the wholesale “liquidation of assets.” If the money already exists for the hungry to be fed, why does the Vatican, specifically, have to play the middleman, if you will? Wouldn’t it be far simpler for people to just do it of their own accord?”

It became painfully obvious to me that, generally speaking, people love to place “blame” on the Vatican when, in reality, that is not where the finger should be pointed. In fact, there should be absolutely no finger pointing whatsoever! Humanity, overall, needs to come to grips with the fact that this world is full of riches and, as we all learned from the movie *Forrest Gump*, “Mama always said, there’s only so much money a man needs, and the rest is just for showing off.”

So, what did Forrest do after he became a “gazillionaire”? He donated a whole bunch of money to a church, a hospital, and a family living in poverty who had a rightful claim to a portion of his wealth. Not to mention the fact that he also cut the local school’s grass for free, Forrest teach-

es us a valuable lesson here. Forrest “pays it forward,” as it were, out of love of neighbor and nothing else.

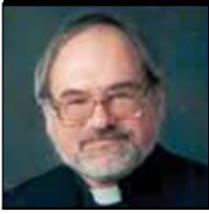
The “problem” with “the world” is not the Church, the “institution of religion,” the Vatican, or any such thing. The “problem” is that the world at large seemingly will not give away monetary wealth unless something is received in return. In

the scenario presented to me by this person, it wasn’t “people should give money to the Vatican to support humanitarian aid.” It was “the Vatican should sell all its stuff.” Great... but what happens when all the “stuff” is gone? Game over! Then what?

We, as Catholic Christians, need to make it our goal to change this way of thinking. We need to teach

the world that giving, true giving of oneself to God and neighbor, is not at all transactional. We need to teach the world that all the money in the world will not fix a thing. Rather, it is true love of God, neighbor, and self that will indeed bring about a change in this world, however small it may be. We already know this, and we already practice this within our own communities. Now

let’s pay it forward to the world, pay it forward with love, and show the world that the true spirit of change in this world is not with tangible wealth, but rather by living a life in accord with the Gospel of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ! **ECL**



THE BYZANTINE LITURGY

By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD

RENOUNCING EVIL

The mystery of baptism is an action of both God and the human person. When we are baptized, we enter into God’s life, we become children of the Father, brother and sisters to His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ and receive the Holy Spirit. That is why we are baptized “into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Our faith teaches us clearly that we cannot do this by our own human powers, but only by the action and blessing of God. However, for this to happen, we need to open our free will to His goodness. This is why, in baptism, God is acting to make us God-like, while we are acting to turn away from sin and to commit ourselves to Christ and His gospel. Today, most people enter into baptism as newly-born infants, and are yet unable to make these decisions and commitments, so they are made for us by our parents and are spoken in the rite of baptism by the sponsors, the godparents. This does not take away our freedom, for it only makes real in us the saving power of God, which we freely either accept or reject when we are able as we grow in age and maturity. However, we need the power of God and it is there for us to embrace it.

Accepting baptism was seen as a struggle with the devil, won only by prayer, fasting and divine power. When we are baptized, the priest performs an exorcism, completely unlike those seen in modern entertainment shows, but instead a process of leaving the evil of the world in order to accept the goodness of the Kingdom of God. We become no longer slaves to the devil, but follow-

ers of Christ who pray as He taught us, “Thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven.” Thus, after the exorcism, we explicitly promise, “I renounce Satan, and all his works, and all his angels, and all his service, and all his pride.” The Fathers called this a purification, and John Chrysostom said the exorcisms brought about Christian equality: “This rite does away with all difference and distinction of rank. Even if a man happens to enjoy worldly honor, if he happens to glitter with wealth, if he boasts of higher lineage or the glory which is his in the world, he stands side by side with the beggar and with him who is clothed in rags and many a time with the blind and the lame.” In another place, he observes the same about baptism: “In the Church there is no distinction between slave and free, foreigner and citizen, old and young, wise and foolish, private citizen and king, female and male. Men and women of every age and condition go into that bath of waters in the same way; kings and peasants enjoy the same cleansing. This, above all others, is the greatest proof of the nobility among us, that we initiate in the same manner the beggar and the prince.”

Chrysostom also noted the bodily posture of the ones being exorcised. They were to stand with bare feet and outstretched hands. This is done for a baby by his or her godparents. This shows our sadness at being a captive of the devil. Exorcism, then is our freedom from the devil, and the cleansing of our house for a royal visit (Christ). Saint Cyril of Jerusalem gives the same meaning to exorcism as Saint John

Chrysostom, it is our purification: “Just as gold is purified of foreign substances by fire, so “exorcisers, infusing fear by a divine breath, and setting the soul on fire in the crucible of the body, make the evil spirit flee.”

Becoming a Christian is a protracted struggle with the forces of evil, particularly Satan as evil personified, who was rebuked in the strongest possible language: “I abjure you, O most crafty, impure, vile, loathsome and alien spirit.” In the present ritual, the first prayer is the strongest, implying physical possession. The exorcism is an expression of the fear that we are under the control of an evil power, which can be broken only by the name of God. Therefore, the third exorcism begins with the Greek translation of the Hebrew name for God, “the One who is,” “Eternal Being.” This fear has been exploited by occultists and the modern entertainment media, which present a grotesque Satan, outside of ordinary human experience. The demon possession in the baptismal liturgy, however, reflects the real situation, and is more terrifying – the fact that our daily lives are vulnerable to evil. We must all struggle against this evil power, especially through knowledge and enlightenment, but we cannot win the victory by ourselves. We need the awesome power invoked in the exorcisms, the power of “the Lord who triumphed over the adverse powers by His crucifixion, when the sun was darkened and the earth quaked and the graves were opened and the bodies of the saints arose.” The prayers of exorcism are an admission that we cannot

conquer evil by ourselves, but that we need the power of God.

After the exorcisms, we make a solemn renunciation of the evil one, that is, Satan. Because of this Hebrew background, and because similar formulas are found in the New Testament, as Romans 13:12: “Let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light,” it is possible that the renunciation of Satan goes back to apostolic times. From Gospel times, baptism was connected with the struggle against Satan. Immediately after His baptism, Jesus goes out into the desert to struggle with Satan. Jesus links His passion on the Cross to a kind of baptism, asking His disciples, “Can you be baptized with the baptism with which I am to be baptized.” (Mark 10:38)

The renunciation of Satan was true liturgical drama. In the standard ritual for baptism of adults, the candidates would face towards the West, the direction of the setting sun, hence associated with darkness. They raised their hands as a sign of being searched. The ancient rite, no longer used, explained, “That is why you stand and hold up your hands when I command, as if you were being searched, so that no one will have anything hidden on him that belongs to the devil.” The Fathers taught that Satan was actually present, citing at times 1 Peter 5:8-11, a baptismal homily: “Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a lion, looking for someone to devour.” The ancient rite explained, “The devil now stands to the West gnashing his teeth, tearing his hair, wringing his hands, biting his lips, crazed, bewailing his loneliness, disbelieving your escape to freedom. For this reason, Christ sets you opposite the devil, that having renounced him and having spit upon him, you may take up the warfare against him.” **ECL**



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SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

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

EXODUS 15: THE FIRST BIBLICAL ODE

You've just eaten the very first hasty Passover meal, avoided the Angel of Death by marking your door with blood, escaped from slavery in Egypt, and witnessed the miracle of the Red Sea parting to let you cross over without getting wet while Pharaoh's chariots and armies were drowned. So what do you do once you're safe on the far side of the sea? Why, once you catch your breath, you sing, of course!

The first of the ten biblical odes (Exodus 15: 1-18) records what Moses and the children of Israel sang spontaneously as they looked back at the sea they had crossed and saw their persecutors destroyed. Their celebration of salvation recounts the events at the Red Sea (verses 1-5), praises the Lord as a warrior (vv. 6-8), mocks the boasts of the Egyptian army (vv. 9-10), and recognizes the Lord's superiority over all other supposed gods (vv. 11-13). As in the *Polyelej* Psalms also sung at Matins (Psalms 135-136), Moses' hymn (v. 13) sees the Lord's mercy in the miracle of the Red Sea, foretells how other hostile nations along the route of the Exodus

will react (vv. 14-16), and finally looks forward to settlement in the Promised Land (17-18). In a way, this ode summarizes the entire Exodus from the Red Sea to the conquest of the land and even points ahead to the Temple in Jerusalem.

Beyond the facts of Israel's escape from Egypt, Christians have always seen a deeper meaning in the events of the Exodus. Around 56 AD, Saint Paul wrote: "All passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10: 1-4). The Paschal Lamb, the manna, and the Sea all point to the sacramental mysteries that unite us with Christ.

For the great saints who interpreted these events, the crossing of the Red Sea points to Baptism which frees us from sin, unites us to Christ through His Church and grants us rebirth through water and the Holy Spirit

(John 3:5). In the violent destruction of Pharaoh's army with all their weaponry, we can see Satan's arsenal of temptations turned aside and his foray for the ruin of souls defeated. Like the Flood in Noah's generation (Genesis 7-8), the waters of the Red Sea drown sin and save God's faithful from death.

This is a general rule for interpreting the Old Testament: wherever the text speaks of the violent destruction of "enemies," we are meant to see Christ's victory over the ultimate Enemy, the sin to which he tempts us, and the death which is sin's wages. In his stubborn resistance to God's will and his pride in his own power, Pharaoh is just one more willing tool of Satan, one more institutionalized evil, like Babylon/Rome in the New Testament book of Revelation (chapter 18). They can do damage, but they cannot ultimately conquer. Like the final hymns in Revelation (chapter 19), Exodus 15 celebrates the Lord's ultimate victory over Satan, sin and death. It is in this sense that "The Lord shall reign forever and ever" (Exodus 15:18).

The whole Song of Moses points naturally to the celebration of Christ's Resurrection, the overthrow of Death and the gift of new life on Pascha. The passage from death to life, from earth to heaven, also makes sense in the Canon of the Deceased sung at Parastas. The Canon for Theophany seizes on the image of the Enemy drowned in the waters. The Canon for the Dormition cites Exodus 15:20-21 to evoke Moses' sister Miriam as a foreshadowing of Mary. Saint Andrew of Crete's solemn Great Canon of Repentance (sung on the fifth Thursday of the Fast), simply reproduces whole lines of the original Song of Moses: "A Helper and a Protector has become salvation to me. This is my God; I will glorify Him. God of my fathers; I will exalt Him: for in glory has He been glorified" (Exodus 15:1-2). The first ode of many other Canons simply concludes with some reference to a "hymn of victory" to the Lord being "glorified." **ECL**

SCHOOL OF PRAYER

Father G. Scott Boghossian



SAINT JOHN OF THE LADDER ON PRAYER

Saint John of the Ladder (579-649), author of the Eastern spiritual classic, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, was a monk who lived at Saint Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai in Egypt. Pierre Pourrat (1871-1957), a renowned scholar of Christian Spirituality, describes Saint John as "the most important ascetical theologian of the East, at this epoch, who enjoyed a great reputation and exercised an important influence on future centuries." John's famous work, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, was influential even in the west and studied and often quoted by western authors and saints such as the Abbé de Rancé, founder of the Trappist reform. A Spanish translation of *The Ladder* was the first book printed in the Americas in 1532.

Step 28, or chapter 28, is entitled: "On holy and blessed prayer, the mother of virtues, and on the attitude of mind and body in prayer.

The Splendor of Prayer

In the first section of John's Step 28 on prayer, he presents us with a tribute to prayer that is worth quoting in full:

"Prayer by reason of its nature is the converse and union of man with God, and by reason of its action upholds the world and brings

about reconciliation with God; it is the mother and also the daughter of tears, the propitiation for sins, a bridge over temptations, a wall against afflictions, a crushing of conflicts, work of angels, food of all the spiritual beings, future gladness, boundless activity, the spring of virtues, the source of graces, invisible progress, food of the soul, the enlightening of the mind, an axe for despair, a demonstration of hope, the annulling of sorrow, the wealth of monks, the treasure of solitaries, the reduction of anger, the mirror of progress, the realization of success, a proof of one's condition, a revelation of the future, a sign of glory. For him who truly prays, prayer is the court, the judgment hall and the tribunal of the Lord before the judgment to come" (28:1).

There is nothing as important as prayer!

A Pattern of Prayer

Saint John of the Ladder gives us a pattern or a plan for prayer. Perhaps we try to pray and spend an extended time in prayer but run out of ideas and don't know what to pray.

"Before all else let us list sincere thanksgiving first on our prayer-

card. On the second line we should put confession, and heartfelt contrition of soul. Then let us present our petition to the King of all. This is the best way of prayer, as it was shown to one of the brethren by an angel of the Lord" (28:7).

Saint John tells us that an angel revealed his pattern to a fellow monk. Start with thanksgiving, then go to confession and contrition, and finally make petitions and requests.

The Discipline of Prayer

Saint John of the Ladder expects a specific time set aside every day for prayer. In several places, Saint John speaks of the "hour of prayer" or "the time of prayer."

"War proves the soldier's love for his king; but the time and discipline of prayer show the monk's love for God" (28:33).

Be disciplined. Set aside some time every day to go to God in fervent, heartfelt prayer. Perhaps start with only 15 minutes, then 30, then eventually an hour or more. Resolve today to have a set time, a schedule, a discipline of daily prayer.

The One-Word Prayer

John of the Ladder teaches us to pray *monologicistic* (one-worded) prayer. We are familiar with the "Jesus prayer." And most scholars seem to think this is precisely what Saint John is discussing. Listen to what he says:

"The beginning of prayer consists in banishing the thoughts that come to us by single ejaculations (or a single thought – *monologistos*) the very moment that they appear" (28:19). "Always let the remembrance of death and the Prayer of Jesus said as a monologue go to sleep with you and get up with you" (14:54). "Let the remembrance of Jesus be present with each breath... (28:61). "Let your prayer be completely simple. For both the publican and the prodigal son were reconciled to God by a single phrase" (28:5).

The Great Fast

During the Great Fast, monastics of the Eastern Church read through *The Ladder* from beginning to end. May Saint John's words inspire us to practice prayer with greater faith and enthusiasm during the Great Fast of 2022. **ECL**

SEASONAL REFLECTIONS

Father Ronald Hatton



OUR ENTRY INTO THE GREAT FAST

The Liturgical year moves quickly, but it does not just drop us, cold-turkey, from one season to the next. One great example of this is our pre-Lenten Sundays and the beginning of The Great Fast. At the end of January, we celebrated the Sunday of Zacchaeus. One thing you will notice, though, is that the only thing that distinguishes this particular Sunday is the Gospel reading: there are no special troparia, kontakia, and so on. Even the *Lenten Triodion*, the book we use during the Lenten season for Matins and Vespers, does not even have an entry for the Sunday of Zacchaeus. We are simply “put on notice” that things are beginning to change.

We shift gears the very next Sunday, though, with the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee. Other than the Gospel reading, the only other thing we notice during the Divine Liturgy is that we sing the Kontakion for the Publican and Pharisee rather than the Resurrectional Kontakion of the week. More important, the weekdays following this Sunday are all fast-free (one of the four Fridays that are fast-free during the liturgical year). This is to remind us that our fasting is not a matter of pride, as it was for the Pharisee, but of humbling ourselves and disciplining the body.

The Sunday of the Prodigal Son gets a little more intense, as the Epistle

reading now also relates to the coming season of the Fast. Together with the Kontakion for this day, we feel the time drawing closer.

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

Finally, we come to Cheese-fare Sunday, the day before we begin the Great Fast in earnest. Not only is there a special kontakion for the day, but the Prokeimenon is one of the most solemn that we can sing, and is a reminder that the Fast and our promises to God are not to be taken lightly: “Make vows to the Lord your God and fulfill them!” (Isaiah 19: 21b). From the Saturday night Vespers, through Matins and Vespers for this day, we are reminded both of our fallenness (this Sunday is the Commemoration of the Expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden) and of God’s great forgiveness. And so, on this evening, we enter into the season of the Great Fast by gathering together to pray what we referred to as “Cheese-fare Vespers,” singing the Stichera of Repentance. In many parishes, there is normally a ritual of mutual forgiveness between all the members

of the parish, both clergy and laity, to cleanse ourselves of any lingering resentment or lack of forgiveness in our lives before we enter this holy season. For if we do not forgive one another fully and totally, how can we expect forgiveness from God? The text for this ritual is taken from the Office of Compline.

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

Last, but certainly not least, we enter fully into the season of fasting. Depending on medical conditions or other mitigating circumstances, the Typicon prescribes fasting from meat on all Wednesdays and Fridays. Some people are in a position to fast completely from all meat and dairy, eating only vegetables; some have no meat until Pascha. It may be that they cannot fast from food at all, and have been assigned an al-

ternative discipline to fasting from food. The main point is that it is a time of subjecting the body to the mastery of the spirit, thus reminding us that we must subject ourselves to God. Whatever the case, we must keep in mind the admonition that the holy Apostle Paul gives in his letter to the Romans: “One person believes that one may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. The one who eats must not despise the one who abstains, and the one who abstains must not pass judgment on the one who eats; for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on someone else’s servant? Before his own master he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand. ... whoever eats, eats for the Lord, since he gives thanks to God; while whoever abstains, abstains for the Lord and gives thanks to God. ... Why then do you judge your brother? Or you, why do you look down on your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God” (Romans 14: 2-10). May our time of the Great Fast be profitable, and may we attain our salvation through our humility to our Lord. **ECL**

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

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

Saint Basil the Great
1475 N.E. 199th Street
Miami, FL 33179-5162
1-305-651-0991

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

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

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

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

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

**Byzantine Catholic Outreach:
The Villages, FL**
Address: 625 W. Lady Lake Blvd.
Lady Lake, FL 32159 (at St. Alban's)
1-352-530-9631



CARPATHO-RUSYN SOCIETY

MANIFESTING CARPATHO-RUSYN CULTURE AND HISTORY

The mission of the Carpatho-Rusyn Society is to preserve and perpetuate the distinct culture, history, language, and heritage of the Carpatho-Rusyn people.

The Society offers many educational programs online at Carpatho-Rusyn Society You Tube. Also offered are genealogy presentations on Zoom and expert help in finding your roots. Our new addition is our Heritage Store, where you will find educational materials, maps, flags and accessories. We will constantly be adding more items.

Visit our website at www.c-rs.org and click on “Get Involved” to become a member. For more information contact: Bonnie Burke, Southeast Coordinator at bb@c-rs.org or call 440 729-2045.

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EPARCHIAL PARISHES LIVE-STREAM THE DIVINE SERVICES
Below are just a few examples from our eparchy

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
Saint John the Baptist—Trumbull, CT

NEW JERSEY

Cathedral of Saint Michael the Archangel—Passaic, NJ
Assumption of the Virgin Mary (Saint Mary)—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 Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church—Perth Amboy, NJ
Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church—Hillsborough, NJ
Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church—Dunellen, NJ
Saints Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church—Somerset, NJ
Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church—Jersey City, NJ
Saint John Byzantine Catholic Church—Bayonne, NJ
Nativity of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church—East Brunswick, NJ
Saint Thomas the Apostle Byzantine Catholic Church—Rahway, NJ
Saint Elias Byzantine Catholic Church—Carteret, NJ
Saint George Byzantine Catholic Church—Linden, NJ
Saint George Byzantine Catholic Church—Newark, 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
Resurrection Byzantine Catholic Church—Smithtown, NY

PENNSYLVANIA

Saint Michael Byzantine Catholic Church—Mont Clare, PA
Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church—Wilkes-Barre, PA
Saint Mary Pokrova Byzantine Catholic Church—Kingston, PA

Saint John Byzantine Church—Wilkes-Barre Twp., PA
Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic—Mahanoy City, PA
Saint John Byzantine Church—Wilkes-Barre, PA
Saint John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church—Lansford, PA
Saints Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church—Bethlehem, PA
Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church—Old Forge, PA
Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church—Taylor, PA
Saints Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church—Minersville, PA
Saint Michael Byzantine Catholic Church—Dunmore, PA
Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church—Hazleton, PA
Saint John Byzantine Catholic Church—Hazleton, PA
Holy Ghost Byzantine Catholic Church—Jessup, PA
Our Lady of Perpetual Help Byzantine Catholic Church—Levittown, PA
Saint Mary 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
Epiphany of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church—Annandale, VA

FLORIDA

Holy Dormition Byzantine Catholic Church—Ormond Beach, FL
Saint Nicholas of Myra Byzantine Catholic Church—Orlando FL
Saint Anne Byzantine Catholic Church—New Port Richey, FL
Saint Cyril and Methodius Byzantine Catholic Church—Fort Pierce, FL
Our Lady of the Sign Byzantine Catholic Church—Coconut Creek, FL

NORTH CAROLINA

Saints Cyril & Methodius Byzantine Catholic Church—Cary, NC
The Outreach Community of Greater Charlotte

SOUTH CAROLINA

Charlotte, NC, Byzantine Catholic Mission at Fort Mill, SC

MARYLAND

Patronage of the Mother of God Byzantine Catholic Church—Arbutus, MD
Saint Gregory of Nyssa Byzantine Catholic Church—Beltsville, MD

Are you called to the Priesthood?
Are you afraid of College Debt?

Is God calling you to be priest? Are you worried about college debt? Why not study in Europe and avoid college debt? Would you like to study in Vienna in the heart of Europe at the International Theological Institute in your own English Language? You can receive a university degree approved by the Pope. Contact the Director of Vocations for the Eparchy of Passaic, the Very Reverend Michael Kerestes at Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church, 695 N Main Street, Wilkes-Barre, PA 18705, phone: 570-822-6028



UPCOMING EPARCHIAL AND PARISH EVENTS

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FEBRUARY, 2022

- 2 Holy Encounter of Our Lord with Simeon
Solemn Holy Day
- 6 Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee
Second Pre-Lenten Sunday
- 13 Sunday of the Prodigal Son
Third Pre-Lenten Sunday
- 19 First All Souls' Saturday
- 20 Sunday of Meatfare
Sunday of the Last Judgment
- 21 President's Day
*Civic holiday * Chancery closed*
- 27 Sunday of Cheesefare
Sunday of Forgiveness
- 28 Clean Monday
First day of the Great Fast

MARCH, 2022

- 6 Sunday of Orthodoxy
First Sunday of the Great Fast

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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