



# EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

Official Publication of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic

VOL. LIX, NO. 2

FEBRUARY 2023

## OH JERUSALEM, JERUSALEM!

Pastoral Reflections of Bishop Kurt

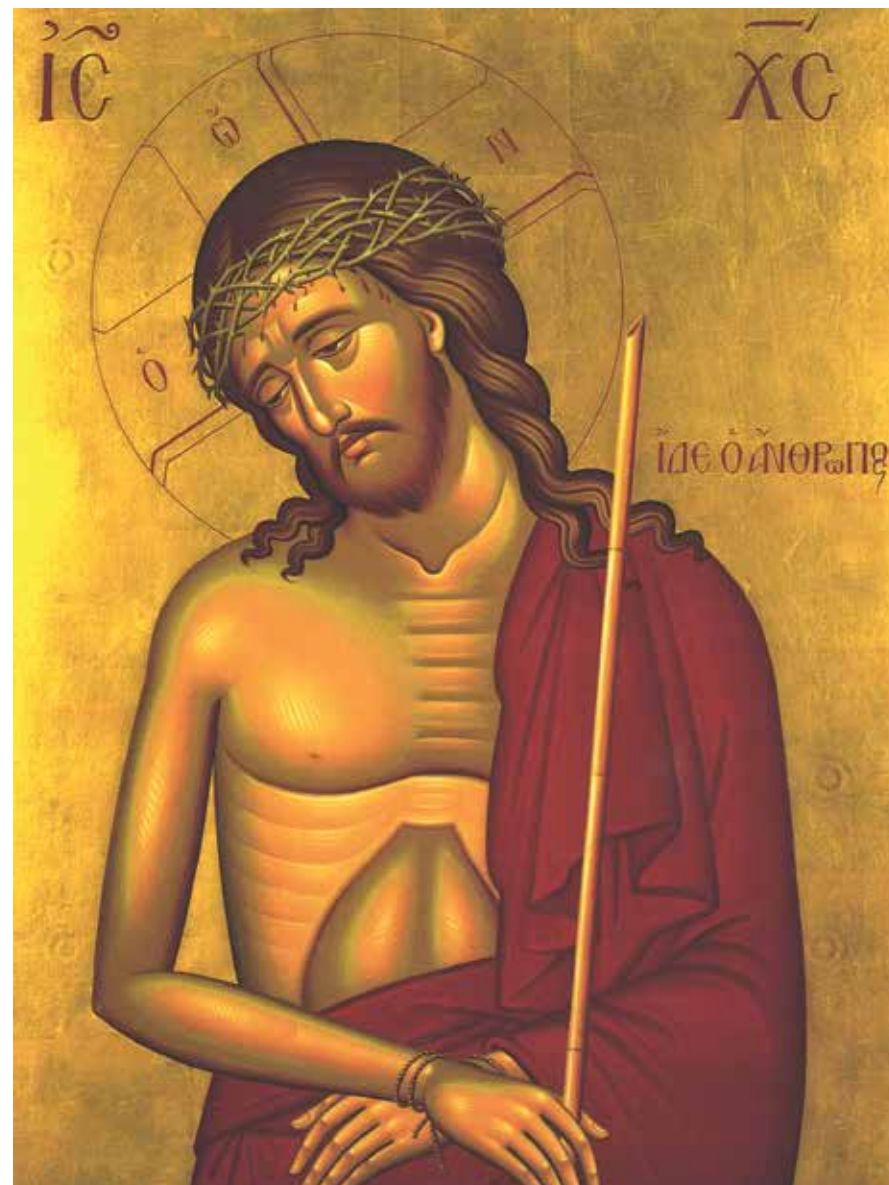
It seems like we just celebrated Christmas and New Year. Traditionally, Christmas was celebrated in the West all the way until February 2, the fortieth day after the birth when Jesus meets Simeon in the temple. Nevertheless, the Sunday of Zacchaeus is past, and we are already preparing for Great Lent. In my parishes, some of the more enthusiastic young people said they started to look forward to Lent. For those who kept the strict fast, it was a welcome change of diet. No more rich foods—a much needed break for the body. We have also learned to love the special liturgies of Lent with their haunting melodies and different rituals, and, of course, the prostrations. I used to “work out” to prepare for the Great Matins of Saint Andrew of Crete. I would do ten prostrations every morning and evening during the first week. The next week I would do twenty each morning and evening. By the fifth week it was easy to do fifty each morning and evening, which is one hundred a day. Then I could survive the Great Matins when it arrived. Unfortunately, age has caught up with me. I might not get back up off the floor if I did ten prostrations now.

When I was living with 70 Latin Rite priests in Rome fifteen years ago, I scheduled the Great Matins one year and put a copy of the book in everyone’s mailbox. They were intrigued and about 35 showed up for the service. Of course, they didn’t know that I had been practicing for six weeks. I explained what a prostration was and began the service. There are over four hundred prostrations in the service, though there are many different versions. When I finished a couple hours later, there were only three left standing, although they were twenty or thirty years younger than I. The next morning when we met at the outside door to walk to the Station Church, they were still sore and laughing about the work out of the previous night. One young priest said that he noticed the fellow in front of him had given up and was simply lying flat on the ground, so he decided he could sit out for a little while. Some of them still laugh about it fifteen years later.

I find it interesting that people find Great Lent to be such a mixture of dedication and also joy and laughter. However, the reason for Great Lent

is by no means a joke. The reason for Great Lent is the sad reality of sin in the world. To fully experience the intense joy of Christ’s Resurrection, we need to be reminded of the purpose of His sacrifice on the Cross, that is, sin. In our American culture, which is obsessed with progress and, I think, has always been obsessed with progress, we are very optimistic people. So many people settled here looking for a new and better society, even believing that they could create a new kind of soci-

ety that avoided the problems of their parents and ancestors. The history of America is filled with fascinating examples of *utopias*—people who separated from their birth culture and tried to start a perfect earthly society. Some of the stranger ones separated men from women permanently, and of course, those disappeared.



Icon of Christ the Bridegroom

ety that avoided the problems of their parents and ancestors. The history of America is filled with fascinating examples of *utopias*—people who separated from their birth culture and tried to start a perfect earthly society. Some of the stranger ones separated men from women permanently, and of course, those disappeared.

One of the utopian societies lives on today in silverware. In 1848, John Noyes began a new society near Oneida, NY.

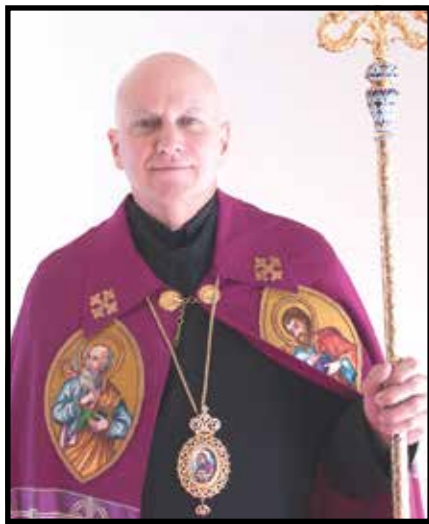
Individual bonding was discouraged, even denounced. One could imagine that Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* was based closely on this unusual experiment. The entire movement converted itself into a joint stock company in 1881 to manufacture silverware. You can still buy Oneida silverware made by the Oneida company. Who knew it originated in the ancient ancestors of the hippies?

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Not all of our American utopian societies were as benign, or end up making kitchen utensils. Although Mr. Noyes seems to have been genuinely well intentioned, many of the utopian cults are founded by, or fall under the spell of, a malevolent egomaniac. Jim Jones began his career in Indianapolis where he was much admired by progressives for his success in racial integration of churches, restaurants, the phone company, and the police department. After moving to California, where he affiliated with the Disciples of Christ for respectability, he became increasingly hostile to Christianity and more openly socialist and Marxist. In San Francisco, his racial integration and idealism attracted many idealistic young people. He targeted other local churches for recruitment. As his community influence grew, he was able to use high profile political figures including Willie Brown, Jerry Brown, Harvey Milk, and Rosalynn Carter. As the press turned against him, with revelations of abuse inside the cult, Jones moved his community to South America, the now infamous Jonestown. The Soviet Consul visited in 1978 and declared that Jonestown was in harmony with the theory of Marx, Engels, and Lenin. After Jones’ *red brigade* murdered a United States Congressman and an NBC cameraman among others, Jones ordered a mass suicide of his community in which the people drank Flavor Aid with cyanide. 909 people died, including 276 children. On a recording of the awful event, Jones can be heard counseling people, “Stop the hysterics. This is not the way for people who are socialists or communists to die.” His wife, Marceline, signed a note, a sort of last will and testament, directing that all the assets be given to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. To this day, people say “drank the Kool-Aid” to refer to someone who was taken in by propaganda or a cult, although, in fact, Jim Jones used Flavor Aid. Some of the political leaders who were taken in actually apologized, but most quietly distanced themselves from the story.

Some other utopian communities ended with massacres or mass suicides including the Waco cult of David Koresh, the Kirtland cult of Jeffrey Lundgren, and the San Diego cult of Heaven’s Gate. The Heaven’s Gate cult highlighted the selfishness of a cult leader.

*Continued on page 2*



## I LIFT UP MY EYES

Pastoral Reflections of Bishop Kurt



### OH JERUSALEM, JERUSALEM!

...continued from page 1

Marshall Applewhite was aging and feared dying of cancer. It is clear from his final video that the final events were entirely about him, his aging, and his fear of cancer. Fortunately, most of the countless utopian societies spawned in our creative free country did not end in tragedy, but simply disappeared quietly.

All of these cults and movements are based in our fundamental sense of right and wrong, our fundamental sense of justice, that comes from being made in the image and likeness of God. No matter how much some people deny it, everyone is aware that there is sin in the world. Even the people who insist that they don't believe in sin, are always quick to point out evil in others. In their search for good, people are often misled by egotists who appear virtuous and offer a way out for those who are discouraged.

In our rich and beautiful tradition, we do not deny the reality of sin and evil, nor do we make false promises that we can eliminate it from the world by merely human means. On the contrary, in order to prepare ourselves for the great events of Holy Week, the great commemorations of Jesus's sacrifice on the cross for the sin of the world, we call sin to mind. Jesus began His ascent to the Holy City of Jerusalem from Jericho, the same place that the Chosen People entered the promised land a thousand years earlier. Jericho is located in the great desert of the Dead Sea. It is located 846 feet below sea level in a great rift valley and is cut off from

atmospheric moisture by the mountains to the west. Although it has little rain, there are springs of water coming from the nearby mountains, and it seems to be one of the oldest cities in the world. Deserts in ancient Christian spirituality are associated with demons and temptations. Indeed, our Lord went to this very desert, according to tradition, to fast and rebuke the temptations of Satan as described in the Gospel. Similarly, early monks sought isolation in the desert to fight demons and temptation and grow closer to God.

As Jesus passes through Jericho, he meets several people who receive blessings and grace collaterally to his journey. We read about two blind men who are cured by him. We read about Zacchaeus who climbed a tree to see Jesus. Although he was not blind, he was "vertically challenged" and also unable to see. In addition, he was despised by his community as a tax collector and called a "sinner" by the pious people of his community. Then Jesus cures yet another blind man who cries out, "Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me." Although he was physically blind, this man could see what the scripture scholars were unable to see, that Jesus was the Son of David, that is, the long awaited anointed one, the Christ, the Messiah.

In our rich tradition, we are prepared for our journey through Great Lent by a sequence of lessons: first, Zacchaeus who climbs the tree; then, the story of the Prodigal Son. In that story, we are not only called to repentance like the younger son who "came to his senses," or literally, "came to himself" in a pigsty, but we are also warned against the envy, the pride, and the self-righteousness of the older brother who cannot be happy for his younger brother's conversion. In his jealousy, the older brother can only

look at his younger brother's sins. Jesus warns us about sin: do not look at the speck in someone else's eye when you have a plank in your own eye. Similarly, with the story of the Publican and the Pharisee, the Pharisee cannot be happy that the man he considers a sinner has come to the temple to repent. In his boasting, he deprives himself of the justification of repentance, and sadly deprives himself of the joy and delight of seeing the good in someone else.

Finally, just before the first day of Great Lent, the Church wisely presents us with Jesus's short but no-nonsense teaching on forgiveness. Jesus tells us point blank, do not expect forgiveness unless we first forgive others. In one place He says, "The measure by which we measure others is the measure by which we will be measured." While forgiveness seems challenging, in this formulation it sounds more like a "get out of jail free" card. If I judge other people mercifully, Jesus promises, then I will also be judged mercifully. Jesus says, "Come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden, for my burden is easy and my yoke is light." For us who are burdened with a lifetime of sin and mistakes, what could be easier than the burden of Christ? He says simply that I will be shown mercy to the extent that I am merciful. What a light burden indeed!

As Jesus makes his journey up the mountain passes, from Jericho to Jerusalem, to deliver from sin, we follow along in His train. We also cry out as He passes by, "Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me." By fasting and attending services, we climb up a tree like Zacchaeus and catch a glimpse of Jesus. Along the highway, we catch sight of the man beaten by robbers by the side of the highway, and we see Jesus, Him-

self the Good Samaritan, who pours wine and oil in his wounds, carries to him to an inn which is the Church, and we hear His sweet promise, "If he owed anything else, I will pay it on my way back." Our anticipation intensifies as we draw closer to the Holy City where the Paschal Lamb, Jesus, will sacrifice Himself, putting his own blood on the doorposts of our house so that the Angel of Death will pass us by. He then feeds us the Paschal Feast, the flesh of the lamb which is His own flesh.

In the West, the Great Journey of Lent has almost vanished as fasting has disappeared from our indulgent, impatient culture. The disappearance of fasting is rooted in the western heresy that separates the body from the spirit. Concomitantly, the west has lost all sense that the body is sacred. All of the sins against the body that are currently fashionable, not only sins of indulgence but also sins of mutilation and sins of child sacrifice, flow from the loss of all sense of the sacred. God wants us to take delight in our beautiful bodies, His greatest work of art. To take delight in our bodies we must have a sense of awe, awe for the creation and awe for the Creator, the Artist. The traditional fast of Great Lent brings us back into a connection with our bodies, and by disciplining our flesh, brings us back into connection with our souls. As a Church, we make the journey together, up the difficult mountain highways to the Holy City of Jerusalem, supporting one another along the way, until we enter the Holy City together with Our Lord, singing *Hosanna, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord*, and then singing *Christ is Risen!*

+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 20, and on Great and Holy Friday, April 7.

#### 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, is 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.



**ETERNAL MEMORY!**  
**+FATHER PHILIP SCOTT**  
 July 21, 1943-October 25, 2022

**WOODSTOCK, GA** — +Father Philip Scott, 79, a retired priest of the Eparchy of Passaic, fell asleep in the Lord on Tuesday, October 25, 2022, at his residence in Woodstock, GA. Prior to his retirement, he was pastor of Epiphany of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church, Roswell, GA. His home parish was Epiphany of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church in Annandale, VA, where Father John Basarab is pastor.

The son of Belah Paul Scott and Clara Adele Hightower, +Father Philip was born on July 21, 1943, in Cartersville, GA. He was Baptized at Saint Francis of Assisi Church in Cartersville, GA, on October 12, 1968, and Confirmed on March 28, 1969, at Saint Bernadette Church in Cedartown, GA.



Discerning a vocation to the priesthood, he studied at Holy Trinity Seminary, Silver Spring, MD, and LaSalette Seminary, Washington, DC, before completing his studies at Saints Cyril and Methodius Byzantine Catholic Seminary, Pittsburgh, PA. He was ordained to the Priesthood of Jesus Christ on October 14, 1979, by Bishop

Michael (Dudick).

Following ordination, Father Philip was appointed Assistant Pastor at Saint Therese Byzantine Catholic Church in Saint Petersburg, FL. In 1980, he was appointed Pastor of Epiphany of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church in Roswell, GA.

His first task as pastor was to oversee the construction of a permanent church building for the new parish. The groundbreaking for the new rectory and church was celebrated by Bishop Michael on April 26, 1981. The construction was completed in May, 1982.

+Father Philip faithfully served the parishioners of Epiphany parish for almost 40 years. He formally retired from active priestly ministry in May of 2016 but continued to offer liturgical assistance during his years of retirement.

He reposed in the Lord on Tuesday, October 25, 2022, at his residence in Woodstock, GA. In addition to his parents, +Father Philip was predeceased by his sister, +Jean Scott Smith. He is survived by his brother, Jim Scott, as well as by his nieces and nephews: Micah Scott, Corinne Scott, Marianne James, Paul Kelly, and his close friend, Connor Banyas.

Interment was at Hayes Cemetery, Adairsville, GA. A Divine Liturgy will be celebrated for his repose by Bishop Kurt at Epiphany Parish in the near future.

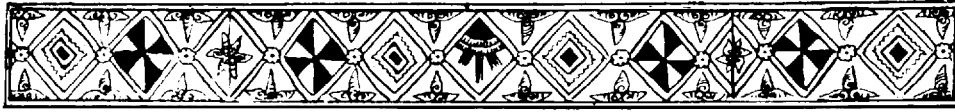
“Well done, my good and faithful servant ... Come, share your master’s joy!” (Mt 23)

*May his memory be eternal!*



On January 23 at noon in the Eternal City, the Vatican announced that the Holy Father has appointed Most Rev Milan Lach, SJ, as auxiliary bishop to the Eparchy of Bratislava and has named Most Rev Kurt Burnette, the Bishop of Passaic, as Apostolic Administrator *sede vacante* of Parma. The Holy Father has also named Most Rev Kurt Burnette as Apostolic Administrator *sede vacante* of the Holy Protection of Mary Eparchy of Phoenix. Thank you to Bishop Milan Lach and Bishop Thomas Olmsted for your tireless work for these eparchies. Well done good and faithful servants! May God grant to his servant +Francis, the Pope of Rome, peace, health, and happiness for many blessed and fruitful years!





## PEOPLE YOU KNOW

### IN TRUMBULL...

*Miraculous Mary, Helper of Mothers* Icon on display at Saint John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church, in Trumbull, CT

Saint John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church, in Trumbull, CT, graciously accepted an invitation to display the very special icon of “Miraculous Mary, Helper of Mothers.” The icon shows a calm and prayerful Blessed Mother with her beloved Son looking directly at the faithful. It is associated with several miraculous births in Byzantine communities; and as a result, it has become beloved by mothers and grandmothers, and especially by women who struggle with infertility or difficult pregnancies.

The icon was on display at Saint John Parish from November 13—27, 2022, where all the faithful were provided several opportunities to come to church and personally pray to Mary. During the icon’s presence, Father Gregory Lozinsky, pastor of Saint John Parish, presided over two special prayer services accompanied by Cantor John



Bayusik and Altar Server, Paul Z., which consisted of several psalm and scripture readings celebrating the mysteries of conception. Both services concluded with the congregation reciting a special prayer to Mary, the Helper of Mothers, prayerfully offering their own intentions, and receiving a special blessing from Father Gregory. On November 20, Saint John Parish also opened its doors to local-area residents of all faiths by hosting a special Interfaith Thanksgiving Service during which all those present were able to “Come and See” the icon, pray, and venerate the Blessed Mother.

Father Gregory and the Saint John’s parish family were very grateful to have been chosen to participate in this unique and wonderful experience.



the benefit of three local charities, Trumbull Social Services, Bridgeport Rescue Mission, and the Thomas Merton Center.

Saint John Parish was filled with worshippers of many faiths sharing the common theme of offering thanksgiving to God. Mr. Gregory Horton, Director of Music at Nichols United Methodist Church, assisted with the music. Words of welcome were offered by Father Gregory Lozinsky, pastor of Saint John’s. In addition to Father Gregory, other clergy presenting were Rev. Cleavon Johnson, Long Hill United Methodist Church; Father Joseph Marcello, Saint Catherine of Siena Church; Rabbi Colin Brodie, Congregation B’nai Torah; Rev. Todd Shipley, Unity Hill United Church of Christ; and Rev. Kathleen Mills, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church. Ms. Vicki Tesoro, First Selectman of Trumbull, CT, was a guest visitor who also greeted and welcomed all in attendance.

Father Gregory greeted all the faithful with words of welcome, many of whom entered a Byzantine church for the first time. Rev. Johnson called all to worship by reciting Psalm 95, “O come, let us sing to the Lord... O come, let us worship and bow down ... before the Lord our Maker!” followed by Father Marcello, who prayed a brief prayer of thanksgiving. Rabbi Brodie led the faithful in a litany giving thanks to God for all His creations and gifts to us. After a reading of Psalm 103, “Bless the Lord, O my soul... and forget not all His benefits...,” by Peggy Mehai, Saint John Parish’s Interfaith Council representative, a small choir of Saint John’s parishioners led by Cantor John Bayusik, sang Thanksgiving Day to the melody of *We Hasten to Your Patronage*. Rev. Shipley recited scripture verse from Joshua 1, which reinforced that “... God is with us...” wherever we go and whatever challenges we may face. Father Gregory prayed a final prayer, and the services were concluded with a benediction followed by a recessional with the faithful singing America the Beautiful.

It was an honor for Saint John Parish to host this year’s Annual Trumbull Community Thanksgiving Service. The efforts of the Trumbull Interfaith Council to have so many people of several faiths gather together at Saint John’s to give thanks to God was a blessing.

### IN TRUMBULL...

Trumbull Community Thanksgiving Service Celebrated at Saint John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church

The Annual Trumbull Community Thanksgiving Service was held at Saint John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church, Trumbull, CT, on Sunday, November 21, at 3 PM. The service is an annual event sponsored by the Trumbull Interfaith Council, of which Saint John Parish is a member. Faith leaders of the Trumbull Interfaith Council prayed, chanted, sang, and preached in expressions of their faith traditions during the service. The service also provided the congregants an opportunity to donate nonperishable food items and monetary gifts for

### IN McADOO...

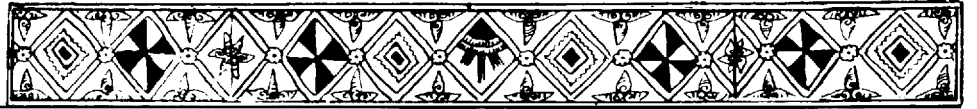
Holiday Parish Events



Saint Michael Byzantine Catholic Church, McAdoo, PA, celebrated the holiday season with a series of events. First, on September 25, everyone gathered for an afternoon of tricky-tray fun. A wide variety of prizes were available for our patrons to win. In addition to the prizes, various homemade foods and desserts were served. Then, on November 13, our parish celebrated our feast day of Saint Michael with our annual spaghetti dinner. The dinner featured delicious homemade desserts made by our parishioners. Lastly, on December 11, our parish sponsored a Christmas cookie sale. All our bakers contributed delicious cookies that were made with love. Father Gregory Hosler is the pastor of Saint Michael Parish.



# AROUND THE EPARCHY



## IN ROSWELL...

### The Rivers Saw You and Fled

Epiphany Byzantine Catholic Church's first attempt at blessing the local river almost wasn't. Just 3 days prior to January 6, record rainfalls were had all over North Georgia that resulted in the main river that flows through the area, the Chattahoochee, to overflow its banks.

The proposed venue for the blessing, Saint Andrew Roman Catholic Church, sits on the riverbanks of this local waterway. After 4+ inches of rain in less than 24 hours, the rear parking area and grounds were flooded – threatening cancellation of Friday's river blessing.



But, as providence would have it, the floodwaters receded and the stormy weather gave way to a beautiful blue sky and 60 degree weather.

On Friday, January 6, following the Divine Liturgy at Epiphany Byzantine Catholic Church, Father Lewis, the deacons and 25 faithful drove 3 miles down the road to Saint Andrew's where, for the first time in the history of the parish, the local waterway was blessed with the celebration of the Great Blessing of Water.

### McAdoo continued...



# SYNOD ON SYNODALITY REPORT/SYNTHESIS FOR THE EPARCHY OF PASSAIC

## Publication 3/3

Prepared by Joan (Cebrick) Grossman, PhD, RDN, Synod Coordinator

[Editor's note: Please keep in mind that, in the spirit of transparency, these are the actual responses of the people in the eparchy.]

Below are the responses for the final questions 8-12, presented to all clergy and parishioners regarding the Synod process. These responses were compiled from the reports received, and synthesized into the following:

*To what extent do diverse people in our community come together for dialogue? What are the places and means of dialogue within our local Church?*

Aside from generational differences, for the most part, diversity is lacking.

We have a unique opportunity with our Eastern European priests. We should consider engaging them within the community to bring together other immigrants from Eastern European countries.

Prior to COVID-19, there were opportunities with other parishes, such as Lenten vespers, interparochial confessions at Christmas and Easter, synclerate gatherings for river blessings and St. Thomas Day dinners, supporting local parish picnics and other such examples, but in general, diversity gatherings with those of other faiths and races is lacking.

Basic needs must first be met within the local Church before more complex discussions with diverse populations could begin.

Suggestions: A starting point for dialogue at the local level is via a Pastoral Advisory Board, (as suggested in Questions, 9, 11 & 12) not hand-picked by the priest, but a self-nominated group of interested and dedicated parishioners. These meetings, with input from the priest, deacon and trustees could be regularly scheduled throughout the calendar year, with a focused agenda and perhaps with rotating administrative point-persons selected by the group, to run the meetings. They could be open to the entire parish with meeting minutes distributed for everyone. Transparency equals truth.

Church of St. John, Pottstown, PA, offers Alcoholic Anonymous (AA) meetings and this brings a wide diversity of persons to the church, providing exposure while living out the Gospel message.

*How are divergences of vision, or conflicts and difficulties addressed? What issues in the Church and society do we need to pay more attention to?*

The global hierarchy of the Church thwarts an honest discussion of important issues, in particular, the American Catholic Bishops and their continued

focus on conservative political agendas, which is in direct conflict with the separation of Church and state.

Issues of conflict within the local parishes are generally avoided and not addressed.

Some parishes utilize Pastoral Advisory Boards to resolve conflicts, specific to local issues.

Larger societal/universal issues to address include: climate change, immigration and migrants, sexual misconduct via the clergy, abortion, financial transparency, church closures, addiction, poverty, homelessness.

There should be open dialogue about divorce and remarriage. People make mistakes or may find themselves married to a spouse who has become abusive or unfaithful and is unwilling to change. A person in this situation should not be bound to stay in that marriage. If they are a person of faith and fall in love again, they should be allowed to re-marry and remain a full member in the Church. In this example, if a person who has children leaves the Church because they chose to re-marry, not only are they no longer a member of the Church, but their children and future generations are lost to the Church, a primary reason why many former Catholics have left to join Evangelic churches.

If God is love, then love is love. All love is an expression of God's love for us, His children. The Church should find ways to welcome same sex partners into the life of the Church and bless their unions. God's love is welcoming and inclusive, God's church should NOT be exclusive.

Suggestions: Local divergences of vision and difficulties should be initially managed by the priest and administrator and further addressed via a Parish Advisory Council, as suggested in Questions 8, 9, 11, & 12.

Again, education is important in the life of the Church, (Questions 2 & 4). Understanding the terminology, e.g., presbyteral, synclerate, protopresbyter etc., these are not common words known to the laity, yet it is important for the laity to know and understand the organizational structure of the eparchy, such terminology is confusing. As all Catholic Churches have a visible photo of the pope and his flag, perhaps an organizational structure, or something similar, could be posted in the vestibules of the churches, as a means to communicate the local hierarchy: trustees, priest, administrator, deacon, protopresbyter, synclerus, etc.

*What relationships does our Church community have with members of other Christian traditions and denominations? (Similar to Question 8)*

Very little interaction with members of other Christian traditions, some inter-faith prayer services have occurred due to the war in Ukraine.

Some reported limited, but good relationships with religious fundraisers with other Byzantine Rite parishes and Roman Catholic churches and the Knights of Columbus.

Suggestions: Hold an "Open House" as St. John's, Lansford, PA reported, as a way to connect with other faith denominations and educate at a community level.

St. Ann, Harrisburg reported they offer tours of their church throughout the year and during their festival.

Our Lady of the Sign, Coconut Creek, FL, reported they welcome Catholic high school students the opportunity to experience the Byzantine Rite and offer the sacrament of reconciliation with 50-100 students participating annually.

*How does our Church community identify the goals to be pursued, the way to reach them, and the steps to be taken? How is authority or governance exercised within our local Church? (Similar to Question 9)*

Bishop, priest and deacon exercise authority, as part of the hierarchical structure, although this can result in a closed-off system, resulting in complacency and decline. As expressed in Question 9, it is important for the laity to know the hierarchical levels of governance and authority, particularly if there is a local concern or issue to be addressed.

Suggestions: Pastoral Advisory Council (Questions 8, 9, 11 & 12) would support the priest and deacon to address issues of concern, such meetings could be open to the entire parish with the minutes of the council meetings, distributed to all parishioners, via bulletin inserts or email.

Regular visits from the Eparchy via the synclerus and protopresbyter would be helpful to connect the laity and hierarchy of the Church, communication is key to success.

A desire for the Eparchy to issue a State of the Eparchy address, similar to that which the Melkite Bishop issues each year.

Create an Eparchial Office of Formational Opportunities for ministerial duties for: cantors, family education and formation of lay ministers.

Develop formal consultants within the Eparchy, to provide a common vision and strategic plan to support the bishop in a constructive manner to affect positive change.

*How do we promote participation in decision-making within hierarchical structures? Do our decision-making methods help us to listen to the whole People of God?*

Participation requires openness and an invitation from the hierarchy is important to include others. It requires the ability to really listen and to hear voices that may not always agree or conform to the thoughts of the hierarchy or to the way things have always been done.

Our present decision-making methods do not help us to listen to the whole People of God, because we have no current decision-making methods. Decisions seem to be made with little input from members of the local community.

This Synod and the process of asking the people of the Church for input and what they think is an important first step. Maybe this is the life of the Spirit blowing open the doors to change and dialogue. Based on dwindling numbers in our parishes and dwindling numbers in the priesthood, something new, evocative, life-giving needs to happen. To continue on the same path, surely will result in a shrinking Church and one that seems more on life-support than one that should be life giving.

Currently, no Archbishop in Muckachevo, Ukraine.

Suggestions: Institute bi-annual full church meetings led by the priest, deacon and trustees with a focused agenda. A running theme that emerged from the synod listening sessions.

Pastoral Advisory Council (Questions 8, 9, & 11).

Formal consultants for the Eparchy (Question 11).

### General Comments

The Byzantine Youth Rally should be announced for months prior to the event in parish bulletins. This is an incredible opportunity for the young parishioners to connect, they are the future of the Church. It is a missed opportunity for many, as they may not read the ECL nor visit the Eparchial website.

There were many opinions regarding the continued streaming of the Sunday Divine Liturgies. Initially, this was a welcomed opportunity due to the "lock down" from COVID-19 pandemic. However, as we have emerged from the pandemic, many have yet to return to, in-person worship and continue to watch virtually. Is the continued streaming of the Divine Liturgy now hindering parish participation?

Suggestion: Offer a limited number of virtual Divine Liturgies each week, directed per the bishop, which may bring back those who are able to worship in-person.

*Important Point on Identity*

Our identity has evolved over time and it was mentioned throughout the syn-celli reports along with the clergy that we as Byzantine Rite Catholics have an identity crisis. One report in particular highlighted the divergences with our Byzantine communities within the U.S. Membership in each of these Archeparchies/Eparchies is inclusive by way of the Byzantine Rite, but exclusive by country of immigrant origin or descent.

Established understandably to serve newly immigrated people, however, today, should we look to inclusive prayer and liturgical worship as united Byzantine Catholics of America?

Pittsburgh Ruthenian, 1924  
 Passaic Ruthenian, 1963  
 Parma Ruthenian, 1969  
 Phoenix Ruthenian, 1982  
 Philadelphia Ukrainian, 1907  
 Stamford Ukrainian, 1956  
 Chicago Ukrainian, 1961  
 Parma Ukrainian, 1983  
 Newton Melkite, 1966  
 Canton Romanian, 1983

Are we preserving the nations of origin distinctions to preserve nationalistic identity and customs? Or would we not be more effective as a mission, as there

is strength in numbers, in a growth-oriented Byzantine Church to witness our Church's Catholicity if we were one multi-Eparchy Metropolia?

The Synod on Synodality remains a work in progress. The first step was listening to the voices throughout the eparchy, followed by the creation of the eparchial synthesis and disseminating this work via the ECL.

Note: If your parish participated in the Synod process, the parish-level report(s) should have been shared with the laity. Please see your priest, administrator, deacon or Synod facilitator for parish-level report(s).

The next step, in April 2023, the synod coordinators from Passaic, Parma, Phoenix and Pittsburgh will meet in Pittsburgh and report to Metropolitan Archbishop William Skurla the eparchial synod syntheses. The greatest work remains, creating and implementing an action plan to strengthen our Byzantine Rite.

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## LIFE, LOVE, AND THE HUMAN PERSON

By Ann M. Koshute, MTS

### A FRESH LOOK AT SHAME

In my last column, I wrote about Pope Saint John Paul II's Catechesis on Human and Divine Love, which is popularly known as the theology of the body. The study of the human person and his/her relationship with God, and our relationships with each other, was the Pope's life's work. From the time he was Karol Wojtyła - actor, seminarian, priest, and cardinal - through his papacy, and even in the example of his death, John Paul was interested in more deeply examining the love story between God and man. The fruit of this examination has become "popular," but the Pope's desire was that each of us would not approach God with the enthusiasm of a fad. He wanted us to know that God is not beyond our reach, but intimately connected to us.

This sense of intimacy is felt in the feast of Christ's Nativity, when we marvel just as the shepherds who received news of His birth from the angels did; at the almost unbelievable reality of God with us and among us. This intimacy will only grow stronger as we approach the days of the Great Fast, walking with Jesus through His ministry, and to the foot of the Cross. The Fast invites us to enter the life of Christ in a way that recalls our need for a Savior. The fall of our First Parents in the Garden of Eden set the stage, but you and I still engage in conversations with sin. There may not be talking snakes whispering temptations in our ears, but we

certainly have those internal conversations about some action or words that will hurt ourselves or others - and our relationship with God - and whether we will act upon them. Adam and Eve sinned first, but they were not the last to sin. God became man to redeem us, so that the ultimate consequence of our sinfulness, which is death, will not be the final word. Yet the effects of sin remain, and the temptation to sin, and sometimes our resistance to acknowledge or repent from it, is a constant battle. We're not helped in the battle by our culture, which encourages a resistance to personal shame or guilt, rightly identifying when they are unhealthy, but often going too far in the other direction. As Christians, we know that God is merciful, but that we have a responsibility to acknowledge our sins, confess them and strive to be better. God's forgiveness is true, and we need not continue beating ourselves up for past deeds. At the same time, if we keep our sins always before us (as Psalm 51 advises), we're more likely to be vigilant and to rely not on ourselves, but on the strength and grace of God. It is here that Saint John Paul teaches us so beautifully, through the lens of the experience of our First Parents' fall into sin, about our own experience of shame.

In the beginning, the author of Genesis tells us that "the man and his wife were both naked, yet they felt no shame." (Genesis 2:25). Their nakedness was

both literal (they had no clothes on) and spiritual. The earliest human experience was one of perfect chastity, that is, respect and honor for themselves and each other. The Man and Woman were emotionally and spiritually "naked," in that they did not see each other as objects or means to an end. They loved and trusted each other completely, and this love and trust extended to their relationship with God as well. They lived in friendship with Him, believing that God loved them and provided for all their needs. Of course, this changed when the serpent deceived them by insinuating that God was withholding knowledge from them. If that were the case, what else might God be keeping from them? Perhaps His invitation to be His stewards of Creation was a lie, and so was the threat of death. We know that both the Woman, then the Man, took the serpent at his word, and the world as they knew it was thrown into chaos. With their sin came the realization of their nakedness, and the need for protection by covering their bodies. They were ashamed.

John Paul describes this shame as a boundary experience, the line separating humanity's experience of God's original design from how we now experience time and history: far from perfect, and too often deviating from God's good plan. The Pope suggests that shame represents a rupture in our relationship with each other, as well as with

God, because sin has made us inclined to be suspicious and fearful of others, and more centered on ourselves. In this sense, shame is a multi-layered experience, far deeper (and more instructive to us) than simply being embarrassed or feeling guilty for a wrong we've committed. Those layers are too many to examine in depth here, but one aspect of the Pope's novel approach to shame may aid us as we make our way through the Fast. As much as shame is often a recognition that we have sinned, the Pope posits that it also has a positive sense. Adam and Eve's instinct to cover themselves when they realized they were naked was born of shame, yet it reflects an understanding that our bodies, and our entire person, are sacred. We are icons of God, His beloved creation, never to be used, abused, or treated in any way contrary to our dignity. In this sense, shame teaches us something about who we are, because we only protect that which is precious.

Our pilgrimage through the Fast should make us mindful of our faults, knowing that Jesus bore them in His wounded body for our sake. At the same time, the shame we feel should stand as a reminder that God's mercy is deep and wide. It should motivate us to protect and cherish ourselves and each other, because we are so cherished by Him.

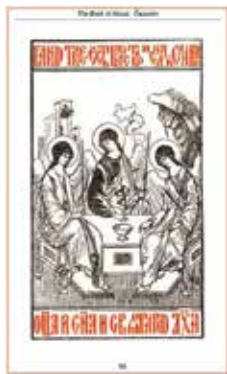
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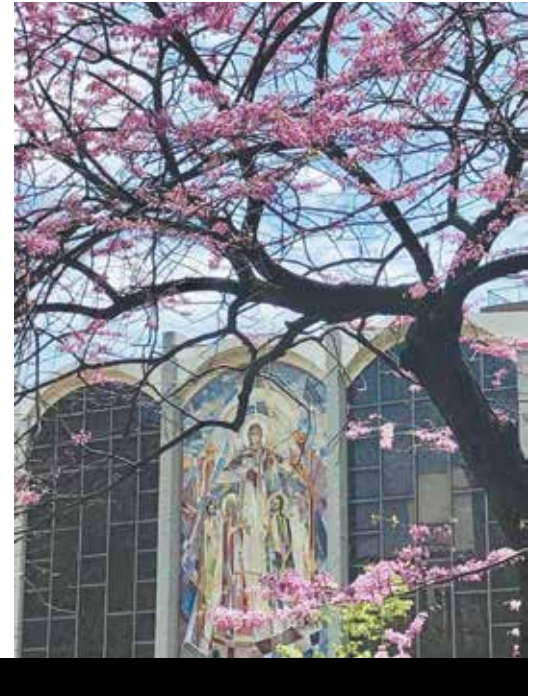
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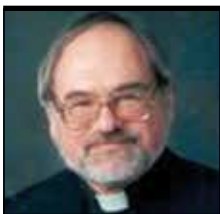


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**THE BYZANTINE LITURGY**

By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD

**THE RITES OF INITIATION: CHURCHING**

Baptism is a sacramental mystery in which we take part by our free choice to reject all that is evil and to follow Christ by committing ourselves to his gospel. While our choice is free, it can be done only by the grace of God who guides us and strengthens us to do his will. Only in him can we find sanctification and salvation. Since we are both body and spirit, the means by which God does this sanctifying work is also both spiritual and material. Baptism in water and anointing with chrism therefore bring about a rebirth of the whole person that we are. Baptism as the act of God can be done at any age, so that the tradition of faith is that as soon as a baby is born into a Christian family, they are baptized that we may be filled with God's life and given the power to choose his will and to refuse evil. Today, most people who become Christian do so by being baptized in infancy, though there are still many not born in a Christian family and who must seek baptism as an adult.

Adults entering into faith can only make that free choice with the help of God who desires the salvation of all. Before being baptized, then, the adult is given assistance by the community. They go through a period of instruction and enlightenment called the catechumenate (those who are "learning"). In a way, a catechumenate is also necessary for children. For children, the process is reversed, children are baptized first, and instruction, called catechesis, is provided later, according to their ability to learn. Today, children are baptized soon after birth. It seems

though that, in some times and places, children were baptized only when they were able to answer the questions (of renouncing Satan and committing to Christ) by themselves, usually at about the age of three. This was not the same as "adult baptism," that some Protestant Churches consider necessary. This led to the formation of a series of rites connected with initiation into the faith.

When a child was born there was a rite on the eighth day called "naming the child," which still exists in the liturgical books today. The title comes, of course, from the Jewish practice of circumcision, which was done on the eighth day and at which the child was given his or her name. The Byzantine "Rite of Naming a Child," however, is really an inscription into the child's preparation for baptism. There is actually no explicit reference to imposing a name. Instead, the prayer is connected with the making of a sign of the cross on the infant, which corresponds to the laying on of hands in the adult catechumenate. From Psalm 4:7, we ask that "the light of your face may be impressed upon your servant." The child is therefore brought into the presence of God, and it is a gospel idea that the image of God is to be seen in humans. The child is expected to become an imitator of Christ, taking up his cross and fleeing the vanity of the world. As in the adult catechumenate, there is also the concept of the joining of the Name of God with the name of his chosen one, the child destined "in due time to be joined to your holy Church."

Then, on the fortieth day, there was a "Rite of Churching." Originally, it was the answer to a practical problem. If a child was not baptized immediately, they did not have to right to be present for the eucharistic liturgy. At the same time, the child could not simply be left outside and separated from his or her parents who were able to attend. "Rite of Churching" gave the young child the right to remain in the church for the whole Liturgy with the parents. Because children are now baptized soon after birth, the original meaning of this rite has disappeared, and it has become a sign of the dedication of the child to God. It was related to the Jewish rite of the consecration of the first-born to God.

Today, when churching is done, it is usually done after baptism, having lost its original function. It is now more of a celebration of the new status of the baby as a Christian. As presently celebrated, the baby is brought in the hands of the priest from the door of the nave (at the narthex), and brought up to the altar with the formula, "The servant of God (name) is churching in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen." This is done with

psalm verses, "I will enter your house. I will bow down before your holy temple" (Psalm 5:7) at the door and "In the middle of the church I shall praise you (Psalm 21:22)" in the middle of the nave. At the Holy (Royal) Doors, the Hymn of Saint Simeon from the Gospel of Luke is said. There is also the custom of bringing the child into the altar through the Holy (Royal) Doors and processing with them around the Holy Table, a very powerful sign of the dedication of the child to God.

The custom also developed of performing the churching of the mother following the baptism. The churching of the mother is in response to the Old Testament concept that the mother is ritually impure for forty days following birth because of the flow of blood. Where this churching is still done, this concept has receded to the background, and it is seen now as a blessing of the mother. Some have pointed out that in ancient times, ritual impurity did not have the connotation of sin, but the word still seems very negative, so that this rite is more often uncelebrated. We do not view the shedding of blood as impurity. It was, at any rate, a revival of the Old Law. **ECL**

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# SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

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

## A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES

Whether purebred Rusyns or children of the American melting pot, most worshippers in a Byzantine Catholic parish probably never realize how extraordinary it is that they should be chanting Psalms and calling Jesus “Christ” and their Savior and God. Yet, that was exactly what the liturgical services for the two weeks before Christmas were trying to impress upon us.

We heard Saint Paul insist that “in Christ there is neither Greek nor Jew” (Colossians 3:11). Jesus’ parables about the Kingdom of God conclude with the promise that “they will come from the East and the West, from the North and the South and take their seats in the Kingdom of God” (Luke 13:29) and that unexpected guests will be invited to the Great Banquet of the Kingdom (Luke 14:16-24). The presence of the Magi at the manger in Bethlehem dramatizes the same message. It is finally proclaimed publicly when the elderly Simeon recognizes Israel’s Messiah in a 40-day old baby being presented in the Temple according to the law regarding firstborn sons.

We celebrate this first recognition of the Messiah by a righteous Israelite on February 2. The Church sings Simeon’s Hymn of thanksgiving for this encounter every evening at Vespers: “Now You may dismiss Your servant, O Lord, in peace, according to Your word. For my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all people: a light of revelation to the

Gentiles and the glory of Your people, Israel” (Luke 2:29-32). The breakthrough in this moment is that Simeon sees in the infant Jesus more than Israel’s promised Messiah; he sees Him the “light of revelation to the Gentiles” as well.

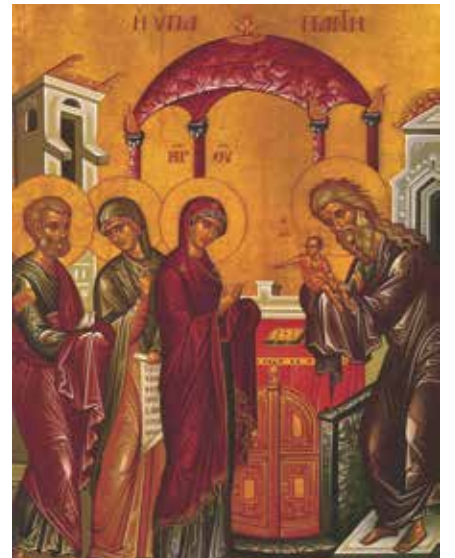
The first eleven chapters of the Bible are universal in their outlook. There is nothing specifically Jewish about Adam, Eve, or Noah. The Ark came to rest in Armenia and the builders of the Tower of Babel were clearly not Israelites. The focus on Israel begins with Abraham and his descendants, Isaac, Jacob, and the Twelve Patriarchs (Genesis 12ff) and remains there for bulk of the Old Testament. But just as the vision narrows down to Israel, we hear God’s promise to Abraham quoted by Saint Paul in Galatians: “in you all nations shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:3; Galatians 3:8).

God’s plan of salvation for the non-Jewish “nations” seemingly sat on the back burner of the Bible until the prophecies of Isaiah. The very first time he is mentioned, the “Servant” who will sacrifice himself in atonement for the sins of Israel is told by God: “I will strengthen you and give you as the covenant to the people, as the light of the Gentiles” (Isaiah 42:6). The second time the “Servant” appears, God’s words are even clearer: “It is too small a thing that you should be my Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give

you as a light to the Gentiles, that you should be My salvation to the ends of the earth” (Isaiah 49:6).

From here on in the last books of the Old Testament, hints of God’s outreach to all nations continue to accumulate. Zechariah, the other great prophet of our Lord’s Passion and Resurrection, announced, “I will come and dwell in Your midst,” says the Lord. And many nations will join themselves to the Lord in that day and will be my people” (Zechariah 2:10-11).

Simeon’s careful study of the prophets might well have shown him what most of Jesus’ Jewish contemporaries had forgotten or ignored. Exactly where Gentiles fit in to the community of Jews who recognized Jesus as their Messiah would be a problem for the first generation of Christians and a point of contention between Saint Paul and the Jerusalem Church (Acts 15; Galatians 2). But, as we heard in the Gospel for the Sunday after Theophany, Jesus’ own intentions could not have been clearer. According to Saint Matthew, after Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan and forty-day fast in the wilderness, He left the region of Jerusalem and moved north to Galilee, proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom for the first time in the least Jewish part of Israel, in an area that had been ethnically cleansed by the Assyrians and resettled with pagans 700 years earlier. Once again, it was Isaiah who predicted it: “Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea,



Icon of the Presentation in the Temple

beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who dwelt in the region and shadow of death light has dawned” (Matthew 4:15-16; Isaiah 9:1-2). **ECL**



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

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

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

Published monthly by the  
*Eastern Catholic Press Association*  
445 Lackawanna Avenue

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

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

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:  
**Eastern Catholic Life**  
445 Lackawanna Avenue  
Woodland Park, NJ 07424

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## PRIESTLY REFLECTIONS

Father Paul Varchola West

### GOING OUT ON A LIMB

Although the Great Fast does not officially begin until February 20, this year, at least, the pre-Lenten cycle of the Lenten Triodion actually begins four Sundays prior to the first day of the Fast with the Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee (this year on January 29th). While not technically part of the Lenten Triodion, some traditions consider the Sunday of Zacchaeus to be the first “pre-Lenten Sunday” marking our preparation for the Great Fast. Whether explicitly recognized and celebrated as a pre-Lenten Sunday, or simply kept as a significant remembrance in the Byzantine liturgical cycle, to meditate upon the story of Zacchaeus in preparation for the Great Fast is, most certainly, a noble and beneficial endeavor.

Luke 19:1-10 (the Gospel passage for Zacchaeus Sunday) informs us of Zacchaeus, the tax collector of minimal stature, and his exhilarating encounter with Jesus Christ that culminates in this sinful man’s conversion and salvation. In this very well-known passage, Zacchaeus desires desperately to seek out Jesus simply to see what all the fuss is about but cannot do so because he is rather short, and the crowds were great. He couldn’t get through to see so he

runs ahead of the crowd, climbs a sycamore tree, and accomplishes his goal. When Christ sees him up in the tree, He calls Zacchaeus down and Christ essentially invites Himself over to Zacchaeus’ house for dinner. The tax collector is so enthralled with Christ and this experience that he confesses and repents of his sins right then and there, despite the murmuring, grumbling, and gossiping of the massive crowd surrounding him.

While this is merely a synopsis, I highly encourage those reading to take the time at home to read this passage from Luke as a meditation to help prepare for the Great Fast, and here is why: Zacchaeus is representative of all of us. He is simply struggling to find Christ in a hectic world. Trapped in this hectic world, however, Zacchaeus does not become engulfed by the crowd; he does not go along with the mainstream group; he does not complain that he got dealt a bad hand and stands there whining that he can’t see, and people should move out of his way. Rather, he recognizes his limitations (or dare I say... *shortcomings*...) and takes matters into his own hands. He runs ahead, apart from the crowd, and climbs what we can assume to be a rather large tree. By going out of

his way, by pushing his limits, by climbing the tree, Zacchaeus doesn’t simply catch a glimpse of Christ, but rather, he encounters his very salvation.

What we need to realize is that in many ways the Great Fast is our tree to climb. Ultimately, we get out of the Fast what we put into it. Sure, are many aspects of the Great Fast disruptive to our routines, to our daily lives, to what keeps us moving along with the crowd? Absolutely! And, well, that’s the point. As the old saying goes, “if you’re not being inconvenienced, then it’s not Lent!” While superficially the Great Fast might seem like more weekday services that our priest makes us feel guilty for not attending, and extra rules about what we cannot eat — this is only if we choose to look at it this way!

Zacchaeus had a choice, and he chose the path to Salvation. The Great Fast is not meant to be a burden on us. It is meant to force us to face our spiritual and bodily shortcomings, to force us out of our comfort zone, and, most importantly, to lead us to Jesus Christ, to lead us to Salvation. While yes, there are “minimal regulations” for the Fast, the reality is that we have a choice: we

can simply meet the bare minimum begrudgingly, or we can run ahead of the crowd, go out of our way, and climb that tree. We might very well be surprised at the view from that tree on Holy and Great Pascha, but we have to climb it if we are to find out.

I encourage you to talk to your parish priest, to a spiritual father or mother, and discuss the Great Fast with them. Taking your own health and personal limitations into account, ask for guidance in working out a prayer and fasting rule that works for you, but also forces you to run ahead of the crowd. Remember, along with the guidance of your parish priest, YOU need to set YOURSELF up for success. While we increase our prayer, alms giving, and self-denial, we must do so with great joy. After all, we hear that Zacchaeus receives Christ joyfully, even though Christ pretty much did just invite Himself over the guy’s house for dinner! (Luke 19:6)

It is with joy and with love that we receive the Great Fast. It is with joy and love that we climb the tree of the Great Fast. Most importantly we must remember that, as we climb the tree of the Great Fast, we do so in imitation of Christ. We choose to climb this tree because after all, Christ Himself did choose to climb a tree for us...and He did so out of nothing more than love of mankind and with the joy of the Resurrection! **ECL**

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

## SEASONAL REFLECTIONS

Father Ronald Hatton



### OUR ENTRY INTO THE GREAT FAST

# SCHOOL OF PRAYER

Father G. Scott Boghossian



## PERSIST IN PRAYER

In Genesis 32:22-32, Jacob wrestled with the Angel of the Lord and prevailed. Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." Cornelius Lapide writes of this mysterious event, "See here the efficacy of fervent prayer, as Jacob wrestled with the angel and overcame him, and obtained the blessing which he asked."

Abraham petitioned God five times and asked Him to spare Sodom (Gen. 18:22-33). At each request, the LORD lowered the number of the righteous required to spare the city. Even though the city was destroyed because it lacked even ten righteous men, God responded to Abraham's persistent plea.

We see a metaphor for persistent prayer in Israel's defeat of Amalek (Ex. 17:8-13). As long as Moses kept his hands upraised (in prayer), the people of God prevailed, but when his arms weakened and faltered, the enemy regained its strength. Then, with the help of Aaron and Hur, Moses kept his arm aloft, and Joshua overcame and defeated the Amalekites.

Elijah (1 Kings 18:41-44) prayed fervently, with face to the ground, seven times for rain. At the seventh attempt, a tiny cloud appeared over the sea, which brought rain after a three-and-a-half-year drought.

In the New Testament, the Canaanite Woman (Mt. 15:21-28) exemplifies

persevering prayer. Ignored, denied twice, and insulted, she persisted in humble faith and was granted her miracle.

Blind Bartimaeus (Mk. 10:46-52) repeatedly cried out for mercy, was rebuffed by onlookers, yet stubbornly refused to be silenced, and eventually received his sight.

Another word often used to describe persistence in prayer is the English word "importunity." We assume that importunity means the same thing as persistence. Yet there is an additional sense of being annoying, obstinate, and stubborn.

It is this obstinate, annoying persistence that Jesus advocates and encourages in two important parables about prayer found in the Gospel of Luke.

In the Parable of the Persistent Friend (Lk. 11:5-13), we read, "although he will not rise and give him because he is his friend; yet, because of his importunity, he will rise, and give him as many as he needeth" (Luke 11:8).

The Parable of the Widow and the Unjust Judge (Luke 18:1-8) ends with "yet because this widow bothers me, I will vindicate her, or she will wear me out by her continual coming."

The kind of prayer that Jesus teaches is the insistent, bothersome, "I am going

to wear God out by my continual praying" kind of prayer.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ teaches us: "Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened" (Mt. 7:7-8).

Based on grammatical nuances in the original Greek, Bible translator and Greek scholar Bill Mounce says that the sense of the verse is more accurately rendered by the New Living Translation, which reads, "Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you" (Mt. 7:7, NLT).

The Catechism says, "The great figures of prayer of the Old Covenant before Christ, as well as the Mother of God, the saints, and He Himself, all teach us this: prayer is a battle" (CCC 2725).

"From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and men of violence take it by force" (Mt. 11:12). Prayer is a violent, forceful struggle.

"God desires to be entreated, He desires to be constrained, He desires to be conquered by a certain importunity," says Saint Gregory the Great.

Saint Alphonsus writes, "At times, in order to obtain certain graces of special value, it will not suffice simply to pray, but it will be necessary to insist and, as it were, compel God by our prayers to give them to us."

"Such violence is pleasing to God," says Tertullian.

"Prayer piously offers violence to God. Prayer is a devout coercion of God," says Saint John of the Ladder (28:60).

When asking for things you are confident are in accord with God's will and will help you toward salvation, be persistent, annoying, obstinate, stubborn, and unrelenting in your prayers to God. Ask for the grace of final perseverance, the spirit of prayer, love for Jesus Christ and the Blessed Mother, greater faith, hope, charity, patience, the virtues, and the fruit of the Spirit. Ask for the conversion of your friends and loved ones. Ask for the restoration of the Catholic Church, the end of heresy and schism, and the Reign of the Immaculate Heart of Mary as promised by our Lady of Fatima. All of these things can and should be prayed for with persistent, importunate prayer.

"Pray and do not give up" (Lk. 18:1). **ECL**



## Crowned in Love

### A Byzantine Pre-Cana Program

Sponsored by the Syncellate for the State of New Jersey

Saturday, February 25, 2023, 9AM to 4PM, Via Zoom

Sat. March 5  
9AM-4PM

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.

Couples planning to marry before spring 2023 are urged to attend. The cost is \$75.00 payable to St Michael's Cathedral Syncellate at time of registration.

### Presenters



Father Thomas Shubeck, PhD and his wife Caroline are navigating the pandemic with a young adult daughter and a teen-aged son. After many years of diaconal ministry at Saint Thomas the Apostle parish in Rahway and at Seton Hall University, Father Thomas was 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.



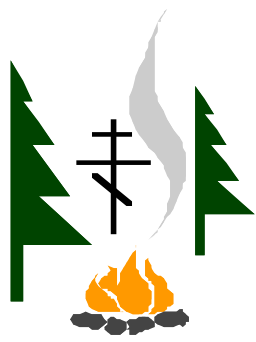
Michael and Lisann Castagno were married in 1994 and have three daughters. They have been involved in marriage preparation and youth ministry in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia for many years, speaking especially about the beauty of God's design for marriage, by proclaiming the good news of Natural Family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



## Carpathian Village Saint Nicholas Shrine

802 Snow Hill Road, Cresco, PA 18326-7810  
 Tel (570) 595-3265 - Cell (570) 650-3252  
 Email: carpathianvillage@earthlink.net  
 Father Michael J. Salnicko, Director

*Carpathian Village is presently taking reservations for group retreats, ski weekends, family vacations, day of recollection weekends, parish or group picnics, and private retreats. To schedule your event or for more information call or email Fr Michael.*

### 2023 Eparchial Events

**“Eparchial Teen Rally 2023”**

Thursday, June 22, thru Sunday, June 25  
 Camp Director Father Andrii Dumnych

**“Altar Server Retreat Congress 2023”**

Sunday July 16 thru Thursday July 20  
 Camp Director Deacon Stephen Russo

**“Annual Saint Nicholas Pilgrimage 2023”**

Sunday, August 6  
 Pilgrimage Co-Ordinator Father Michael Salnicko

**“Family Weekend Retreat Camp 2023”**

Friday, August 11 thru Sunday, August 13  
 Camp Director/Retreat Master Father Andrii Dumnych

### 2023 Parish Events

**“Teen Ski Retreat Weekend”**

Friday, February 17 thru Monday, February 20  
 Saint Ann’s ECF, Harrisburg PA

**“Annual Great Fast Teen Retreat”**

Friday March 17 thru Sunday March 19  
 Saint Ann’s ECF, Harrisburg, PA



Save the Date

November 2-5, 2023

## Assembly of the Byzantine Catholic (Ruthenian) Metropolitan Church

## Living Our Faith/Moving Forward/ Appreciating Our Past

Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church  
 Hillsborough Township, NJ

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

Is God calling you to be a 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



### Eastern Catholic Life

Circulation Department  
 445 Lackawanna Avenue  
 Woodland Park, NJ 07424

Next Issue:  
 March, 2023

Copy Deadline:  
 February 17, 2023

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

## UPCOMING EPARCHIAL AND PARISH EVENTS

### FEBRUARY, 2023

- 2 Encounter of Our Lord with Simeon  
*Solemn Holy Day*
- 5 Sunday of the Prodigal Son  
*Pre-Lenten Sunday*
- 11 First All Souls' Saturday
- 12 Sunday of Meatfare  
*Sunday of the Last Judgment*
- 19 Sunday of Cheesefare  
*Sunday of Forgiveness*
- 20 First Day of Great Lent  
*Strict fast and abstinence*
- 26 First Sunday of the Great Fast  
*Sunday of Orthodoxy*

### MARCH, 2023

- 4 Second All Souls' Saturday
- 5 Second Sunday of the Great Fast
- 11 Third All Souls' Saturday

- 12 Third Sunday of the Great Fast
- 18 Fourth All Souls' Saturday
- 19 Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast
- 25 Holy Annunciation of the Theotokos  
*Solemn Holy Day*
- 26 Fourth 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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