



# EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

Official Publication of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic

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## EARLY SPRING— "WE NEED A LITTLE EASTER"

*Pastoral Reflections of Bishop Kurt*



*Some of the ten thousand daffodils in the forest around Saint Michael Cathedral Chapel in Woodland Park, NJ*

Here in New Jersey, the winter is so mild that the plants think it is spring in the middle of February. The trees are budding. In the forest around the chancery in Woodland Park, we have planted over ten thousand daffodil bulbs. We chose daffodils because they are one of the few things that deer will not eat and neither will the squirrels. In the San Bernardino Mountains of southern California there was a woman with a cabin by the national forest. She tried to plant flowers, but the squirrels dug up everything and ate them except for the daffodil bulbs, so she planted them. As they grew, she dug up the bulbs and divided them. Over some decades she planted 300,000 daffodils in the forest. It became a tourist attraction and appeared in the tourist guides. (Note for young people—before the Internet, we had books telling us where to go to find interesting things.) Then there was a great forest fire that destroyed her house and all the gardens, so she moved away. She said she was too old to start over. However, in its time, her work provided beauty and spiritual elevation for tens of thousands of people.

Daffodils come with built in protection, at least from animals. The leaves contain crystals that make them unpleasant to chew on, and the entire plant, including the bulb, contains poison. According to some stories, Roman soldiers carried a bulb in their supplies to commit suicide if the occasion arose, but I think those stories aren't true. Eating a whole bulb will make you very sick, or your pet very sick, but probably won't kill anybody. In Holland, where bulbs are king, every school child knows not to put cut daffodils in a vase with other flowers. The other flowers, such as tulips, will die much faster if they share the water with daffodils.

If you look up how long daffodils live, it's hard to find an answer. In the right place they seem to live a very long time, and often outlive the people who planted them. In a rural area, you might find a place where a house used to be, and the outline is still there because of the daffodils planted around it. If they live so long, and have no enemies, why don't they take over the world? Nature has balance. They reproduce very slowly.

Like all flowering plants, they produce seeds, but these are few and take years to produce a plant. If you would like to breed daffodils, you must be very patient, as with orchids.

The other name for a daffodil is narcissus. In *The Metamorphoses* of Ovid, there is a version of the myth of Narcissus. He was a very beautiful man, but never returned affection. A nymph named Echo fell in love with him, but he rebuffed her advances. In retribution, the goddess of revenge, Nemesis, punished him. He saw his reflection in a pool, and was so taken by his own beauty that he could not leave and was turned into a flower. The Greeks had many different versions of this myth, but they all end sadly. Perhaps it's better not to be too good looking after all!

However sad the myths, I love the beautiful flowers that appear in the forest year after year. Here in New Jersey, the green points of the leaves are starting to push aside the soil and the blanket of leaves and peak out from hiding a few months early this year. I can't wait

to see all ten thousand of them on the hills around our Cathedral Chapel.

The past year has seemed like a year-long winter. The attempted annexation of Ukraine last February brought the attention of the world to the suffering of the people there. However, the war did not begin in 2022. The war of invasion actually began in February of 2014, so by now Ukraine has been fighting for nine full years. When I went to study at the Greek Catholic University of L'viv in the summer of 2017, one of our churches in downtown L'viv was dedicated to remembrance. One wall of the large church was already covered with portraits of young men killed in fighting. It was only with the invasion of February 2022, that the world began to take notice of this prolonged slaughter.

One of the most discouraging aspects of this war is that Ukraine was in possession of nuclear weapons after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. In 1994, Ukraine became one of only three nations in history to relinquish its nuclear arsenal. On December 5, 1994, in Budapest, three agreements were signed in which Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine surrendered their arsenals, which were then decommissioned from 1993 to 1996. At the time, Ukraine possessed the third largest nuclear arsenal in the world. It seemed like one of the great events in the modern quest to end wars and have world peace. "A thrill of hope—a weary world rejoices." The memoranda were signed by the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States. On my trip to Ukraine this past December, I met with a woman with small children whose husband was killed in the war this year, and another woman whose son was killed. There are no words to give comfort to such women. By providence, I had a rosary blessed by the Holy Father in my pocket, so I gave that to the woman who lost her son.

After such a year, what a joy it is to see the leaves pushed into the light by the bulbs that were sleeping in the underground darkness for the month. It reminds us that God has not forgotten us in our winter. Seventy years ago, a little book was published called *Auntie Mame: An Irreverent Escapade*, about a

*Continued on page 2*



## I LIFT UP MY EYES

Pastoral Reflections of Bishop Kurt



### EARLY SPRING— "WE NEED A LITTLE EASTER"

...continued from page 1

little boy named Patrick who is taken in by his colorful, eccentric aunt. It was a runaway bestseller, and begot a stage play, then a movie, then a Broadway musical, then a movie of the musical. One of the cheery parts of the musical occurs after Auntie Mame loses her fortune in the 1929 stock market crash. She gets out all the Christmas decorations and celebrates with the household singing, "We need a little Christmas now!" After a year of hardship, it came into my head, "We need a little Easter now!"

In the dark winter months of the year, we take time during Lent to contemplate evil, the sin of the world, and our own sins. We set our minds on repentance, or more accurately: change of heart. When Jesus appeared after millennia of darkness from the sin of Adam, the first thing He says in public is, "Metanoete!," that is, "Change your mind, change your attitude, change your heart!" For a thousand years before, God sent prophets, who said over and over, "I don't want your rituals, I want your heart!" In our sins, God promised through the prophet Ezekiel, "I will take out your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh." (By the way, Rich Mullins wrote a hit song based on this verse that you can listen to on the Internet; it's called *New Heart*.)

At the end of Lent, we remember the events of the last week of Christ's life.

The shocking events when the same people who welcomed Him as the Son of David riding on the foal of a donkey, turned against Him and shouted "crucify him, crucify him" because it was the popular thing to do. Sold by one of His close disciples, His friends and followers ran away in cowardice, and one of His closest friends swore an oath that he never heard Him. These were the same fair-weather friends who ate the Passover with him a few hours earlier and had their feet washed by Him.



Icon of the Descent into Hades

After death, He was sealed in a rock tomb. People who were seeking God must have been so very discouraged when they saw the great stone rolled into place hiding His lifeless body.

Then, just as the bulbs push up points of green leaves from the underground darkness, the Light of Christ appears after His journey into the Underworld. It's not by chance that Mary Magdalene mistakes Him for the gardener. He is the Gardener who created life in the be-

ginning, and gives us life now. When Jesus first appeared to His astonished disciples, who were locked in a room because of fear, the first thing He said to them was, "Peace be with you." Then after He showed them His wounds, He said again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, so I send you."

After comforting His friends with the words of peace, Jesus goes on to offer something more astonishing to His already astonished followers. He

with his mat, everyone praised God, for Jesus can forgive sins. Then after the resurrection, He gave that power to the Church. There are many ways to ask God for cleansing of our sins, but Saint James says in his epistle, "Confess your sins to one another." The surest way to know we have been cleansed of our sins was given to us at the Resurrection. We confess our sins to someone authorized by the Church, and we hear the consoling words that Jesus spoke, "Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them." After the sacramental mystery of confession, we feel the same peace that His friends felt when He appeared in the locked room and said, "Peace be with you."

After appearing to them, Jesus went on to visit them several times over the next forty days, building up their faith and teaching them what they failed to understand before His sacrifice and Resurrection. He explained the Scriptures to them which foretold His mysterious acts. He even fixed breakfast on the beach for them, and ate fish and bread so that they could see with their own eyes that He rose in the flesh and was not a phantasm. He left us the gift of Hope in time of discouragement, and Faith in His second coming, and Faith in His gift of eternal life for those who accept Him. We have His assurance of everlasting life as certainly as the flowers come up out of the earth after the longest, coldest, darkest winter. Christ is Risen!

+Kurt Brunette

## 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.

Please pray for all the victims of war, refugees, and those in the military serving our country throughout the world..

## THE CROSS OF GRATITUDE

### World Tour Leads to Pennsylvania

By Matthew Balukonis

During the 2022 Christmas season, many people paid a visit to Saint Mary Ukrainian Catholic Church in McAdoo, PA, to pray and spend some moments before the *Cross of Gratitude*. According to an article in the *Hazleton Standard Speaker*, written by James Esposito, Jr., and published on December 21, the *Cross of Gratitude* is an 8-foot wide, 16-foot tall and 816-pound wooden crucifix. It was designed by Ukrainian architect, Vitaliy Sobolivskyy, in 2004.

A group of dedicated people have taken the cross on a pilgrimage

of Jesus' crucifixion in 2033. The cross has been blessed by Popes Saint John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis. There are plans for the pilgrimage to continue to the rest of North and South America, Asia, Africa, Indonesia, and Australia. In an interview featured in Esposito's article, Father Roman Oliinyk, pastor of Saint Mary Parish, said that many healings have been attributed to the *Cross of Gratitude*.

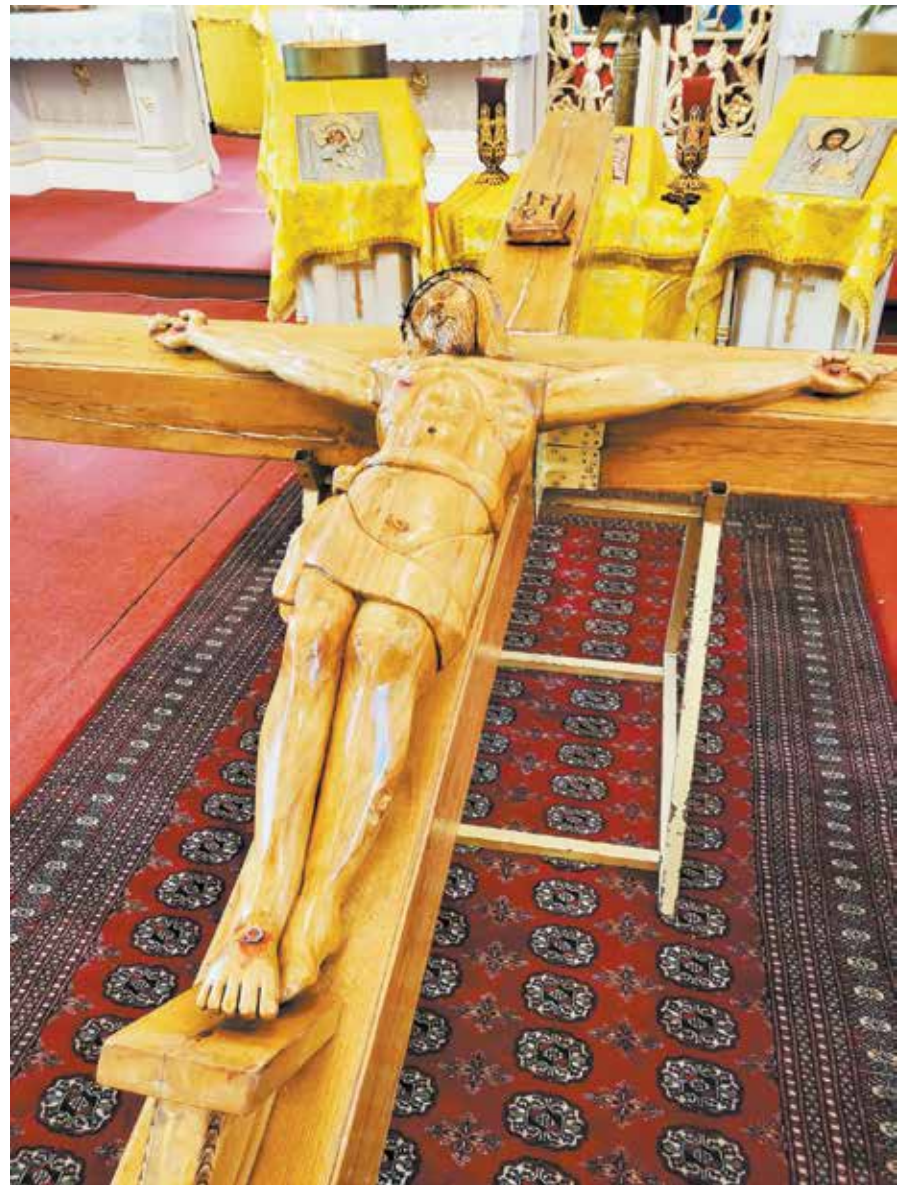
In his book, *Jesus of Nazareth*, the late Pope Benedict XVI discusses Jesus' final journey from Jericho to Jerusalem where He would die on the



Saint Mary Ukrainian Catholic Church, McAdoo, PA

throughout 47 European countries and the United States. The goal of the pilgrimage is to prepare the world for the 2000<sup>th</sup> anniversary

cross. Benedict draws attention to the steep rise in elevation between Jericho, which is near sea level, and Jerusalem which rests on a high



The Cross of Gratitude

mountain. Pope Benedict XVI sees this ascent of Jesus as His journey to "the mountain of love." It would be on this mountain where Jesus would offer himself on the cross out of his great love for all of us. It is from this mountain that the love of God radiated to all the corners of the world.

In a special way, the pilgrimage of the *Cross of Gratitude* has given countless individuals an opportunity to take a moment to personally contemplate and experience the

tremendous sacrificial love of Jesus who suffered and died for the forgiveness of our sins.

During the upcoming Great Fast, we will have another opportunity to contemplate the suffering and death of Jesus with ever more devotion as we will sing, "Having suffered the passion for us, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us."



### "MAKING THE CITY A CHURCH" Byzantine Catholic Seminary's Saints Cyril and Methodius Lecture Series to be Livestreamed May 10, 2023

This will shed light on the liturgy itself, popular piety, and the relation of liturgy to the surrounding culture.

All are welcome to attend this lecture virtually on Wednesday, May 10, at 7:00 PM via the seminary website ([www.bcs.edu](http://www.bcs.edu)). The lecture can also be accessed live or at a later time from archives on the B.C.S. YouTube channel.

Father John F. Baldovin, SJ, is Professor of Historical and Liturgical Theology at the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry. He is a priest of the USA-East Province of the Society of Jesus. He received his B.A. from the Col-

lege of the Holy Cross; an M.Div. from Weston School of Theology, and M.A., M.Phil, and PhD from Yale University.

Father Baldovin served on the advisory committee for the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy of the U.S.C.C.B. (1989-1993). He is past president of the North American Academy of Liturgy as well as the international ecumenical *Societas Liturgica*. He is a member of the Board of Directors of the journal, *Theological Studies*, with his fields of expertise being history and theology of the liturgy, sacramental theology, and the theology of ministry. Among his numerous publications is *The Urban Char-*

*acter of Christian Worship: The Origins, Development and Meaning of Stational Liturgy* (Pontifical Institute of Oriental Studies, 1987).

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

The Byzantine Catholic Seminary in Pittsburgh, PA, is pleased to announce its 23<sup>rd</sup> annual academic lecture to be delivered by Father John Baldovin, SJ, at 7 PM on May 10, 2023. This livestreamed lecture, entitled, *Making the City a Church: Liturgical Processions in Constantinople from the Sixth to the Tenth Centuries*, is to study the mobile character of ancient Constantinopolitan Christian worship and the processions of Byzantine stational liturgy.



# PEOPLE YOU KNOW



## IN CARY...

### Saints Cyril and Methodius 15th Annual European Christmas Market

More than 2,000 people came to the 15<sup>th</sup> annual Saints Cyril and Methodius Saint Nicholas European Market on Friday and Saturday, December 9 -10 at the North Carolina State Fairgrounds in Raleigh. Father Vasyl Sokolovych, pastor, along with Deacon Cyril from Saint Sophia Ukrainian Catholic Church opened the market with singing and by blessing all the patrons, vendors, and volunteer workers with holy water. This free event attracts folks from throughout the area who come to sing, dance, dine, and shop in the European market tradition. Twenty vendors participated to sell their specialty items and our church's retail area sold beautiful items from throughout Eastern Europe, Scandinavia, and the UK all with a unique old world vintage vibe. Pierogi, halupki, halushki, grilled kielbasa and sauerkraut, kolachi, cookies, and other homemade delights were available, along with Pani Olena's Ukrainian sauerkraut and vinaigrette salad. The acclaimed Little German Band, singers, and dancers provided lively and festive music and Saint Nicholas was on hand for picture taking assisted by our ByzanTeens. Donations were gladly given to our church in support of two orphanages in Ukraine. Also, this year we were pleased to sponsor *Divine Mercy Radio, 540-AM*, a Catholic radio

station serving eastern and central North Carolina whose mission is to strengthen the Catholic faith. Once again, we were blessed with a successful fund-raising market. Plans are underway for our Pascha Market in March and the Saints Peter and Paul Summer Market in June.



## IN MIAMI...

### Parishioners gather to celebrate Christmas

The current members of Saint Basil the Great Church in Miami received a wonderful Christmas gift when many former members and visitors attended the Christmas Divine Liturgy. There were nearly 50 people in attendance as Father Frank Hanincik, celebrated the feast of the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The administrator of Saint Basil Parish is Father Sal Pignatto.



## IN HILLSBOROUGH...

### Young Adult Poustinia

In Russian, *poustinia* means "desert." Servant of God Catherine de Hueck Doherty describes it as "...a quiet, lonely place that people wish to enter to find God who dwells within them." On January 28, 2023, over forty young people traveled to Saint Mary Parish in Hillsborough, NJ, from throughout New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland to attend *Theosis in Action's* first ever *Poustinia* event. Inspired by the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal's cultural apostolate "Catholic Underground," *Poustinia* was conceived through a conversation between Father Thomas Shubeck and Brother Simeon Miriam, CFR. Their vision was to combine elements of Catholic Underground – which is centered on Eucharistic Adoration, beautiful music, and fellowship – with the unique and rich traditions of our Byzantine Catholic Church, and to ultimately create an evening of encounter and hospitality in light of the East. At the heart of this evening was Rublev's *Trinity* icon. After Small Compline, celebrated by Father James Badeaux, pastor of Saint Mary Parish, Brother Simeon offered a prayerful reflection on his own experience of being on a *poustinia* and our universal invitation to God's banquet. Confessions were heard as Cantor Glenn Sedar chanted the Psalms and the Jesus Prayer while the participants prayed and meditated. Throughout the evening, it was profoundly evident that young people have a great desire to retreat to the desert and encounter God through silence and prayer through the beauty of our Byzantine tradition. Glory to Jesus Christ!

For information on our next *Poustinia*, March 25, visit [facebook.com/theosisinaction](https://facebook.com/theosisinaction) or email us at [theosisinaction@gmail.com](mailto:theosisinaction@gmail.com).

# AROUND THE EPARCHY



## IN ORMOND BEACH...

### Halifax River Blessing

On Sunday, January 8, for the first time since the COVID pandemic, in the warmth of the Florida sun, Father Vince Brady and the parishioners of Holy Dormition Church, celebrated the Baptism of Our Lord by gathering for the traditional blessing of the waters at the Halifax River in beautiful Fortunato Park, downtown Ormond Beach. At the conclusion of the service, Father Vince threw a three-barred cross made of ice into the river. It has become a rather nice parish tradition that, after the service, after all the hustle and bustle of preparations for Christmas, Father Vince and the parishioners gather for a meal at a local restaurant to celebrate the Theophany of Our Lord. Father Vince Brady is Associate Pastor in residence and Father Salvatore Pignato is Administrator of Holy Dormition Parish.



## IN WILLIAMSBURG...

### Dedication of New Parish Hall Addition

On Sunday, December 4, 2022, Ascension of Our Lord parish in Williamsburg, VA, dedicated the Saint John the Baptist Fellowship Hall to the service of God, the benefit of the people, and the beloved memory of John George Labanish (December 1, 1941 – December 29, 2019). This addition to the existing Saint Phillip Hall was made possible through the kindness of his devoted wife, Betta Labanish. Father Alex Shuter, pastor of Ascension of Our Lord Parish, conducted the dedication ceremony, assisted by Reader Adithia Kusno.

For years, John and Betta Labanish have been very active at Ascension of Our Lord Parish. John, a retired college professor and avid historian, offered educational lectures for the parish. Before he fell asleep in the Lord, John presented a description of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. John and Betta were known for their festive musical performances at Italian dinners hosted by the Men's Club.

May the Lord grant Eternal Memory to His servant, John George Labanish, and many blessed years to his wife, Betta.



# WHAT'S COOKING FOR PASCHA?

By Georgia Zeedick

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

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

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

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

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

## Hrudka (Sirets)

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

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

## Pascha

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

12 to 14 cups flour.

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

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

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

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

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

## Hrin

(Beets with Horseradish)

8 cans whole beets, drained

3 bottles horseradish (Do not use creamed horseradish.)

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

## Kolachi

(Nut and Poppyseed)

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

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

Add flour and mix well with hands until dough leaves the hands. Refrigerate overnight. In the morning, divide the dough into eight balls and let rise for one hour. Roll out on floured board and spread with filling. Roll up gently, tucking in ends.

Bake at 350 degrees until brown, about 45 minutes.

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

## Nut Filling

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

Combine sugar and nuts. Beat eggs and add to mixture, add honey and milk. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly. Bring to boil, remove from stove; let cool. Roll out dough to ½-inch thickness; brush with butter; place filling on dough and roll up. Bake.

## Poppyseed Filling

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

Cut it in half, decorate the halves, bake them and place one of them in the basket.

## Kolbasi

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

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

## Butter

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

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



Photo by Bob Bruce.

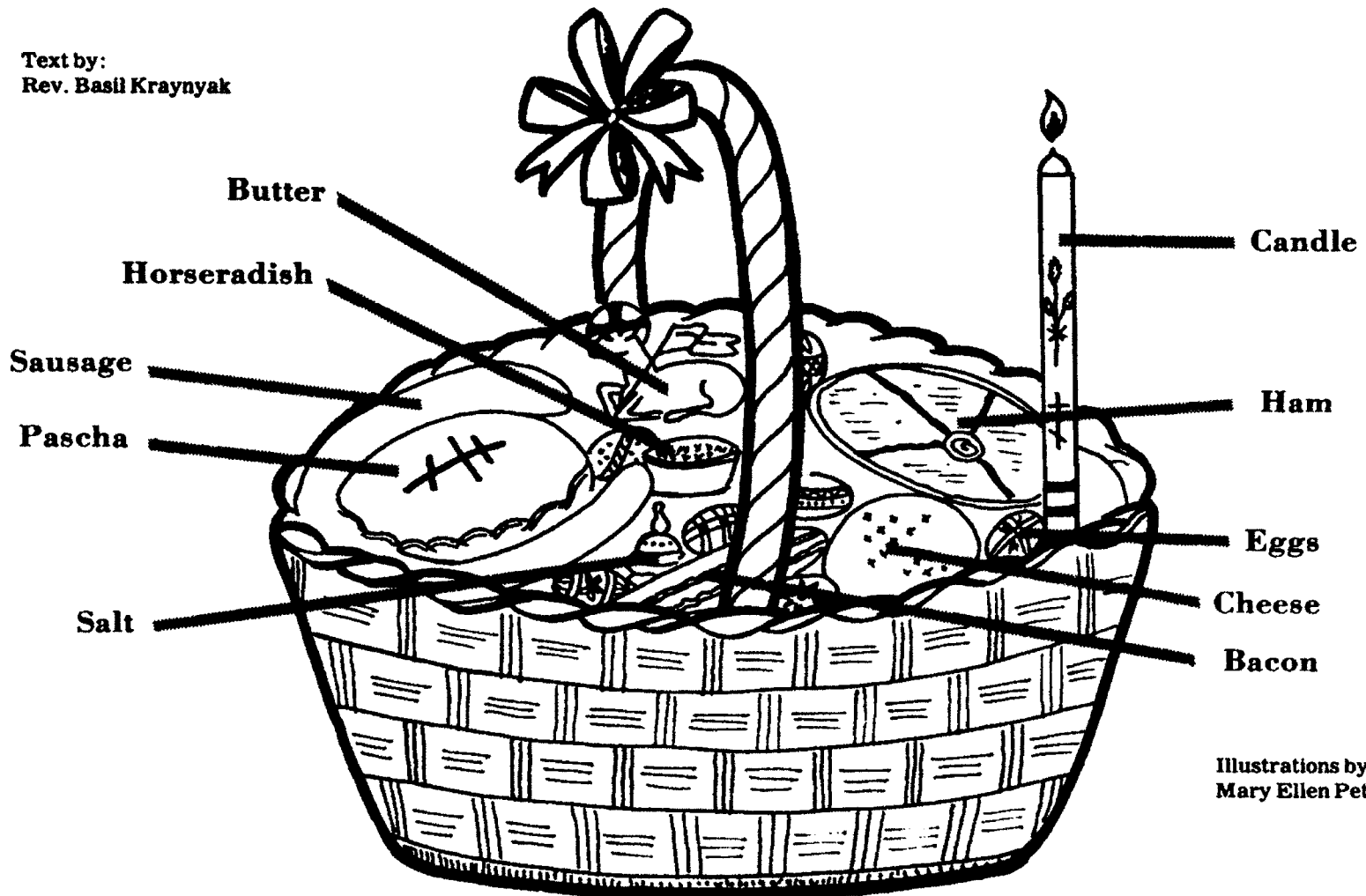
Combine sugar with poppyseed. Add melted butter and then add honey and milk. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly until blended. Cool and spread over dough that has been rolled out to ½-inch thickness and brushed with butter. Roll up and bake.

## Ham

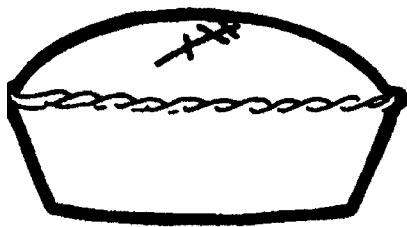
The ham is decorated and baked according to your favorite recipe. How large a ham you buy and use depends on how many people you are serving. For a 20-pound ham:

# How to Put Together a Traditional Easter Basket

Text by:  
Rev. Basil Kraynyak

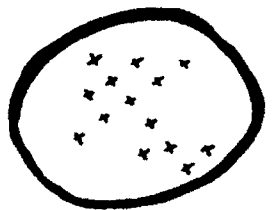


Illustrations by:  
Mary Ellen Petro

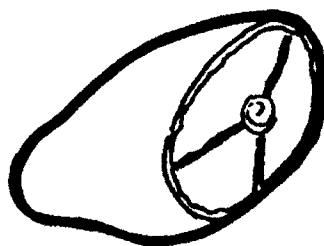


**PASCHA** - The Easter Bread (pron. pá-ska.) A sweet, yeast bread rich in eggs, butter, etc. Symbolic of Christ Himself who is our True Bread. Usually a round loaf baked with a golden crust decorated with a symbol indicative of Christ. Sometimes a cross (+) of dough is placed on top encircled by a plait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

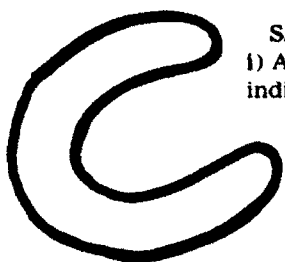
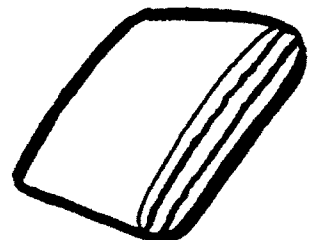
**CHEESE** (Slav. Hrudka or Sirets pron. hroód-ka or sí-rets) A custard-type cheese shaped into a ball having a rather bland but sweet taste indicative of the moderation that Christians should have in all things. Also, creamed cheese is placed in a small dish and both are decorated with symbols (see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



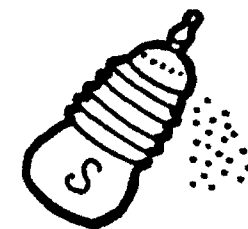
**HAM** (Slav Šunka - pron. shoon-ka.) The flesh meat popular with the Slavs as the main dish because of its richness and symbolic of the great joy and abundance of Easter. Some may prefer Lamb or Veal. This is usually well roasted or cooked as well as other meats so that the festivity of the day will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



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

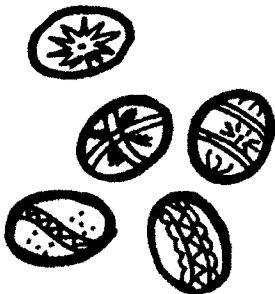


**SAUSAGE** (SLAV. Kolbasi - pron. kol-buš-1) A spicy, garlicy sausage of pork products, indicative of God's favor and generosity.



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

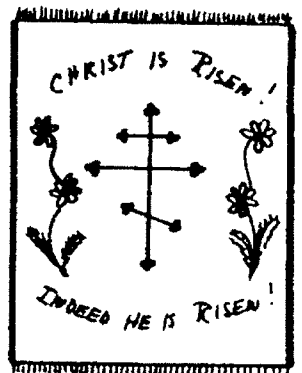
**EGGS** (Slav. Pisanki pron. pi-sún-ki) Hard-boiled eggs brightly decorated with symbols and markings made with beeswax. Indicative of new life and resurrection.



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

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

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



## CHRIST IS RISEN! INDEED HE IS RISEN!

# A JOURNEY FROM HOLY WEEK TO THE RESURRECTION...

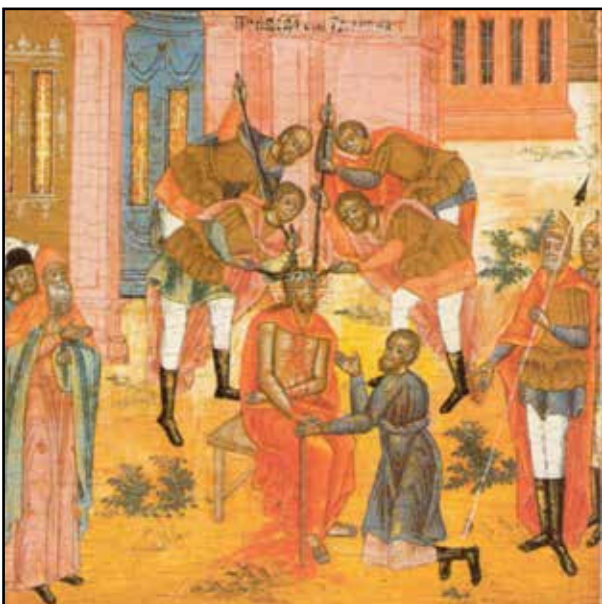


## Passion Week or Great Week

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

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

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



confess to You: Remember me, O Lord, in Your kingdom." "Let no one, O believers, fail to join in the Lord's Supper. Let no one whatsoever approach the table, like Judas, with deceit."

The wickedness of Judas is expressed very realistically. Judas is called "law-breaker," "son of vipers," and the "murderer" who sets up for himself the gallows of wealth and loses both temporal and divine life.

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

## Good Friday

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

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

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

In the evening, Solemn Vespers are performed. At the end of Vespers, the priest, vested in full priestly vestments, makes a procession around the church carrying the *plashchanitsa* and places it in the tomb

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

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

## Holy Saturday

Holy Saturday is dedicated to the memory of Our Savior's entombment and to His descent into Hades to save the souls of the just and to open for them the gates of Heaven. This, too, is a day of mourn-

Having suffered for  
Jesus Christ,  
have mercy

ing. It is numbered among the fast days, although originally in the East, no Saturday was kept as a fast. But the sadness of the day is already lightened by the approaching Resurrection. This anticipation of Christ's victory is already evident in the Liturgy.

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

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

## The Resurrection Period

For a long time, by many prayers, liturgical services and ceremonies, the Church has been preparing us for the glorious day of Christ's Resurrection, Pascha. Hoping that during Lent everybody had an opportunity to be cleansed from his personal sins, the Church now celebrates externally and with beautifully joyous ceremonies the final triumph

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

## Resurrection

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

Following the procession, Resurrection Matins begin. Preceded by candle bearers and by bearers of the processional cross, church banners, an icon of the resurrection and the Gospel book, the priest goes to the main church doors and from outside, after incensing the closed doors, he intones: "Glory be to the holy, consubstantial and indivisible Trinity always, now and ever, and forever and ever." After the people answer with "Amen," the priest sings the glorious Paschal troparion: "Christ is risen from the dead, by death He conquered

*the passion for us,  
Son of God,  
Mercy on us!*

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

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

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

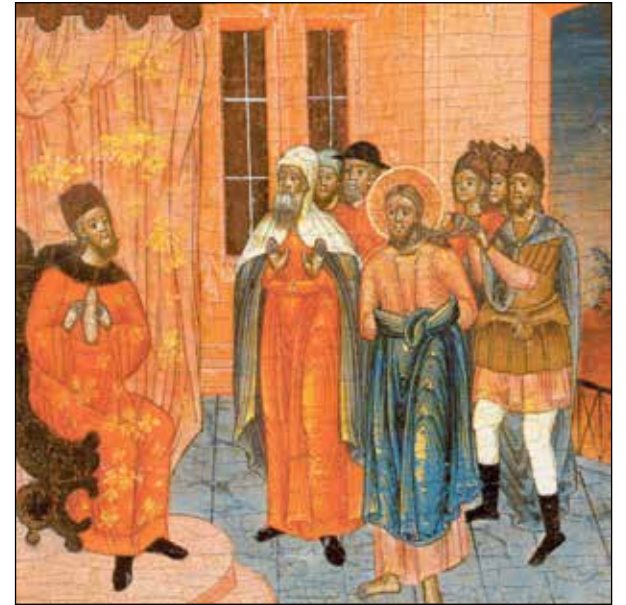
The prototype of the ninth ode is the song of the Mother of God, "My soul magnifies the Lord" and recalls the Angelic Salutation: "The angel exclaimed to her, full of grace: Rejoice, O pure Virgin! And again I say: rejoice! Your Son is risen from the grave on the third day and has raised the dead. O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

The Canon of the Resurrection ends with the hymns of Lauds, which exhort us "to sing hymns to Your (Christ's) saving passion and glorify Your Resurrection." Christ must be glorified on this day for "He has endured crucifixion, overthrown death and risen from the dead." Today, "we praise Your divine condescension and sing hymns to You, O Christ! In order to save the world, You were born



of a virgin without leaving the Father. You suffered as man and willingly endured crucifixion, and You rose from the tomb. O Lord, glory to You."

The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom has a slight deviation from its ordinary celebration. Immediately after the initial invocation, the celebrant sings the Paschal troparion in order to emphasize the joy and solemn happiness brought by the glorious Resurrection of Christ. The Gospel, taken from John 1:1-17, is divided into twelve verses.



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

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

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

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

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



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*"Mary arose and went with haste" (Luke 1:39)*

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## A REFLECTION ON CREATIVITY

By Sister Seraphim Olsafsky, OSBM

I've always felt the urge to play with colors. The rich hues of God's beauty move my spirit. Dabbling in paints and dipping a brush into a rich gold or sublime magenta is not only a joy but an experience of losing track of everything- time, self, worries and concerns. It's almost like entering another world.

Many people say, "I'm not a creative person." Many believe that creativity belongs only to a group of artists, musicians, writers and architects. This is a fallacy. All of us are called to be creative because we are made in the image and likeness of God, the Ultimate Creator. From the moment we were called into being, this gift has been given to each of us to some degree. We are called to develop it, and to use it in the building of God's kingdom.

Creativity is an essential part of what it means to be human. It is also a difficult concept to define. Countless descriptions and quotes about creativity exist. The very perspective you have on life can be your "creative gold". This gift has to be nurtured. Some of the ways to do this are by cultivating a spirit of play and child-like wonder; living a life that inspires you; and spending time in quiet solitude. Creativity emerges from our deep inner world. Set aside some time to be still, and allow ideas to simply flow.

Try something new, something different- write a brief story, bake something out of the ordinary, take a class at the local library or college, get involved in an activity you would not ordinarily do. Creativity exists in every dimension of life. It may be as simple as arranging wildflowers for the table, creating a new recipe, cutting the lawn in a unique design, or working on a difficult equation or an innovative computer program. Teaching, managing, organizing, decorating, developing projects- all offer multiple opportunities for creativity to flourish. It will take work but your creative spirit will ultimately win.

The author of *The Book Thief* rewrote the first part of his very popular novel 150 to 200 times. It is obvious creativity comes with a price: a great work ethic and dedication. The reward is beyond measure, and holds a deep sense of the power of the Infinite Creator working within you.

The Community requested that I select several of my paintings and create a packet of all occasion greeting cards - birthday, congratulations, sympathy, and wellness. Inside of each card is an inspirational message and a verse from the Bible. VICNAJA PAMJAT! is on the back of the sympathy card and MNOHAJA L'ITA! BLAHAJA L'ITA! is on the back of the wellness card.



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# LIFE, LOVE, AND THE HUMAN PERSON

By Ann M. Koshute, MTS

## A TIME FOR MERCY

As we prepared to enter a new season of the Great Fast, Jesus spoke to us on Cheesefare Sunday in the Gospel of Matthew (25:31-46) about the Last Judgment. This passage may initially evoke in us a sense of fear and dread. After all, who wants to be cast into a fiery pit for all of eternity? Our response to this discourse may also be centered mostly on ourselves, as we contemplate how to avoid eternal punishment. While we should do all we can to remain in right relationship with God, confess our sins, and try to live good, moral lives, focusing on avoiding punishment takes us away from the central point of this Gospel. Rather than trying to avoid punishment, we should be actively engaged in deepening our relationship with God, loving and serving our neighbor, and modeling our lives after Christ's. Jesus presents a stark picture of the consequences of a life dedicated to anything but Him, and we should take it seriously. But He is calling us to a life much richer and more fulfilling because it is lived in and through Him.

This passage may be familiar to us from our Catholic school or Eastern Christian formation classes, because it forms the basis of the Corporal Works of Mercy (if you need a refresher, see *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2447). The season of the Fast is a perfect time to refresh our memories by re-reading Matthew 25: 31-46, and the *Catechism's* explanation of the

Works of Mercy. We must go one step further, though, by immersing our whole selves in contemplation of God's mercy, and what He is asking of us as bearers of that mercy to the world. I encourage you to turn to Saint Matthew's Gospel. Place yourself in the crowd and listen to Jesus' word as He describes how "the Son of man" will gather the people assembled and separate them: the sheep on His right, the goats on His left. Now imagine Jesus is speaking directly to you, mentioning specifically those who are hungry, naked, thirsty, sick, and in prison, and how you tended to each of their needs. How will you answer Him? Like those in the story, will you protest that you never saw Jesus Himself in any of these situations? Take a few moments now to stop reading, and reflect on all the ways we hunger, thirst, find ourselves naked, sick or imprisoned. How have you found Jesus in these experiences?

We live in a prosperous country, yet there is no shortage of hungry individuals, children, and families. It is our Christian duty to feed the hungry by donating to the local food pantry, or giving money to agencies that assist those in need. But what about those who are hungry to be seen and loved? Do we "feed" those around us who are lonely or without family through the gift of our time and presence? Jesus is certainly to be found in those whom we might deem "inconveniences," not worthy of a little of our time and under-

standing. Similarly, what of those who are thirsting for meaning and purpose? Jesus is found in them, too, and His thirst is satisfied when we take notice of those who may be struggling and need someone to listen. Perhaps they are open to the Gospel or have rejected it in the past because of how it was presented to them. You might be the one to show them who Jesus is by your willingness to share the good news that God loves them.

Clothing our physical nakedness is a legitimate need, and one many of us can easily meet for others out of the surplus of clothes in our closets. But what about the emotional and spiritual nakedness of so many in our families, among our friends and community? So many people feel alone and vulnerable because of the crosses they carry, and they may not feel courageous enough to reach out for help. Jesus is there with them, waiting to be clothed with understanding, compassion, and love. We can't know or perceive every problem of every person we know; but even in the most superficial of acquaintances, we can be truly present in the moments we spend with them, treating them with dignity and respect.

Jesus is so close to those who are sick, and we can minister to them, too; whether nursing a sick child or spouse, or bringing a friend or co-worker a care package to help make them more comfortable. But there

is another "sickness" in our world, and it spreads rapidly unless we take steps to fight it. This sickness is, at its best, having poor manners; and at its worst, acting in mean, hateful, and even violent ways. It is a sickness that particularly thrives in the online world, where we might feel immune to the repercussions of spreading it ourselves, but its poison eventually overcomes us. Jesus is waiting for you to come to Him to be healed of this sickness, to release anger, bitterness, and the desire to "be right." Jesus wants you to instead become an instrument of His healing. Finally, a prison is not just a physical space to hold those who have committed crimes. There are prisons of loneliness, addiction, abuse, mental illness, and so on, and Jesus waits with those imprisoned there. Do you see those prison walls and notice the person who finds himself seemingly without means of escape? Is the one imprisoned a family member, friend, or a co-worker? How can you visit them and help them to find freedom?

As you continue your walk through the Great Fast, consider meditating on the many encounters Jesus had during His ministry, and place yourself there. Listen to His words and observe His actions. How is He speaking to you? What is He asking of you? And will you become like a sheep and follow the example of your Master? **ECL**

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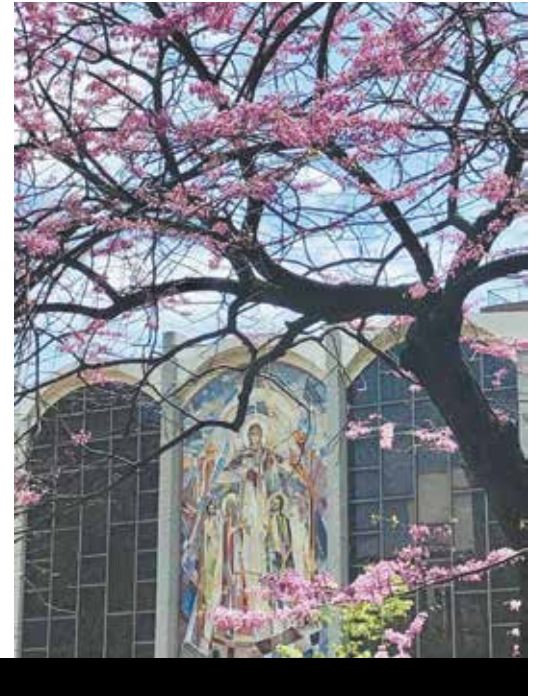
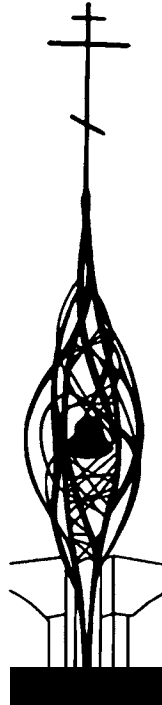
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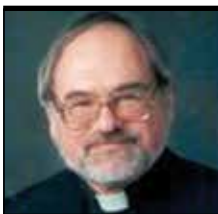


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**THE BYZANTINE LITURGY**

*By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD*

**BAPTISM: A LIFE-TIME PROJECT**

Sometimes baptism feels like a one-time event, an initiation that is celebrated and finished. It is true that in faith, the decision we make in baptism to renounce evil and commit ourselves to Christ is a definitive choice that we cannot turn back on. Once we are baptized, we cannot ever be re-baptized. Baptism is an action of God and therefore must be effective and cannot lose its divine power. God adopts us as His child and cannot go back in His word. The grace of God is real and it cannot be recalled. Baptism, then, is never repeated. At the same time, however, it is a decision that we make over and over again, and that is renewed every time we receive Holy Communion, "for the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting." (*Communion formula*, Byzantine Liturgy) It is a life-time project, as Saint Nicholas Cabasilas described, "The life in Christ originates in this life and arises from it. It is perfected, however, in the life to come, when we shall have reached that last day. It cannot attain perfection in human souls in this life." (*The Life in Christ*, 1, § 1) While we have made a commitment to God, we are human and sometimes fail in our promises. Scripture warns us, "it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment handed down to them." (2 Peter 2:21) If we fail after baptism, however, there is another road to repentance that God makes possible for us.

We live out our baptism throughout our whole lives. Today, when someone is baptized, the rite itself is all done on

one day. This has not always been the case. To indicate that it was a continuing reality, when someone was baptized, there were associated rituals both before and after the actual baptism in water. Before baptism, for adults, there was a catechumenate, which means a period of learning. It was more than just an intellectual process, but a period of training in Christian love, prayer and ascetical discipline. For children, there were rites of naming and churching. After baptism, for seven days one would wear white clothing to signify the purity of faith. Since adult baptisms were especially prescribed for Pascha (Easter, the Feast of our Lord's Resurrection) the week after is still called "Bright Week," for the brilliance of the new garments. The Trisagion hymn in the Liturgy hinted at this by quoting Saint Paul's Letter to the Galatians 3:7: "All you who have been baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ." Baptism is the beginning of the new, eternal life, from the Epistle read at the Paschal Vigil Liturgy and at every baptismal Liturgy, "We were indeed buried with Him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life." (Romans 6:4)

On the eighth day, there were also supplementary rites that are still present in the liturgical books, though they are not generally celebrated anymore, or, if they are, on the days of baptism itself. The newly-baptized Christian kept the chrism for eight days, and then they were washed. In our modern times, of course, one is washed or

washes every day, so that this period no longer has a meaning. When the person was washed, the new Christian was first sprinkled with water, and the priest said, "You are justified. You are illumined. You are sanctified. You are washed in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God." Then they were washed, as the priest said, "You are baptized. You are illumined. You are anointed with chrism. You are sanctified. You are washed in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." These words are an elaboration of 1 Corinthians 6:11: "now you have had yourselves washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God." These words are a proclamation of the new reality that we have become, and is always present: "You are." It is as Saint Paul wrote: "So whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

On the same day, the newly-baptized was also tonsured, their hair was cut by removing a lock from the front and the back and both sides in the form of a cross. This also signified that we now

live in Christ, and that we have morally died to the values of the world and to worldly vanity. Father Alexander Schmemmann wrote: "Tonsure has always been one of the fundamental religious rites: the symbol of obedience and sacrifice.... there exists a "mystery of hair" as one of the fundamental means of self-expression, self-affirmation, and identity." Tonsure today is still done for when someone enters either into a life of service as a sub-deacon, deacon or priest, where it signifies the renunciation of self for service to the people of God. Tonsure is also done when someone enters the monastic state, as a sign of laying down one's life for the struggle for service and perfection in Christ. For this reason, tonsure was at least at one time also done for anyone who became a Christian. It is a powerful sign that our lives have no meaning except in Christ. That is why we read Saint Paul's Letter to the Romans at baptism, "We know that our old self was crucified with him" (that is, in whatever ways we sacrifice our own desires for Christ) "so that our sinful body might be done away with, that we might no longer be in slavery to sin....

If, then, we have died with Christ", (spiritually) "we believe that we shall also live with him." (Romans 6:6.8) The Christian therefore joyfully proclaims, "Christ is risen!" for we now share in his life. **BCL**

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## SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

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

### A TALE OF THREE TREES

Two trees bookend the Great Fast. On the first of the Pre-Lenten Sundays, as the Church eases us into considering repentance, we see Zacchaeus climbing a tree and finding salvation (Luke 19:1-9). At the far end of the Fast, children climbing trees to cut palm branches give our Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem as "Son of David" its festive mood (Matthew 21:1-17; John 12:12-17) and fulfill a prophecy hiding in one of the richest of the Psalms: "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. We bless you from the house of the Lord. The Lord is God, and He has revealed Himself to us. Appoint a feast for yourselves, decked with branches, even to the horns of the altar" (Psalm 118:25-27).

The self-righteous grumbled at the grace that enabled Zacchaeus to repent (Luke 19:7) and tried to silence those who acclaimed Jesus (Matthew 21:15-16). The same crowd that waved branches and cried "Hosanna" on Palm Sunday were pumping their fists and shouting "Crucify Him" by Good Fri-

day (Matthew 27:20-23). Out of this mess of human sinfulness rises a third tree: the Precious and Life-giving Cross.

To our ears it may sound strange or even disrespectful to call Christ's Cross a "tree," but this is the word the Apostles themselves used (Acts 5:30; 10:39; 13:29; 1 Peter 2:24). The immediate connection for them was the Old Testament law which states: "Cursed be everyone who hangs on a tree" (Deuteronomy 21:23); Saint Paul actually quotes this verse (Galatians 3:13), and it helps us understand his otherwise shocking statement that "He who knew no sin was made sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Of course, the "curse" is more than just the shame of public exposure as an executed criminal. Page after page of the New Testament insists that Christ's sacrificial death set humanity free from the death that was the consequence of the first sin: (Genesis 2:17), but also from the dead-ended-ness of the ongoing inclination of human nature to sin, which

the Law of Moses could condemn but could not heal (see for example Romans 5:12-17; Romans 8:1-4; and the Epistle to the Hebrews, especially chapter 10). It comes as no surprise, then, to hear our liturgical hymns returning again and again to a comparison between the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden and the Tree of the Cross on Golgotha. We will explore this connection in a future column.

The Cross gives Zacchaeus' tree and the palm trees of Palm Sunday their full and deepest meaning. It is Jesus' willingness to ascend the Tree of the Cross that makes Zacchaeus' repentance possible and life-giving. It is the Cross that makes possible our inheritance of the Kingdom of Heaven, so much more than the earthly kingdom of David that excited the crowds on Palm Sunday.

Set up as bookends of the Great Fast, these two trees raise some questions for us. The image of a dumpy, pencil-pushing tax collector climbing a tree just to see Jesus asks us to consider how much we are willing to step out of our com-

fort zones and let ourselves be inconvenienced in order to have a life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ. The steps leading to confession may be more daunting for many of us than scrambling up a tree! But Zacchaeus' public confession (Luke 19:8) reminds us there is no other way. The children who climbed the palms and cut the branches ask us: How deep does our commitment to Christ go? Does our enthusiasm for Christ extend beyond singing *Silent Night* and *Christ is Risen* two days out of the year? Do we join the parade and wave our palms on Sunday only to go back to life as usual on Monday? Do we drop the palms and raise our fists in anger the minute we don't get our way or Gospel truth challenges the latest convenient fads and fictions? Will our commitment to Christ match the commitment that nailed Him immovably to the Tree of the Cross?

Look how far and how deep our focus on the simple word "tree" has taken us! This is true of so many of the Bible's simplest images and should whet your appetite to find others. **ECL**

### 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 Saint John's

parishioners. 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, Saint 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](mailto:carpathiancookery@gmail.com).



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## PRIESTLY REFLECTIONS

Father Paul Varchola West

### OK...SO...WHY ARE WE FASTING AGAIN???

At this point, a few weeks into the Great Fast, we most likely find ourselves in one of the following places.

*Three weeks in... How long is this Fast again?*

*Oh my goodness... The Fast! I have YET to do anything related to it, but I will... I've just been so busy...*

*That cheeseburger certainly does look tasty... what day of the week is it again???*

*I quit!*

*Things are good; I've got this! (Which, perhaps, could be the most dangerous mindset of all as we do not want to become complacent in our fasting either!)*

Regardless of what state of mind we find ourselves in a few weeks into the Great Fast, this is a good time to step back once again, take inventory of our spiritual life, and ask ourselves, "why are we fasting again?"

Far too often we let our modern way of thinking dictate the ancient practice of fasting. We tend to fall into the trap of

thinking that we need to fast because the bishop says so, or because our priest keeps talking about it, or even perhaps because mom or baba said I have to so I just do what they say so they don't bother me about it.

We have to wonder, who are we trying to please here? More so, we humans love rules and guidelines. Oftentimes when we see minimum regulations, or just follow the fish on the calendar, as if the other days of the week are simply normal days, we miss out on something rather important, all the while thinking we've met the requirements so "we're good." We get so wrapped up in the *how*, we forget about the *why*!

Fasting is not at all about following the rules or checking an item off the list, but rather we fast to bring us back into a state of communion with God that existed at the creation of the world. In Gen 2:16, God makes His first covenant with Adam, stating that all the green plants and fruit of the trees are to be our food (except the forbidden fruit, obviously). Remember that, at this time, God walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. They were in

the very presence of His Glory in Paradise! Then in Gen 3:24, Adam and Eve are driven from the Garden (and the presence of the Lord) as a consequence of sin. This is why we abstain from all meat and dairy *at a minimum*, on the First Day of the Great Fast, to bring us to a state of being and purity from before the Fall, to a time when we were in the presence of the Glory of God.

*[Fun side note: Humanity is actually not permitted to eat meat until AFTER the Flood. We read this in Gen 9:3 in God's covenant with Noah when He states that all things that creep upon the earth shall now be our food. Interesting to think about, isn't it?]*

We must remember that, as we learn from the Old Testament prophets, fasting without prayer is an offense to Almighty God. If fasting is not bringing us closer to God, if we are simply making ourselves hungry and cranky, all the while not engaging in prayer, then why are we fasting? As a pastor, I encourage you to make it a point to go out of your way to attend Presanctified Divine Liturgy, *especially* if you have never attended one before! Even if you attend only

once, at least you've done something to make the Fast a special time of prayer.

In short, we fast to bring ourselves closer to God. Each should fast within one's own means at the guidance of a pastor and/or spiritual father/mother, making adjustments for health, age, lifestyle, etc., remembering always that prayer and fasting go hand in hand. Even if you have been a little slack in your Lenten observances this year, just as we learn from the parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard [MT 20:1-16], it is never too late to turn our works to the Lord! Start now!

Let us all make these last few weeks of the Great Fast a season of prayer, a time of renewal, simplicity, and above all, a time of reconciliation with God and with one another, that we all may fittingly celebrate with the unbounded joy of the Resurrection on the Holy and Great Day of Pascha! **ECL**

Jesus taught, "When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth." Christ promised, "I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Mt. 16:18). Hold fast to these promises in our difficult and confusing times.

Saint Thomas Aquinas defines heresy as "a species of infidelity in men who, having professed the faith of Christ, corrupt its dogmas." "Heresy is the obstinate post-baptismal denial of some truth which must be believed with divine and catholic faith, or it is likewise an obstinate doubt concerning the same" (CCC 2089).

Today many are downplaying the miraculous in the New Testament by suggesting that the miracles of Jesus Christ didn't really happen as written. Some have suggested that Jesus did not multiply the loaves and fishes but only got the five thousand to share! Others claim the morality taught explicitly in the New Testament is outdated and scientifically incorrect. A well-known Cardinal from Germany has recently suggested that the Bible and the Catholic Church have gotten the morality of marriage and human sexuality wrong for the past 2000 years. The Cardinal says we need to change the Catholic Faith and get with the times. Some wish to see women ordained to the Holy Priesthood, even after Saint John Paul II authoritatively decreed that such a thing was impossible.

We were warned. Jesus and the Apostles said false teachers will try to corrupt the True Faith. They alert us again and again: "Beware of false prophets" (Mt. 7:15). "Many false prophets will arise and lead many astray" (Mt. 24:11). "False Christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect" (Mt. 24:24). "Fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock (Ac. 20:29). "In later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1). "The time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths" (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

Even the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* warns us of religious deception. "Before Christ's second coming the Church must pass through a final trial that will shake the faith of many believers. The persecution that accompanies her pilgrimage on earth will unveil the "mystery of iniquity" in the form of a religious deception offering men an apparent solution to their problems at the price of apostasy from the truth. The

supreme religious deception is that of the Antichrist, a pseudo-messianism by which man glorifies himself in place of God and of His Messiah come in the flesh" (CCC 675).

Satan has attacked the truth of the Catholic Faith for the past two thousand years, and he continues to try to destroy the Faith today. Throughout history, serious errors arose and were eventually defeated by the Church. There was Arius, Nestorius, the Monophysites, the Iconoclasts, the Bogomils, Cathars, Albigensians, Waldensians, and Lollards, the Protestant Reformers, Jansenists, Quietists, and Modernists. Today, there is confusion in the Church, with priests opposing priests, bishops against bishops, and Cardinals opposing Cardinals.

What should we do to preserve our Faith and not all away?

Love truth and hate error. The great saints and Fathers of the Church hated heresy. *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (1910) entry on heresy states:

"Polycarp regarded Marcion as the first-born of the Devil. Ignatius sees in heretics poisonous plants, or animals in human form. Justin and Tertullian

condemn their errors as inspirations of the Evil One; Theophilus compares them to barren and rocky islands on which ships are wrecked; and Origen says, that as pirates place lights on cliffs to allure and destroy vessels in quest of refuge, so the Prince of this world lights the fires of false knowledge in order to destroy men."

Study the Holy Bible, the Catechism, the Creeds, and the great Councils of the Church. If you know your faith, you won't be deceived.

Most importantly, pray. Pray that the Church continues to conquer heresy and teach the truth, as Christ promised (Mt. 16:18). Ask the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, to protect and guide you. Even if you are not a theologian, you have an inner sense about truth and error, right and wrong (1 Jn. 2:26, 27).

Stay close to Jesus Christ, who is the Truth (Jn 14:6), and to the Our Lady, the "destroyer of all heresies" (Pope Saint Pius X), and you will not be easily deceived.

"Take heed that you are not led astray" (Lk. 21:8). **ECL**

## SCHOOL OF PRAYER

Father G. Scott Boghossian



### PRAY THAT YOU ARE NOT LED ASTRAY

# SEASONAL REFLECTIONS

Father Ronald Hatton



## THE LOST ART OF FASTING

We enter once again into the time of the Great Fast, that great penitential season before the celebration of Pascha, the Feast of Feasts. In our preparations, we are always encouraged to the three pillars of penitence: *prayer*, *fasting* and *almsgiving*. Two are very straightforward in explanation: we are encouraged to pray more deeply, and more often; we are to give alms to all in need. But although we think we know what is needed in fasting, I believe that the depths of fasting have been lost on our society. Fasting has been reduced to “What are you giving up for Lent?” It seems that all Catholics say, “I didn’t think we needed to do that anymore.” During Lent, Western Catholics are now called to abstain from meat on Fridays, whereas that used to be true for the entire year. Eastern Catholics are called to complete fasting and abstinence on the first day of the Great Fast and on Good Friday, and abstinence from meat on Wednesdays and Fridays, whereas we used to fast and/or abstain from all meat and dairy for the entire Fast – thus the true import of Meat-fare Sunday and Cheese-fare Sunday.

And so, we need to rediscover fasting. Fasting has its place in every religion in the world, from ancient times. It doesn’t matter if one is Muslim, Jew, Hindu, Buddhist, Native American or Wiccan or pagan – fasting is found in all of them. In the Eastern Orthodox Churches, there is still a strong fasting tradition. But Catholics seem generally to have let it go by the wayside, much to our shame.

We need to rediscover the terms. What is *fasting*, and what is *abstinence*? Do either necessarily entail just eating, or are there other aspects of life where it can be applied? *Abstinence* traditionally refers to certain types of food, regardless

of quantity, while *fasting* traditionally refers to limiting the number of meals and/or amounts of food consumed, regardless of types of food. There can be abstinence from meat and meat products for an entire period of time, or fasting from every form of food for a period. Most Lenten fasts, when kept traditionally, consist of only vegetables. In our modern society, we can also abstain from certain activities, but the desirable concentration of either abstinence or fasting from food. Why this particular point? Other than the fact that fasting from food is the common fast throughout religions, it is in response to basic needs and desires. No other part of our lives is so fundamental than the need to



eat. If there is one addiction that gets short-shrift in our lives it is the addiction to eating, especially in Western civilization. No denial of any aspect of our lives upset us more than when we miss our meal.

I think the main thing that fasting from foods does is remind us of how much

we are slaves to our bodies. Hunger can be overpowering, to the point where dieters “cheat” or tell themselves they “deserve a reward for doing so well the past week.” And we can extend this to our treatment of sin. Sinful habits and mindsets overpower our desire to be more like Christ, and we find ourselves crying out as did the holy Apostle Paul: “Indeed, I do not know what I am doing! I do not practice what I desire to do; but what I hate, this is what I do!” (Rom. 7:15). Fasting reminds us that in and of ourselves we can do nothing, and we are in constant need of God in our lives to overcome our sinful nature.

Metropolitan Kallistos Ware says, “Fasting is not a mere matter of diet. It is moral as well as physical. True fasting is to be converted in heart and will; it is to return to God, to come home like the Prodigal to our Father’s house. In the words of Saint John Chrysostom, it means ‘abstinence not only from food but from sins.’ ...It is useless to fast from food, protests Saint Basil. and yet to indulge in cruel criticism and slander: ‘You do not eat meat, but you devour your brother.’”

Many years ago, I read something from Father Anthony Coniaris that has stuck with me. His analogy is: When you squeeze an orange, what comes out? Our usual response is, “orange juice.” But Father Anthony says, “No; it is whatever is inside the orange that comes out.” In times of stress or anger, we find out what is truly inside of us. When we get angry, do we yell at a person, or go into road rage, or say things that should not be said out loud? If we do, we betray that what is in our heart is not peace or love but turmoil and anger. When we are stressed at any situation, do we panic, make abrupt, and probably incorrect, assumptions and decisions,

or do we take a deep breath and really examine the situation and act prudently. Yes, it is kind of disturbing to find what is really inside us, rather than what we think is inside. Fasting shows us who we are. It shows our weakness and our need for diligence over our hearts, minds and words, and how we cannot do otherwise without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It is only then that we can call upon Him to heal us in the very depths of who we are.

Again, Bishop Kallistos: “Fasting, then, is valueless or even harmful when not combined with prayer.” When Jesus’ disciples were unable to cast out a demon, Saint Matthew writes, “Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, ‘Why were we not able to cast it out?’ Jesus replied, ‘Because of your unbelief! Amen, I tell you that if you have faith even like a grain of mustard, you will tell this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you! But this kind [of spirit] does not go out except by prayer and fasting.’” (Matthew 17: 19-21). So, too, it is with us: we cannot expect to make any spiritual progress during Lent without fasting accompanied by prayer.

Of course, we are in need also of the Holy Mysteries. Saint Thomas Aquinas calls the Holy Eucharist “spiritual food and spiritual medicine.” After all communicants have received the Eucharist, the priest proclaims, “Behold! This has touched your lips, and will take away your iniquities and will cleanse your sins.” Holy Confession is also necessary for us to call to mind where we fall short in our efforts to become more like Christ. We relieve the burdens on our hearts, receive counsel from our spiritual father, and received absolution and remission of our sins. This Mystery is the most neglected today, and yet we ask why it seems God does not hear our prayers: “You lust, and do not have! You kill, covet, and [still] cannot obtain! You fight and make war. You do not have because you do not ask! You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, in order to spend it for your pleasures.” (James 4:2, 3).

We need to fast. We need to pray. We need to reach out to others through our giving of ourselves and our substance to others. Without all this, our fasting is doomed to failure; our prayer will be weak and ineffective; and we will not attain the Kingdom we seek. **ECL**

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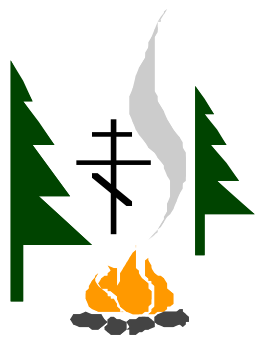
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Thursday, June 22, thru Sunday, June 25  
Camp Director Father Andrii Dumnych

### 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 Day 2023

Saturday, August 12  
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

\*Registration forms for the Congress and Rally can be found at <https://www.eparchyofpassaic.com> under Youth and Young Adult Ministries



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## UPCOMING EPARCHIAL AND PARISH EVENTS

### 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 Fifth Sunday of the Great Fast

### APRIL, 2023

- 1 Saturday of Lazarus
- 2 Flowery Sunday  
*Triumphal Entry of Our Lord*
- 3 Great and Holy Monday
- 4 Great and Holy Tuesday
- 5 Great and Holy Wednesday
- 6 Great and Holy Thursday

- 7 Great and Holy Friday
- 8 Great and Holy Saturday
- 9 THE GREAT DAY \* PASCHA\* THE HOLY RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD, GOD, and SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST

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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