



# EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

Official Publication of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic

VOL. LIX, NO. 5

MAY 2023

## THE ASSEMBLY OF THE BYZANTINE (RUTHENIAN) METROPOLITAN CHURCH

Hillsborough, New Jersey, November 2—5, 2023

Metropolitan Archbishop William and the Council of Hierarchs of the Byzantine Metropolitan Church of Pittsburgh will be hosting the third assembly of our Church on Thursday, November 2 to Sunday, November 5, 2023, at Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church, Hillsborough, NJ. The assembly's theme is *Living Our Faith: Moving Forward, Appreciating Our Past*.

The assembly will consist of two tracks. A clergy track will be presented on Thursday and Friday, November 2 and 3. A laity track will occur from Friday to Sunday, November 3 to 5. This gathering aims to increase the appreciation of the Byzantine Ruthenian Church's history (both in the *Old Country* and the United States) and Byzantine Ruthenian art and culture. The second goal of the assembly is to learn about the best practices occurring in our parishes today, which

are contributing to the growth of our communities, with the hope that the attendees will incorporate this information into their parish activities. A third goal is to develop concrete steps to ensure the future and growth of our Church. The synodal meetings revealed these three topics to be the most important to those participating.

The cultural aspect of the assembly will consist of presentations by Dr. Paul Magocsi on the history of the founders of the Byzantine Catholic Church in America. His influential book, *Our People: Carpatho-Rusyns and Their Descendants in North America*, has just been released in a new and expanded edition. Dr. Magocsi will also present on the art and culture of this community. His book on the artists of the Transcarpathian School will be published shortly.

Father Christopher Zuger will explore the history of the foundation of the Byzantine Catholic Church in America. Next year marks the 100th anniversary of the arrival of Basil Takach, the first bishop of the Byzantine Ruthenian Catholic Church in America. Father Zuger is the author of *The Forgotten: Catholics of the Soviet Empire from Lenin through Stalin* and *Finding a Hidden Church*. His third book, which focuses on the history of the Byzantine Ruthenian Church from its founding to the present, will be released in November.

The Eparchy of Passaic's collection of works by artists of the Transcarpathian School will be displayed throughout the assembly venue. Maria Silvestri, a renowned promoter of Rusyn history, art, and culture, will curate this exhibit featuring works by Adalbert Erdelyi, Josyf Bokshay, Shubo, Andrii Korska, and other artists.

throughout the United States, the assembly committee will issue a call for presentation proposals from individuals or teams, clerical, religious, and lay. Presentations may be based on personal experience or academic research. The ideal would be a combination of the two. The request for proposals may be found on the Assembly website and at any parish or chancery office of the Metropolitan Church of Pittsburgh.

Registrations may be made through the Assembly website or by mail beginning June 15. The fee includes meals, breaks, presentations, materials, and the gala on Saturday evening. The Assembly cost is \$250 for individuals and \$400 for couples. The Maria Theresa Foundation will underwrite the registration fees of individuals and couples between the ages of 18 and 35.

Special rates for hotel accommodations have been arranged at the Hilton Garden Inn in Bridgewater, NJ. The reservation link and hotel information may be found on the Assembly Website. The hotel is a fifteen-minute drive to Saint Mary Parish in Hillsborough.

For more information, contact the Assembly coordinators, Father Ed Cimbala, at 212-677-0516 or Father Yuriy Oros at 609-394-5004. The assembly website is [byzantineassembly2023.org](http://byzantineassembly2023.org), and the email is [byzantineassembly2023@gmail.com](mailto:byzantineassembly2023@gmail.com).

Cardinal Timothy Dolan will offer the keynote address at the opening dinner on Friday evening.

As music and dancing play a significant part in the cultural heritage of Carpatho-Rusyns, attendees will have an opportunity to enjoy music, food, and fellowship at a gala Saturday evening. Pajtáši – a noted Rusyn/Slovak Band, will be the musical entertainment, and the dinner menu will feature a variety of ethnic foods.

To discover the best practices utilized in Byzantine Catholic parishes



**METROPOLITAN ASSEMBLY**  
Art | History | Presentations | Prayer | Dancing  
**NOVEMBER 2 - 5, 2023**

**LIVING OUR FAITH**  
Moving Forward  
Appreciating Our Past

- \$250 per person
- \$400 per family
- Young Adult (18-35)\*

\*registration underwritten by The Maria Theresa Foundation



**St. Mary Byzantine Catholic Church, Hillsborough, NJ**

**Assembly Coordinators**  
Fr. Edward Cimbala 212-677-0516 | Fr. Yuriy Oros 609-394-5004  
Email: [byzantineassembly2023@gmail.com](mailto:byzantineassembly2023@gmail.com) | Web: [byzantineassembly2023.org](http://byzantineassembly2023.org)

### CALL FOR ASSEMBLY PRESENTATION PROPOSALS

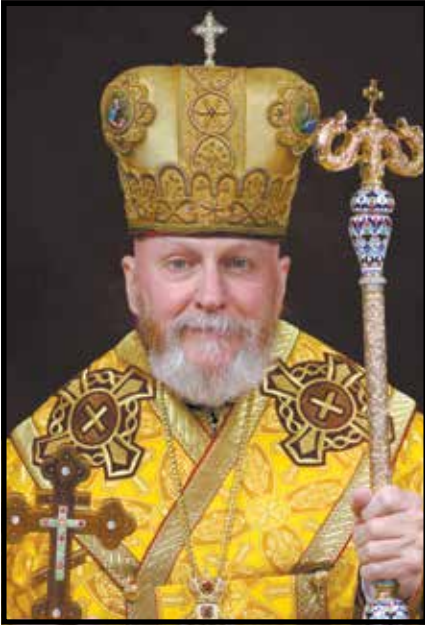
The assembly committee seeks proposals from individuals or teams, both clerical and lay, for presentations to discover the best practices utilized in our parishes throughout the United States. The presentations may be based on personal experience or academic research. The ideal would be a combination of the two. The Eparch of the presenter will be contacted to receive his *nihil obstat*.

There are two primary areas for exploration:

A) **Where We Are:** these sessions will explore the present conditions of our Church, both good and bad – looking at its development and growth over time. How have we grown, and how have we

*Continued on page 7*





# I LIFT UP MY EYES

Pastoral Reflections of Bishop Kurt



## SEVEN TIMES A DAY

land that was lost for financial reasons was returned to its original owners as determined by tribes and families.

In the last book of the Bible, Saint John writes seven letters to seven churches. With the number seven appearing in the first and last book of the Christian Bible, its status was secure, and Christians began to find the number seven in many places. For example, the western Christians systemized morality with seven deadly sins and seven correlative virtues. Actually, there were eight deadly sins in the writings of the Eastern monks, but the West modified the list to fit the number seven. In the Book of Proverbs (in the Bible) there is a verse that says, "There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to Him." Of course, moral writers use that verse to support the seven deadly sins idea, although the list in Proverbs doesn't quite match the list popular today.

We also think of the seven sacraments, or as we say, the seven sacramental mysteries. Even within the mysteries, for blessing the oil of the anointing of

to learn that the number seven was not always fixed for the sacraments. Even in the second millennium there were writers with different numbers, though the number seven was fixed by a council in 1215 AD. Before that council, some considered the anointing of a king to be a sacrament, or the profession of a monk.

Although people look for seven things in the scriptures and in the traditions of our Faith, one place that the number seven is explicit in the Bible is in the longest psalm. King David says, "Seven times a day I praise You for Your righteous decrees." The first monks took this rule from the great psalm to mean that they should schedule seven times each day for formal prayers. In fact, Hippolytus enjoined the duty to pray seven times a day on the early Christians around the end of the second century which is over a hundred years before the first monks. Exactly when the seven times should occur was open to interpretation. In a different verse of the same great psalm, King David says, "At midnight I rise to praise you,

pels, there are many times that our Lord prayed, and no specific number can be assigned. There are times when the Gospel tells us that Jesus prayed, but doesn't tell us what He said, and then there are several times when the Gospel tells us His words.

The first time that we hear about Jesus praying is at His Baptism. According to Saint Luke, the skies were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended, and the voice of God was heard, "when Jesus had been baptized and was praying." Saint Luke also tells us that when the crowds grew too great, "He withdrew to the wilderness and prayed." Also, at the beginning of His public ministry, Saint Mark tells us that Jesus got up in the morning before everyone else and went out in the wilderness to pray. Saint Peter and the others went looking for Him, and when they found Him, they said, "Everyone is looking for You." He responded by setting out for other places. In three of the four Gospels, Jesus goes up on a mountain or hill to pray before His great miracle of walking on the water. Speaking of going up in the hills to pray, Saint Luke tells us that Jesus went up to pray all night in the hills, and then when He came down, He appointed the Twelve. That must have been an agonizing night of prayer because He knew the plan of the Father that Judas would hand Him over for His passion and death, and even more painful, that Judas was destined to be lost. As we sing in our hymns for Good Friday, "Take heed, all you lovers of money. Love of silver drove a man to take his own life."

A few chapters later, Saint Luke tells us that Jesus was praying in a secluded place with His disciples when He asked the big question, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter answered, "The Christ of God." About eight days later, Jesus took Peter and James and John up a mountain to pray, and that was when the Transfiguration happened. Some time later, Saint Luke tells us that Jesus was praying and when He finished, the disciples said, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." Then Jesus taught them the "Our Father" or "the Lord's Prayer". Did you know that there are two different versions of the "Our Father" in the Gospels? The version in Saint Matthew is the one everyone knows from the Sermon on the Mount. Almost no one can recite the one in Saint Luke's Gospel by heart.

One of the most solemn mentions of prayer is at the Last Supper. Jesus promises Saint Peter, I have prayed for you so that your faith will not fail, because, Jesus warns, Satan has demanded to have you to sift you like wheat. As Catholics, we are comforted knowing that Jesus prayed for the faithfulness, not only of Peter himself but of his successors. Jesus already told Saint Peter, "Upon this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." Nevertheless, Jesus prayed for Saint Peter in order to actualize His promise. Although every prayer is important, this prayer of Jesus reverberates through thousands of years into our own day. With storms raging in the ocean of modern life, we are careful

The number seven seems to have a mystical significance in our religion. From the beginning, God made the cosmos in seven days. He rested on the seventh day and ordered us to do likewise. It is a strange phenomenon that the most appealing of all the ten commandments, the seventh, is the one that people are the most determined to break. The number seven appears in other places in the scriptures, for example, the seven-branched candlestick that was an important ornament of the tent that contained the Ark of the Covenant. The golden seven-branched candlestick is described in great detail by God in His instructions to Moses. Although the original was lost, no doubt, when the Ark was also lost, the Jews made sure that a replacement was in the Temple up until the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. The Romans memorialized the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem on a victory arch in the city of Rome, and you can see with your own eyes the victory procession including the seven-branched candlestick. In our own churches, we follow many of the artistic prescriptions of the Old Testament, and you probably have a seven-fold candle on or behind the altar in your parish church. When God gave instructions for the construction of the first seven-branched candle stick, many of the details are based on the almond tree. The almond tree also appears elsewhere in scripture, partly because of a pun in Hebrew, and another interesting topic could be the trees in the scriptures—perhaps on another day.

Because of the seven-day week, with a day of rest at the end, God also ordered that the land be allowed to rest after six years of harvest. The Chosen People were commanded to let the land rest for one year out of seven. With our knowledge of chemistry, we can understand now why soil becomes depleted. Our ancestors weren't stupid—they also could see that soil became depleted although they didn't understand the reason. In any case, the people did not follow the admonition of God, and tried to get as much as possible from the land. God says that the reason that he exiled His people to Babylon for seventy years was to make up for the amount of time that they neglected to let the land rest. The Hebrews were not only ordered to let the land rest every seventh year, but after the seventh sabbath year, that is, the forty ninth year, came the Year of Jubilee. So, every fiftieth year was the Jubilee, when debts were forgiven and



"The prayer of a righteous man has great power and effect. Elijah was a man like us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again and the heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit". James 5:16-17

the sick, there are seven epistle readings, seven gospels, and seven prayers after the scripture readings for seven priests. A friend of mine used to joke that the reason Eastern Europeans live such a long time is because it is so difficult to get seven priests together for the anointing. You might be surprised

because of your righteous ordinances." Because of this verse, many Slavs have the custom of getting up in the middle of the night to pray and do prostrations.

Although the number seven is associated with Christian prayers, how many times did Jesus pray? In the four Gos-

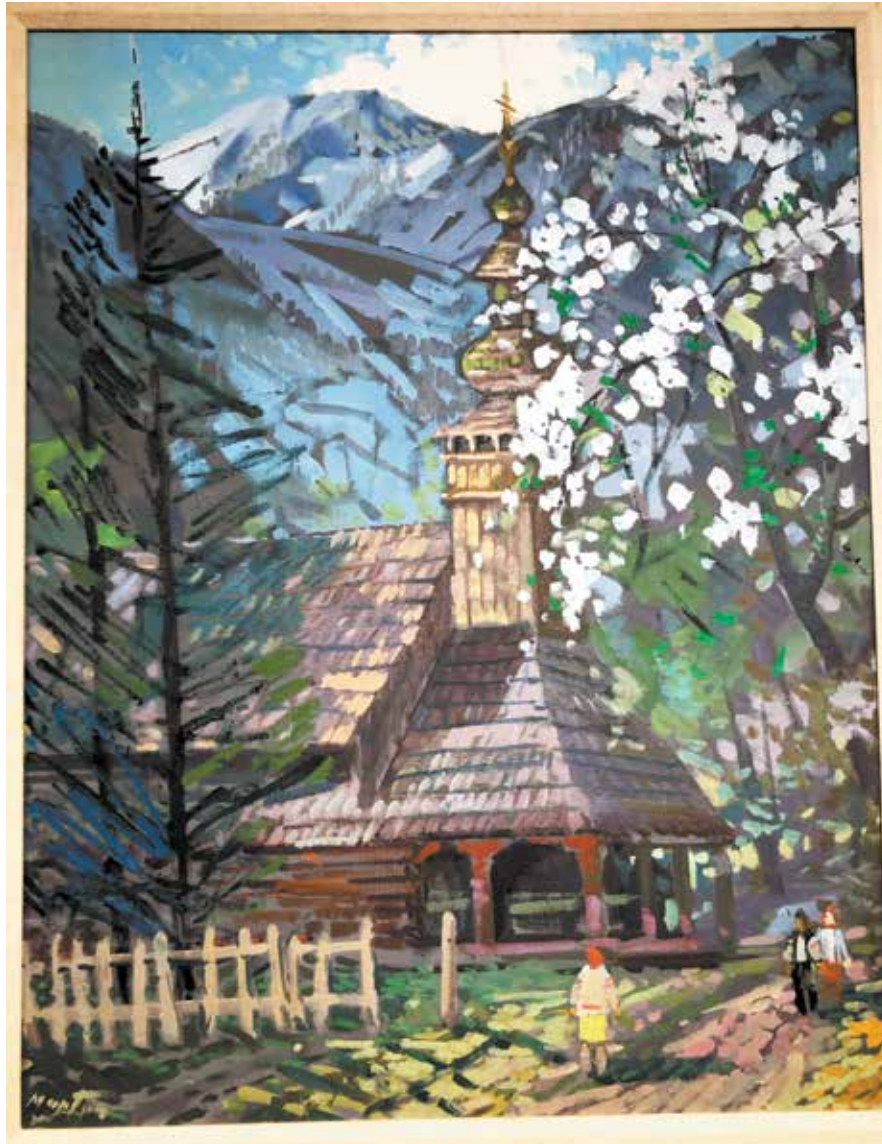


to stay in the boat of Peter and try not to get too close to the side lest we are swept overboard. We have two promises from Jesus that this captain will not lose his ship. There is no promise of salvation if we get on another boat, and even Saint Paul warns of some who “made shipwreck of their faith”.

Although many of the prayers of Jesus must have been painful, the Gospels tell us that He prayed especially during the night before His arrest. He must have thought about each of us and all of our sins for which He would die the next day. In order to get through it, He must have also thought about how very much He loves you and about your beauty and joy in heaven after salvation. Saint Luke the Physician tells us that Jesus was in such agony that He began to sweat drops of blood, and that the Father sent an angel to comfort Him in His sorrow.

Some of the words of Jesus’ prayers in the Garden are recorded by Saint Matthew. In fact, Saint Matthew records them twice, “My Father, if it is possible, let this chalice pass from me, nevertheless, not my will, but your will be done.” And the second time, “My Father, if this cannot pass without my drinking from it, your will be done.” In addition to praying in the Garden, Jesus also spoke to his disciples and said, “Can’t you pray with me for one hour?” It is from these words that the custom came about of praying for one hour in the presence of the Holy Sacrament. Bishop Fulton Sheen did much to promote this practice and I also recommend it to anyone who has the opportunity. Though if you cannot pray in a Church for one hour a day, you can still spend one hour a day with Christ in the Scriptures.

In His final hours, our Lord prayed several times that are recorded in the Scriptures. In His last agony, some of the Lord’s most comforting words are spoken. He said to the repentant thief, “Truly I say to you, this day you will be with Me in paradise.” And Saint Luke also says that He prayed on the cross, “Father, forgive them, they don’t know what they are doing.” If Jesus prayed for our forgiveness on the Cross, what do we have to fear? The last two things that Jesus said are both quotes from the Book of Psalms, from the inspired prayers of His ancestor King David. In two of the Gospels, Saint Matthew and Saint Mark, Jesus quotes from Psalm 21 (22), “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” People who don’t read the scriptures for themselves read this as a cry of despair. But if you read the whole psalm for yourself, you will find something else. The Psalm contains prophetic details about Christ’s passion, including, “They divided my garments among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots.” Even though Jesus only quotes the first lines, He expected His hearers to know the Psalm themselves. After the darkness, Psalm 21(22) opens up into to a world of light and joy. And feasting, too—it is the psalm we quote when we bless our food. After describing the triumph of good over evil, the Psalm concludes, “Posterity shall serve him. Men shall tell of the Lord to the coming genera-



tion and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn.” Indeed, this Psalm is an exuberant prophecy about Jesus’ conquest of death and even of our celebration of the Resurrection now two thousand years later.

In Saint Luke’s Gospel, Jesus also ends His earthly life with a quote from the psalms of his ancestor King David, “Into your hands I commend my spirit.” The rest of the verse says, “you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God.” Even in His dying body, Jesus gave us an example of praying, and especially praying from the Scriptures. King David said, “Seven times a day I will praise you,” and “at midnight I rise to praise you”. Jesus gave us the example of praying and especially praying from the Scriptures until His last breath. His prayers from His last days, can be our prayers throughout our lives as well, “My Father, not My will but Yours be done. And also, “Into your hands, I commend my spirit. You have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God.”

+Kurt Burnett

Left: Faithful at wooden church in the Carpathian Mountains. Oil painting from the Eparchy of Passaic Heritage Center.

### Bishop Kurt Presents New Stipend Campaign to aid Ruthenian Priests in Ukraine

Please use form below to list the name or initials of the person you would like Divine Liturgy offered for. You may also list the intention, such as illness, deceased, or their relationship to you, mother, son etc.

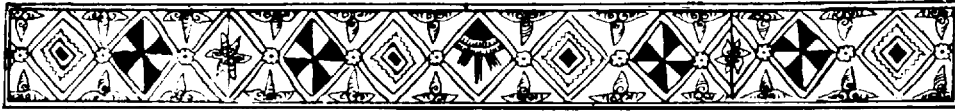
Divine Liturgy to be offered for	Intention (Optional)	Number of Liturgies	Stipend	Total Donation
			X \$20.00	
			X \$20.00	
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			X \$20.00	

Total Enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_ Check # \_\_\_\_\_

**Make checks payable to “Eparchy of Passaic”. The full amount will be sent to a priest in Europe. Mail this sheet and your check to Eparchy of Passaic, 445 Lackawanna Ave, Woodland Park, NJ 07424. You will receive the same form in the mail soon, but you may use this one if you don’t want to wait. NB Stipends are not tax deductible, but you will receive a “Thank You” acknowledgement.**

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Parish: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_





# PEOPLE YOU KNOW

## IN McADOO...

*Saint Michael Church holds Lenten Food Sale*



On Friday, March 22, the parishioners of Saint Michael Byzantine Catholic Church in McAdoo, PA, held a Lenten food sale. The menu included halushki, pirohi, fish sandwiches and delicious baked goods. The food sale was a good opportunity to share the spirit of the Great Fast with their neighbors from surrounding communities. Father Gregory Hosler is the pastor of Saint Michael Parish.

## IN MIAMI...

*Parishioners Pitch-In to Paint Church*

Many members of Saint Basil the Great Church, Miami, FL, gathered during the Great Fast to paint the exterior of the church in preparation for the Feast of the Resurrection. Because most of the parish members helped in some way, the phrase, “many hands, make light work,” came in to play. The administrator of Saint Basil Parish is Father Sal Pignato.



## IN ROSWELL...

*Parishioner Given New Command*

Long-Time Epiphany Parishioner Takes Command of 122nd Regiment (Regional Training Institute)

Dr. John Fuchko, III, his wife Sherie, and their family (twelve children ranging from three to almost 24) are among

the longest-serving parishioners at Epiphany Byzantine Catholic Church in Roswell, GA. John started attending Epiphany at the age of 2 in 1980. His wife, Sherie, is a convert and a current student in the Master of Applied Theology program offered by the Byzantine Catholic Seminary in Pittsburgh, PA.

John has served for almost 22 years in the Georgia Army National Guard and currently is a colonel. He recently took command of the 122nd Regiment (Regional Training Institute) with responsibility for training in military intelligence; signal and ordnance; as well as the state officer candidacy school (OCS) program. This is John's fifth command. He also has two combat deployments and recently served as the Co-Exercise Director for Operation Noble Partner 2022 in the Country of Georgia.

## IN TAYLOR...

*Choral Group Returns*

After a three-year Covid-induced hiatus, the Vespers choral group, under the direction of Professor Steven Dougherty, gave a concert of Slavonic and other Christmas carols at Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church in Taylor, PA, on Sunday, December 18, 2022.

Numerous carols from the Byzantine Catholic tradition were sung as well as favorites from France, Italy, Germany, and England, all sung in their original language.



A packed church greeted the singers in the newly renovated and very beautiful church. A special prayer was sung for our friends in Ukraine especially for the families of Father Eduard Shestak and Pan'i Oksana.

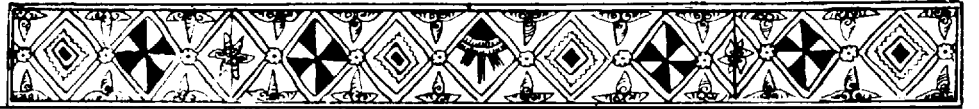
The choral group had 16 members, including the director, the Covalesski Family (Cantor Ric, Joyce, and Alex); the Possanza Family (Riley and Anthony); the Manzano Family (Michael, Maureen, and Maria); the Petterson Family (Roxy and Eric); James Troutman; T.J. Worobe; Trish Ross; Chrissy Pirozzi; and Katie Elliott. The members gathered from the local area, the Philadelphia area, New Jersey, and Nebraska!

The concert was live streamed and can be found in its entirety on the Byzantine Catholic Community of Northeastern Pennsylvania page on Facebook. After the concert, the wonderful parishioners of Saint Mary Parish provided a warm reception with pizza and desserts for all in attendance.





# AROUND THE EPARCHY



## IN TRUMBULL...

*Saint John the Baptist, Trumbull, CT, Begins New Traditions*

**W**hat would you do with 95 pounds of pork, beef, bacon, and lots of garlic, pepper, salt, and paprika? Answer: Make 55 rings of kolbasi – one of our traditional Paschal foods!

A team of six parishioners at Saint John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church, Trumbull, CT, under the guidance of their pastor, Father Gregory Lozinsky and his wife, Pan'i Maria, spent the afternoon of March 30 in the church's kitchen cutting and grinding the meats, adding seasonings along the way, followed by stuffing the casings in preparation for smoking.

None of the team had ever made kolbasi, so this event was truly a learning experience for all! Father Gregory and Pan'i Maria were wonderful teachers. As the ingredients were prepared and the grinders were grinding away, everyone realized how much hard work went into the final product. Yet, there was a still lot of laughter the whole afternoon!



Not only did the kolbasi-making event provide parishioners with a Paschal food for their baskets, but it did provide another opportunity for parishioners and guests of Saint John's to gather together in fellowship. The kolbasi were smoked by another team of "smokers" after the Divine Liturgy on Palm Sunday. It was a beautiful sunny day; and while waiting for the final smoked product, the parish family gathered in good conversation with coffee and dessert before leaving with at least one ring of kolbasi.

A special event for the children of the parish's Eastern Christian Formation (ECF) classes was also held on Palm Sunday. After attending ECF classes, the children participated in an Easter Egg Hunt organized by the Ladies' Guild of Saint John Parish. Approximately 20 children roamed the church's beautiful grounds having lots of fun searching for specially filled eggs to take home.

Both events were great successes.



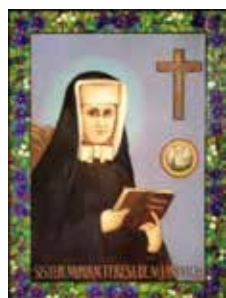
## IN WILLIAMSBURG...

*Parish Holds First 'Men's Day of Reflection'*

**A**scension of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church in Williamsburg, VA, hosted its first "Men's Day of Reflection" on the Feast of the Annunciation. The day of reflection was titled, *Journey to Emmaus: Listening, Loving, and Serving – the Pillars of a Man's Path to Holiness*. The retreat was attended by Ruthenian and Ukrainian Catholics, Roman Catholics, and a Baptist. Michael Bracelin coordinated the retreat, and Father Mark Morozowich, a priest of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and Dean of Theology at Catholic University of America, guided three reflections covering Christ's salvific works, vice, virtue, the sanctification of men, discernment, prayer, confession, Eucharistic life, and a

detailed examination of the Anaphora. The reflections were structured around the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, concelebrated by Father Mark, retreat master, and Father Alex Shuter, Pastor of Ascension Parish, assisted by Reader Adithia Kusno, as well as the Hours prayed by Father Alex and Father Mark and Michael Kostick as Cantor leading the men in attendance. The day of reflection concluded with the opportunity to participate in the Mystery of Reconciliation.

Ascension of Our Lord thanks Father Mark for the gift of his presence on the retreat, and during the following Sunday, when he was present for a much needed extended period of time to offer confession to the parish before being the concelebrant and guest homilist during the Sunday Divine Liturgy.



### First Annual Pilgrimage in Honor Of Blessed Miriam Teresa Demjanovich

Sunday 7 May 2023

Holy Family Chapel of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth  
The Location of Blessed Miriam Teresa's Shrine  
2 Convent Road Morristown, NJ 07960  
Google Map Link: <https://maps.google.com/>

**1:00pm** Praying the four mysteries of the Holy Rosary

Confessions available

**3:00pm** Divine Mercy Chaplet

**4:00pm** Byzantine Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom

Followed by Moleben (prayer service) Intercessions to Blessed Miriam Teresa

Anointing with Holy Oil for healing

Refreshments following



## World Youth Day Pilgrimage to Lisbon

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

OPTION 1: JULY 20 - AUGUST 8, 2022

- COME AND SERVE AS A CHAPERONE FOR AN ENGLISH SUMMER CAMP IN SLOVAKIA
- ENJOY A EUROPEAN ROAD TRIP TO PORTUGAL
- PARTICIPATE AT THE WORLD YOUTH DAYS

PRICE: **\$900** *Preferred*

OPTION 2: AUGUST 1 - AUGUST 8, 2022

- PARTICIPATE ONLY IN THE WORLD YOUTH DAYS AND MISS THE OPPORTUNITY TO SEE VENICE, LOURDES, AND FATIMA

PRICE: **\$450**

**PRICE INCLUDES:**

- MEALS, ACCOMMODATION, ROAD TRIP EXPENSES, AND THE PACKAGE OF THE PILGRIM FOR WYD

**PRICE DOES NOT INCLUDE:**

- AIRFARE (ALTHOUGH WE WILL SUGGEST THE BEST WAY) AND TRAVEL INSURANCE
- EU VISA FOR US CITIZENS\*

\* Beginning January 1, 2023, all U.S. citizens traveling to the 26 Schengen Zone countries will need to register with ETIAS. The information is very new and once we will know details, we will update the information.

RECOMMENDED AGE: 18+ (THOSE BETWEEN 16-18 INTERESTED, PLEASE CONTACT FR. LUKAS MITRO: FRLMITRO@PARMA.ORG)

## 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.



These all-occasion cards are sold in a package of ten. Each card is 4 1/4" x 5 1/2". The proceeds from the sale of the cards benefit the Sisters of Saint Basil.

**Ordering Instructions:**

Complete the order form below. Enclose this form in an envelope with the amount due. Please note that only CHECKS OR MONEY ORDERS in U.S. funds will be accepted for payment.

Questions? Please call 724-439-8644.

Please mail your completed form & check to:  
Sisters of St. Basil the Great Card Shop  
500 W. Main St., P.O. Box 878  
Uniontown, PA 15401

SHIP TO:  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**SHIPPING & HANDLING—UNITED STATES**  
\$6 for orders of \$15.00 or less  
\$7.50 for orders \$15.01-\$35.00  
\$8.50 for orders \$35.01-\$49.99  
\$10.50 for orders \$50.00-\$99.99  
Orders of \$100 or more, add 9%. Additional postage may apply.

**CHECKS/MONEY ORDERS IN US FUNDS ONLY.**  
PA Residents add 6% \_\_\_\_\_  
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## Call for Assembly Presentation Proposals

...Continued from page 1

changed. Where we have developed, where have we fallen short, and what have we learned from these experiences. Evangelization and the different approaches that individual parishes have taken for growth will be presented in this section. In these sessions, we will explore the present parish life in our communities by presenting success stories that can be used as examples for other communities to utilize. Best practices will be explored.

**B) Where are (or where should) we be going?** In these sessions, presentations will focus on what we should be doing as a Church. It is an opportunity to present a vision for the future. This is an opportunity to present the dream of the Byzantine Catholic Church going forward. What can be done that has not been done? The conclusion of this section will discuss the steps to utilize the fruits of this gathering to make the dream a reality.

### How to Submit a Presentation:

- 1) Review the themes and ideas in the following table. Use these suggestions to spark ideas about what you can contribute, but do not limit your thoughts to those presented. If there is something that you believe should be explored, do not hesitate to submit a proposal.
- 2) Present your topic in a short paragraph using the submission form. Explain your topic and how you would like to present it – for example, an individual presenter or a group presentation. The final presentation would be no more than an hour, including Q & A. This may be modified depending on the number of successful submissions. Your presentation may take the form of a breakout session.
- 3) Would you like to present to the clergy, the laity, or both?
- 4) Create a short video (no more than 5 minutes) presenting your topic
- 5) Submit your proposal information form, the video, and a short bio to Fr. Edward Cimbala via email:

Byzantineassembly2023@gmail.com.

The committee will contact you to discuss or clarify your proposal if necessary.

### Themes and Ideas for Topics

- The observance of the Divine Office as well as the Divine Liturgy is necessary for a living, healthy parish and for the survival and thriving of every Church.
- A proposal for recovering an ancient successful ecclesial paradigm: Pre-evangelization, Evangelization, Catechesis, and Mystagogy as a seamless process and the members of the Byzantine Ruthenian Church as missionary disciples.
- The Divine Liturgy as a Tool for Evangelization – The Divine Liturgy as a Missional Act

- The Culture of the Byzantine Ruthenian Catholic Church as a Tool for Evangelization
- Young Adults and their attraction to the Byzantine Catholic Church – Why they long for Liturgy
- Successful Mission Outreach and Parish Development
- Evangelization and the Church Year – the Seasons of Fasting and Feasting a School for Evangelization
- The Liturgy after the Liturgy as a means of developing community
- What is the mission field for the Byzantine Catholic Church in America? Where should we be developing new parishes?
- Principles to be applied to becoming a parish of the future
- Listening to the people in the pews: Closing, Rebuilding and Revitalizing Parishes
- The development of a Byzantine Mission Theology
- A Blueprint for the Growth of the Byzantine Catholic Church in America
- The use of social media for Evangelization

### Timeline:

May 1 Requests for presentations out

June 1 Application deadline - Videos and support materials received

June 15 Committee reviews submissions

June 20 Presenters Notified

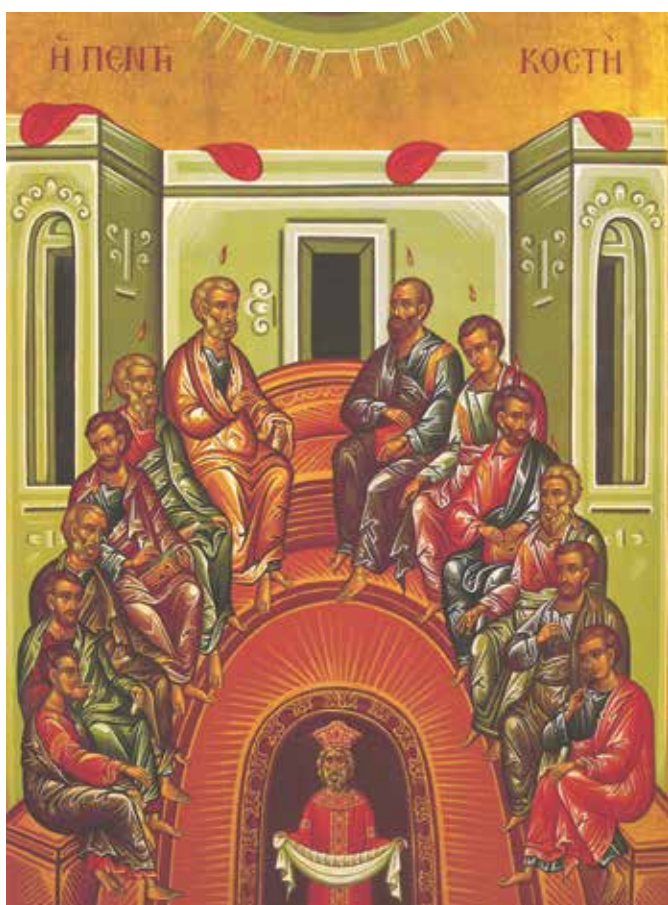
July 1 Full Assembly Scheduled Announced and major promotion begins

### Presenter Compensation:

Presenters will receive a stipend of \$250.00, and their Assembly registration will be covered.

### Have Any Questions?

Please do not hesitate to contact Fr. Ed Cimbala at 212-677-0516 or [fredcimbala@gmail.com](mailto:fredcimbala@gmail.com) if you have any questions or need additional information to aid you in formulating your proposal.



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MAY 28, 2023

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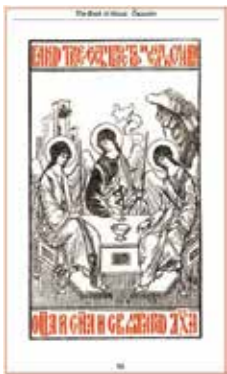


## EASTERN CHRISTIAN PUBLICATIONS ANNOUNCES

### *The Book of Hours* (Časoslov)

This edition of *The Book of the Hours* (Časoslov in Slavonic and *Horologion* in Greek) is an authentic and complete translation of the typical (official) Church Slavonic edition issued in 1950 by the Holy See of Rome for the Ruthenian Churches. The contents, pagination and layout match the original and include:

The Midnight Service	Matins
The Hours	Vespers
Compline	The Canonicon
Troparia During the Year	The Menologion (Troparia of the Saints)



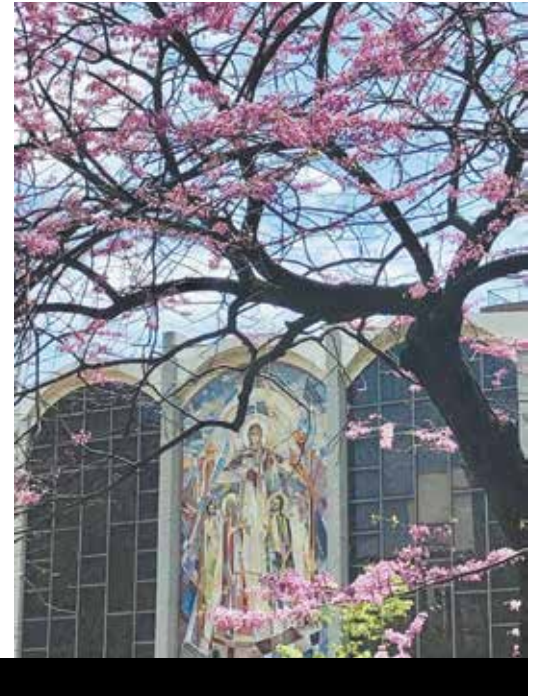
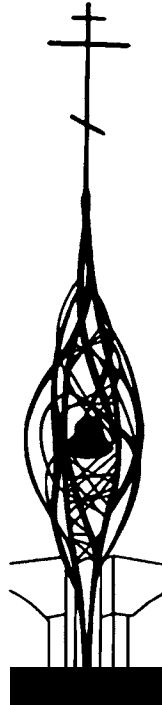
The book is printed in red and black on medium-weight opaque paper, with a black leatherette sewn binding and flexible covers. At 5"x7" and 2" thick, it also matches the original Slavonic edition with approximately 900 pages. The translation has been approved in concordance with the original by Bishop Kurt Burnette of Passaic. Special launch pricing is available at \$60/copy, or \$40/copy for orders of five or more, plus shipping and handling.

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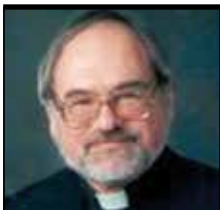


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**Sunday Divine Liturgy**  
**10:00 AM**



## THE BYZANTINE LITURGY

By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD

### WHAT IS THE SACRAMENTAL MYSTERY OF REPENTANCE?

We usually call the sacramental mystery of repentance “confession.” This is because its most obvious feature is the need to approach another human being, specifically a priest, and reveal to him all the ways in which we have sinned – that is, misbehaved, as Christians. This can be very difficult to do, since shame and regret over our actions can be painful. Not all church members use the sacrament of confession, sometimes because it seems too self-demeaning and sometimes because we feel that no other human being has the right to know our inner spiritual life. Likewise, people may have very complicated ideas about how we, as individuals, relate to one another and to God, and about what we call a sin really is.

Many priests today want to revive the sacrament of repentance-confession as a very helpful medicine for our spiritual health. We must first ask the question: what is the sacrament of confession really? In the Gospel of Saint John, after His resurrection, Jesus appeared to his disciples, “He breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.’” (John 20:21-22) (We will discuss the “retaining of sins” in a future article.) We see, then, that God gives the ministry of forgiveness to human beings, answering the objection of the people, “Who but God alone can forgive sins?” (Mark 2:7) However, the apostles and their successors do not forgive sins by any human power, but

only by the gift and grace of the Holy Spirit.

At the same time, this service of forgiveness has taken many forms in the story of the Church. The first and main repentance or turn from sin was baptism. The first era of baptisms were adults, who made the choice by their own free will. As the society became Christian, then most entered the Church by baptism as infants, who had to make a commitment later. In this first era, the sacramental mystery of repentance was meant for those adults who had made the choice for Christ, but later fell away from faith either by apostasy (sometimes because of the threat of torture) or by very serious and (usually) public sin. This was subject to Church discipline, and different areas of the Church had different lists of sins that were subject to public penance, though the most common were apostasy, murder, or adultery. Those who committed these serious crimes unworthy of their Christian baptism were then given one chance to repent again and be forgiven. Penance, then, was rare and public. The sinner had to undergo a long period of time as a penitent, barred from Holy Communion until they had proven that they were truly repentant. As Christianity became the established religion, and the civil penalties for faith disappeared, the general population became less fervent and public penance became too harsh for most. Within a couple of hundreds of years, it disappeared from the people’s faith life.

Though public penance was no longer practiced, that did not mean, of course, that people stopped sinning. However, the repentance for sin took on a new form, taken from the practice of penance in monasteries. Monastics may be defined as people who are seeking the perfection of the Christian life. Since it is difficult to know ourselves through our own efforts, it is necessary to seek the help of others. Those who entered the monastic life, therefore, were expected to have a spiritual guide, a spiritual father, or a spiritual mother. Saint Paul called himself a spiritual father: “Even if you should have countless guides to Christ, yet you do not have many fathers, for I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel.” (1 Corinthians 4:15) A spiritual child was expected to open themselves completely to their director, so that faults could be identified and rooted out. Monasteries had a daily confession of spiritual failings, called sometimes a “chapter of faults,” to deal with personal community flaws and weaknesses. Many lay people also imitated the monks and sought spiritual guides, who may or may not have been ordained, but who had a reputation for holiness, to direct them in their lives of faith.

In time, this monastic practice was accepted by the Church as a method of dealing with the sins of people. Penance was no longer public; the penitent did not have to show repentance before the community, but only confess his or her sins to a spiritual father. Since this now became an official act

of the Church, the confessors had to be ordained priests. The confession was private, and the penance done was also private. A person did not have to confess all sins, but only those that were very serious, called in the West “mortal” or “deadly” sins because they killed the life of faith received in baptism. The frequency of confession varied. In the Catholic Church, one had to confess at least once a year, and that in the paschal time. This was required, however, only if one had a grave sin, called “mortal.” At the same time, many theologians felt that one could not go for a long time without committing a grave sin, though this, of course, depends on how one defines a “grave” sin, which we will discuss in a future article. In the East, it was expected that one confessed at least in the four fasting periods, and before receiving Holy Communion, which had become less and less frequent.

This new form of penance, based on monastic practice became, the new form of the sacramental mystery of repentance. It replaced public penance for sins that had made us unworthy of Holy Communion. At the same time, it also became a tool for spiritual direction, and many people confessed much more often, to help them in their spiritual growth. Confession, then, now has two uses, and while the confession of grave sins is required by Church law, many avail themselves of confession as a way to grow in faithful practice. **ECL**





# LIFE, LOVE, AND THE HUMAN PERSON

By Ann M. Koshute, MTS

## FASTING TOWARD RESURRECTION

Originally published in the March 2023 issue of *Horizons*, the official publication of the Eparchy of Parma. Reprinted with permission.

I remember the day of my wedding as if it happened yesterday. My father escorted me from the church basement to the landing where my mother waited for us. The three of us locked arms as they walked me to the threshold of the church's entrance. There, at the open door, stood Keith, my husband-to-be, and Father Frank, my brother. My parents kissed me, and then Keith and I faced Father Frank, exchanged rings, and entered the church together. Here, at the culmination of twenty-one months of courtship and engagement, we stood on the threshold of something wonderful and mysterious: our new life together. As we processed down the aisle, the cantor chanted the words of Psalm 128: "Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the recesses of your house. Your sons like olive shoots around your table" (v.3). As we celebrated that day with our friends and family, we could not have known that this joyful verse would later ring hollow; the "fruitful vine" God had planted in our marriage would grow and blossom from the wood of a cross.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, approximately 1 in 5 couples struggle with infertility. This cross, experienced by couples like me and Keith, is one that many people – even those in the Church – do not fully appreciate. Infertility is isolating, and couples often face intrusive questions and incessant offers of "advice" from family members, friends, and even strangers. Couples may feel this isolation most intensely in their parishes, where they are frequently surrounded by families with

children. They often feel as if they don't measure up to the "Catholic ideal" of family and may even be misperceived by some to be avoiding children by using contraceptives.

While the external pressures that a couple experiences can be great, sometimes the internal pressures are more damaging. Communication may falter as husband and wife each uniquely process and deal with their complex emotions, the effects of fertility treatments, and the grief accompanying negative pregnancy tests. The weight of this cross has the potential either to bring them closer together, or to tear them apart. Similarly, their relationship with God may suffer as their hopeful prayers for the gift of a child become desperate, and supplication yields to negotiation. The couple rightly prays to God for their needs, but when their prayers for a child seem to go unheard, they may believe God has abandoned them, is punishing them, or perhaps simply does not care. The impact on their relationships, the negative self-talk and emotions, and the great trial of wondering where God is in all of it – these are real aspects of this suffering. Infertility is a heavy and painful cross, but the couples who bear it are powerful witnesses to the Holy Mystery of Marriage as a way of holiness, and a sign of contradiction in a world where marriage and family are under attack.

In our experience of over a decade struggling with infertility in our marriage (and through Springs in the Desert, the infertility ministry I co-

founded), the pain has sometimes been overwhelming, but so has the grace we have received. This is precisely what God promises us, as He said when Saint Paul begged to have the "thorn" in his flesh removed: "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." (1 Cor 12:9). Every one of us has a "thorn" that causes us pain or disturbs our peace; the what and the why are mysteries known to God alone. As hard as it often is to see or believe, the "thorns" piercing our hearts are a means by which God unleashes great graces, mercy, and gifts. This has certainly been the case for me and Keith; infertility has been a heavy cross, but one that has enriched our marriage and our spiritual lives. Infertility has taught us that the "desert" of childlessness that we experience is real but does not define us or our marriage. Our identities are not "infertile couple," but beloved children of God, chosen by Him to be radically available to each other, and to family, friends, and everyone we encounter. This radical availability is not equivalent to having children – nor is it a substitute – but it is a real and necessary way of fruitfulness to which we have the honor to be called.

One of the greatest gifts of infertility has been the realization that fruitfulness – that command which God gave to humanity in the beginning (cf. Genesis 1:28) – is the common call of every Christian. Regardless of our state in life – whether married or single, priest, religious or laity – every one of us has the opportunity and the task to be life-giving. Some of us will have the

great privilege of co-creating with God through the gift of children. Thankfully, however, our capacity to be life-giving is not exhausted in our ability to have children. We give life to others when we are compassionate, generous, and offer hospitality and friendship. When we speak well of others and avoid gossip, when we listen or offer our help to another even though it may be inconvenient for us, and when we make even small sacrifices for the good of another – these are all moments of creativity, because they "give birth" to God's love in the world.

The crowns placed on our heads, joining Keith and I in marriage, were made from periwinkle leaves and dotted with babies' breath; they were crowns lush and in full bloom. The wedding crowns symbolize the priesthood of the spouses, making their home a little church where God dwells; their kingship, giving them stewardship over their resources, each other, and their children; and martyrdom, wherein the couple dies to self for the other, and becomes a witness to the love of God in the world. We preserved our crowns, though they are now fragile and must be handled with care. Perhaps in their present condition, and influenced by the suffering of infertility, they take on new symbolism: they serve as a reminder to handle each other with care, so that our love will continue to blossom into the "fruitful vine" that God has planted in our marriage. **ECL**



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## SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

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

### STIRRING UP THE WATERS

The *Pentecostarion* describes the Paralytic as “an unburied dead man.” He is stuck in his illness, prone to complain, and probably tempted to despair. There is also a type of spiritual paralysis that the Lord Himself condemns. The visions Saint John recorded in the book of Revelation include letters to seven local Churches in the vicinity of Ephesus (the west coast of what is now Turkey). To the Church at Laodicea the Lord says: “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. So then, because you are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of my mouth” (Revelation 3:15-16). This image may hint at the hot springs located at Pamukkale near Laodicea, which are still a major tourist attraction. These mineral-rich warm waters are wonderful to soak in but would be nauseating to drink.

Laodicea boasted banks, textile works, a medical school, and lots of wealth. The Lord convicts the Church there: “Because you say ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked” (Revelation 3:17). Unlike the Paralytic who complains that he has

nothing and no one, the Laodiceans boast that they have everything and need nothing. The Paralytic is stuck in his depression; the Laodiceans are stagnant and smug in their comfort. Both need to be stirred up. To both, in different ways, Jesus says, “Sin no more.”

Much about life in the developed world tempts us to measure our happiness by what we possess and consume. Material comfort can give us a false sense of security, make us complacent, and dull our ability to cultivate a spiritual life at all. “Churchgoers” are not immune from this attitude, as the letter to Laodicea shows.

It’s worth stopping to examine just what belonging to a parish means to you. Sunday worship can become a comfortable routine that makes us feel good. How upset would it make you if the time or location of “your” Liturgy were to change? What about holy days, vespers and matins, and other devotional services? These are much less convenient for many people; do you participate in such “optional” and maybe even inconvenient worship at all? How would you handle a visitor occupying “your” pew or “your” table at

Sunday fellowship? Have you ever invited someone to join you for worship? Have you ever greeted a newcomer at the Liturgy or made them welcome at a social event? If you’ve never volunteered to help at a parish event, why not? If you’re one of the “regulars” who “do everything” at your parish, have you reached out to invite others in or made new volunteers welcome?

Fasting can become a pleasant routine, a chance to enjoy tried and true ethnic favorites or to explore new meatless recipes. Do you fast with a spirit of repentance? If you do not observe the weekly and seasonal fasts, what excuse do you give yourself: “material things like food don’t really matter” or “I just don’t like any of those foods” or, most tellingly, “I’m just set in my ways”?

When was the last time you made a sacramental confession of sins? Did you take time to actually examine your real life or simply recite a few ritual sins like missed prayers, missed Liturgies and a little gossip? If it’s been a while, what excuse do you give yourself: “I just tell my sins to God” or “I’m no worse than anybody else” or “I’m too old to sin”?

How do you decide how much to offer back to God? Is it the same amount you gave ten years ago? How does it compare with your phone plan or your cable bill or the price of an evening out? How do you offer up your time, your attention, your skills, your resources, and your money to charitable works? If you do not reach out in charity, what excuse do you give yourself: “Nobody ever did anything for me” or “Charity begins at home” or “I don’t have much to share” or “what good will it do”?

Your honest answers to these questions may point out a few areas where the waters of your Baptism need to be stirred up. Our relationship with Christ in His Church can become stagnant. Perhaps, instead, you may be inspired to help stir someone else up by good example or a friendly invitation. Negative experiences, difficulties, illness, or death can shock us into a deeper reliance on God. Why shouldn’t the joyous season of Pascha and the possibilities it holds out to us stir up our faith, our hope, and our love? **ECL**

## SCHOOL OF PRAYER

Father G. Scott Boghossian



### SPIRITUAL WARFARE

A couple of new movies, *Nefarious*, and *The Pope’s Exorcist*, focus on the devil and exorcism. I have no interest in seeing either movie. All we need to know about the devil is in Sacred Scripture and the Tradition of the Church.

The devil and evil spirits are real. Jesus and the Apostles cast out demons. The Church continues to expel evil spirits today. At every baptism, the priest prays prayers of exorcism over the catechumen. Many Catholic eparchies and dioceses have a designated exorcist to deal with the more severe cases of demonization.

Scripture and Tradition assume that every believer has to deal with the devil and evil spirits. The final petition of the “Our Father” is a prayer against the devil. “Deliver us from evil” may just as validly be translated as “deliver us from the evil one.”

The devil wants to get us into mortal sin and drag us to hell. He is a tempter, a deceiver, a liar, and he is subtle. “Now the serpent was more subtle (crafty, shrewd, cunning) than any of the beasts of the earth which the Lord God made” (Gen. 3:1)

Don’t expect impossible bodily contortions, split pea soup, or diabolical levitation. Those things may happen, but even experts admit they are extremely rare. The real battleground is the mind and the evil one attacks primarily by suggesting evil thoughts and temptations. So, fight, resist, and “take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5).

Jesus came to earth to defeat the devil. “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil” (1 Jn. 3:8). We pray, “O God of spirits and all flesh, you trampled death, **broke the power of the devil**, and granted life to your world.”

By the death and resurrection of Christ, Satan has been defeated. On His way to the Cross, Jesus said, “Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.” (Jn. 12:32). “And having disarmed the powers and authorities (demonic forces), He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross” (Col. 2:15). Jesus Christ destroyed the power of the devil. “It is finished!” (Jn. 19:30).

Even though defeated, the devil and his crowd still try to cause trouble. Only

when Jesus returns in glory will Satan be thrown into that “everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mt. 25:41). “The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever” (Rev. 20:10).

Until then, “be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith” (1 Pt. 5:8, 9).

“Woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!” (Rev. 12:12)

Saint Paul tells the Church in Ephesus, “We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places (the spiritual realm)” (Eph. 6:12).

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (Js. 4:7). When the devil comes

around, resist him. Say no to him. He will flee from you. He is a defeated foe.

Use your spiritual weapons: “For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds” (2 Cor. 10:4). “Take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one” (Eph. 6:16). See evil thoughts as the flaming darts of the devil. Block their influence with faith and prayer.

“Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph. 6:17). Use the Word of God as your weapon. The Fathers of the Desert used Psalms and other biblical texts to rebut the devil’s suggestions (*logismoi*). Learn some Psalms and Bible verses to put the devil to flight. See Psalm 91. Find verses contrary to whatever temptations plague you, and say, “Away with you, Satan! for it is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only Him.’” (Mt. 4:10).

Stay close to God, live a holy life, call on the Name of Jesus, invoke the protection of the Theotokos, and “the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet” (Rm. 16:20). As for the latest movies, don’t bother. **ECL**



# SEASONAL REFLECTIONS

Father Ronald Hatton



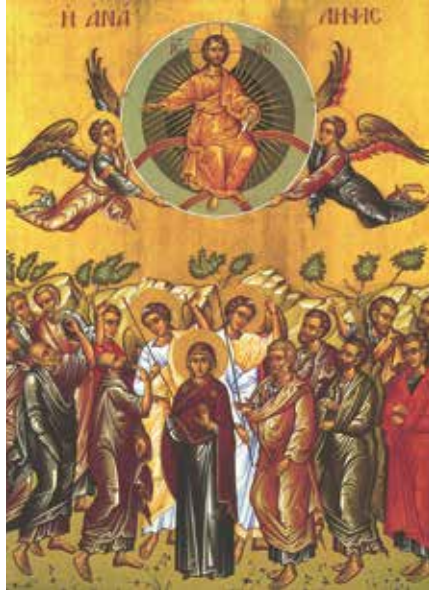
## BE EXALTED ABOVE THE HEAVENS, O GOD!

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

I am reading through all the stichera for Vespers and Matins for the feast of the Ascension of our Lord, and I am overwhelmed at the beauty of these hymns given to us. As I read, I am filled with love for our Lord, and His love for Mankind, shown in His Passion, Resurrection, Ascension, and sending down to us the Holy Spirit.

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

“O loving Jesus, while You lived on earth, You were God inseparable from the Father, and You truly shared our



Icon of the Ascension of Our Lord

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

For some, this part of the Paschal season, the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, is very difficult to understand

or accept. We believe that Christ physically died and rose in the flesh to conquer sin and death for our salvation. We are caught up in crying out “Christ is risen” for forty days after Easter; most homilies for this time are centered on, or at least refer in some way to, the Resurrection. But, come the Feast of the Ascension, we start to lose that sense of “foregone conclusion.” Many years ago, I was in a conversation with a non-Catholic professor who taught seminarians at the theological seminary attached to the college I attended, and at one point he stated, “I can’t believe that the last thing the disciples saw of Jesus was the bottoms of His feet.” I was so taken aback that someone who was teaching future ministers did not believe in the physical ascension of our Lord that I had no answer for him. I believe that if we deny that Christ physically “ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father,” (cf. the Profession of Faith), we deny His Incarnation as surely as if we denied His physically taking flesh from the Virgin at His birth, or truly and physically rising from the dead on the third day. Yes, our finite minds cannot picture heaven, the throne, His physically being lifted from the sight of the disciples, and taking His seat in heaven, yet we know by faith that it is true. The “how” is beyond our understanding, but we believe it to be true, just as we believe that He was born, taught us, suffered for us, and rose from the dead for us. We see it in His encounter with the two disciples at Emmaus. We see it

in His appearance to Mary Magdalene at the Tomb. We see it in His appearance to the Ten and, eight days later, in telling Thomas to touch the nail prints in His hands and to place his hand into His side. “And he [John] who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe.” (John 19:35)

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



## “MAKING THE CITY A CHURCH”

Byzantine Catholic Seminary’s Saints Cyril and Methodius Lecture Series to be Livestreamed May 10, 2023

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. Baldwin, 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 College of the Holy Cross; an M.Div. from

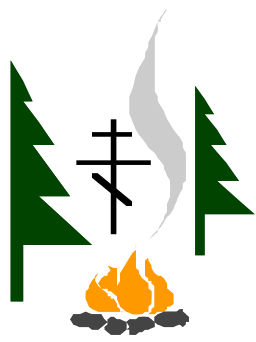
Weston School of Theology, and M.A., M.Phil, and PhD from Yale University.

Father Baldwin 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 Character 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.





# 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. Salnick, 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.*

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

## 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 13  
Pilgrimage Coordinator Father Michael Salnick

### Family Day 2023

Saturday, August 12  
Camp Director/Retreat Master Father Andrii Dumnych

## PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY LAND & JORDAN 11 DAYS: JANUARY 21 - 31, 2024

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## CARPATHO-RUSYN SOCIETY

MANIFESTING CARPATHO-RUSYN CULTURE AND HISTORY

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

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

Visit our website at [www.c-rs.org](http://www.c-rs.org) and click on "Get Involved" to become a member. For more information contact: Bonnie Burke, Southeast Coordinator at [bb@c-rs.org](mailto:bb@c-rs.org) or call 440-729-2045.

## 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

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## UPCOMING EPARCHIAL AND PARISH EVENTS

### MAY, 2023

- 7 Sunday of the Samaritan Woman  
*Fifth Paschal Sunday*
- 14 Sunday of the Man Born Blind  
*Sixth Paschal Sunday\* Mother's Day*
- 18 Holy Ascension of Our Lord  
*Holy Day of Obligation\* Chancery closed*
- 21 Sunday of the Fathers of the First Six Ecumenical Councils  
*Seventh Paschal Sunday*
- 27 Fifth All Souls' Saturday
- 28 Pentecost  
*The Descent of the Holy Spirit*
- 29 Pentecost Monday  
*Simple Holy Day \* Memorial Day*  
*Chancery closed*

### JUNE, 2023

- 4 Sunday of All Saints
- 18 Third Sunday after Pentecost  
*Father's Day*

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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