



# EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

Official Publication of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic

VOL. LX, NO. 4

April 2024

## CHRIST IS RISEN! INDEED HE IS RISEN!



### BISHOP KURT'S PASCHAL MESSAGE

*Pastoral Reflections of Bishop Kurt*



## O HAPPY TOMB

*Reprinted from April 2016*

At the beginning of our Great Fast, we were disturbed by the words of our Judge, "Whatsoever you did to the least of these little ones, you did to me!" And then on Forgiveness Sunday, even more disturbing, we were reminded of Christ's words, "Unless you forgive each other from the bottom of your hearts, your heavenly Father will not forgive you." As we spent more than forty days contemplating our sins, and God's perfection, who can hold up his head? Who can look forward to judgment?

As we travel through the Great Fast, it seems that the standards become higher with each Sunday, from the first Sunday of the True Faith, to the Sunday of the Ladder of Ascent, to the remarkable repentance of Saint Mary of Egypt. And no matter how hard we try during Lent, we always seem to fall short of the standards set for us by tradition and by our own desire for perfection.

But then we come to Holy Week, and everything gets better, when we remember that we don't save ourselves. On Last Judgment Sunday, Our Lord admonishes us to feed the hungry, but we are the ones who hunger for life, and this week He makes His own flesh into food that gives eternal life to our souls and consolation. He admonishes us to give drink to the thirsty, but this week He gives us His own blood to drink for the cleansing of sins. He tells us to clothe the naked, but then He takes away our shame by hanging naked on the cross. He tells us to visit the sick,

but it is when we are sick that we experience divine visitation, as Our Lord comes to comfort us. As Saint Matthew says, He cured all their afflictions: the sick, those in intractable pain, the possessed, the lunatics, and the paralyzed.

Jesus admonishes us to visit the prisoners, but the prison of sin is our own hearts, carrying a lifetime of sins both deliberate and accidental, a lifetime of injuries and regrets and selfishness, a prison of envy and bitter unforgiveness. And Our Lord comes into our hearts, our jail, and announces freedom to the captives and breaks the chains and loosens the bonds, "Come out into the light! Your sentence is finished! You are free!"

After Adam sinned, when he heard God walking in the garden he was afraid and ashamed and hid from his own Creator, but after Jesus is laid in the tomb, when Adam hears Jesus walking in the underworld, he is overcome with happiness and rushes to meet Him, his fear and shame left behind. When the body of Jesus lies in the grave, remarkable things happen. The stone and the grave were hewn from rock by human hands, and Joseph a mortal man conceals God in a tomb, then as the earth embraces the body of her immortal Creator, she quakes and trembles with fear, waking up the dead from their slumber, and the centurion announces, "This was truly the Son of God!"

When creation saw its Creator lying in a tomb, how could it hold back its grief? The sun and moon clothed themselves in black garments of mourning, the ground shook, and rocks were split in two. When the armies of angels, and the great leader of the heavenly hosts saw God hanging naked and bleeding on the cross, how could they restrain themselves from action, how could they control their anger? But wait, I will show you something more remarkable than this.

When Adam slept, Eve came from his side, and they brought death into the world and all our sorrows, but when Jesus lay in the tomb, eternal life flowed from His side, blood and water, cleansing baptism and the precious drink of everlasting life. Hell held all of us in fear for thousands of years, but when Jesus walked in the underworld, Hell was afraid and immediately gave up its prisoners. Death itself, the ruler of this world, was annihilated by the Creator of Life. As it says in the Scriptures, "Do not bring death by the error of your life, nor bring on destruction by the works of your hands, because God did not make death, and He does not delight in the death of the living.... the dominion of Hades is not on earth. For righteousness is immortal."

O happy tomb, to receive the Creator in your peaceful embrace. O happy tomb, to give rest to the Divine Flesh on the seventh day, the sabbath of all sabbaths. O happy tomb, that the King lay upon you. O happy tomb, that touched the flesh of Jesus. O happy, happy tomb, but happier still to release Him in the Resurrection on the third day!



*Icon of the Resurrection from the Eparchy's Heritage Museum, Woodland Park, NJ*

+Kurt Burnett





## FATHER +JOHN ZEYACK ENTERS ETERNAL REST

May 16, 1939 – March 11, 2024

NJ, on May 28, 1939, by Father Desederius Simcoe.

Discerning a vocation to the priesthood, he entered Saints Cyril and Methodius Byzantine Catholic Seminary in Pittsburgh, PA, and later attended Theological College in Washington, DC. He received a Licentiate in Sacred Theology and an MA in Eastern Catholic Theology from the John XIII Center.

He was ordained to the Diaconate on August 30, 1964, by Bishop Stephen J. Kočisko at Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church in Trenton, NJ. On March 19, 1965, he was ordained to the Priesthood of Jesus Christ at the Cathedral of Saint Michael the Archangel, Passaic, NJ, by Bishop Stephen J. Kočisko.

During the course of his years of priestly ministry, Father +John served the faithful at Saint Michael Cathedral

in Passaic, NJ; Holy Spirit Byzantine Catholic Church in Binghamton, NY; Saint Basil Byzantine Catholic Church in Miami, FL; Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church in Danbury, CT; Saint Thomas the Apostle Byzantine Catholic Church in Rahway, NJ; Saint Ann Byzantine Catholic Church in Harrisburg, PA; and Saint George Byzantine Catholic Church in Linden, NJ.

In addition to his parochial assignments, over the years Father +John also served as professor at Blessed Theodore Romzha Seminary in Uzhorod, Ukraine; the Eparchial Representative of the Byzantine Catholic Church at the National Catechetical Directory; an Eparchial Consultor; the Director of Continuing Education for Clergy; the Eparchial Director of Religious Education; Executive Director of the Office of Religious Education; and Director of the Eparchial Presbyteral Council.

Father +John was predeceased by his brother +George; his sister, +Bertha; his brother, +Michael; his brother, +Thomas (and +Ruth); his sister, +Martha (and +Daniel Opielski), and brother-in-law, +Jack Chumar. He is survived by his sister, Irene Chumar; his sister, Bernice (and William) Terwillinger; his brother, Albert (and Awatif) Zeyack; sister-in-law, Mary Zeyack; and many nieces and nephews, including Susan Terwillinger.

Funeral Services were held on Sunday, March 17, 2024, at Saint Thomas the Apostle Byzantine Catholic Church, 1407 St. Georges Ave, Rahway, NJ.

*"Well done, my good and faithful servant... Come, share your master's joy!" (MT23)*

Father +John Zeyack, 84, a retired priest of the Eparchy of Passaic, fell asleep in the Lord on Monday, March 11, 2024, at Hackensack Meridian Medical Center in Brick, NJ.

The son of Michael Zeyack and Mary Soltis, Father +John was born on May 16, 1939, in Trenton, NJ. He was baptized and chrismated at Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church, Trenton,

## SISTER +AGNES HERBENICK ENTERS INTO THE FULLNESS OF LIFE

Eager to complete her life's journey, Sister Agnes Herbenick (formerly Sister Stephen) was welcomed home by the Lord on Saturday afternoon, March 2, 2024, at Mt. Macrina Manor. The Manor was the last place of Sister's active ministry, and it was from there that she took the final steps into God's Kingdom. Her passing is felt deeply by all staff and residents alike, to whom she ministered as the pastoral care director for several years with great love and fidelity.

Sister Agnes was born in Lyndora, PA, the daughter of the late John and Mary (Katana) Herbenick. She entered the Sisters of Saint Basil from Saint John Byzantine Catholic Church in Lyndora, PA, on October 1, 1958, and made her Final Profession of Vows on August 22, 1964.

As a Sister of Saint Basil, Sister Agnes devoted 50 years of her life to the ministry of education. It was a ministry that she enjoyed, and this was evident in the energy and good humor she brought to her students.

Throughout these 50 years of teaching, Sister Agnes ministered in the eparchies of Pittsburgh, Parma, and Passaic with a joy and bright spirit that was evident.

As it became apparent that the Lord would soon call her home, she had the opportunity to speak with a few family members. To one in particular, whose tears were apparent, she said, "Please don't cry. This is what I've been waiting for my whole life." Even through the journey of death, Sister Agnes continues to teach all of us and model the grace and gentle spirit that were characteristics of her life as a Sister of Saint Basil.

Sister Agnes loved to laugh and found humor in the most mundane things. She had a love of life, a love of her community, and a love for her family. As one of fourteen children, she had many nieces and nephews and grandnieces and nephews. She faithfully acknowledged birthdays, holidays, and celebrations throughout the year. She kept in touch with so many, and even as she became weaker, she desired to stay in touch via a greeting card or text. She loved her family very much, and they her.

In his homily at the Divine Liturgy, Father Andrew Summerson drew from the following troparion for a woman-martyr:

"O Jesus, your lamb ... cries out to you with great love. O my Bridegroom, I long for you in great pain. I long for you, and in baptism, I am buried with you. I suffer for your sake in order to reign with you. I die for you in order to live in you. Accept me as an immaculate victim since I am immolated for your love."

How appropriate that Sister's parents chose to name their youngest child "Agnes" since this name became a fitting description for her life as expressed in this troparion. We can place Sister Agnes' name before each phrase, which rings true for everyone who shared her life. Now, it remains for us to pray the last phrase, "Through her intercession, O Merciful One, save our souls."

Sister Agnes was preceded in death by her parents and many siblings: John, Michael, Stephen, William, Joseph, George,



Paul, Frank, Mary Stanko, Margaret, Ann, Helen Villani, and Andrew. In addition to the members of her community, she is survived by many devoted nieces, nephews, and their children.

Relatives and friends were received at the Monastery on Monday, March 4, from 3:30 to 6:30 p.m. Metropolitan William celebrated the Funeral Divine Liturgy on Tuesday, March 5, in the Monastery Chapel. Concelebrants were Father Andrew Deskevich, Father Jerome Botsko, the Monastery Chaplain, and Father Andrew Summerson, a former student of Sister Agnes at Saint Mary School in Cleveland, OH. Father James A. Spon-tak was in attendance.

Interment followed in the Dormition Section of Mount Macrina Cemetery.



### From the Office of the Bishop

Very Reverend Edward Higgins is appointed as Syncellus for Religious, effective March 9, 2024

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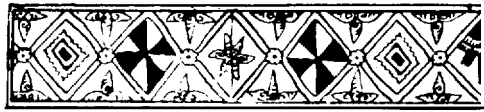
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# PEOPLE YOU KNOW AROUND THE EPARCHY

## IN PERTH AMBOY...

### Parish Celebrates Fashengy

Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church, Perth Amboy, NJ, celebrated a Fashengy on Sunday, February 11, 2024. Father Vasil Remitskyi assists Father Ed Cimbala, parish administrator, in serving Saint Nicholas Parish.



Above: Parishioner with Father John Zec, Right: Pan'i Mariia, Mariska, and Father Vasyl Remitskyi



## IN SOUTH FLORIDA...

Gifts abound in South Florida parishes!

Saint Basil the Great Byzantine Catholic Church, Miami, FL, and Our Lady Of The Sign, Coconut Creek, FL, received wonderful Christmas gifts, when Father Martin Vavrak and his family moved to South Florida and became the parish priest. This was an answer to years of prayers from the South Florida churches.

Since arriving in South Florida, Father Martin and his family have inspired and generated great enthusiasm in the two parishes. One parishioner exclaimed, "We are ecstatic because we have 'our priest!'"

One of Father Martin's first messages was: We are building one strong, healthy parish family. We are not lost sheep that are pursuing individual interests. We must work together to build up our parish life as we share our journey to eternal life.

On the Sunday of Zacchaeus, the South Florida parishes received another special gift when three of Father Martin's friends visited and concelebrated the Divine Liturgy together. They included: Father Dušan Nemeč, Father Roman Dominik Palečko, and



Father František Conka, Slovak Roman Catholic priests of the Oratory of Saint Philip Neri, New York. Our voices were elevated and our prayers ascended to heaven like incense and an evening sacrifice.

We are thankful for the priests who drove many hours each weekend for several years to serve our South Florida parishes: Father Sal Pignato (former administrator), Father Vincent Brady, Father Frank Hanincik, and Father Michael Kane, who was the pastor of Our Lady Of The Sign for nearly 40 years.



Traveling to the Pocono's? Visiting Kalahari Water Park?  
 Come Worship With Us At:  
**St Nicholas of Myra Byzantine Catholic Church**  
 2121 Commerce St (Commerce St & Rt 940)  
 Pocono Summit, Pa  
 Divine Liturgy Schedule:  
 Pascha-Oct 31<sup>st</sup> Sat 5 PM/Sun 10 AM  
 Nov 1<sup>st</sup>-Pascha Sat 4 PM/Sun 10 AM  
 Eve of Holydays 6 PM

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# 1924 — Centennial — 2024

## Establishment of the Byzantine Ruthenian Church Exarchate in the United States



### Most Reverend Basil Takach, D.D.

First Byzantine-Ruthenian Bishop in the United States

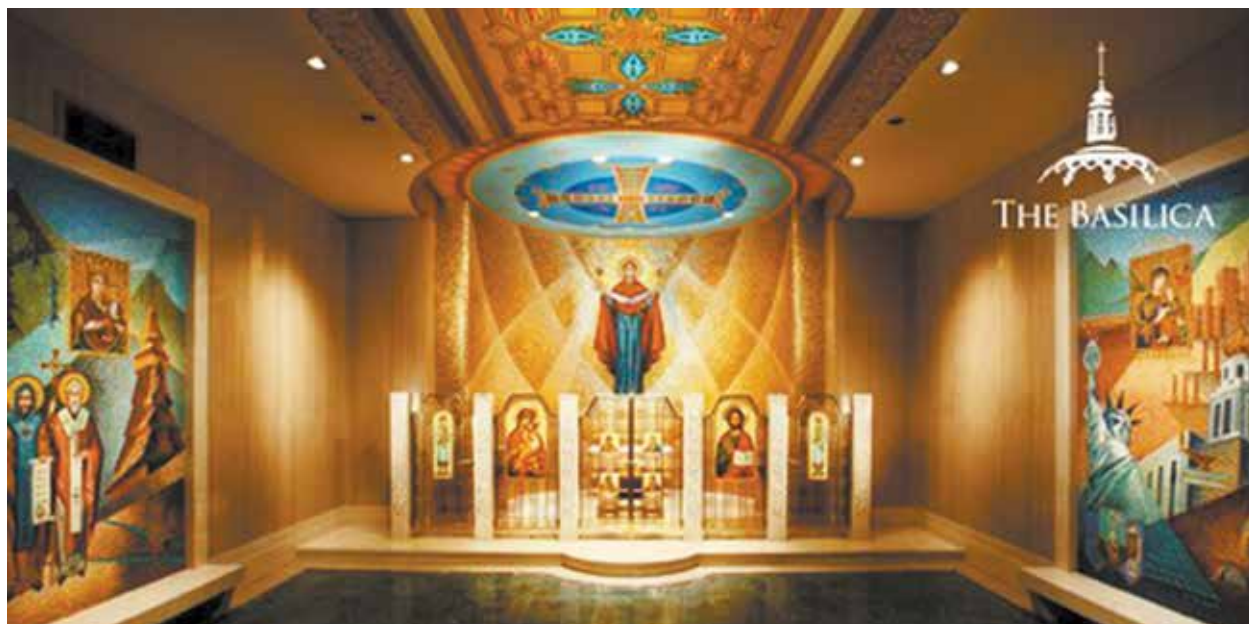
Ruthenian Exarchate Established May 8, 1924

Pope Pius XI appointed Father Basil Takach as Bishop for United States May 20, 1924

Bishop Basil Takach Episcopal Ordination, Pentecost Sunday, June 15, 1924,

Saint Athanasius Church, Rome, Italy

Bishop Takach arrived at New York Harbor August 13, 1924, on the liner RMS Mauretania and offered a Moleben of Thanksgiving at Saint Mary of the Protection Church, New York City





# The Dual Anniversaries

1924 — Centennial — 2024

Establishment of the  
Byzantine Ruthenian Church Exarchate  
in The United States

1974 — Golden Anniversary — 2024

Dedication of the Byzantine Ruthenian Chapel,  
Washington, DC

Dedication of the Byzantine Ruthenian Church  
in The United States

To The Protection of the Mother of God

Jubilee Weekend Celebration

October 12-13, Washington, DC—Annandale, VA



## LECTOR JACK FIGEL RECEIVES ECUMENICAL AWARD

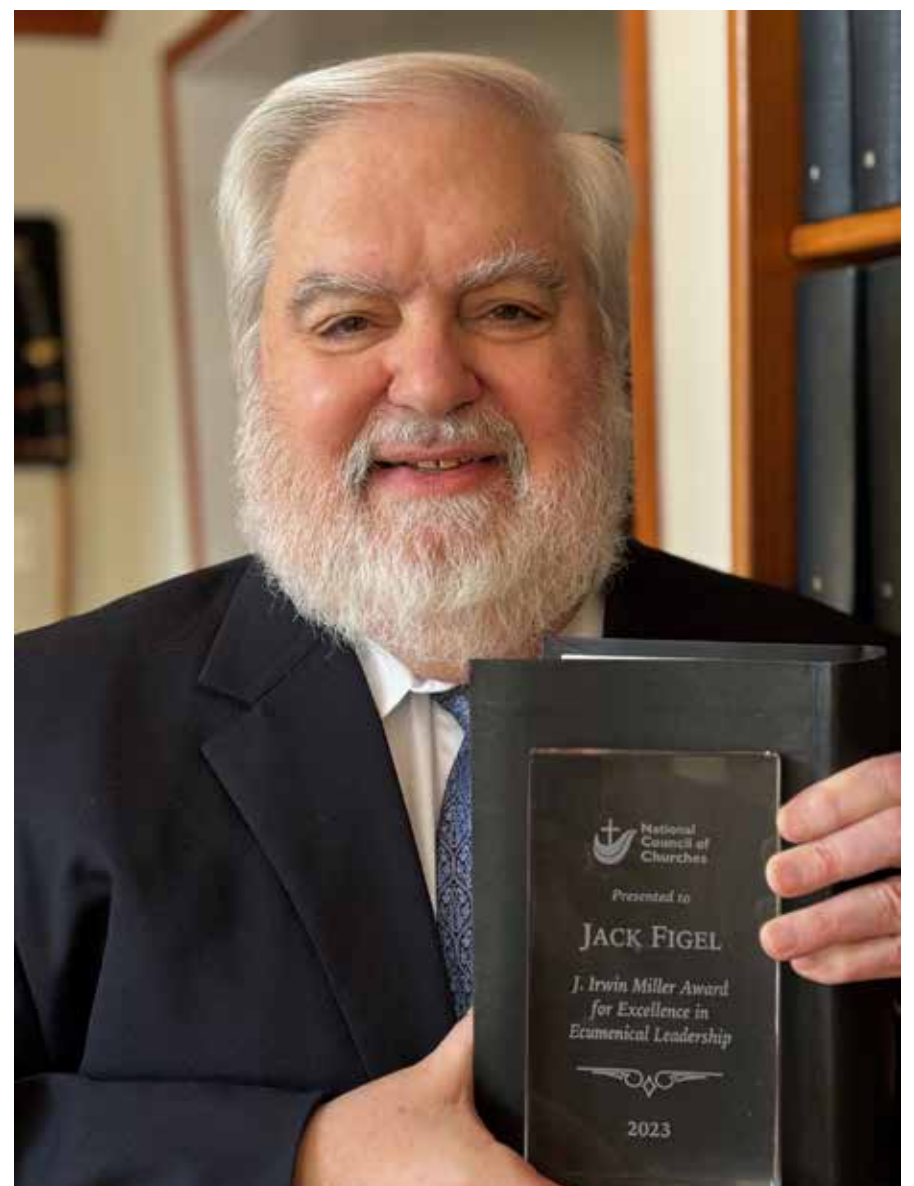
In October 2023, the National Council of Churches gave the J. Irwin Miller Award for Excellence in Ecumenical Leadership to Lector Jack Figel, a member of Epiphany of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church in Annandale, VA. He is founder and chairman of the Orientale Lumen Foundation and Conferences, an annual ecumenical event of Catholics and Orthodox in Washington, DC. He was nominated by Fr. Nicolas Kazarian, Ecumenical Officer of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, for his leadership in Catholic-Orthodox dialogue for over 25 years.

The Orientale Lumen Foundation is a “grass roots” movement of lay persons and diocesan clergy initiated by Jack, and which has been meeting annually since 1997. Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew wrote in his 10th anniversary greetings, “Your sacred intent, therefore, is blessed from within and from above by the very nature of your initiative. For, while your effort may be – as you describe it – ‘grass roots’, we are convinced that it is at the same time rooted in heaven.” Cardinal Kurt Koch, Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity at the Vatican, recently wrote to Jack, “I am convinced that the Orientale Lumen Conferences are a unique opportunity for fraternal encounters, ecumenical reflection and reception of bilateral Catholic-Orthodox dialogues.”

In his acceptance remarks for the award, Jack said, “We have no particular agenda. We seek nothing more than to discuss and learn about the Eastern Christian heritage that we share among Eastern Catholics and Eastern Orthodox. We pray that the Holy Spirit influences Church leaders to find common ground on which we can achieve full unity between East and West.”

The 28th annual Orientale Lumen conference will be held in Washington, DC, in person, on June 17-20, 2024, on the theme of “Primacy in the 21st Century” with reflections on the agreed statements in Ravenna and Chieti, Italy, and Alexandria, Egypt ([www.olfoundation.net](http://www.olfoundation.net)). Plenary speakers will include Metropolitan Job of Pisidia (Ecumenical Patriarchate, Orthodox co-chair of the Catholic-Orthodox dialogue), Msgr. Paul McPartlan (Roman Catholic, retired from The Catholic University of America), Fr. Radu Bordeianu (Romanian Orthodox, Duquesne University), Fr. Hyacinthe Destivelle (Roman Catholic from the Vatican) and others. Fr. Nicolas Kazarian will be the moderator.

Lector Jack was born and raised in Duquesne, PA, at Saints Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church and ordained a Lector as part of the first deacon class of the Eparchy of Passaic in 2001. He is also the founder and pub-



lisher of Eastern Christian Publications ([www.ecpubs.com](http://www.ecpubs.com)), releasing over 300 books in 30 years including 25 years of the *Eastern Churches Journal*. He is the designer of the smartphone app, *EC-PUBS*; executive producer of Orientale Lumen TeleVision ([www.oltv.tv](http://www.oltv.tv)); and distributor of the weekly Eastern Chris-

tian Bulletin Service used by almost 200 parishes across the country.



# 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

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: 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.

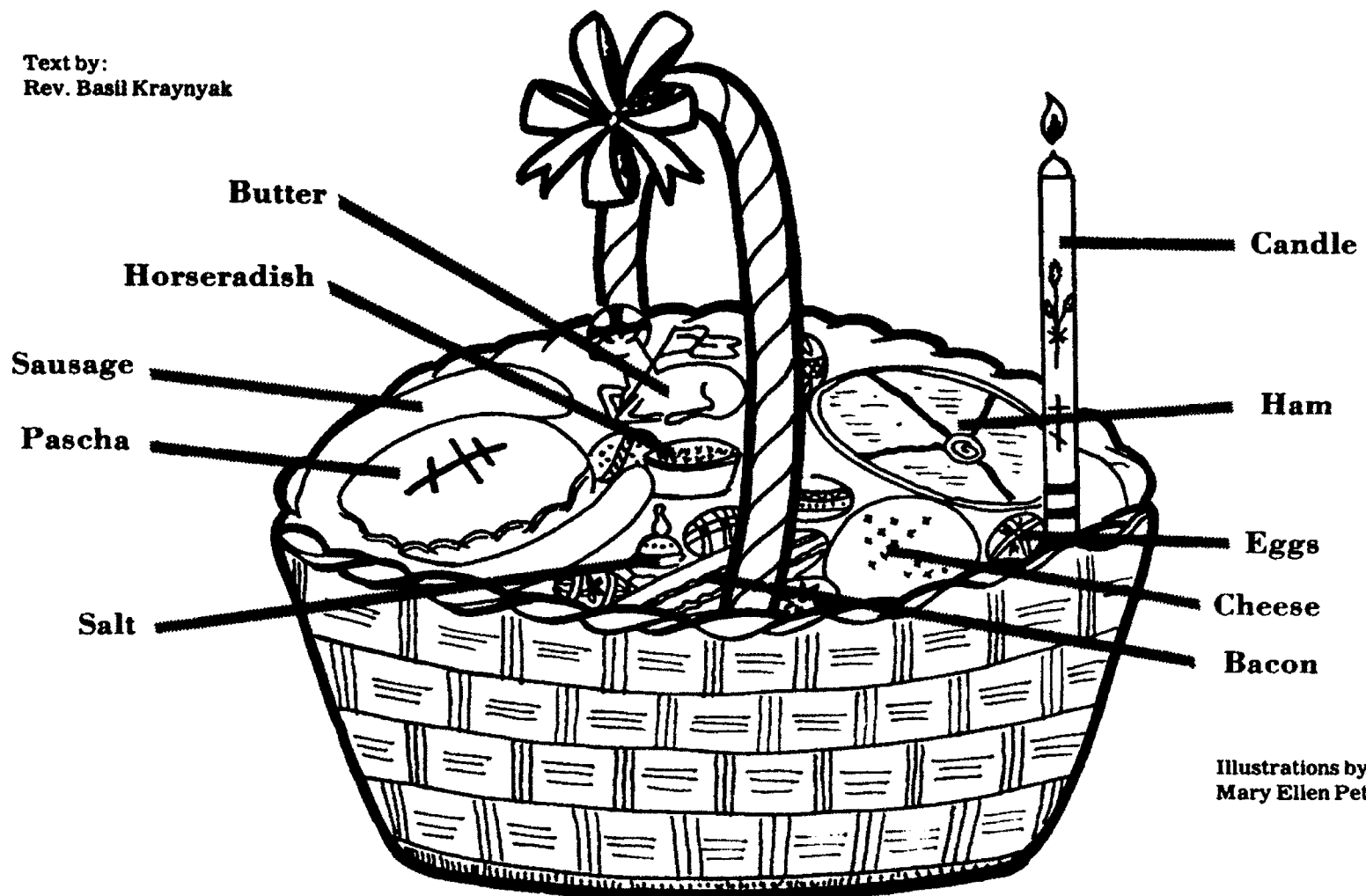
## Butter

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.

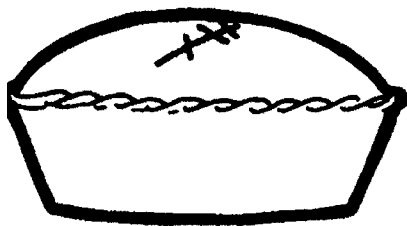
(The above is a revised version of an article that originally appeared in the April 10, 1979, edition of the *Homestead, PA, Daily Messenger*.)

# How to Put Together a Traditional Easter Basket

Text by:  
Rev. Basil Kraynyak

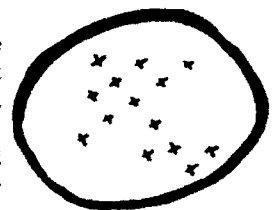


Illustrations by:  
Mary Ellen Petro

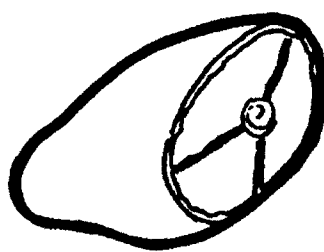


**PASCHA** - The Easter Bread (pron. pá-ska.) A sweet, yeast bread rich in eggs, butter, etc. Symbolic of Christ Himself who is our True Bread. Usually a round loaf baked with a golden crust decorated with a symbol indicative of Christ. Sometimes a cross (+) of dough is placed on top encircled by a plait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

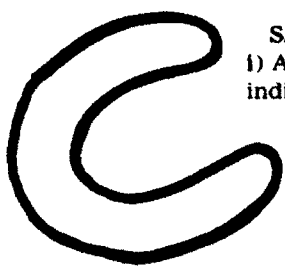
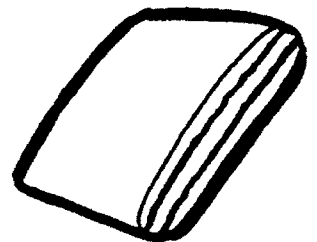
**CHEESE** (Slav. Hrudka or Sirets pron. hroód-ka or sí-rets) A custard-type cheese shaped into a ball having a rather bland but sweet taste indicative of the moderation that Christians should have in all things. Also, creamed cheese is placed in a small dish and both are decorated with symbols (see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



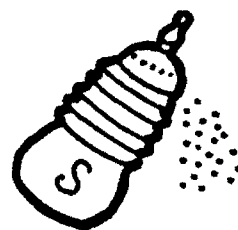
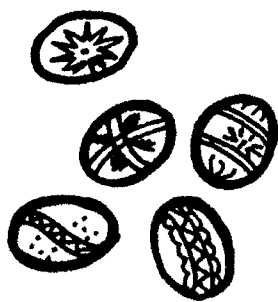
**BUTTER** (Slav. Maslo pron. má-slo) This favorite dairy product is shaped into a figure of a Lamb or small cross and decorated as the cheese. This reminds us of the goodness of Christ that we should have toward all things.



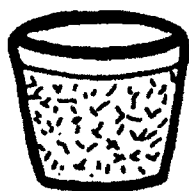
**SAUSAGE** (SLAV. Kolbasi - pron. kol-buś-i) A spicy, garlicky sausage of pork products, indicative of God's favor and generosity.

**BACON** (Slav. Slanina pron. sla-ní-na) A piece of uncooked bacon cured with spices. Symbolic of the overabundance of God's mercy to us.

**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.



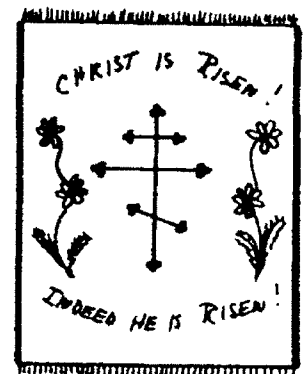
**SALT** (Slav. Sol' pron. sol') A condiment necessary for flavor reminding the Christian of his duty to others.



**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..

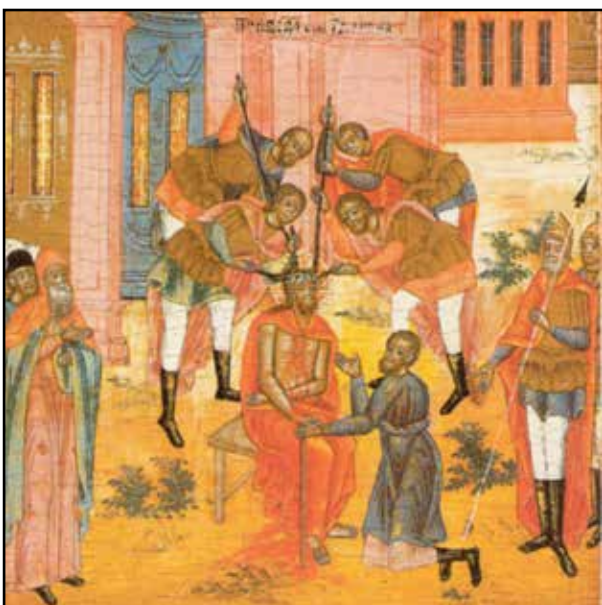


## Passion Week or Great Week

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

Having suffered to  
Jesus Christ,  
have mercy

the gates of Heaven. This, too, is a day of mourning. 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 passion for us,  
son of God,  
mercy on us!*

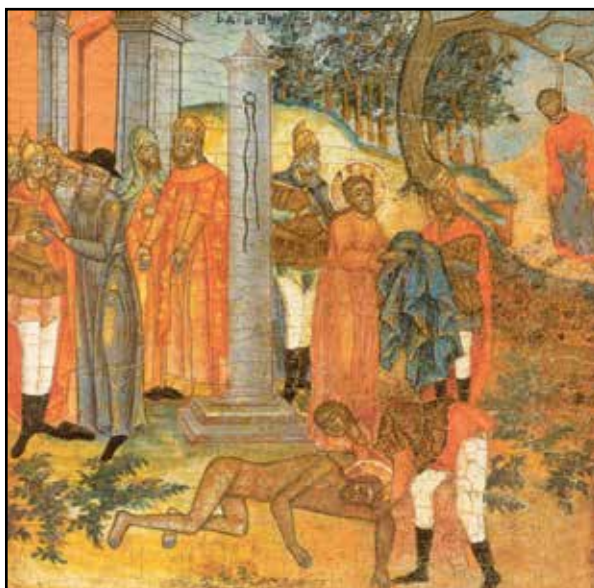
the people answer with "Amen," the priest sings the glorious Paschal troparion: "Christ is risen from the dead, by death He conquered death, and to those in the graves, He granted life. After the celebrant finishes, the whole congregation bursts into a joyous, jubilant singing of the same troparion twice. 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)







## Carpathian Village Saint Nicholas Shrine

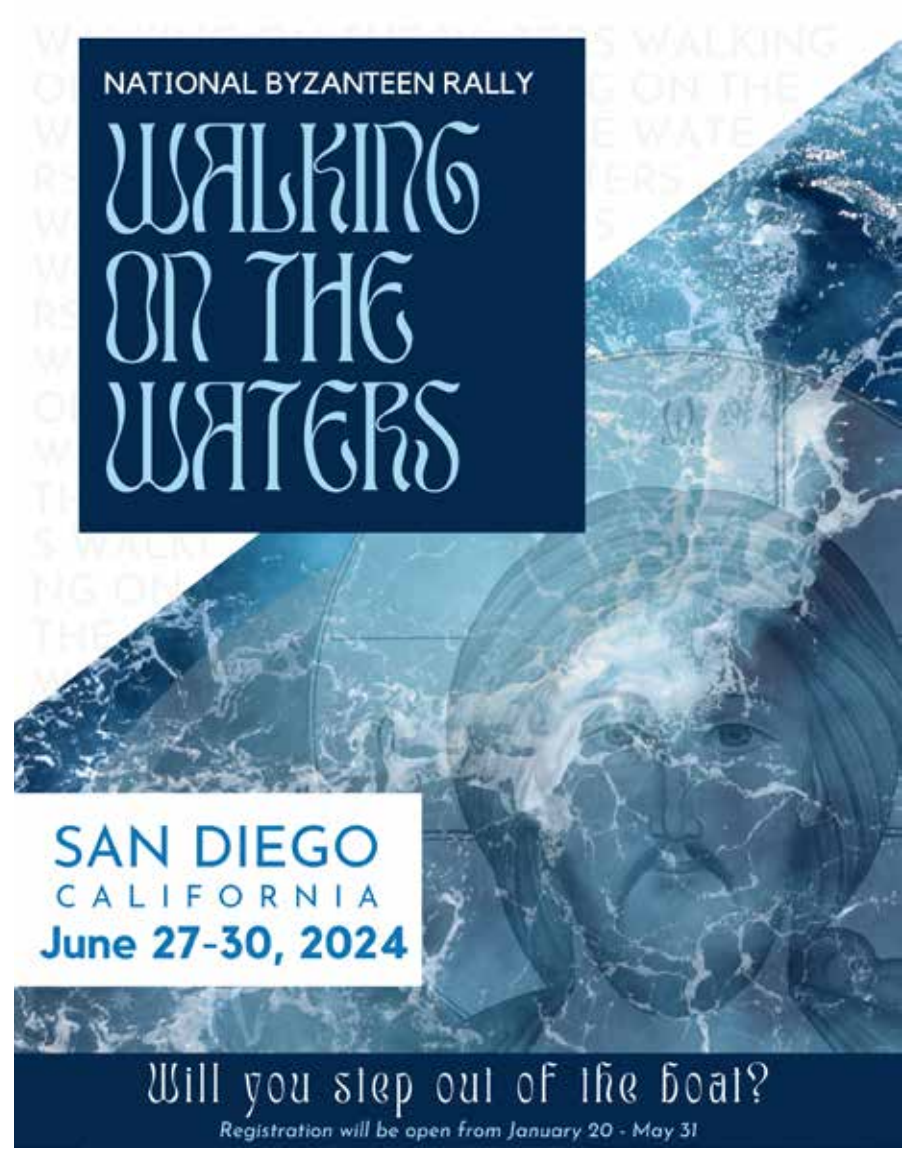
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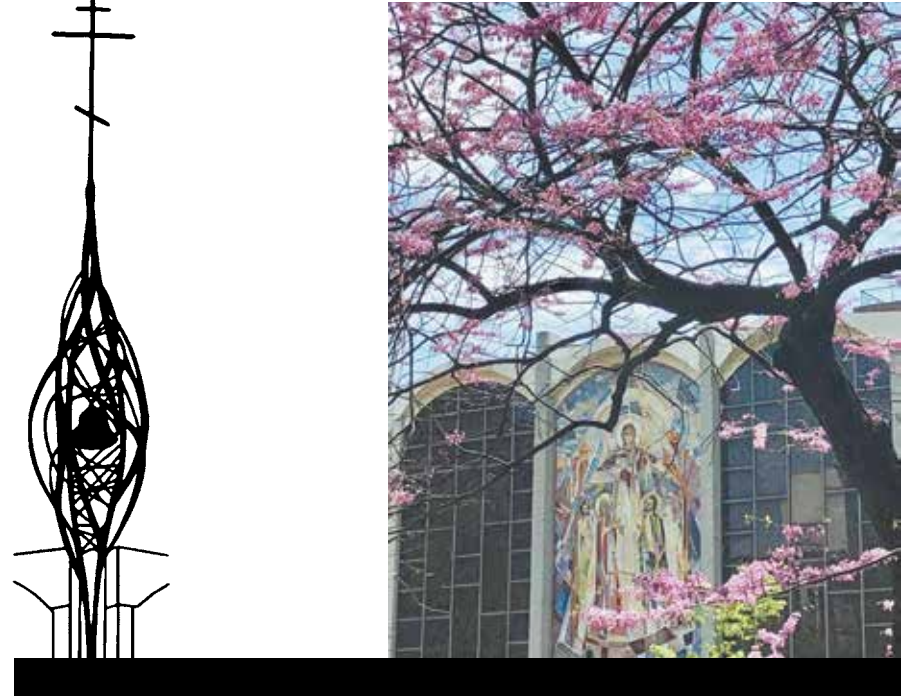
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# LIFE, LOVE, AND THE HUMAN PERSON

By Ann M. Koshute, MTS

## ENTERING THE PASCHAL MYSTERY

Many of the technological wonders unfolding around us offer life-changing possibilities for our good, while others are a bit of a mixed bag. The newest and most talked about advance these days is Artificial Intelligence, or A.I. This technology has been up for debate over the last year as some fear it could someday lead to computers and smart devices developing consciousness, and rebelling against its creators. It sounds a lot like science fiction, but even as I type this column on my laptop, the Word program periodically “predicts” the next word I’m about to type, and this is a form of A.I. So is the predictive text that pops up on a smart phone while typing a message, or when as little as two letters in a Google search bar suddenly yields exactly the result we want. As a college instructor this technology worries me because it opens avenues for students to take shortcuts in research and writing. As amazing and helpful as it may be, it also puts us at risk of losing our drive to be imaginative.

Despite the dangers some *are* using this technology as part of the creative process. One example on Instagram are the creators of The A.I. Bible, which illustrates images from Scripture in vivid and captivating detail. Their artwork and animations, posted on social media, bring scenes like the Garden of Eden and the Crucifixion to life. A regular feature of The A.I. Bible depicts

what most people “think” a particular image from Scripture looks like, then shows what it “really” looks like. The people behind this account probably aren’t receiving Divine revelations that make their illustrations accurate; but their imaginative renderings can present the viewer with an opportunity to contemplate God’s Word in ever-deeper ways. For example, The A.I. Bible’s conception of what the six-winged, many-eyed Seraphim “actually” look like both fascinates me and scares me. But it also changes the way I hear the anaphora (the prayer of thanksgiving before the Consecration) during the Divine Liturgy. No one has seen these angels, and the most sophisticated artificial intelligence program can never reveal them in all their glory. Yet artistic renderings of holy people and sacred events – whether images on a smart phone or icons written on wood – allow us to “break free” of ourselves, and let God speak to us through our imagination.

Praying before holy images and reading the Bible are important spiritual tools, but they’re only meaningful if they lead us into deeper relationship with God. The season of the Fast, and especially the days leading to the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Christ, invite us into a more profound consideration of the Paschal Mystery. Let’s take a moment now to contemplate it together, and taking a cue from The A.I. Bible,

let’s consider what we “think” the Paschal mystery looked like, and imagine what it “really” looks like – not two thousand years ago, but in our lives today.

On Good Friday, Jesus stands before Pilate, broken and beaten, the crowd overwhelmingly against Him. He is sentenced to death and forced to carry the instrument of His execution on His back. When He and the crowd reach Golgotha, Jesus is nailed to the Cross and hangs there in agony until He finally breathes His last. Imagine yourself in the crowd, taking notice of what you see and hear. Listen as people yell and taunt Jesus. See Mary and John at the foot of the Cross, weeping. Watch as the soldier pierces Jesus’ side, blood and water flowing from it. What are you feeling at this moment? Does “being there” make you sad, grateful, repentant?

Now it is Holy Saturday, and it is quiet – almost uncomfortably so. You stand outside the tomb, but the huge stone prevents you from seeing inside. You listen for a sound, any sign that the horror you witnessed yesterday was a dream, but there is none. There is only stillness – yet there is also a sense that it will only be still for a little while longer. Stay here in the quiet, without letting the anticipation become distracting. Be still, patient, silently contemplating only your longing for the Lord.

It is Sunday, the beginning of a new week. You slowly make your way back to the Garden, but something is different. As you walk along, the ground begins to shake beneath you, and the silence is broken by a loud sound. What is it? You pick up the pace, eager to discover what caused such a violent break in the quiet. As you get closer to the tomb you see that the stone was rolled away. You wonder how this could be; what force could move something so heavy, and why?

There, in the Garden, you see Him, the wounds in His hands and feet still visible, yet He is alive! You move closer, trying to get a better look without being noticed. It is Jesus, risen from the dead, just as you knew Him, and yet – different. He turns and invites you to come closer. Do you run to Him, or are you afraid? If so, what is holding you back?

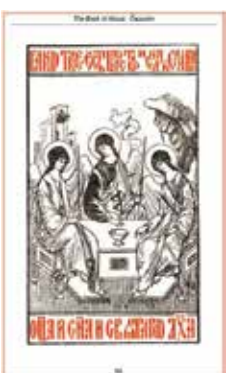
The rest of the scene is yours - and mine – to continue contemplating, but not just during one liturgical season of the year. In our finite humanity we may only “think” of the Cross, the Tomb, and the Resurrection as moments in time. But they “really” are integral to the meaning of our lives, and our hope for eternity. We don’t need any special intelligence to grasp this reality; only trust, and the courage to draw close to Him. **ECL**

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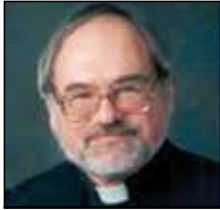
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# THE BYZANTINE LITURGY

By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD

## MARRIAGE, THE CHURCH, AND THE WORLD

The other six sacraments are exclusively mysteries of the Church, celebrated by liturgical rites of the Church. Marriage, however, is universal to humanity, to all religions and even to non-believers. It is a commitment of two people to one another. Its function in human history is to stabilize family life, provide for the procreation of the human race, foster love and the proper raising of children. As an institution, it precedes the establishment of the Church. It is transformed into a sacrament by being taken up into God's life, becoming not only human love but a particular manifestation of God's love for his people, maintaining its natural purpose but adding to it the grace of God for our sanctification and deification. In Scripture, it exists from creation, "a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body" (Genesis 2:24). Jesus was to teach, "Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate." (Matthew 19:4-6). Usually, the Church locates the foundation of marriage as a sacramental mystery in the blessing of the marriage in Cana of Galilee (John 2:1-11).

Saint Paul, also quoting Genesis reflects, "This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the church" (Ephesians 5:32).

The coming of Christ, then, has transformed the meaning of marriage for the world. It is no longer simply a natural union, but has become a part of God's infinite love for all his creation. It is now a part of the story of how God elevates his people and of how he brings us into his divine life. The rite of marriage expresses this clearly. The priest prays, "You blessed your servant Abraham; and, making Sarah fertile, you made him the father of a multitude of nations. You gave Isaac to Rebekah and blessed her childbearing. You joined Jacob to Rachel and from him brought forth the twelve patriarchs. You united Joseph to Asenath and gave them Ephraim and Manasseh as the fruit of their procreation and, accepting Zechariah and Elizabeth, you brought forth their child the Forerunner. From the root of Jesse you made the ever-virgin spring forth according to the flesh and from her you took flesh and were born for the salvation of the human race." Of course, in all marriages which produce offspring, the couple share with God the joy of creation. For the Christian, the couple are united in God in the gift of new life, giving not only physical existence, but a new person alive in faith in God. Not only creation, but the love of the two people are brought into God's plan of

salvation by name: "Now, O Master, do stretch forth *Name*), for you alone join woman to man. Join them in oneness of mind, crown them in love, unite them in one flesh."

In addition, the love of marriage is now made into a model of God's love for all humanity. This is the deep meaning of Saint Paul's letter to the Ephesians, read at the marriage rite, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her to sanctify her, cleansing her by the bath of water with the word, that he might present to himself the church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish ... For no one hates his own flesh but rather nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body" (Ephesians 5:25-27.29-30). In the Gospel of St. John, John the Baptist identifies Christ as the bridegroom of the Church, who gives Himself for the life of the world and to create the Church as His mystical body. The Baptist says, "The one who has the bride is the bridegroom; the best man, who stands and listens to him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. So this joy of mine has been made complete" (John 3:29). This is confirmed in the Gospel of Saint Matthew with the parable of the wise virgins, "the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet

the bridegroom" (Matthew 25:1). This is the theme in the Book of Revelation: "Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory. For the wedding day of the Lamb has come, His bride has made herself ready .... I also saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Revelation 17:9; 21:2).

This reality of the Church as the bride of Christ is celebrated in the Liturgy of the Church especially in Holy Week. In the first three days, the morning service is called Bridegroom Matins, and we sing, "Behold, the Bridegroom is coming in the middle of the night" (Troparion). This theme then continues through all of Holy Week. On Good Friday, the Oikos of Matins puts these words into the mouth of our Lord's mother, Mary: "Are you going to another wedding in Cana?" Indeed, the "Bridegroom of the Church" goes to the cross to die for His bride, bring us life and resurrection. Finally on Pascha itself, we chant, "Today, Christ has shown forth from the tomb as from a bridal chamber", having accomplished the mystical marriage of Christ and the Church in the fullness of life. In this way, we see the double mystery: marriage itself has become a sacrament of the love of God for his people, and human marriage has been taken up into God's plan of salvation. **BCL**

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# PRIESTLY REFLECTIONS

Father Paul Varchola West

## PAYING IT FORWARD

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

"I used to go to church, but..."  
 "I'm spiritual, but not religious."  
 "I talk to God, but I don't need to go to church to do that."

A couple weeks ago I got a new one: "I believe in God, but I don't go to church... I'm thinking of maybe starting to." This person then went on to tell me how they want to come to church but have had a life-long struggle with the "riches and opulence" of the Catholic Church. Having grown up with relatively simple means, this person felt conflicted that "so many people are starving, yet the Church, specifically the Vatican, has so much wealth." Then they followed up with their entire plan about how the Vatican should essentially "liquidate all its assets, feed the world, and stop being hypocritical."

Of course, I politely listened. We had a nice little exchange, and this person went on their way. Later that evening, I got to thinking about my interaction with this person and what they said.

My train of thought was not what I expected.

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

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

So, what did Forrest do after he became a gazillionaire? He donated a whole bunch of money to a church, a hospital,

and a family living in poverty who had a rightful claim to a portion of his wealth. He also cut the local school's grass for free, Forrest teaches us a valuable lesson here; he "pays it forward," out of love of neighbor and nothing else.

The problem with the world is not the Church, the institution of religion, the Vatican, or any such thing. The problem is that the world at large seemingly will not give away monetary wealth unless something is received in return. In the scenario presented to me by this person, it wasn't, "People should give money to the Vatican to support humanitarian aid." It was, "The Vatican should sell all its stuff." Great, but what happens when all the stuff is gone? Then what?

We, as Catholic Christians, need to make it our goal to change this way of thinking. We need to teach the world that giving, true giving of oneself to

God and neighbor, is not at all transactional. We need to teach the world that all the money in the world will not fix a thing. Rather, it is true love of God, neighbor, and self that will indeed bring about a change in this world, however small it may be. We already know this, and we already practice this within our own communities. Now let's pay it forward to the world, pay it forward with love, and show the world that the true spirit of change in this world is not with tangible wealth, but rather by living a life in accord with the Gospel of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ!

**ECL**

### Eastern Catholic Life

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## SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

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

### TOUCHING THE RISEN LORD

“Touch me,” Jesus challenged the fearful, doubtful disciples in the Upper Room on the evening of His Resurrection (Luke 24:39). “Bring your finger here and examine my hands,” He told Thomas eight days later. “Take your hand and put it in my side” (John 20:27). To Mary Magdalene at the tomb, however, He said: “Do not touch me!” (John 20:17). We could be forgiven for being a little confused.

The difference isn’t that Mary Magdalene is a woman and the Apostles are men. It’s more a matter of time and place. Mary Magdalene tries to cling to Jesus’ body at the tomb. But Jesus has left the tomb behind, once and for all. He needs to ascend in glory; she needs to begin to announce good news. Jesus doesn’t say “never;” He rather tells Mary, “Not yet” (John 20:17). The other disciples encounter Jesus in the Upper Room, the place where the Mystical Supper was served, where Jesus explained the Scriptures (Luke 24:44-47) and the earliest Church regularly “broke bread” (Acts 2:42) as the Lord had commanded (Luke 22:19). There is a clue here, and we will return to it in a moment.

Consider just how often Jesus was touched in His thirty-three years on earth. He was swaddled as a newborn in Bethlehem (Luke 2:7), wrapped in burial linens after His death (Mark 15:46). He touched a leper for healing (Luke 4:13) and laid His hands on little children in blessing (Mark 10:16). He permitted the woman with the flow of blood to steal a healing touch of His garment (Mark 5:25-34) and, quite against social norms, He allowed a woman to lavish perfumed oil on Him at a banquet (Luke 7:36-50). Consider too all the hateful and hurtful ways Jesus suffered to be touched in the course of His Passion. Our Lord was never untouchable. His Incarnation made the inaccessible God utterly accessible to us.

From the Anointing on Great and Holy Wednesday to the Holy Shroud on Great and Holy Friday, the Church’s liturgy insisted on our own physical contact with Christ in His Passion. But then the Shroud is removed; the Tomb is empty. How can we take the next step and touch the Risen Lord as Thomas, Mary Magdalene and the Eleven did?

The answer leads us back to the Upper Room. The Risen Lord met most often with His Apostles in the same place where He had instituted the Eucharist on the night before He died. Even when He encountered disciples elsewhere, like in Emmaus (Luke 24:30-32) or at the Sea of Tiberias (John 21), it was in “the breaking of the bread” that they recognized Him. Here too is where He “opened their minds to understand the Scriptures” (Luke 24:27,32,44-46).

When thinking about the mystery of human beings touching the One True God through Holy Communion, the saints often point to Isaiah’s vision of the heavenly Liturgy (Isaiah 6:1-7). The Prophet realized that he was seeing and hearing things no human being has a right to experience. He knew his own unworthiness, and the belief that no one can see God and live caused him to fear (Exodus 33:20). But then one of the seraphim serving at God’s throne took a burning coal from the heavenly altar and touched the prophet’s lips with it saying: “Behold, this has touched your lips and will take away your iniquities and will cleanse your sins” (Isaiah 6:7).

The liturgical hymns for Saint Thomas Sunday compare Isaiah’s experience of the burning coal to Thomas’ desire to touch the Risen Lord. These words may sound familiar for another reason: they are recited by the priest for himself, and again for the deacon, after each receives Holy Communion. Saint John Damascene’s prayer of thanksgiving after Holy Communion takes up this same theme: “God, my God, all-consuming invisible fire, You make Your angels flaming fire. In Your inexpressible love, You have condescended to give me Your divine flesh. You have allowed me to partake of Your divinity by possessing Your most pure body and precious blood. May they penetrate my entire body and spirit and all my bones. May they burn away my sins, enlighten my soul and brighten my understanding. May they sanctify me, making a dwelling-place in me, so that I too may be in You forever, with Your blessed Father and Your all-holy Spirit, through the prayers of Your most pure Mother and of all Your saints.” **ECL**

## SEASONAL REFLECTIONS

Father Ronald Hatton



### BREAK ON THROUGH TO THE OTHER SIDE

“You know the day destroys the night; night divides the day. Tried to run; Tried to hide. Break on through to the other side.” (“Break on Through (to the Other Side)” -Jim Morrison, et al, 1967). By the time this is published, we will have already celebrated the Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord. There are probably some who would take exception to me thinking about a song by the rock group The Doors for the Paschal Season, but these lyrics came to my mind as I reflected on the time after the feast of the Resurrection. The Day of Resurrection has destroyed the darkness of the night of sin, and “...people going in darkness, see a great light! Those inhabiting a region, a shadow of death, light will shine on you!” (Isaiah 9:2, Lexham English Septuagint).

We have gone through the rigors of the Great Fast, with all the services. Holy Week can be an unending series of going to church, getting our baskets ready for Pascha (Oy! all the cooking and baking!), planning for family getting together around the Easter feast and, unfortunately for most of us, by the end of the Paschal Liturgy we are “churched out”; we just want to take it

easy for a while. (Faithful churchgoers can see it in how the pews are filled for Palm Sunday and Pascha, and then everyone seems to disappear by Thomas Sunday.) I say it is unfortunate because the Church continues to offer so much for us during the Paschal season, and I liken our reaction to a golfer or a baseball player who swings but does not follow through on their swing. I am not a sportsman, but I know enough to know that if you don’t follow through, there is no power or direction to your swing, and the result is futile. It is the same with our Faith and with the power of the Resurrection in our lives: it is not enough to go through all the externals that we place on this season; we must follow through, and break on through to the other side, as it were. This is what Jesus did with His death and resurrection: He suffered the Passion, the three-day burial, and then broke through the power of death and darkness, shattered the gates of Hades, rose from the grave, and shed a new light on the world.

There are some theologians who see the death of Jesus as being all that was necessary for our salvation – “He died in our place, and now we do not have to pay the price for our sin.” This leads

such people to be able to spiritualize His rising from the dead. They stop at the cross, but don’t follow through. “But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain” (1 Cor. 15:14). It was not enough for Christ to die on the cross; He had to “break on through to the other side.” He had to rise to fulfill *all* things for us. So, we too have to realize that Easter is not the end of a season, but the beginning of new life for us. The day has destroyed the night, and as much as we try to “run and hide” from the rest of the story, if we are true to our Faith, we have to now respond to what has happened.

In our icon of the “Harrowing of Hades”, we see Christ trampling down the gates of Hades, and physically raising Adam and Eve, representing all of Mankind, from Hades into the new life. This is what the Paschal Season is all about: we who have been brought from death to life are now dead to sin and alive to Christ. Our former ways are over. We have new responsibilities, a new reason for living. The forty days of the Paschal Season are a celebration of the

forty days that Christ appeared to the disciples and taught them, before His Ascension into heaven (cf. Acts 1:3). If we are to “follow through”, it is important that the days after Pascha be just as important as was the Fast, Holy Week, and the Feast itself. All that has gone before will be for nothing if we do not allow ourselves to be transformed into the new life offered to us in the resurrection of Christ.

On Cross Veneration Sunday, we hear the words, “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Mark 8:34). Following Christ leads to the cross, but it leads *past* the cross, to the new life in the Resurrection! “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). In this Paschal season, we should resolve to follow through with our faith, to delve deeper into the mysteries we have witnessed, and break on through to the other side, to eternal life. **ECL**





## BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF MONEY & POSSESSIONS

By Father Michael J. Salnicky

### THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING A HAPPY AND GENEROUS GIVER

Previously, we were reminded that the first thing we must realize is that all money and possessions belong to and come from God. We are given them to see if we are wise stewards and it starts with generosity. We are to give our first and best to God. As Deut. 8:18 instructs us, “Remember then the LORD, your God, for He is the one who gives you the power to get wealth, by fulfilling, as He has now done, the covenant He swore to your ancestors”. We also learned the importance of establishing a detailed written monthly budget of every expense and income. Your donation to church as the first item of your working budget should not be viewed as simply an expense to be paid. Instead that donation must be viewed as a gift to God: “What do I return to God for all He has given me?” It is a percentage deduction from income before taxes and before the rest of your working budget. Let us repeat a fact – God does not need your money. Your giving is also not a deal with God to get what you want. It is to teach us the power of generosity and is an element of faith. It is a character quality God wants to instill in our hearts and it changes our whole life.

That was the purpose of tithing that God introduced in the Old Testament. In fact, it is the only place in Sacred Scripture where God challenges us to test Him. The prophet Malachi (Mal 3:10) speaking the message of God tells us, “Bring one-tenth of your income into the storehouse so that there may be food in my house. Test me in this way,” says the LORD of Armies. “See if I won’t open the windows of heaven for you and flood you with blessings”. This challenge to tithe was to keep the Jewish people (and us) from becoming selfish and only thinking of their (and our) own needs and selfish desires. How do we do this? The answer is in our budget. If our monthly income before taxes is \$6,230 (the average monthly salary in the USA according to the Bureau of Labor and Statistics), you take \$623 (10%) off the top for your donation and live as if your monthly income is \$5,607. Then adjust your budget for living expenses accordingly.

Saint Paul, in addressing the non-Jewish Gentile community living in Corinth, tells us in 2 Cor 9:7, “Everyone should give whatever they have decided in their heart. They shouldn’t give with hesitation or because of pressure. God

loves a cheerful giver.” This ties in with the concept of Sacrificial Giving. God wants to turn you into a generous person and establish a new way of living and dealing with life’s challenges. It is a proven fact that generous people smile more, generous people are happier people, generous people have better personal relationships, generous people are less apt to suffer from depression, generous people deal better with stress, generous people are those who imitate the generosity of God.

A perfect example of this is seen in the old Bing Crosby movie “The Bells of Saint Mary.” It is only when the distraught rich owner of the new building next to the old and failing school building actually donates that new building to the school that the rich man finds peace and joy. Remember: money by itself is neither good nor evil—it is the love of money that is the root of all evil. Learning to live as a generous, loving, and forgiving person, beginning with our generosity to God through His Church, keeps us from that sin.

Glory to Jesus Christ. **ECL**



Icon of the Hospitality of Abraham

## SCHOOL OF PRAYER

Father G. Scott Boghossian



### PREPARE FOR ETERNITY

At the end of our life, will we hear Jesus Christ say to us, “Come, O blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Mt. 25:34), and “well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master” (Mt. 25:21)?

Or will we hear, “Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mt. 25:41), and “I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers” (Mt. 7:23)?

We will hear one or the other. There is no third possibility. Saint Alphonsus says: “In eternity there are two places of abode — one overflowing with all delights, the other replete with every torment. And these delights and torments will be eternal. ‘If the tree fall to the south, or to the north, in what place soever it shall fall, there shall it be’ (Eccl. 11:3). If the soul go to the place of salvation, it will be happy there forever; but if it fall into hell, it will remain there to weep and lament as long as God shall

be God. There is no medium: either forever a king in heaven, or forever a slave of Lucifer; either forever blessed in heaven, or forever in despair in hell”.

Do everything possible to ensure that you are headed for heaven. “Make every effort to confirm your calling and election” (1 Pt. 1:10 NIV). There isn’t anything more important than this. “For what doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul? Or what exchange shall a man give for his soul?” (Matt. 16:26 DR). Eternity outweighs all other concerns. Whether or not we are rich or poor, famous, or unknown, healthy, or sick, matters little in light of eternity. None of the other concerns we allow to consume our effort and attention are as important as our salvation.

Do you look at your past with disappointment because you didn’t accomplish your goals, fulfill your God-given potential, or have the family or career you had so ardently hoped for? In the light of eternity, these things are insignificant. What matters is that we are

happy forever in heaven. Instead of feeling bad about not achieving our goals, let’s make every effort to receive the salvation that Jesus Christ, our Lord, has suffered and died to provide for us.

Take drastic action. Jesus says, “If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell” (Mt. 5:29-30). In other words, whatever it is that can come between you and your eternal destiny, get rid of it. What people, places, and things lead you away from God and salvation? These are the near occasions of sin that we need to avoid. It might be hard to give certain things up, but considering eternity, every sacrifice is worth it.

Don’t be lazy; make an effort and strive. “Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads

to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few” (Mt. 7:13-14). Be among the few who enter the narrow gate and walk the hard road. Heaven is more than worth it.

When Jesus was asked, “Lord, will those who are saved be few?” Our Lord answered, “Strive to enter by the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able” (Lk 13:23-24). Are we striving or taking it easy? “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12). “Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven” (Mt. 6:20), “seek the things that are above” (Col. 3:1), “set your mind on things above” (Col. 3:2).

“No eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Cor. 2:9). The happiness of heaven will be above and beyond anything we can understand or imagine. Make every effort to get there. Prepare for eternity. **ECL**



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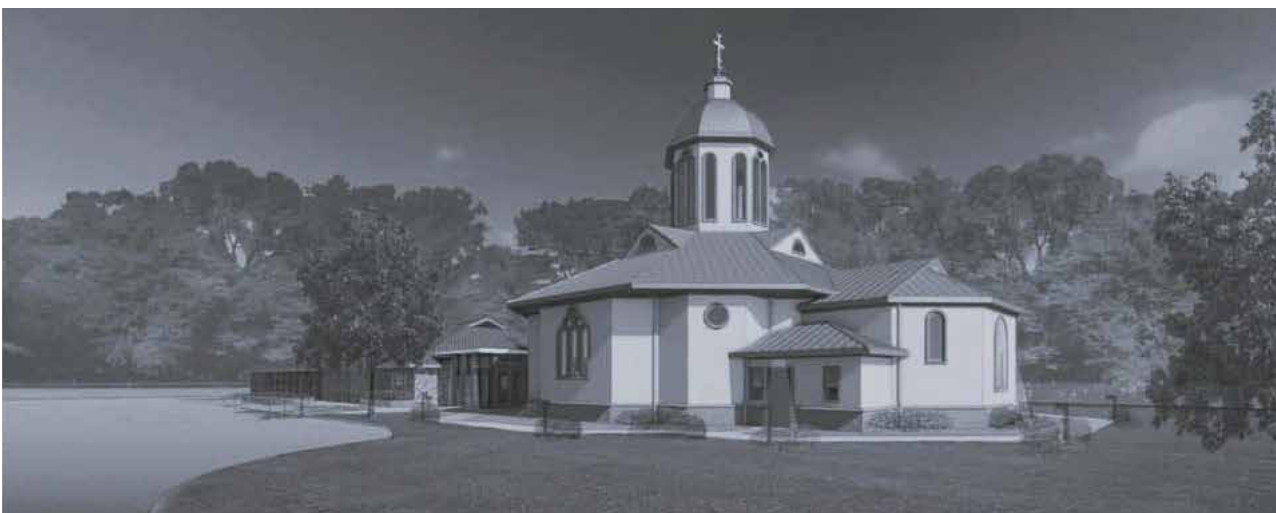
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March 28 - April 2:

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- 28 Great and Holy Thursday
- 29 Great and Holy Friday
- 30 Great and Holy Saturday
- 31 THE GREAT DAY • PASCHA  
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### APRIL, 2024

- 1 Bright Monday *Solemn Holyday*
- 2 Bright Tuesday *Simple Holyday*
- 7 Sunday of Saint Thomas
- 14 Sunday of the Holy Myrrh-Bearers
- 21 Sunday of the Paralytic Man
- 23 The Holy Great-Martyr George  
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- 28 Sunday of the Samaritan Woman

### MAY, 2024

- 5 Sunday of the Man Born Blind
- 9 Holy Ascension of Our Lord  
*Holyday of Obligation*
- 12 Sunday of the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council  
*Mother's Day*

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