



EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

Official Publication of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic

VOL. LX, NO. 10

OCTOBER 2024

FATHER RYAN LIEBHABER ORDAINED TO THE ORDER OF PRESBYTER



“At the sight of the crowds, His heart was moved with pity for them because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest is abundant, but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest.’ Matthew 9:36-38.

On the Feast of the Beheading of John the Baptist, August 29, 2024, Deacon Ryan Liebhaber was ordained to

the Holy Priesthood by Bishop Kurt at Saint John Chrysostom Byzantine Catholic Church in Columbus, OH. Father Ryan’s family in attendance included his wife, Pan’i Niccole, and their eight children: Ryan, Jr., Peter, Gianna, Joseph, Genevieve, Helena, Theodore, and Andrew, as well as his mother, Maureen; sister, Sara, brother, Tim; brother, Scott, with wife, Michelle, and son, Anthony; in-laws, Warner and Anna Rogers, and aunts, Anne Marie Liebhaber and Nora Greteman.

Concelebrating priests were Father Robert Jager, pastor of Saint John Chrysostom, and Father Juraj Terek, chaplain of the International Theological Institute. Three former Deacon Formation classmates of Father Ryan served at the Divine Liturgy: Deacon John Reed (Epiphany of our Lord BCC, Roswell, GA), Deacon Johnathan Dean (Holy Angels BCC, San Diego, CA), and Deacon John Harden (Saint Luke BCC, Sugar Creek, MO). Retired priest of the Eparchy of Parma, Father Michael

Hayduk, served as the Master of Ceremonies. Assisting at the Divine Liturgy was Jim Hartung, deacon candidate for the Eparchy of Parma, ITI students Henry Hunter, Benjamin Ančočík, and Michael Foster, as well as the sons of Father Ryan and Deacon John Harden. The resident choir of Saint John Chrysostom wonderfully sang the Liturgy, allowing all in attendance to experience the true beauty of Ruthenian *prostopinije*. A reception in the church hall followed the Divine Liturgy. The following day, August 30, 2024, Father Ryan celebrated his first Divine Liturgy, which coincided with the special occasion of his and Pan’i Niccole’s twenty-first wedding anniversary. Deacon John Harden provided a wonderful homily, keeping with the tradition that a new priest never gives the homily at his first Divine Liturgy. Students from the ITI formed the choir at the first Divine Liturgy, and sang the songs and tones reminiscent of Father Ryan and his family’s stay in Austria. During both the ordination and first Divine Liturgies, an icon of the Austrian saint, Blessed Franz Jägerstätter, painted by Father Ryan while studying in Austria, adorned the tetrapod along with the festal icon of Saint John the Baptist.

Ordination marked the official change in vocations for Father Ryan, who had previously served for 21 years as a U.S. Army in- ...continued on page 11

MICHAEL SIVULICH ORDAINED TO THE ORDER OF DEACON

Saint Nicholas of Myra Byzantine Catholic Church in White Plains, NJ, made history on July 6 as it celebrated the ordination of its first deacon. Subdeacon Michael Sivulich, a lifelong member of the parish, was ordained to the Sacred Diaconate through the grace of God and by the laying on of hands of Bishop Kurt.

The solemn and joyful occasion was attended by a large gathering of clergy, family, friends, classmates from the Byzantine Catholic Seminary in Pittsburgh, and parishioners. Following the ordination, a reception was held at the hall of Saint Gregory the Enlightener Armenian Church, where the community gathered to

celebrate the newly ordained deacon.

Deacon Michael expressed deep gratitude to God for the gift of his ordination, to Bishop Kurt for his guidance, to his wife and family for their unwavering support, and to his mentor and parish priest, Father Ihor Vorontsov, for his wisdom and encouragement throughout his journey.

The ordination marks a milestone in the life of Saint Nicholas parish, as Deacon Michael steps into this new role to serve his community. His dedication and faithfulness were evident to all who gathered for this historic event, which will be remembered as a moment of great joy and blessing for the church.





I LIFT UP MY EYES

Pastoral Reflections of Bishop Kurt



AROUND THE EPARCHY, AND BEYOND



Right: Dawn at Newark Airport with New York City skyline in the background.



Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church on the corner on of 15th and 2nd Avenue in New York City. The church is a jewel box. Two of the sides are mostly stained glass.



When Bishop Takach arrived in New York Harbor on August 13, 1924, the people rented a launch to fetch him from the ocean liner Mauretania. They were singing the poem "Vruchanije" by Alexander Duchnovych. He was taken to Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church on 13th Street. It was called "Greek Catholic" at the time, not "Byzantine Catholic". A Moleben of Thanksgiving was sung, and then he was taken to the Hotel Pennsylvania by Penn Station. The church moved to its present location on 15th street in the 1960's. On August 13, 2024, a Moleben was sung one hundred years later at the 15th Street church with a history lecture by Father Christopher Zuger and a celebratory meal afterwards. There was nothing at the Hotel Pennsylvania because it closed in 2020 and was demolished last year in 2023.



Saint Michael Church in Mont Clare celebrated its 125th anniversary this year. On September 22 at the Divine Liturgy, Bishop Kurt blessed the new iconography on the ceiling. He was also able to visit Holy Ghost Church in Philadelphia with Father Kovach that morning, and celebrate Mass at the prison with Father Kovach the evening before and visit with some prisoners.



Josephine Medovich celebrated her 100th birthday on September 19 at Saint Nicholas Church in Orlando! Bishop Kurt was honored to be invited. Also in the picture are Father Sal Pignato, pastor, and Deacon Richard Ballard. Left to right are grandson, Matthew; son, Mark; Arielle; Bill; and Mark's wife, Jill Medovich.



While in Orlando, Father Sal and Bishop Kurt visited the science museum where we saw a laser harp and these lovely birds.



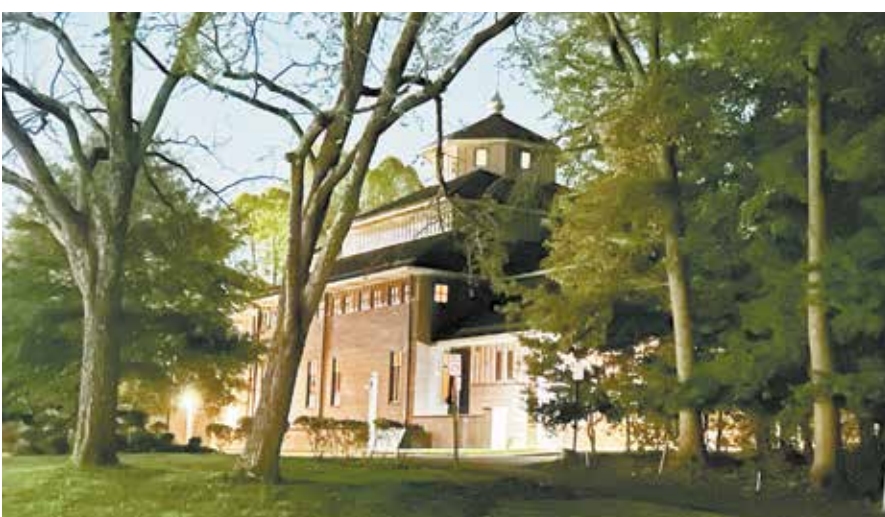
The National Shrine of the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in Washington DC is one of the great churches of the world. Our Byzantine-Ruthenian Church has one of the best chapels in the lower level of the Basilica, completed fifty years ago with mosaics by Christine Dochwat.



With the recent completion of the last dome artwork, the Basilica is now one of the most spectacular displays of mosaic in the world, even astonishing. The Christ in the apse is dressed in red, inspired by the passage from the prophet Isaiah, "Why is thy apparel red, and thy garment like one who has been treading in the vineyard?" The same passage was used on the prayer card for Bishop Kurt's episcopal consecration in 2013.

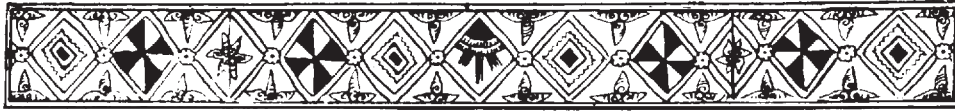


Our Church celebrated the Divine Liturgy in the lower level of the Basilica in the "Crypt Church". Archbishop Wiliam flew back from the Synod in Rome, and all three Bishops concelebrate the Eucharist with a Homily by Bishop Robert. Afterwards, in the Ruthenian Chapel, Bishop Kurt sang a Moleben and Bishop Robert sang a Panachida.



Above: In Tucson, Bishop Kurt attended the clergy retreat for the west coast eparchy where he is still Apostolic Administrator for now. There were many informative talks, including a profound and thought-provoking talk about "voluntary and involuntary sin" by Mitered Archpriest Stephen Washko. Arizona is famous for its sunsets and for the saguaro cactus found only in the great Sonoran Desert. The saguaro cactus can live over 150 years and grow over forty feet tall. One might grow its first side arm at age 75 or 100. It is illegal to take one from the wild, and any cactus in your yard must have a tag on it, like your dog. You don't need a license to look at the sunset.

Left: After the celebrations at the Basilica in Washington DC, the next day, all three bishops concelebrated Divine Liturgy at Epiphany of Our Lord Church in Annandale, VA with a banquet afterwards in the parish hall.



PEOPLE YOU KNOW

IN BEAVER MEADOWS...

Catechetical Sunday

The ECF students from Saints Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church in Beaver Meadows, PA, enjoy a snack with their pastor, Father Vasyl Chepelskyy, at the beginning of their school year studies. Instructors are Doctor Marisue Rayno, Denise Daniels, and Cantor Mike Komishock.



IN BELTSVILLE...

Bishop of Parma Greets Family



Newly-ordained Bishop Robert (Pipta), Bishop of Parma, poses with family members from Saint Gregory the Great Parish in Beltsville, MD, at the Uniontown Pilgrimage.

From left to right: Robert Bodner (cousin of Bishop Robert), MaryJane Bodner, (Aunt), Bishop Robert, Eleanor Hipsley (Aunt).

IN CARTERET...

Parish Blesses New Vestments

Photo by: Gerald J. Wutkowski Sr., Parish Trustee

On Sunday, September 8, 2024, the feast of the Nativity of the Virgin Theotokos, Father Michael Popson blessed new blue and green altar cloths and priestly vestments before the dismissal of the Divine Liturgy. The parish is grateful to the eleven families who contributed funds to make this possible. Gold and dark altar cloths and vestments have also been ordered from Byzantine Church Supply in Philadelphia, PA. The parish also asks for prayers for world peace since the seamstress, living in Ukraine, often experiences power outages from eleven to eighteen hours per day. They also ask prayers to Our Lady of Protection to intercede for peace, justice, and protection for all victims of war.



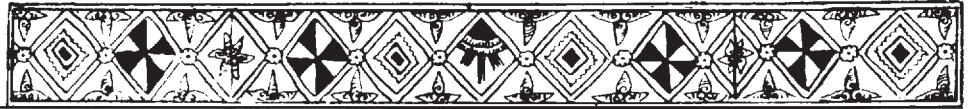
IN JESSUP...

Blessing of Pets

The parishioners of Holy Ghost Byzantine Catholic Church and neighbors from our local community joined together for a pet blessing in honor of the Feast of the Martyr Saint Mamas. Pets and their families gathered in front of the icon of the Byzantine saint to receive an individual blessing from Father Tim Kennedy. What a wonderful way to come together as a community to celebrate the pets that are such a special part of our family!



AROUND THE EPARCHY



IN SARASOTA...

New Community Gathering in Florida

On Saturday, September 14, 2024, a Divine Liturgy was celebrated at Incarnation Roman Catholic Church at 3:00 PM, with Father Robert Evancho, pastor of Saint Therese Byzantine Catholic Church in Saint Petersburg, FL, and Syn-cellus of the Southern States Syncellate, and Father Yurii Mikhalko, of All Saints Church, North Fort Myers, FL. Father Yurii will continue celebrating the Divine Liturgy every Saturday at 3:00 PM. If anyone has family or friends in the areas of Sarasota, Venice, or Bradenton, FL, you are kindly ask to let them know. You can also call Father Yurii at (908) 422-7897 for more information. Snowbirds are always welcomed to attend!



IN ROSWELL...

Atlanta Area Eastern Catholic Clergy Meet

By Deacon John Reed

“Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!—Psalm 133:1

The clergy of four of Atlanta’s Eastern Catholic parishes met recently at Saint John Chrysostom Melkite Greek Catholic Church in Atlanta for prayer and fellowship.

The meeting was the first of a new series of periodic gatherings of the Eastern Catholic priests and deacons in the Metro Atlanta Area. The clergy started their meeting by praying the Office of Sixth Hour from the Divine Office. Next, a Middle Eastern-style lunch was served followed by fellowship and discussion. Topics included brainstorming ideas for outreach, developing a fraternity of prayer and support among the clergy, and attendees were treated to a nice informal history lesson on the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church. The meeting concluded by praying the Office of Ninth Hour from the Divine Office.

Atlanta is home to eight Eastern Catholic parishes: Saint John Chrysostom Melkite Greek Catholic Church; Epiphany of our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church; Mother of God Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church; Saint Alphonsa Syro-Malabar Catholic Church; Holy Family Syro-Malabar Knanaya Catholic Church; Kid-anemehret Eritrean Ge’ez Rite Catholic Church; Saint Joseph Maronite Catholic Church; as well as a new Syro-Malankara Catholic Mission. All of these Eastern communities are in full-communication with the Holy See.



IN SAINT PETERSBURG...


Catechetical Sunday

On Sunday, September 15, 2024, a nice number of children and teachers were able to attend the Divine Liturgy and receive a blessing as they begin another year of having fun, meeting new friends, and learning about all the mysteries of the Eastern Church. Father Robert Evancho is pastor of Saint Therese Parish in Saint Petersburg, Florida.



ONLINE CHURCH SINGING CLASSES BY METROPOLITAN CANTOR INSTITUTE

The Metropolitan Cantor Institute offers an online, 2-year program in church singing for both new and experienced cantors. Tuition is \$75 for each eight-week class, which includes feedback to help you improve your singing and cantorial skills. Initial classes on liturgy and church singing are free. For details: <https://mci.archpitt.org/classes> or call Deacon Jeffrey Mierzejewski at (412) 735-1676. Classes are offered at no charge to qualified students from any parish with no current cantor.



VOICE LESSONS

Develop your voice for more confident musical participation in liturgies!

Private singing instruction with professional voice teacher & cantor

Andrew Skitko

Lessons available in-person or online. Scholarships are possible to arrange!

Andrew Skitko is Cantor for St. Mary's Byzantine Catholic Church in Trenton, NJ, director of Theoria Chamber Choir, and holds degrees in Vocal Performance and Voice Pedagogy from Westminster Choir College. He performs regularly with Opera Philadelphia and numerous professional ensembles and teaches singers of all levels.
Contact for more information:
(610) 220-3479
andrewskitko@gmail.com



Carpathian Village Saint Nicholas Shrine

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

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

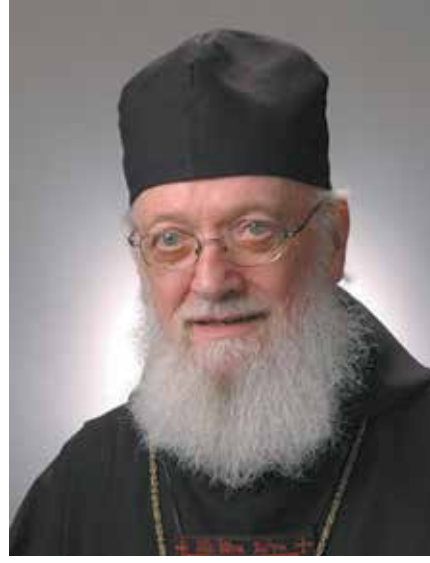
+ABBOT LEO (SCHLOSSER) RECEIVES HIS ETERNAL REWARD

Abbot Leo R. Schlosser, retired Abbot of Holy Trinity Monastery, fell asleep in the Lord on September 13, 2024, at Mount Macrina Manor, Uniontown, PA. He was born on April 23, 1933, in Akron, OH, the youngest child of Joseph M. and Juliana (Toth) Schlosser.

He received his elementary education at Saint Bernard School and his high school education at Saint Mary High School, both in Akron, OH. He entered Saint Vincent Seminary, Latrobe, PA and then transferred to Saint Bernard Seminary in Alabama for his monastic and priestly formation. He was

ordained a priest at Saint Leo Benedictine Abbey, Saint Leo, FL, by Archbishop Joseph P. Hurley. Following ordination, he received bi-ritual faculties to serve the Byzantine Catholic Church.

Throughout his active priestly ministry, he served as Novice Master and Prior at Saint Leo Abbey in Saint Leo, FL. In addition, he taught at the Prep School and Junior College. He served numerous parishes throughout Florida, Ohio and Pennsylvania. He gave many retreats and missions. In 1993, he was elected Hegumen (Abbot) of Holy Trinity Byzantine Catholic Monastery, Butler, PA. He retired from active priestly ministry



in 2017, but continued to offer words of encouragement which impacted so many people.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his siblings: Barbara,

Juliana, Stephen, Rosalia, Joseph, Ivan, Mary Ann, George, Bernard, Rita, Norbert and Richard. Surviving him are numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, parishioners, and friends.

A viewing was held from 2 to 8 PM Tuesday, September 24, at Saint John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church, Uniontown, PA, with a Parastas celebrated at 7 PM. The Funeral Divine Liturgy for a priest was celebrated by Metropolitan William on Wednesday, September 25 at Saint John Church. Interment followed at Mount Macrina Cemetery, Uniontown, PA.

May his memory be eternal! Vičnaja jemu pamjat'!



+FATHER NICHOLAS KRAYNAK FALLS ASLEEP IN THE LORD

NORTH LIMA, Ohio – Father Nicholas (Nick) Kraynak, 91, a retired priest of the Eparchy of Passaic, fell asleep in the Lord on July 14, 2024, at Hospice of the Valley in North Lima, OH.

Father Nick was born in Youngstown, OH, in 1933, the son of the late Michael and Anna Kraynak. He was the eighth of eleven children. He graduated from Saint Procopius Academy (High School) in Lisle, IL, in 1951. He then graduated from Duquesne University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1955, and from Saints Cyril and Methodius Byzantine Catholic Seminary in Pittsburgh, PA, in 1959.

He was ordained to the Priesthood of Jesus Christ by Bishop Nicholas (Elko) on April 23, 1959. Following his ordination to the priesthood, he served at parishes in the Cleveland, Ohio, area as well as in California. After this, he served in several parishes in New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania, including Saint Michael, Glen Lyon, Pennsylvania; Saint Mary, Nanticoke, Pennsylvania; Saint Mary, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania; Saint John, Wilkes-Barre Township, Pennsylvania; Holy Wisdom, Flanders, New Jersey; Saint John, Bayonne, New Jersey; Saints Peter and Paul, Elizabeth, New Jersey; Saint Mary, Kingston, Pennsylvania; and Holy Spirit, Binghamton, New York.

Following this, he rendered priestly services at Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic in Old Forge, Pennsylvania, for more than 25 years until his retirement from active priestly ministry in 2008, when he returned to the Youngstown, Ohio, area.

In addition to his parents, Father Nick was preceded in death by all of his siblings: Ann, Mary, Helen, Marge, Mike, John, Andy, Emil, William, and Edward. He is survived by a sister-in-law, Adeline, and by many nieces and nephews.

At the request of the family, funeral services were celebrated privately by Archbishop William and Bishop Kurt on July 20 at Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church in Youngstown, Ohio where Father Mykhaylo Farynets is Pastor.

Interment was at Saint Nicholas Cemetery, Campbell, Ohio.

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

May his memory be eternal! Vičnaja jemu pamjat'!

ANNUAL CIRCULATION REPORT

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE® (All Periodicals Publications Except Requester Publications) Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

1. Publication Title Eastern Catholic Life		2. Publication Number 165-600		3. Filing Date 09/12/2024	
4. Issue Frequency Monthly		5. Number of Issues Published Annually 12		6. Annual Subscription Price 15.00	
7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication (Not printer) (Street, city, county, state, and ZIP+4®) Byzantine catholic Eparchy of Passaic 445 Lackawanna Avenue, Woodland Park, NJ 074740				Contact Person Maureen French Telephone (Include area code) (973) 890-7777	
8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher (Not printer) Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic 445 Lackawanna Avenue, Woodland Park, NJ 07424					
9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor (Do not leave blank)					
Publisher (Name and complete mailing address) Most Reverend Kurt Burnette - Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic 445 Lackawanna Avenue, Woodland Park, NJ 07424					
Editor (Name and complete mailing address) Very Reverend James Badeaux 445 Lackawanna Avenue, Woodland Park, NJ 07424					
Managing Editor (Name and complete mailing address) Reverend Ronald Hatton 445 Lackawanna Avenue, Woodland Park, NJ 07424					
10. Owner (Do not leave blank. If the publication is owned by a corporation, give the name and address of the corporation immediately followed by the names and addresses of all stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of the total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, give the names and addresses of the individual owners. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, give its name and address as well as those of each individual owner. If the publication is published by a nonprofit organization, give its name and address.)					
Full Name		Complete Mailing Address			
Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic		445 Lackawanna Avenue, Woodland Park, NJ 07424			
13. Publication Title Eastern Catholic Life		14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below 09/01/2023			
15. Extent and Nature of Circulation				Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
a. Total Number of Copies (Net press run)					
b. Paid Circulation (By Mail and Outside the Mail)					
(1) Mailed Outside-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 (Include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)				3891	3822
(2) Mailed In-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 (Include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)				0	0
(3) Paid Distribution Outside the Mails Including Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS®				0	0
(4) Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS (e.g., First-Class Mail®)				0	0
c. Total Paid Distribution (Sum of 15b (1), (2), (3), and (4))				3891	3822
d. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (By Mail and Outside the Mail)					
(1) Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County Copies included on PS Form 3541				101	67
(2) Free or Nominal Rate In-County Copies included on PS Form 3541				0	0
(3) Free or Nominal Rate Copies Mailed at Other Classes Through the USPS (e.g., First-Class Mail)				0	0
(4) Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail (Carriers or other means)				0	0
e. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of 15d (1), (2), (3) and (4))				101	67
f. Total Distribution (Sum of 15c and 15e)				3992	3889
g. Copies not Distributed (See Instructions to Publishers #4 (page #3))					
h. Total (Sum of 15f and g)				3992	3889
i. Percent Paid (15c divided by 15f times 100)				97%	97%
* If you are claiming electronic copies, go to line 16 on page 3. If you are not claiming electronic copies, skip to line 17 on page 3.					
16. Electronic Copy Circulation				Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
a. Paid Electronic Copies				0	0
b. Total Paid Print Copies (Line 15c) + Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a)				3891	3822
c. Total Print Distribution (Line 15f) + Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a)				3992	3889
d. Percent Paid (Both Print & Electronic Copies) (16b divided by 16c x 100)				97%	97%
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I certify that 50% of all my distributed copies (electronic and print) are paid above a nominal price.					
17. Publication of Statement of Ownership					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If the publication is a general publication, publication of this statement is required. Will be printed <input type="checkbox"/> Publication not required.					
in the 10/1/24 issue of this publication.					
18. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner Kurt Burnette, Publisher					Date 09/12/2024



The Byzantine Catholic
Metropolitan Archeparchy of Pittsburgh
 Office of the Archbishop
 66 Riverview Avenue Pittsburgh PA 15214
 (412)231-1000 Phone (412)231-1697 Fax

Assembly 2025 – Byzantine Catholic Metropolitan Church of Pittsburgh

July, 10, 2024

Preparations are underway for our Church – Bishops, Clergy, Monastics, Religious, and Laity - to come together in Assembly next year - from July 16-20, 2025. The gathering will convene at St. Mary Byzantine Catholic Church in Whiting, Indiana under the name and calling, "Come let us worship and bow before Christ"

Worship of the Lord includes our personal prayer and our liturgical prayer life. It is reflected in our relationships with each other and in the ways we live our faith as Byzantine Catholics of the Metropolitan Church of Pittsburgh.

The goal of the Assembly is to together discern ways to live our worship of Christ today in a real and practical manner while learning from the past and looking to the future. The Assembly will include formal presentations, interviews, panel discussion and round table exercises.

Special emphasis will be given to the distinctive contributions Byzantine Catholic have made to their Metropolitan Church.

The Assembly is a time to celebrate the unique contributions of each region and Eparchy while at the same time acknowledging the unity of the Byzantine Catholic Church in North America.

More information will appear in your parish bulletins and online at the Assembly website: byzantineassembly.org

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

Most Reverend William C. Skurla, D. D.
 Metropolitan Archbishop of Pittsburgh

EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

(USPS 165-600) (ISSN 0894-9786)

Official Publication of the
 Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic
 Subscription Rate: \$20.00 per year.

News and Photo Services:
 Member of the Catholic Press Association of America.
 Published monthly by the
 Eastern Catholic Press Association

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

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

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

Most Reverend Bishop Kurt Burnette
President and Publisher
 Father James Badeaux, *Editor*
 Father Ronald Hatton, *Associate Editor*
 Father Lewis Rabayda, *Layout Editor*
 Mrs. Maureen French, *Circulation Editor*
 (mfrench@eparchyofpassaic.com)

E-Mail us at:
ECL@eparchyofpassaic.com

Eparchial Website:
www.EparchyofPassaic.com



LIFE, LOVE, AND THE HUMAN PERSON

By Ann M. Koshute, MTS

IT'S ALL IN THE ATTITUDE

Clichés are a dime a dozen (see what I did there?). In all seriousness, there are many catchy phrases, aphorisms, and adages that have been around forever and are easily recognized and understood by most people. But when use of even the wisest of these sayings is overdone the one repeating it may lose points on originality, and the interest of his/her intended audience. Such is the case with the old phrase admonishing everyone to "have an attitude of gratitude." I must admit that this one has always rubbed me the wrong way for some reason. It's always struck me as a little too sugary and discounting of the real struggles and suffering in life. As a cliché it lives up to its name – overused, kind of irritating, and ultimately unhelpful. Added to that is the emphasis on "attitude," which points the finger squarely at me. If my attitude isn't right, if I am not actively focused on gratitude, then a personal shortcoming has revealed itself, which is discouraging and leaves me feeling inadequate, spiritually desolate, and... well...ungrateful!

I recently had a wonderful conversation with a priest and the question of gratitude came up. Father shared that it is so important to all our personal

relationships, as well as our relationship with God, to give thanks always and in everything. Thank your spouse, even if he/she didn't do anything special. Thank your kids, neighbors, pastor, the person who checks you out at the store. Be thankful to everyone and show it. This practice of radical gratitude, of course, includes being thankful during times of suffering and difficulties of all kinds. It's something every Christian knows, but putting it into practice is often very hard, especially when we feel as if there nothing – and nobody – for which we can be grateful. Thanking family and friends, co-workers, and strangers, is routine, and easy when some need has been satisfied for us. Thanking God is something we at least do as we celebrate the Liturgy, and when prayers have been answered (although there's always the danger of getting so swept up in the joy and relief that we forget about God altogether). But when life is hard, expectations are not met, and true suffering befalls us, how can we possibly be thankful?

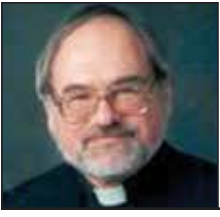
My dislike of the "attitude of gratitude" could be that I associate the saying with emotion; that to be truly, authentically grateful, I must feel it from the very depths of my soul. If the feeling isn't

there, the gratitude must not be, either. I asked Father about this, because it's often a stumbling block to putting gratitude into practice, especially when things aren't going well, or if I or someone I love is suffering. His response was both reassuring and challenging: if you don't feel it, that's okay. Do it anyway. He helped me to understand that gratitude is not dependent on emotion, but that the good feelings that sometimes well up in us are a by-product, and neither the source nor the substance of gratitude. As I said, this was reassuring, because it meant that not feeling especially grateful didn't mean that my thanks to God, or anyone else, wasn't real. At the same time, the challenge that I "must be thankful anyway," especially when things are tough, bestowed a sense of responsibility on me that I'm not sure I wanted! Isn't easier for us to fall into the rut of thinking, "If I don't feel like it, I don't have to do it"? But Father reminded me that gratitude – like love – is first of all a choice, an act of our will. That makes sense when you put it into the context of Jesus' admonition that we love our enemies. We're not obligated to like them, or condone their behavior, particularly if they do evil. But we must love them; that is, we must desire their good, and espe-

cially desire that they would embrace God and experience a transformation through Him. The same goes for gratitude: we don't have to like a bad situation or the suffering we experience. But we must choose to be thankful, even for the smallest glimmer of light, and in the face of darkness itself. In the end, gratitude may not change a bad situation, but it will certainly change us.

Within a few hours of this conversation, I received some news. It was good, but maybe not quite what I hoped for or expected. Just as I started my grumbling, Father's words about gratitude transformed my thoughts and I praised God in that moment. It was a small thing, but to me it represented a giant step on my newfound pilgrimage toward gratitude. There will be setbacks, resistance, and standstills, but with God's grace and my desire to follow Him, there will be forward progress on this road of thankfulness.

I'm still not much for clichés, but now I have a better appreciation for the meaning and spiritual benefits of an "attitude of gratitude." How about you? Ready to make an "attitude adjustment?" You just may be thankful you did. **ECL**



THE BYZANTINE LITURGY

By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD

MARRIAGE EAST AND WEST

I really don't like to make comparisons between the Eastern and Western Churches on liturgical questions, because it often means we have to make a decision about which is superior. In regard to marriage, something should be said, because the traditions are so very different, and we live in a Western culture that affects our view of how the rite of marriage should be performed. Both Churches believe in the same basic meaning of marriage. It is an act of love and grace given to us as human beings by God. Saint Paul calls it a mystery, not in the sense of something unexplainable, but in the sense of a gift given in God's plan for life. Human marriage then becomes a finite reflection of this infinite love. In Ephesians, therefore, he writes, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the church" (Ephesians 5:31-32). Both East and West have this one picture of marriage: a man and a woman love each other to the degree that they become one life lived together, and that this union is blessed by God's divine sacramental blessing.

The structure of Christian marriage is also the same. From the human perspective, it is a story of love between a man and a woman. They see in one another a bond that surpasses all other commitments, and they make a decision to share

each other's life. The second story of creation in the Book of Genesis describes it: "a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body" (Genesis 2:24). This choice to share life is a free human decision and may not be forced on the couple. It is true that in human history men and women have been forced by the will of their parents or by the forces of society to wed, but the Church has always taught and defended their individual freedom, even if some persons have not. From the divine perspective, it is a union conceived in God's grace and love. It requires, therefore, for the faithful, the blessing of the Church. The holy Bishop of Antioch and first century martyr, Ignatius, wrote, "Those who marry should be united with the bishop's knowledge, so that the marriage may follow God's will and not merely the desires of the flesh." (*Letter to Polycarp* 5)

From the beginning, then, we see that marriage was an essential part of the life of the Church, a divine mystery in the sense of something revealed, overseen by the bishop, the ordained successor of the apostles. Marriage, of course, is not simply the first day ceremony, but the whole life of a man and woman united in Christ. The ceremony itself developed and grew in the life of the Church. In its earliest stage, it consisted of a joyful celebration between the families that were joined in this commitment in the

local community. When the couple had made their pledge to each other, they went to the church, where they sealed their marriage by Holy Communion. Having become one body with each other, they sealed this by union in the Body of Christ. Saint Theodore the Studite wrote, "The head and perfection of the union is the holy and one body and blood of Christ" (*Letter 50*). As time went on, though, the local celebrations were brought into the official ritual of the Church, and the marriage blessing was given by the priest.

The rite of marriage developed differently in the Eastern and Western Churches. In the East, the ceremony of crowning the bride and groom became the centerpiece of the celebration of the wedding. At first, crowning was avoided because of its pagan meanings, but after the victory of Christianity and the eclipse of paganism, the Church accepted this gesture that was used in local communities and gave it a new meaning. It signified victory over the forces of evil and a sign of the blessing of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, in the East, the blessing of the priest was emphasized as the significance of the holy sacrament of marriage.

In the West, crowning was sometimes used, but it was not as popular a local rite. Marriage was not the blessing of the priest, but the commitment the bride and groom made to each other by

exchanging vows and rings became the more important sign of marriage. The wedding vows were incorporated into the ritual, a development that did not happen in the Eastern Church.

When the sacramental mystery of marriage is explained theologically, then, the West talked about the commitment the couple made to each other, while the East emphasized more the blessing of God. Another secular action, the sale of the bride by the father to the groom was brought into the rite, as the father walked his daughter through the center of the church to give her to her future husband. This original meaning is mostly lost now, and it is simply an occasion to give daddy a role in the wedding ceremony.

When we look at the history, we see that Christian marriage is always the same, it is a union of a man and woman which is blessed by God manifested in the blessing of the priest, in the East by crowns, in the West by a hand. Eastern Christians are a minority when they live in Western nations. Therefore, it is much more likely that they will experience a Western marriage ceremony, than that a Western couple will attend an Eastern wedding. This leads to a feeling by the Eastern pair that they are missing something, and the catechesis is difficult. There is another problem, too. The marriage rite was always sealed by Holy Communion, in the East by the partaking of the Pre-sanctified Body of our Lord, in the West by a nuptial Mass. In the contemporary world, though, marriage is very often between two people who do not belong to the same church, and are not in Communion. Holy Communion, then, has become less important as an essential part of the marriage ceremony. **ECL**

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF MONEY & POSSESSIONS

By Father Michael J. Salnicko



SOME FRIGHTENING STATISTICS

When we as a society ignore God and what He teaches us in Holy Scripture about selfish desires that lead to unnecessary borrowing and debt - when we answer the proverbial question "If your friends all jumped off a bridge would you?" with our answer of "Certainly-everybody is doing it!" - we fall into the deep water of perpetual bondage to those intent on collecting our hard-earned income from us for their own pleasure and power. We end up drowning in debt. Remember Sacred Scripture, "The borrower is slave to the lender?" It also prevents us from building wealth so that we can become that loving, forgiving, generous and compassionate person trying to fulfil those corporal works of mercy in imitation of our Heavenly Father.

The United States federal government should not be the example we follow. Presently our country-yours and mine since we are "We the People"- is in debt over 34 trillion dollars (check out the

'national debt clock' for yourself). The federal debt per citizen as of February 2024 is presently \$101,616.00 - read this as taxes you must pay. But not everybody pays taxes, so the bill handed to the individual citizen who pays taxes is \$264,634.00! Like every other debt it is paid in installments. That constitutes the federal taxes part of what is taken from your income. Then we have state taxes, local taxes, right to work taxes, school & property taxes, sales taxes, fuel taxes, inheritance taxes, capital gain taxes, earned income taxes, and the list goes on. This is just governmental debt placed on your income. What I like to call, "The generosity of the taxpayer!"

Now let's look at individual personal debt. Over three-quarters of Americans (78% according to investopedia) are living paycheck to paycheck—and that money crunch affects their ability to build a bright future. After all, it's really hard to build wealth and become generous when your biggest wealth-building

tool—your income—is tied up with bills and debt payments every single month making others rich. Your payments are now the O.P.M. that banks and other lenders are making a profit on with their interest fees and finance charges. Consumers in the United States had over 16 trillion dollars in personal debt as of the third quarter of 2023:

- The majority of personal debt were home mortgages amounting to approximately 11.4 trillion U.S. dollars.
- Student loans were the second largest component of household debt - as of the third quarter of 2023, 45 million American students owed over 1.76 trillion U.S. dollars in student loans.
- Auto loan debt, the third largest component of household debt in America, is now at a whopping \$1.5 trillion, with 81% of all vehicles being financed.
- Credit card debt in the United States

has been growing at a fast pace between 2021 and 2023. In the fourth quarter of 2023, the overall amount of credit card debt reached its highest value ever - \$1.129 trillion - an average of almost \$8000 per household.

From reviewing these statistics, you should now understand why that CHANGE of heart that God desires of us is so important. When we change our heart, trash our selfishness that leads to disastrous financial habits, and learn to live according to the principles in Sacred Scripture, we will experience that wonderful prosperity that God has promised to those who strive to imitate His love, His forgiveness, and His generosity! This will lead to a happy and contented life, better relationships with those we love, and a God Who addresses us as "Good and faithful servant."

Glory to Jesus Christ! **ECL**

SEASONAL REFLECTIONS

Father Ronald Hatton



THE PROTECTION OF THE THEOTOKOS AND THE PRIESTHOOD

“O most-pure Theotokos, you are a mighty defender for those in sorrow. You are a ready help to those in trouble. You are the salvation and confirmation of the world. You are the depth of mercy, the fount of God’s wisdom and the protectress of the world. O faithful, let us sing and praise her glorious protection saying: Rejoice, O Full of Grace, the Lord is with you, and through you He grants great mercy to the world.” – “At Psalm 140,” Vespers for the Feast of the Protection of the Theotokos, October 1.

My Seasonal Reflection is more of a personal one, but with effects for all of us. October is an especially spiritual time of year for me for a couple of reasons. When I lived in Virginia Beach, VA, back in the day, we had no Byzantine Catholic Church in our area, and did not know of Ascension Parish, one hour away in Williamsburg. One day, my mother saw in the local section of our newspaper that there was going to be a mission at a local Roman Catholic parish on October 1, 1989. Now, October 1 is my birthday, and I thought it was such a treat that we could go to “our own” church as a “birthday present.” And so, Mom, Dad, and I went to the chapel at Saint Gregory the Great parish that night. We had not been in our church for decades by then. Father Ed Cimballa, pastor of Ascension Parish, Williamsburg, at the time, and Cantor (now Deacon) Nicholas Sotack were there to offer the Divine Liturgy for the first time in Virginia Beach. The

Liturgy began and, as it progressed, they began to sing the *Jedinorodinyj Syne* (“O Only-begotten Son”); the melody awoke deep memories in my heart, and I said to myself, *I’m home!* There, I found out that my birthday was the Feast of the Protection of the Mother of God, and I was a bit dumbfounded. This mission eventually became Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish, Virginia Beach, VA. I became the first cantor; my father helped build our first icon screen when we finally found a permanent home. In April of 1991, Father Ed drove me up to meet with Bishop Michael, and I entered seminary in the autumn of that year.

During the early part of my priesthood, I met a parishioner who introduced me to Saint Thérèse of Lisieux and her “Little Way.” I was intrigued by her life and bought up all the books I could find about her, and took her on as a patron saint. I then found out that she had had a mission to priests.

At age 14, Thérèse understood her vocation to pray for priests, to be “an apostle to apostles.” In September 1890, at her canonical examination before she professed her religious vows, she was asked why she had come to Carmel. She answered “I came to save souls, and especially to pray for priests.” Throughout her life she prayed fervently for priests, and she corresponded with and prayed for a young priest, Adolphe Roulland, and a young seminarian, Maurice Bellière. She wrote to her sister, “Our mis-

sion as Carmelites is to form evangelical workers who will save thousands of souls whose mothers we shall be.”

In October 1895, a young seminarian and subdeacon of the White Fathers, Abbé Bellière, asked the Carmel of Lisieux for a nun who would support – by prayer and sacrifice – his missionary work, and the souls that were in the future to be entrusted to him. Mother Agnes designated Thérèse. She never met Father Bellière but ten letters passed between them.

A year later, Father Adolphe Roulland (1870–1934) of the Society of Foreign Missions requested the same service of the Lisieux Carmel. Once more, Thérèse was assigned the duties of spiritual sister. “It is quite clear that Thérèse, in spite of all her reverence for the priestly office, in both cases felt herself to be the teacher and the giver. It is she who consoles and warns, encourages and praises, answers questions, offers corroboration, and instructs the priests in the meaning of her little way.”

It is interesting to think that the priest, in one aspect of his ministry, mirrors the “ministry” of the Blessed Mother. We see her as the Ladder by which God comes to earth, takes on our flesh from her, and gives us Himself to the world. In a similar, although inferior, way, God gives Himself to the world through the priest in the Holy Eucharist. The priest is a ladder between heaven and earth, standing at the altar giving his parish

to God and, turning to the people during Liturgy, gives them His blessing through His priest, and gives His Body and Blood to them in the precious Sacrament. How blessed the priest is to echo the life of the Mother of God in the service he gives to his parish!

My priesthood has always been blessed by the knowledge that Saint Thérèse, a “Western” saint, and the Feast of the Protection of the Theotokos, an “Eastern” feast, were part of who I was as a priest, a child of God, and as a Catholic Christian. Both of these women in my life have been a source of strength to me throughout what, in many ways, has been a bumpy ride through not quite 30 years. Every October 1st, as I celebrate the feast in my parish, I am reminded of how both these feasts have been part of my formation as a priest, how our Blessed Mother has sustained me and covered me with her veil as I fought with human weaknesses and temptations. I am a priest because of a Divine Liturgy that took place on my birthday. I remain a priest because of the protection, prayers and intercessions of the Blessed Theotokos, and through the prayers and intercessions of our Mother, Doctor of the Church, and Little Flower, Thérèse of Lisieux. With this, I commend to you, be you priest or layperson, the prayers of these two standards that our Lord has raised up for us during the month of October.

ECL

FATHER FRANK TWARDZIK AMONG SALESIAN JUBILARIANS

On Saturday, October 12, the New Rochelle Province of the Salesians of Don Bosco celebrated 20 priest and brother jubilarians at the Marian Shrine in Haverstraw-Stony Point, NY. Father Hugo Orozco, a member of the Salesian general council, presided at Mass. Father Dominic Tran, provincial, preached.

One of the jubilarians was Father Francis Twardzik, professed 65 years, now semi-retired at the Marian Shrine.

Father Frank was born on March 29, 1940, in Springfield, Massachusetts, and entered the Salesian minor seminary at Haverstraw, New York, in 1954. After high school graduation, he was admitted to the novitiate at Newton, New Jersey, and professed vows there on September 8, 1959. He studied theology in Italy and Columbus, Ohio, and was ordained on March 21, 1970, in Elizabeth, New Jersey.

Father Frank served a few years in Salesian schools in Florida and Louisiana, but most of his priestly ministry has been in service to the Byzantine-Ruthenian parishioners of the Pascaic Eparchy: assistant pastor at Saints Peter and Paul Church in Minersville, Pennsylvania (1973-1976) and pastor at Saint Nicholas Church in Dunellen, New Jersey (1978-1989) and Saint Mary Church in Scranton, Pennsylvania (1989-2017).

Father Frank was part of the staff at the Salesian house of formation in Orange, New Jersey, for six years, including a period of chaplaincy to the Salesian Sisters in Haledon, New Jersey. In 2023, he retired to the Marian Shrine in Haverstraw-Stony Point, NY, where he still offers some priestly service.

Invited to offer a reflection on his 65 years as a Salesian, Father Frank wrote:

Well, my thought goes to the beautiful vesting prayer of the Byzantine Rite as we put on the Stichar (Alb):

“My Soul rejoices in God my Savior, for He has clothed me in the garment of Salvation. With a garment of salvation, He has clothed me with joy. As on a bridegroom he has placed a crown and as on a bride he has clothed me with beauty!”

This crown of obedience has sent me to serve in the beautiful, holy Byzantine Rite—the Ruthenian Rite—to people I have loved forever—young, old, sick, and suffering and our dear deceased—all of whom I remember daily in my Divine Liturgies! And all the several bishops for whom I pray!

He clothed me with the beauty of this awesomely beautiful Sacred Apostolic Rite in her truly divine Sacrament-Mysteries! The truly wonderful parishioners and our beloved young



people are what I treasure in my old age.

The many photos of these 51 years of service recall to mind with tears of joy, my privilege.

The vow of obedience has been my peace and joy, and my love of Jesus crucified—obedience perfected.



SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

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

PROTECTION OF THE THEOTOKOS

The celebration of the Theotokos' protection of the Church is based on an apparition of the Virgin in Constantinople in the 10th century. Saint Andrew the Fool for Christ, Saint Epiphanius, and a group of faithful saw the Virgin Mary holding her veil over the congregation as a sign of her protection. What, you may wonder, does that have to do with the Scriptures that were completed a thousand years earlier?

We can begin by reminding ourselves that Mary, "full of grace" (Luke 1:28), only receives and reflects what comes first and foremost from God. She has been compared to the moon that reflects the light of the Divine Sun. Scripture offers several images of God's overshadowing presence and protection over His people.

In the Old Testament, the image of God's overshadowing presence is intimately connected to the portable Tent of Meeting of the Exodus period (Exodus 25-40; especially 40:34) and then the permanent Jerusalem Temple (1 Kings 6-8; especially 8:10-13). Both Holy Places were overshadowed by God's Glory as the sign of His presence. Within the Temple, as described by the Epistle to the Hebrews, above the Ark of the Covenant were "the cherubim of glory overshadowing the Mercy Seat" (Hebrews 9:5). This Mercy Seat, or Place of Expiation, was the focal point of the Day of Atonement Liturgy, when the blood sacrifice was sprinkled there in atonement for the sins of all Israel (Leviticus 16). This same portion of the Law states that the Lord "will be seen in the cloud above the Mercy Seat" (Leviticus 16:2).

We read Hebrews 9 on most feasts of the Theotokos precisely because we see all the elements of the Old Testament Temples fulfilled in her. They offered access to God's presence to the degree that any earthly building could but, even as he dedicated the Temple he had built, King Solomon admitted that no building could contain God (2 Chronicles 6:18-19). But Mary actually did contain God Himself--Jesus Christ, truly God and truly human—in her womb. So the cloud of glory, the Ark of the Covenant, the Cherubim of Glory, the Mercy Seat, are all seen as images and foreshadowings of the Theotokos.

God's overshadowing presence in the Temple merged in the inspired mind of the Psalmist with a much humbler image: that of a mother bird gathering her young beneath her wings. Several Psalms ask God for shelter "in the shadow of Your wings" (Psalms 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7; 91:4). We can trace this image back to the Hymn of Moses at the end of the forty-year Exodus, which Moses describes from the Lord's point of view: "He found him (Israel) in a desert land, and in the howling

waste of the wilderness; He encircled him, He cared for him, He kept him as the apple of His eye. Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that flutters over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on his pinions, so the Lord alone guided him. No foreign god was with him" (Deuteronomy 32:10-12).

Jesus Himself employed this same image in His lament over Jerusalem: "O

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it. How often would I have gathered you together as a hen gathers her brood under her wing and you were not willing" (Matthew 23:37; Luke 13:34).

Beneath His arms outstretched on the Cross, Jesus did gather the nucleus of the Church: His Mother and His Beloved Disciple, and He entrusted them to each other (John 19:25-27). Here, we might see the

beginning of Mary's role as "Gentle Protectress of Christians," as the kondak for this feast calls her. Of course, her attention to our needs was evident from the very beginning of Jesus' ministry. At the Wedding in Cana, it was Mary who became aware that the wine had run out and it was Mary who brought this problem to her Son for the sake of the bride and groom (John 2:3). We can rely on Mary's intercession and protection in whatever we do, so long as we "do whatever He tells you" (John 2:5). **ECL**

NAWAS INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL, INC.

ITALY JUBILEE PILGRIMAGE



HOSTED BY:
Archbishop William C. Skurla
 Metropolitan Archbishop of Pittsburgh
Bishop Kurt R. Burnette
 Eparch of Passaic, Apostolic Administrator of Phoenix & Toronto
Bishop Robert M. Pipta
 Eparch of Parma
With Tour Coordinator:
Fr. Ed Cimbala

11 Days: May 5-15, 2025

\$4829 from NEWARK

(Air/land tour price is \$4299 plus \$530 government taxes/airline surcharges)

VISITING:
Venice ♦ Padua ♦ Ravenna ♦ Florence
Assisi ♦ Rome ♦ Vatican City
Including
The Opportunity to Pass Through The Holy Doors of the Basilica of St. Peter in Vatican City & the Other Three Major Basilicas

TOUR FEATURES:

- Roundtrip air from Newark
- \$530 government taxes & airline surcharges
- First class/select hotels based on 2 persons sharing in twin bedded rooms with private bath
- Most Meals
- Services of a professional English-speaking tour director
- Comprehensive sightseeing

For More Information, Please Contact:
Fr. Ed Cimbala
Tel: (908) 872-2928
Email: fredcimbala@gmail.com



FOR THE FULL DETAILED BROCHURE

“This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me” (Mt. 15:8).

Praying with perfect single-pointed attention and without distraction is impossible for us in this life. We will inevitably suffer from distraction during our public and private prayers. Even though distractions can't be avoided entirely, we must try.

The Divine Liturgy and other church services are so rich, profound, and meaningful that we all should be saints by now if we had only been praying and paying attention to all we hear.

After all these years of weekly or even daily Divine Liturgy attendance, reading and hearing Epistles, Gospels, and liturgical texts, shouldn't we have made more significant progress in spiritual things by now?

During the Divine Liturgy, the priest or deacon often encourages us, “Let us be attentive,” and “Wisdom, be attentive.” For good reason, as our minds are prone to wander.

The fourth-century Egyptian Desert Father Theodore of Enaton said, “If God were to hold against us our lack of attention in prayers and psalm-singing, we could not be saved” (Wortley, 121).

Saint John Climacus (579-649) writes:

“Try to lift up, or rather, to shut off your thought within the words of your prayer, and, if in its infant state it wearies and falls, lift it up again. Instability is natural to the mind, but God is powerful to establish everything.” (Ladder, 28:17).

(The Paulist Press edition translates this as “Make the effort to raise up, or rather, to enclose your mind within the words of your prayer; and if, like a child, it gets tired and falters, raise it up again.”)

“Constantly wrestle with your thought, and, whenever it wanders, call it back to you. God does not require from those still under obedience prayer completely free of distractions. Do not despond when your thoughts are filched, but remain calm, and unceasingly recall your mind. Unbroken recollection is proper only to an angel” (Ladder, 4:92).

When you notice you are distracted, bring your attention back, and God will help and reward you for your efforts. Get into the habit of constantly calling your wandering mind back. By doing so, you will strengthen your ability to pay attention.

The Desert Fathers and early monastics devoted themselves to reading, memorizing, and reciting the Psalms and other biblical texts with the greatest attention. In one account from the “Anonymous Sayings,” a disciple recounts the teaching of his spiritual father:

“It happened once that I was distracted when we were offering the synaxis and made a mistake in a word of the psalm.

SCHOOL OF PRAYER

Father G. Scott Boghossian



PRAY WITH ATTENTION

When we had completed the synaxis, in response the elder said to me: ‘When I am offering the synaxis, I imagine there is a fire burning beneath me and my thoughts cannot incline to left or to right. So where were your thoughts when we were offering the Psalms, that a word of the Psalm escaped you? Do you not know that you stood in the presence of God and were speaking to God?’ (Wortley, p.101).

Saint Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) says, “Never address your words to God while you are thinking of something else” (Way of Perfection, 22:6).

Paying attention and resisting distractions is part of the reverence and holy fear we owe to God.

Climacus writes, “The beginning of prayer is the expulsion of distractions from the very start by a single thought; the middle stage is the concentration on what is being said or thought; its conclusion is rapture in the Lord” (Ladder, 28:19).

Involuntary distractions are okay and not sinful. We all suffer involuntary distractions, but we are treading on thin ice when we don't try to pay attention to what we are praying. Without trying to pay attention, we aren't praying; we are just wasting our time.

As Saint John Climacus says:

“Prayer is soiled when we stand before God and picture to ourselves irrelevant and inopportune thoughts. Prayer is lost when we are captured by useless cares. Prayer is stolen from us when our thoughts wander before we realize it. Prayer is spoiled by any kind of attack or interruption that comes to us at the time of prayer” (Ladder, 28:22).

“At all times, but most of all during the singing in church, let us keep quiet and undistracted. For by distractions the demons aim to bring our prayer to nothing” (Ladder, 4:101).

Let's try to “enclose our minds in the words of our prayers,” to pay attention, to resist distractions, and when we fail, to pick ourselves up and start again.

Make this commitment to yourself: “From now on, I will make an effort to pay attention to everything I pray in my private prayers, and in everything I hear during the services and prayers in church.”

You will see what a difference it makes.

ECL

FATHER RYAN LIEBHABER ORDAINED FOR THE EPARCHY OF PASSAIC

continued from page 1

fantry officer, before retiring in August, 2022. Father Ryan's military career had taken him all over the United States and the world, with assignments up and down the East Coast of the United States (Fort Drum, New York; West Point, New York; Joint-Base MDL, New Jersey; Fort Meade, Maryland; Fort Myer, Virginia; Fort Bragg, North Carolina; Fort Benning, Georgia), overseas to Germany, and multiple combat deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. The experience of moving throughout the Eparchy of Passaic afforded Father Ryan and his family the opportunity to belong to many different Byzantine Catholic Parishes, which included Holy Spirit Byzantine Catholic Church in Mahwah, New Jersey (Father Marcel Szabo and Father Jody Baran, of blessed repose), Patronage of the Mother of God Byzantine Catholic Church in Arbutus, Maryland (Father Conan Timoney, of blessed repose), Saint Mary in Trenton, New Jersey (Father Yuriy Oros), and Saints Cyril and Methodius in Cary, North Carolina (Father Vasyl Sokolovych).

The experiences gained in each of these parishes gave Father Ryan and his fam-

ily an appreciation for the richness of the Byzantine Catholic Church's tradition and the warmth of its members, but also an awareness of the shortage of priests needed to serve in its parishes. Having been ordained a deacon while still serving on active-duty, Father Ryan decided to retire from the U.S. Army in order to pursue priestly formation. To do so, Father Ryan and his family relocated to Austria immediately after retirement where he began his studies at the International Theological Institute in Trumau, Austria, an institute founded by Saint Pope John Paul II with the mission of uniting the Eastern and Western Churches. In June of 2024, after two years of intensive formation and studies, Father Ryan graduated while earning a pontifical degree in theology.

After ordination to the priesthood, Father Ryan was placed on loan to the Archeparchy of Pittsburgh in order to afford him the opportunity to live closer to his mother, Maureen, who resides in Ohio. As such, Father Ryan was recently assigned by Metropolitan William to serve at Saint Michael's Byzantine Catholic Church in Pleasant City, Ohio. Father Ryan is extremely grate-

ful to Archbishop William and Bishop Kurt, as well as to all the priests of the Eparchy of Passaic who helped form him over the years, but particularly to his now deceased spiritual director, Father John Zeyack, and the deceased priests Father Conan Timoney and Father Jody Baran. He is additionally thankful to his Austrian formators: Father Yury Kolasa (rector, ITI), Father Juraj Terek (chaplain, ITI), and Father Andreas Hornig (spiritual director). Father Ryan is additionally grateful to his parents, Ralph and Maureen; his wife, Pan'i Niccole; his children, his sib-

lings; and all his family and friends who have supported him in his journey to the holy priesthood. A special thanks is also given to Father Robert Jager and the choir and parishioners of Saint John Chrysostom in Columbus, Ohio, for hosting the beautiful ordination. Father Ryan is extremely excited for his future labors in God's vineyard and in fulfilling his role in ministering to the Faithful of the Catholic Church. *May God grant Father Ryan many blessed years of priestly service!*



Bishop Kurt prays the prayer of ordination while laying on his hands.

Theosis In Action & the Eparchy of Passaic Present:

Byzantine Catholic Answers to the Big Questions

Does God exist?

Is the Eucharist really Jesus?

Why does God allow suffering?

Saturday, October 26th @St. Mary Byzantine Catholic Church, Hillsborough NJ

Register here: 

For more information, contact: FatherTomByz@gmail.com or facebook.com/theosisinaction

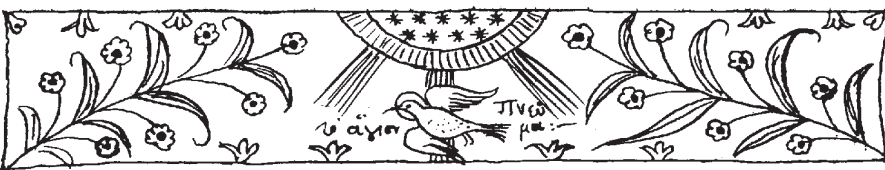
You are invited and welcome to join us for **DIVINE LITURGY (MASS) VIGIL EVERY SATURDAY 11AM** (Fulfils Sunday Obligation)

Celebrated by Fr. Oleksiy Nebesnyk at **Christ Lutheran Church 15699 SE 80th Ave. Summerfield, FL 34491**

For more information call 352-326-9831



Follow us for updates & live-stream facebook.com/ByzantineCatholicVillages



Eastern Catholic Life New Subscription Rate

Beginning July 1, 2024, the Eastern Catholic Life subscription rate will increase to \$20.00. There has not been a rate increase since March of 2013, and in that time postage rates have increased several times, as has the cost of production.

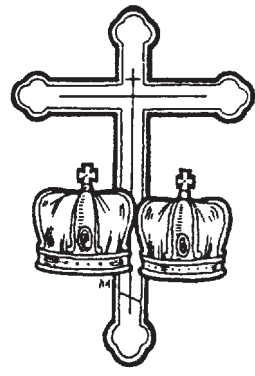
WEDDING JUBILARIANS SCHEDULED FOR FALL 2024

November 10
New Jersey Syncellate 3:00 PM (Sunday)
Saint Mary's Byzantine Catholic Church
1900 Brooks Blvd.
Hillsborough, NJ

December 1, 2024
Pennsylvania Syncellates - 3:00 PM (Saturday)
Saint John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church 3:00
5 E 20th Street
Hazleton, PA

November 17
New York & New Jersey Syncellate 3:00 PM (Sunday)
Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church
13 Pembroke Drive
Danbury, CT

November 23
Middle States Syncellate - 4:00 PM (Saturday)
Epiphany of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church
3410 Woodburn Road
Annadale, VA 22003



Southern states Bi-Yearly. Next one in 2026.

If you plan to celebrate a special wedding anniversary this year and would participate in the Jubilarians Celebration, please see your pastor.

Visiting The Myrtle Beach Area This Summer?

Blessed Basil Hopko
Byzantine Catholic Mission
3059 SC Highway 90
Conway, SC

All Liturgies will start at 10 AM. Follow us on Facebook for any schedule changes.

Eastern Catholic Life

Circulation Department
445 Lackawanna Avenue
Woodland Park, NJ 07424

Next Issue:
November, 2024

Copy Deadline:
November 1, 2024

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

UPCOMING EPARCHIAL AND PARISH EVENTS

NOVEMBER, 2024		24	Christmas Eve
8	Holy Archangel Michael and All Holy Bodiless Powers of Heaven <i>Solemn Holy Day</i>	25	Nativity of Our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ According to the Flesh <i>Holy Day of Obligation</i>
11	Veteran's Day <i>Civic holiday * Chancery closed</i>	26	Synaxis of the Virgin Theotokos <i>Solemn Holy Day</i>
14	The Christmas Fast <i>The Christmas Fast begins at sundown</i>	27	Holy Apostle, Protomartyr, and Archdeacon Stephen <i>Simple Holy Day</i>
21	Entrance of the Virgin Theotokos Into the Temple <i>Solemn Holy Day</i>	24-27	Chancery closed for Christmas holiday
28-29	Thanksgiving Holiday <i>Chancery closed</i>	29	Sunday after Christmas
DECEMBER, 2024			
6	Our Holy Father Nicholas the Wonderworker <i>Solemn Holy Day</i>		
8	Maternity of the Holy Anna <i>Solemn Holy Day</i>		
15	Sunday of the Holy Forefathers		
22	Sunday of the Holy Fathers <i>Sunday before Christmas</i>		

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:

Father David J. Baratelli, Ed.S., M.Div.
Safe Environment Program Coordinator • 732-280-2682

Dr. Maureen Daddona, Ph.D.
Victim's Assistance Coordinator • 516-623-6456