

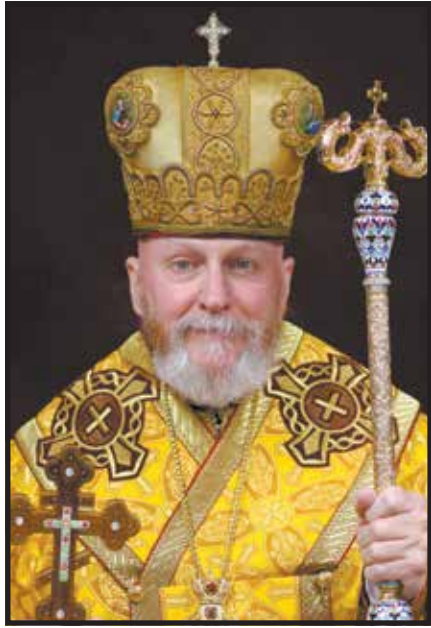


EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

Official Publication of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic

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JULY 2025



I LIFT UP MY EYES

Pastoral Reflections of Bishop Kurt



ANTICIPATING THE BEATIFICATION OF PETRO OROS

Last month, I shared with you my unexpected trip to Rome to pay our respects to Pope Francis at his funeral. He was a man well past mandatory retirement, and looking forward to the freedom from administrative problems, when he was elected Pope in 2013. He took his duties seriously for the next twelve years. He worked till age 88, even working hard on Easter Sunday, the day before he died, against doctors' orders.

We already had a trip scheduled to Ukraine the next week for the Beatification of Petro Oros. When I say "we", I mean Bishop Artur and Archbishop Skurla and I had a trip scheduled. Bishop Artur had obtained special permission from the Ukrainian government

to enter the country without being drafted into military service. Unfortunately, when Pope Francis died, the Vatican postponed the beatification. By the way, many descendants of Mrs. Malaprop pronounced "beatification" as "beautification" which is rather nice. Bishop Teodor petitioned the Vatican to change its mind saying it was so difficult to plan this event in wartime already, but to no effect. While I was there, I did learn how very many people and organizations cooperated to plan the events including the local governor and other officials. Many people were looking forward to a ray of hope in the darkness of war. The beatification was on point because Father Oros was one of the many people killed by the Kremlin during the Soviet occupation. In the present war, the Moscow government has again declared the Greek Catholic Church an enemy and outlawed it wherever Russia takes control, incarcerating priests.

Since I already had my ticket, Bishop Teodor encouraged me to come anyway. The easiest way to go to Transcarpathia is at Kosice, Slovakia. It is a short trip from Uzhhorod, the border crossing is not crowded, and it is less of an

imposition on our people there. I tried to buy a single ticket on United from Newark to Kosice to Vienna to Rome to Newark, and the price was astronomical. The agent at United who tried to find me the best price told me, "Just buy your ticket to and from Newark,

to Frankfurt. So, I attended our clergy week the week after Thomas Sunday. I would have just stayed in Europe after the funeral if it weren't for clergy week. Wednesday evening, I took off on United for Frankfurt. Getting my luggage in Frankfurt, then rechecking it on Aus-



Billboard advertising the Beatification of Father Petro Oros. Many people believe he was consecrated as an underground bishop. The whole state was looking forward to his beatification with excitement.

and then buy your own tickets around Europe on Austrian Airlines." So, I did that. The only inconvenience was that I had to collect my luggage when I got

trian airlines was a lot more challenging than I expected, but a I had a four-hour layover, so I figured it was great exercise roaming the ...continued on page 2



Blessed Iuliu Hossu, the Greek Catholic Bishop of Cluj-Gherla, Romania

A special ceremony was held by Pope Leo XIV on June 2, 2025, to commemorate the life, suffering, and devotion of Blessed Iuliu Hossu, at the Sistine Chapel. Silviu Vexler, the president of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania, had requested an observance to be held in Rome as 2025 was made the Year of Hossu in Romania, and also to mark the fifth anniversary of Pope Francis' journey to Romania

BLESSED IULIU HOSSU CEREMONY

By Father Christopher Zugger

to beatify the seven faithful bishops of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church who were arrested by the communists in 1948. None of those hierarchs would break with the Holy See and join the Romanian Orthodox Church as demanded by the communist regime.

Blessed Iuliu was also the first Cardinal of Romania and is recognized by Israel's Yad Vashem Institute as a Righteous Gentile for his work in saving Jews from deportations to death camps during the Holocaust. Pope Leo XIV praised Hossu as "a symbol of fraternity transcending all ethnic and religious boundaries."

The Hossu family was an ancient priestly family, and in 1917 Father Iuliu Hossu was named the bishop of Gherla; in 1930 he moved the seat of the eparchy to Cluj. Under his leadership the Romanian Greek Catholic Church took an important role in uniting Transylvania with the rest of Romania in late 1918.

During World War II, Romania was partitioned, with Bessarabia and North Bukovina being annexed to the Soviet Union and northern Transylvania to Hungary in 1940. On March 19, 1944, all of Hungary was occupied by the Third Reich, and strict measures against the Jews were imposed. Anticipating that there would be deportations of the Jewish people, Bishop Hossu issued a pastoral letter, *Catre preoti si mireni. Chemare pentru ajutorarea evreilor/ To Priests and Laity: A Call to Help the Jews*, on April 2. In this he wrote: *We call on you brothers to help the Jews not only by thoughts of solidarity, but also with deeds, as we know that today there can be no better Christian or Romanian deed of human warmth. Helping the Jews is the most important task ahead of us today. Help the Jews not only with your thoughts, but also with your sacrifice, out of warm human love.*

The letter inspired the priests and laypeople to intervene on behalf of their Jewish neighbors when the deportations to Auschwitz began on May 3. Out of 127,377 deportees, only 19,764 came back. It was estimated after the war that thousands of Jews were saved by members of the Greek Catholic Church. Hossu himself gave refuge to several dozen young Jewish men by disguising them as students of the Greek Catholic Academy of Theology and lodging them in the Episcopal building. They wore cassocks and participated in worship and classes, and all of them survived the occupation. Pope Leo emphasized that "when the reason of many was blinded by inhuman ideologies and the courage was assailed by fear and resignation, Bishop Iuliu Hossu proved that moral responsibility goes beyond religious, ethnic, or political borders. He chose to react publicly, trying to stem the storm of injustice and contribute to the salvation of the Jews."

Sadly, in 1948 the new communist government attacked the Greek Catholic Church, ...continued on page 8

...continued from page 1



Iconostasis of Holy Cross Greek Catholic Cathedral in Uzhhorod. Built in 1646, it was given to our church in 1773 by Empress Maria Teresa.

airport with my luggage (on wheels) after that transatlantic flight. I caught my flight to Vienna and made my very tight connection in the Vienna airport to Kosice. Not only was it very little time, but it was a long walk with twists and turns and some very slow unexpected

elevators. At least I didn't have to go through customs and passport control again. In Europe, most countries are in the "Schengen Area". That means they don't check passports and customs between all those countries. It's not exactly the same as the European Union nor



The beautiful Synagogue on the River Uzh. Transcarpathia was 9% Jewish before World War II. The Jews who survived the death camps returned to the region after the fall of the Nazi Reich, but then fled again when the Red Army began the sovietization of the region before the border was sealed.



Old Jewish Synagogue in Uzhhorod. Built in 1904 in "moorish revival" it was shutdown by the Nazis in 1944. It was turned into a cultural center by the Soviets and remains a concert hall to this day. All Jewish symbols were removed, but in 2012, a plaque was added commemorating the 85,000 Jews slain by the Nazis.

the common currency zone—a little confusing for Americans. So, once I was admitted to Germany, I could travel throughout the Schengen Area without documents or customs. In some ways it is like the United States, in that we don't need documents or customs control to travel between states. Although, they will check your car for agricultural products if you drive into California.

I was picked up at the airport in Kosice on May 1 by some people from our seminary and we drove to Uzhhorod. Nobody flies into Ukraine except for important people. I think Jill Biden used the Uzhhorod airport when she went to Ukraine. I stayed at the seminary for my short five days there. Bishop Teodor picked me up for various outings. We visited the place where Blessed Petro Oros was left by the police after they shot him. They dumped his body down a hill by a highway thinking it would not be found. Some dogs found his body, and children heard the dogs barking and called their parents. Then the

nism. The skill and patience of these young people is remarkable.

We also visited a shrine, still under construction, that has stations of the cross on a forested hill and spring of water. The shrine is popular with Orthodox and Latin rite Catholics, as well as our Greek Catholic people. The traditional Stations of the Cross ends with "Jesus laid in the tomb" for the fourteenth station. These larger-than-life stations end also with the tomb, but it is a chapel and celebrates the "empty tomb", the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Father Petro Pavel (Peter Paul) Oros was born on July 14, 1917, near Máriapócs in Biri, into a priestly family. His father was a priest, Ivan Oros, and his older brother became a priest, and was sent to Siberia under communism. Petro's father died when he was one year old, and his mother died when he was eight. As a result, he moved several times, first when his mother remarried, then after her death to the house



A magnificent shrine is under construction by our Church at Dzhublyk in the Irshava region. In addition to this church there are life-size stations of the cross in the forested mountain, a spring, and a large center for many activities. In 2002, the Mother of God appeared at the spring to two daughters of a Greek Catholic priest, also with Jesus and St. Joseph.

police buried him very deep in a garage, some twenty feet, and poured concrete on the body. The people remembered the location of this burial, and after our Church was legalized again in the 1990's, his body was recovered.

I visited our Cathedral in Uzhhorod, the same place where we consecrated Bishop Teodor less than a year ago. He was consecrated on July 16, 2024, during a severe heat wave. There is a school building behind the Cathedral that our Eparchy helped to fund, if my memory is correct. There is a restoration workshop where skilled artisans are busy restoring icons and other works of art neglected or damaged under commu-

of Father Oleksander Sabov. Father Oleksander's wife Ana was related to Petro—she was his great aunt and his godmother. When Father Oleksander died, Petro moved to the house of Father Andriy Sabov and his family in Sokyrnytsia. In 1937, Petro entered the seminary in Mukachevo. No one at the time, no one in Czechoslovakia, could imagine the hell that was to be unleashed on Transcarpathia by Hitler and Stalin. Hitler hated the existence of Czechoslovakia, and after annexing Bohemia, he set up a puppet state in Slovakia. Transcarpathia changed hands during this unstable period. It was part of the Kingdom of Hungary from before the year 1000 until the end



Empress Maria Teresa, the mother of our Church



Little bronze sculptures line the walkways along the river from an art contest

of the World War One. It was part of Czechoslovakia during the interwar period, and reclaimed by Hungary when Hitler dismembered Czechoslovakia. Hungary had freely allied itself with the German Reich. The history of central

in Florida a few years ago, screaming “fascist”. The communists, and now the current Russian government, makes an imaginary enemy out of the Vatican, although surprisingly enough, President Putin said some decent things about



A school behind the Cathedral in Uzzhorod, newly built with help from our Church



Another bronze statue on the River Uzh walkway from the art contest

Europe is so complicated that everything I said is a simplification. I encourage you to read it for yourself.

The fatal blow to Transcarpathia came a few years later with the Soviet occupation. The Soviet Union signed treaties

Pope Francis when he died. As soon as the Soviets entered Poland in 1941, a campaign to smear Pope Pius XII was organized by propagandists. In 1960, Khrushchev set in motion a program to destroy the reputation of Pius XII, with the KGB commissioning a play called



Skilled artisans restoring icons.

in the 1940’s promising that all the land of Czechoslovakia would be returned, but the occupying Red Army began the Sovietization of the area immediately, and on June 29, 1945, the Czechoslovak government handed the territory to the Soviet Union. As everywhere else, the new Soviet government set up courts to destroy the leadership, and many leaders and intellectuals were killed or sent to Siberia. The Soviets had begun a campaign in Ukraine in the 1930’s of misinformation directed at Greek Catholics, a campaign that has recommenced with the recent military actions. I found out for myself about this when I was attacked by a drunk Russian

“The Deputy” in East Germany. The play was performed throughout the communist world until the collapse. Before the Russian propaganda campaign, Pius XII was widely respected and there is a forest in Israel that was planted when he died in 1958 to honor him.

After our Church was outlawed on November 1, 1947, Father Oros continued to function as a priest at night, moving from village to village, celebrating the Divine Liturgy, hearing confessions, baptizing, marrying, and burying the dead. In May of 1953, he was imprisoned in Uzzhorod for almost



“Paternoster” Elevator

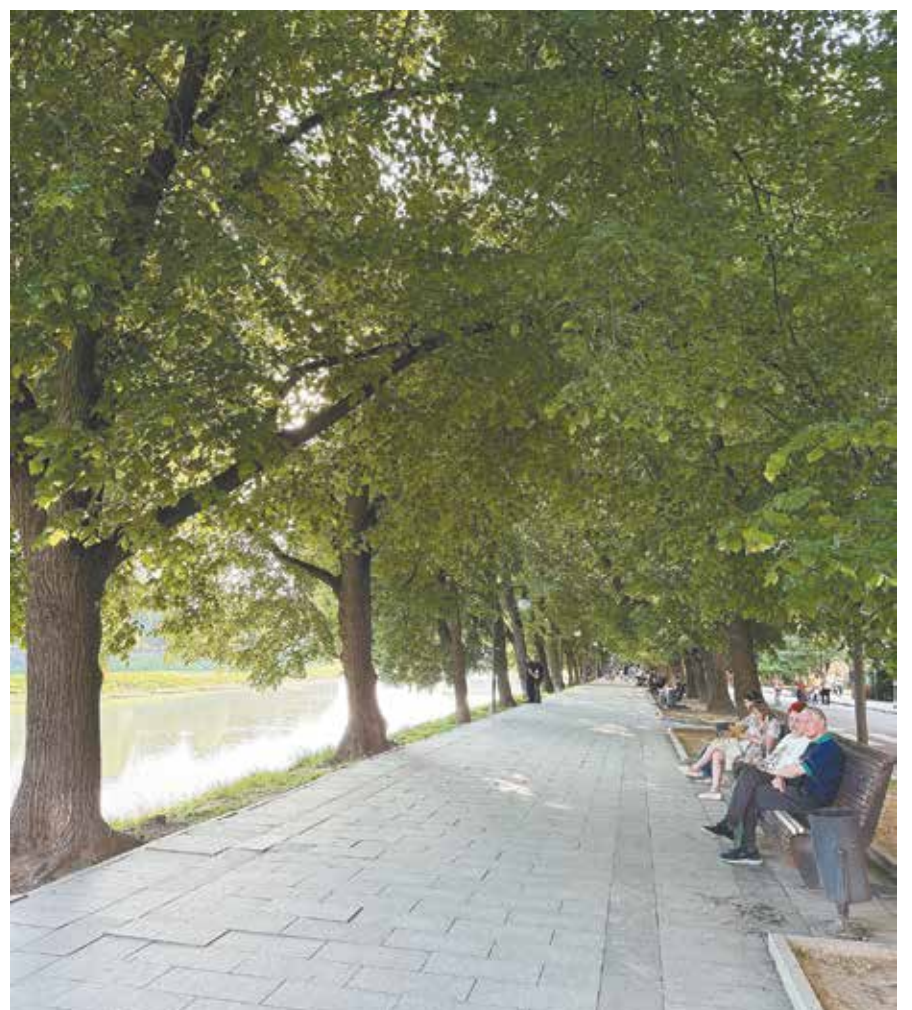


Jesus holding a dead soldier from the war

nine days. When he was released, he was asked if he was beaten. He replied, “No, they didn’t beat me. On the contrary, I gave them a retreat. High ranking officials came, asking questions about religion—what the differences are between our faith and Orthodoxy, and what are the Eucharist and Confession. I explained everything to them. They didn’t beat me. Father Petro even gave a rosary to one of the officers and taught him how to pray it. Then in August, he was traveling to give the last rites to someone dying. He was shot by a police officer in the village of Sil’tse on August 28, 1953, and considered a martyr by the people immediately. His body was buried in Irshava, and after the end of communism, his remains were transferred to Bilky on August 28, 1992.

features is visible along the River Uzh. On one side of the river, the buildings are interesting and still in good repair. These were built largely by the Czechoslovak government in the interwar period, or earlier in the Austro-Hungarian empire. On the other side of the river, the buildings were built by the communists after annexation. They are boring, utilitarian, and falling apart.

One of the best parts of the trip was worshipping in the chapel of the seminary with the seminarians singing mightily. I heard a version of “Shine in splendor, O New Jerusalem” that is different than the one we sing. It is longer and very beautiful, and it was sung with great enthusiasm by the seminarians! I was able to make a recording of it at my last Divine Liturgy there.



The walkway along the River Uzh is lined with Linden trees.

Aside from visiting the sites of Petro Oros, Father Petro Beresh, the Rector of the Seminary took me into Uzzhorod several times to show off his city—a city that he takes great pride in. One of the interesting architectural

I had an audience with the Governor of Zakarpatya. He thanked me for the generosity of all the good people of our Church in the United States. Like the Bishop, he attends an endless stream of funerals, and...continued on page 10



PEOPLE YOU KNOW AROUND THE EPARCHY

IN COCONUT CREEK...

Our Lady of the Sign Catholic Church Spring Picnic

On Sunday, May 4, 2025, Our Lady of the Sign Catholic Church in Coconut Creek Florida held their first annual Spring Picnic in Coconut Creek Florida. There were over 65 people in attendance, who enjoyed a variety of food and drinks as well as games for the kids. The parish celebrated the Pascha Season with both their year-round and seasonal members. A special dessert was presented to pastor, Father Martin Vavrak, and his wife, Pan'i Anna, who celebrated their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary.

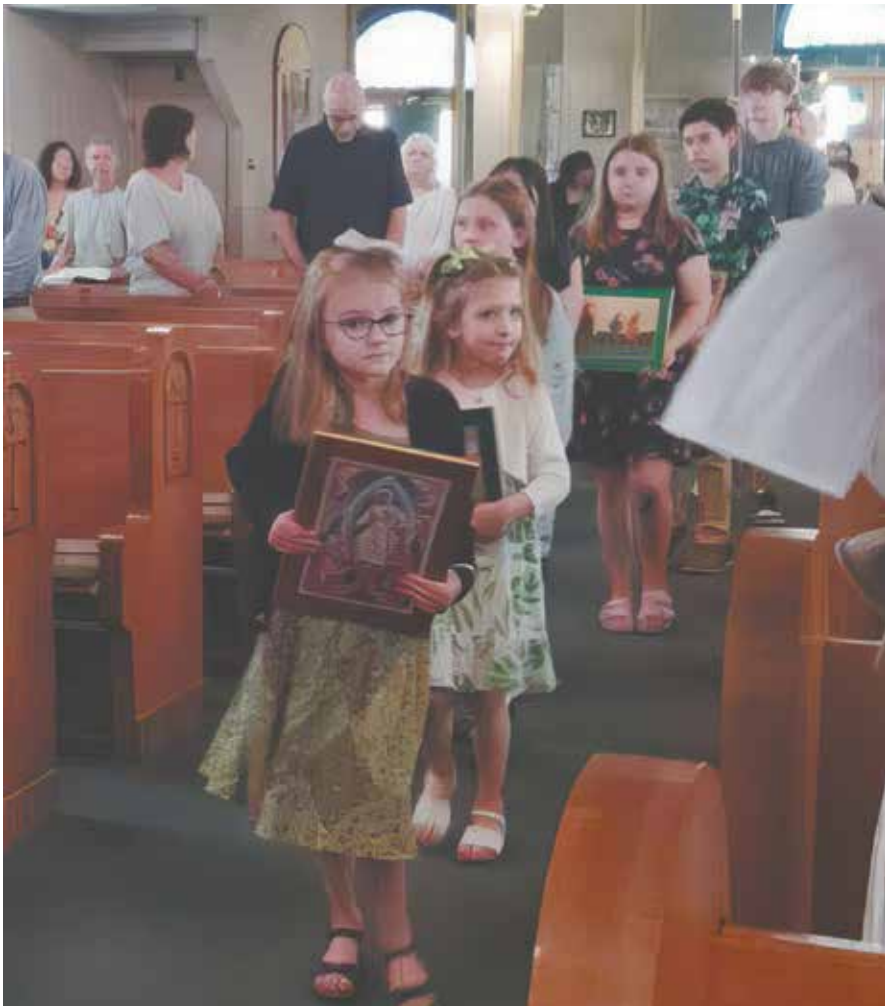


IN JESSUP...

Parish Celebrate Feast Day

It was a beautiful Divine Liturgy at Holy Ghost Byzantine Catholic Church, Jessup, Pennsylvania, celebrated on Sunday, June 8, 2025, to celebrate our parish Feast Day, the Feast of the Pentecost. This day is often referred to as the Birthday of the Catholic Church as God sent upon us the Holy Spirit to embolden us to preach His Word to all the nations.

In celebration, children of our parish were invited to carry icons in procession and a special homily was preached for them. The event ended with a gathering in the Rectory Meeting Room for fellowship and goodies. Come Holy Spirit, Heavenly King! Comforter! Thanks so much to our faithful ECF coordinator Joyce Covaleski for all your help. Fr. Tim Kennedy is the Parochial Administrator of Holy Ghost, Jessup.



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Most Reverend Bishop Kurt Burnette
President and Publisher
Father Lewis Rabayda, *Editor & Layout*
Father Ronald Hatton, *Associate Editor*
Mrs. Maureen French, *Circulation Editor*

and address changes
(mfrench@eparchyofpassaic.com)

E-Mail us at:
ECL@eparchyofpassaic.com

Eparchial Website:
www.EparchyofPassaic.com



SAINT NICHOLAS, PERTH AMBOY, NEW JERSEY, CELEBRATES 75 YEARS OF CHURCH DEDICATION, 90 YEARS OF FAITH DURING JUBILEE YEAR OF HOPE

The parish of Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church gathered the weekend of June 22, 2025, to commemorate a historic milestone: the 75th anniversary of the church's dedication and the 90th anniversary of its founding. Held during the global Jubilee Year of Hope, the celebration honored the parish's steadfast witness to the Eastern Catholic faith in central New Jersey.

in June 1950, led by Bishop Ivancho during a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy.

Today, the parish is led by the Reverend Edward Cimbala, D.Min., who also serves as pastor of Saint Mary's Byzantine Catholic Church in New York City. He is assisted by parochial vicar the Reverend Vasyl Remitskyi.

Bishop Kurt Burnette, Eparch of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic, presided at the anniversary Hierarchical Divine Liturgy. He reflected on the parish's mission and spiritual legacy in his message to the faithful.

"For ninety years, the people of Saint Nicholas Church have borne witness to the light of Jesus Christ in New Jersey, spreading the good news that He conquered death by His voluntary sacrifice on the cross and His resurrection from the dead," Bishop Burnette said. "Today we continue to tell the anxious world that there is forgiveness, there is mercy, there is healing, and there is blessed hope for the future of God's love."

Before the liturgy began, trustees of Saint Nicholas, Mr. John Mandy and Mr. Kurt Rebovich, officially greeted Bishop Kurt Burnette with the traditional presentation of bread and salt, as well as a key to the parish of Saint Nicholas, a symbol of the episcopal authority over the church and parish.

The celebration also recognized longtime parishioners who helped shape the community's identity, including founding member Professor John W. Petach. He was awarded the papal honor of Knight of Saint Gregory the Great by Pope Paul VI in recognition of his lifetime of service.

After the Divine Liturgy, parishioners of Saint Nicholas welcomed members of neighboring Saint Michael's Byzantine Catholic Church for a festive reception, a joyful gathering that reflected the unity and enduring spirit of both communities.

As the parish continues its journey in this Jubilee Year of Hope, Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church remains a vibrant witness to the beauty of Eastern Catholic tradition and the abiding presence of God across generations.



Founded in 1935 by immigrants from the former Austro-Hungarian Empire—including present-day Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, western Ukraine, and Poland—Saint Nicholas was established by faithful who sought to preserve their Byzantine Catholic heritage in a new land. Their vision took shape in the construction of a permanent church, modeled after SS. Peter and Paul Greek Catholic Church in Bradock, Pennsylvania.

"Through the intercession of our patron, Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker, the parish has stood as a beacon of Eastern Catholic faith, bringing the richness of the Byzantine tradition to the people of Perth Amboy and beyond," said Father Cimbala. "Let us recommit ourselves to Christ and His Church, trusting the same God who has guided us through the years will continue to lead us into a future filled with hope and blessing."

In 2009, the church underwent a major interior renovation, which included the addition of a traditional iconostasis and other liturgical enhancements. The rededication, held on Thomas Sunday, deepened the parish's connection to its Byzantine liturgical roots.

Groundbreaking for the new church took place on Easter Sunday, April 17, 1949. That same year, Bishop Daniel Ivancho blessed the cornerstone, and the first Divine Liturgy was celebrated in the completed church on April 2, 1950. The formal dedication took place



NEW HEGUMENA ELECTED AT HOLY ANNUNCIATION MONASTERY

Mother Kristina Lickova accepted her election as Hegumena of Holy Annunciation Monastery, Sugarloaf, Pennsylvania, this past week. Mother Kristina is the third Hegumena of the Holy Annunciation Community, now 47 years since it was founded by Bishop Michael Dudick, 1977.

Mother Kristina, born in Stropkov, Slovakia made her Profession in 1996 at Holy Annunciation Monastery. She succeeds Mother Marija, professed in 1951, in the Carmel of Morristown and Mother Marie Helen, professed in Elysburg Carmel 1960. *God grant her many years!*



NEW SISTER PROFESSES SOLEMN VOWS

May 22, 2025, was a somewhat rainy day. Rain, exactly what the plants need during the warm springtime to grow and bloom and eventually give fruit at harvest.

For the Sisters of the Holy Annunciation Monastery in Sugarloaf, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, OCD, that Thursday was a prominent day. One of them—Sister Katherine Jevocinova—on that day was to profess her Solemn Vows to a monastic life.

As usual, the quiet monastery yard discreetly welcomed the guests and friends with its peacefulness, and inside the chapel, preparations were underway for a Divine Liturgy on this solemn occasion. There in the chapel, which almost spoke out with its abundant Byzantine iconography, a small table to the side of the center of the chapel held a folded habit, a pair of Benedictine sandals, and the rest of the traditional monastic apparel.

The priests from proximate parishes as well as senior clergy from the deanery and eparchy began the liturgy, led by a special guest, the Most Reverend Milan Lach, Auxiliary Eparch of Bratislava of the Slovak Greek Catholic Church. The harmony of the nuns' singing filled the air with prayer and joyful anticipation.

At a set time, Sister Katherine entered the chapel, and those present witnessed the monastic tonsure ceremony.

"What do you want?" This was the question Mother Marija, the Hegumena, asked Sister Katherine, who then in response declared her commitment and willingness to consecrate her life to God's service. When the ritual was complete, the nuns joyfully greeted Sister Katherine with warm hugs and sincere smiles.

"God wants you to be happy right now." With these words, His Grace Milan Lach summed up his sermon addressing the nuns, the faithful, and Sister Katherine in particular, who on that day became a member of the monastic Synaxis.

Dearest guests from Slovakia, including Sister Katherine's family, hastened to greet her after the dismissal and blessing. With tears of joy, they embraced each other fervently.

It was a memorable and significant experience for all attending—a testimony of faith and ultimate commitment to consecrated life. It was a gift to Christ from His bride to the nuns' community from their sister, and to the Christian society of the Ruthenian Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic from the monastic sisterhood in Sugarloaf.

You are invited
to the

3rd Annual

**SAINT THERESE
PILGRIMAGE**

on
September 20, 2025



Holy Annunciation Monastery
403 West County Road
Sugarloaf, PA 18249

For more information
call: 1-800-882-0028
email: giftfromthenuns@ptd.net
or
check our website
www.byzantinediscalcedcarmelites.com
Pilgrimage page



Blessed Iulio Hossu Ceremony

Continued from page 1

ordering that the bishops, Religious, priests and laity join the Romanian Orthodox patriarchate, which was cooperating with the state. All of the bishops were jailed, and none broke with the Holy See. A Church of 1.5 million people was driven into a clandestine exist-



Blessed Iuliu Hossu in prison at Sighet

ence. Hossu, as one of the leading figures of the Church, was offered the post of Orthodox Metropolitan of Moldavia if he would renounce his Catholic faith. To that he replied simply, "Our faith is our life." He was imprisoned in Sighet

where he suffered greatly. In 1955 he was moved to a series of Orthodox monasteries and kept under constant surveillance by the secret police. Visits by his family members were very rare. In 1969 Pope Paul VI wanted to make Hossu a Cardinal of the Church. An Italian priest was allowed to visit the bishop, who was kept in one room of Căldărușani monastery, where he was allowed to offer the Liturgy daily and have a few holy cards taped onto the wall but was isolated from most human contact. The pope had sent a gold ring and silver cross, with an invitation to come to the Vatican for the ceremony. But Hossu knew that the price was that he would be exiled in Italy and forbidden to return home, and he refused to go. As a result, he was named cardinal *in pectore*, or in the heart, and it was only announced in 1971, after his death. Throughout his imprisonment and after his death, the priests and people of the underground Church saw him as a leader of the resistance and then as a heavenly intercessor on their behalf.

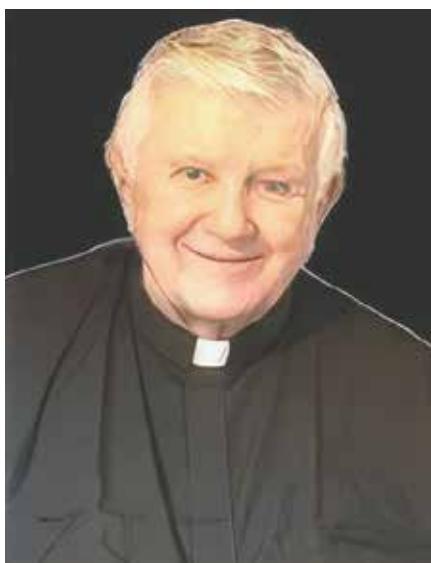


Jewish, Greek Catholic, and government officials from Romania at the special commemoration held at the Sistine Chapel on June 2, 2025

Cardinal Hossu was praised at the Vatican ceremony and in Romania as a figure who "transcends history and remains relevant, being a model of solidarity." Shortly before his death in 1970 at the age of 85, Hossu wrote, "The Lord commands us to forgive, to leave all His judgment; we forgive from the heart and beg the Lord's forgiveness for them (the persecutors), for their true repentance. Held in this situation (in prison), I have the power of prayer left; I strive to hold fast to the Lord, to

beg for the grace to please Him in every moment of my life, serving in this way the cause of our holy Church. May the seed sown in the deep furrow bear abundant fruit to the glory of God..."

Through his example, we may be people who forgive those who have hurt us, and defenders of all those at risk. Especially in this time of rising antisemitism in our own country, may we pray for and intervene on behalf of our Jewish brethren.



MELBOURNE, FL – Father Francis Gera, 86, a retired priest of the Eparchy of Passaic, fell asleep in the Lord at the William Childs Hospice House of Palm Bay, Florida on June 11, 2025.

Father Gera was born in Raven Run, Pennsylvania in 1938, the son of the late George and Theresa (Sylvasi) Gera. Following graduation from Frackville (Pennsylvania) High School, he entered the Byzantine Catholic Seminary of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania where he received Bachelor of Arts Degree from Duquesne University and was ordained

ETERNAL MEMORY!

+Reverend Father Francis T. Gera November 13, 1938 – June 11, 2025

to the Priesthood of Jesus Christ on June 7, 1964, by the Most Reverend Bishop Stephen J. Koscisko at the Cathedral of Saint Michael the Archangel in Passaic, New Jersey.

During his years of priestly ministry, he served as Assistant Pastor at the Cathedral of Saint Michael the Archangel in Passaic, New Jersey; Assistant Pastor of Holy Spirit Byzantine Catholic Church, Binghamton, New York; Pastor of Saint Michael the Archangel Byzantine Catholic Church in Allentown, Pennsylvania; Administrator of Saints Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church, Palmerton, Pennsylvania; Pastor of Holy Ghost Byzantine Catholic Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Pastor of Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church, Hazelton, Pennsylvania; and Pastor of Holy Dormition Byzantine Catholic Church, Ormond Beach, Florida. He also offered liturgical assistance at Patronage Byzantine Catholic Church, Arbutus, Maryland.

In addition to his parents, Father Gera was preceded in death by his siblings,

George, Paul, Joseph, and Nicholas Gera, Mary Kowatch, Mary Hollick, Elizabeth "Betty" Prock, John, Andrew, and Michael Gera. He is survived by many nieces and nephews, including John Gera, Michael Gera and Barbara Darvell, and great nephews and nieces.

Liturgical services were held at Saint Mary Church, Saint Claire, PA, with internment at St Michael Ukrainian Catholic Cemetery in Shenandoah, PA

"Now you are filled with grief, but I will see you again,

then your hearts will rejoice with joy that no one can take from you!" (Jn 16:22)



2025 BYZANTINE ASSEMBLY
Come let us worship, and bow before Christ

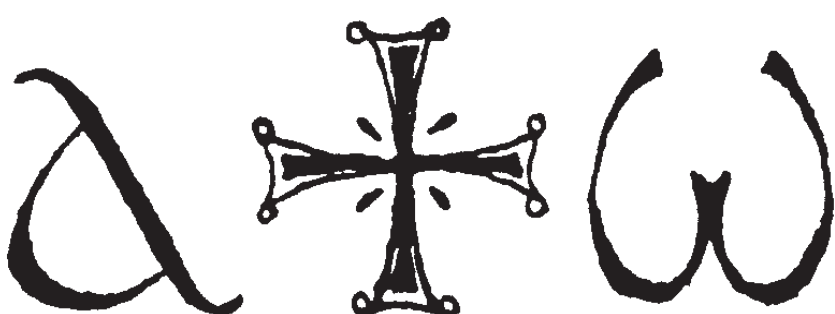
JULY 16-20 | 2025
IN WHITING, INDIANA

Join us in Whiting, Indiana, home of St. Mary Byzantine Catholic Church, for a significant moment in the Metropolitan Church of Pittsburgh's journey. This bi-annual event embodies the essence of a Synodal Church, reflecting our enduring faith and commitment to God's presence. Open to everyone, this is a unique chance to connect, reflect, and grow in faith together.

Visit the community webpage to explore the city and discover where the event will take place.

Registration opens April 1! Check our website for the early bird special!

www.byzantineassembly.org/community





LIFE, LOVE, AND THE HUMAN PERSON

By Ann M. Koshute, MTS

DO YOU WANT TO BE FREE?

Summer is in full swing, changing our routines mostly for the better, with vacations, pool parties and picnics, long days, and relaxing summer nights. In America summer, and specifically July, makes us feel most free of schedules and more able to travel, spend time with friends, and be active. The day most emblematic of that feeling of freedom is the Fourth of July – Independence Day. We remember the cause of freedom for which our Founding Fathers sacrificed so much, and (perhaps not always as prayerfully as we should) those who died so that our nation could be a sovereign one. There are two things Americans truly love: any reason for a party, and our freedom.

The carefree attitude of summer and the celebration of our country's independence will, of course, bring to everyone's mind the importance of – Confession. "Wait a minute! What does Confession have to do with summer and the Fourth? And haven't you already written about it enough?" Confession has everything to do with freedom and how we understand our personal agency as gifts from God in the first place. And yes, I've written about Confession before, and I will again, because it's crucial for our spiritual lives. There can never be too many reminders about how important it is to use our God-given freedom rightly and admit to ourselves and God when we have not done so. Indeed, our true freedom depends on it.

Freedom as such is not simply the ability to do whatever I want, whenever I want. Freedom, as given to us by God (and which He does freely, knowing that in our fallen world we'll misuse it), is our ability to choose the good. True freedom means always doing what is good and just. Doing otherwise – though it may look like freedom – is actually bondage. When we wave our flags and enjoy fireworks on the Fourth, that's a real celebration of living in a country that allows us to think, act, and worship as we will, and that's good. America is not perfect (to say the least), but there's a good argument that our lot is much better than almost anywhere else in the world. But as people of faith who know what truth is, as revealed by Jesus Christ, know that the "freedom" bidding us to do whatever we want, however we want, as long as "no one gets hurt" is not true at all. Authentic freedom, the freedom to reason and act based on the good order God has woven into Creation (distorted though it is by sin), is often more difficult, requires more self-sacrifice, but keeps us in right relationship with Him, our fellow humans, and with ourselves. The classical definition of freedom is "to do good and avoid evil." Simple, concise – and really hard for us to do all the time, in every situation.

This brings us back around to Confession, the Holy Mystery of Reconciliation. We can't control the world or how all the people in it respond to the call to authentic freedom – even through political action and advocacy in our communities – but we can control our personal responses to God's call to follow Him. When we do, we'll be drawn toward the good, desire to do what is good and right, and turn back to God when we allow ourselves to be drawn away from Him. I too often take God for granted. He loves me, He knows me, so we're good! Yet the longer I go without meeting Him in the Holy Mystery, the more I take Him for granted. I feel a strange mix of absolute freedom (I'm basically a good person, so I'll just keep chugging along the way I want to!), and slowly intensifying unease (Something doesn't feel right, I'm unsettled, my relationships are really suffering, and I feel distant from God). That is the disquiet of a conscience that is doing battle with "feelings," and sadly,

all too often I allow that battle to rage for longer than I should before biting the bullet and marching myself to the confessional.

Maybe you have a hard time with Confession. If so, you aren't alone. It's a very human response, because it's scary to look inside ourselves, to examine our relationships and what part we might play when they are difficult, or when we lash out and hurt another because of anger, jealousy, or pride. God knows this, and He knows our hearts. He understands that the "confession part" of it all is hard. He knows already who we are, our actions and motives, and all of our sins. The act of recollection and confession is not revealing anything new to Him but gives us a concrete way of reckoning with ourselves and finding a way back to Him. In this way, perhaps we can begin viewing this Holy Mystery as a gift and a relief, rather than a chore or something scary.

If it's been a while since you last went to Confession begin by asking God to give you the grace needed to look inside yourself and do a good, thorough examination of those things you've done that hurt your relationship with Him, others, and yourself; and those things you didn't do that were for the good. Next, just go! It's like the trepidation you feel about getting into a pool on a really hot day. You know you'll feel better, but you're afraid of how cold the water will feel. Once you jump in and your body acclimates to the temperature, it's so refreshing and you wonder why you hesitated. The same is true when you throw yourself into the ocean of God's mercy.

Do you want to be free? Go to Confession as soon as you can. And remember that confessing is only one part of the equation. Reconciliation with God is what makes you whole again, and that is freedom worth celebrating. **ECL**

ICONOGRAPHY WORKSHOP

THURSDAY EVENINGS IN THE FALL 2025
WOODLAND PARK, NEW JERSEY



Fr. Marek Visnovsky will be offering an iconography workshop at St. Michael's Cathedral Chapel, 415 Lackawanna Ave, Woodland Park, NJ 07424. This class will be on Thursdays, October 2, 9, 16, 23, 30, and November 6 from 6 pm to 10 pm. We will paint the icon of NATIVITY – DETAIL (Mother of God holding Jesus wrapped in swaddling clothes). The cost of the workshop is \$450 and includes boards, paints, brushes, twenty-four karat gold leaf (food and accommodation not included). Beginners as well as advanced artists are welcome. DEADLINE to register is Wednesday, September 17, 2025. Find the registration online at www.stmichaelsarchangel.org For more information, please email Fr. Marek at marekvisnovsky@yahoo.com

Fr. Marek is a married Byzantine Catholic priest, serving as the Rector of the Cathedral of St. Michael the Archangel in Passaic, NJ. With his wife Miriam they raise three children, Caroline, Elias, and Marco. For 25 years he has been teaching iconography classes in the USA and Europe. He has painted over 800 icons which are venerated in churches and private homes around the world.

SEASONAL REFLECTIONS

Father Ronald Hatton



TAKE HEED LEST YOU FORGET THE LORD...

“Take heed lest you forget the Lord your God, by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes, which I command you this day: lest, when you have eaten and are full, and have built goodly houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks multiply, and your silver and gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied, then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, Who led you through the great and terrible wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water, Who brought you water out of the flinty rock, Who fed you in the wilderness with manna which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and test you, to do you good in the end. Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’ You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth; that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as at this day.” –Deuteronomy 8:11-19

I love our liturgical year, in all its richness; how it guides us in all the things of God. We have been led through so much so far this year in the things of the salvation of God given to us: we have witnessed His incarnation at the Feast of the Nativity; we have been brought successfully through the Red Sea of the Great Fast; we have wept at His betrayal, arrest, at the foot of His cross and as He was laid in His tomb. We have also risen early on the first day of the week and gone out with the Myrrh-bearers and found the huge stone rolled away, and the words of the angel, “Why do you seek the living among the dead?” We have seen our Lord risen from the dead; placed our fingers in the nail-prints and our hand in His side and believed. We have watched as He ascended to His Father and our Father. And we have received the heavenly Spirit.

Now, though, we may feel spiritually exhausted, and just want to “get on” to other things in our lives. All the “heavy stuff” is behind us, and it is the traditional time of year for vacations, cook-outs, and just enjoying the warmth of

summer. And yet, we have to remember that, as our Lord’s earthly ministry has ended, our ministry as Church has begun. At His ascension, our Lord told us, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:6–8). We are so wont to set aside all *spiritual* cares, to paraphrase the words of the Cherubic Hymn, but the Church reminds us at this season that we are to be about our Father’s business, and to now put into action all that the Lord has taught us over these past months. We have received our Lord’s teachings and are now to put them into practice. It is not enough to have dutifully attended all the services and done all the prostrations and sung all the praises: we must now follow through on our promises to God: “Make vows to the Lord your God, and fulfill them” (Psalm 75 [76]) we sing in the Sunday Prokeimennon for Tone 8. At our Baptism, our sponsors made vows in our name, or we

made those vows ourselves: “Have you united yourself to Christ?” “Yes, I have united myself to Christ.” “Then worship Him.” During this season, we have been given the time to worship Him, and to do all things in His name and to His glory. As much as we want to leave all this aside for the summer, we are obliged to continue on the path we are on; we are still to take up our cross daily and follow Christ. “But Jesus answered them, ‘My Father is working still, and I am working’” (John 5:17). God does not cease His work during this season, and we, in concert with Jesus, are not to cease doing good, being there for one another, and gathering together in our local parish (or the nearest parish to where we are vacationing) at least every Sunday to worship Him and sing His praises. “Take heed lest you forget the Lord your God, by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes, which I command you this day.” **ECL**



WHY BYZANTINE CATHOLICS DO THAT

By Lisa Krochta Cipriani

SUPPORTING YOUR PARISH AND THE BISHOP’S ANNUAL APPEAL

Many Christian churches utilize the word “tithing” in describing how a member of the congregation is required to support their church. Many further require that a member commit to tithing before being accepted into the congregation. Many years ago, a friend of mine didn’t join a church as the tithing they required was not within her means. I found this very sad.

In the Byzantine Catholic Church all donations are voluntary. We are blessed that the Byzantine Catholic Church welcomes us with open arms whether we choose to provide financial support or not. Volunteering our time, free of charge, is a bonus graciously appreciated by the parish.

The word “tithing” is derived from the Old English word “teotha,” meaning “tenth.” Typically tithing refers to giving ten percent of one’s income to the religious organization of which you belong. References can be found specifically to this amount in the Old Testament. I’ve not found clarity that in today’s world if the ten percent means before or after taxes. One can only say that one option is more generous than the other. The New Testament, however, does not put a specific amount on what one must give towards the support of our church but rather stresses that a person should give from the heart and be as generous as they can afford.

Every December envelopes are assigned to each registered parishioner or parishioner family for the upcoming year. Inside include envelopes for:

- Weekly offertory
- Holy Days of Obligation
- Simple or Solemn Holy Days
- Yearly subscription to the Eastern Catholic Life Newspaper
- Request for All Souls Commemoration
- Scheduling a Divine Liturgy
- Special collections

Parishes don’t exist solely on devotion, love and prayers. A parish and the parish house run like any other business or household. The parish priest also needs to eat, put gas in the car and pay for essentials. The church (including any parish hall or center) and parish house have electric, water, and heat bills just like we do. Repairs to the roofs, AC, heat, plumbing, electric and appliances occur just like we have for our own homes. Regular maintenance of buildings and parking lots keep repairs at bay. While many church activities such as weekly bingo, seasonal bazaars or tricky trays, and the sale of ethnic foods helps along the way each parishioner or parish family needs to review every year if they can monetarily support their parish no matter how small or large and if so, budget that amount.

Contributions don’t always have to be monetary. Your “free time” for any church activity is always of value. Volunteering weekly, monthly or for special events not only cuts down on expenses but also gives you an opportunity to know and build relationships with your fellow church members.

So how does one decide what “give from the heart and be as generous as you can afford” means. My father gave the same amount every week his entire life. He was comfortable with this arrangement. I on the other hand believed that as my career grew, I didn’t do it alone. I had God on my side. Therefore, I increased my contribution every year based on the raise I received at work. Whether I received a one percent raise or a five percent raise, I upped my weekly contribution that year by that much. This to me felt right. Every individual or family needs to decide what their parish and its sustainability or even its ability to survive means to them. Then considering their budget decide how much they can contribute. No one is judged if your contribution is more one year versus another. Everyone has good years and bad. “From the heart” is the key.

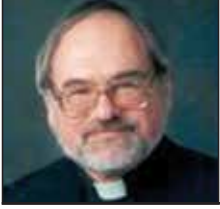
Supporting the Bishop’s Annual Appeal

The Bishop’s Annual Appeal campaign starts in October. I’ve heard many question the need for such a fund. I’ve even heard people say they don’t contribute

because “the bishop has enough money”. How would they know? However, I feel that the age-old idea of “If I have a dollar and you have a dollar, we now have two dollars” is well represented in the Bishop’s Appeal. Many parishes are small while others are large. Pooling money into a larger fund that can help where needed is the right thing to do. In addition, like using a credit card, when a parish reaches their assigned goal, the parish gets cash back. Many people don’t realize that if they help their parish to reach its goal, the Parish will get a 40% refund of the total amount raised. This could help with repairs and outreach.

How do you fit the Bishop’s Appeal into the scheme of things when you are already giving weekly through your donation envelopes? Do like I or perhaps others also do. Budget like any other end of the year expense. Save daily, weekly, or monthly. Just think:
\$1.00 a week is \$52.00
\$5.00 a week is \$260.00
\$1.00 a day is \$365.00

We find it easy to grab a coffee at a specialty store, or a large drink or snack at a fast-food place or even purchase a daily \$1 or \$2 lottery ticket. Make it the same type of habit. Even better, if it applies, make it a family project. At the end of the year your contribution is saved up and writing a check becomes a pleasure “from the heart”. **ECL**



THE BYZANTINE LITURGY

By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DEACON

The order of the deacon is found in the New Testament. This office, therefore, is an essential component of the life of the Church. The first letter of the Holy Apostle Paul to Timothy has the most complete description of the life of the deacon in the community of faith, “Deacons must be dignified, not deceitful, not addicted to drink, not greedy for sordid gain, holding fast to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience....Moreover, they should be tested first; then, if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. Deacons may be married only once and must manage their children and their households well. Thus, those who serve well as deacons gain good standing and much confidence in their faith in Christ Jesus” (I Tim. 3:8-13). The word deacon means, in Greek, “one who serves.” It is necessary, certainly, for all Christians to serve, but it was inevitable that an office would be created for those who so dedicated themselves to service that they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit in the sacramental mystery of the laying on of hands.

Jesus revealed what it means to be his follower in a very important incident with his disciples James and John. Moved by ambition, these two apostles asked Jesus to give them important roles in the Kingdom of God. “Grant

that in your glory we may sit one at your right and the other at your left” (Mark 10:37). Jesus rebuked them and taught them about how a Christian should relate to others “You know that those who are recognized as rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones make their authority over them felt. But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all” (Mark 10:42-44). He then revealed that this is the way to be deified, to become Godlike, “For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve” (Mark 10:45). This is why deacons so often described as fulfilling the role of Christ in the Church. We pray for them in the Liturgy as an image of Christ, “for the diaconate in Christ.”

Deacons were important and essential workers in the life of the early Church. They administered the charitable works of the Church, a mark of faith that enabled Christianity to be recognized as truth. They administered the catechuminate, those preparing for baptism, and the penitents, those repenting for sin. They visited the sick and ministered to the poor, caring especially for widows and orphans, those most in need in the ancient world. They were the chief administrative aides to the

bishop, which accounts for them often being elected to the episcopate themselves. “Of the thirty-seven men elected pope between 432 and 684 A.D., for example, only three are known to have been ordained presbyter before their election as bishop of Rome. The rest were deacons, or occasionally lay people/or in ‘minor orders.’” (Andrew Boyd, quora.com). As the Church became more parochially and hierarchically oriented, however, the diaconate was eclipsed and came close to disappearing as a permanent order, becoming only a step to the priesthood.

As a function of their importance in the daily life of the Church, the deacons also performed an important liturgical function. Because they were an office of service and administrative aides, they were the “glue” between the priesthood, the bishops, and presbyters as “men of prayer,” and the worshipping community. The deacons did the practical, manual acts of the Church, and directed the bishops and priests in their roles, and represented the faithful in their prayer. The deacons censed, read the Gospel, said the litanies, which were the prayer petitions offered by the community. The deacons have performed this service continually in the Orthodox Church, and in the Catholic Church were still required for solemn

Liturgies, where their roles were often filled by priests. The Byzantine Catholic Churches generally followed the Roman practice of using priests as deacons until after the Second Vatican Council.

In Vatican II, the Roman Catholic Church restored the order of deacon in its Constitution of the Church (Lumen Gentium) 29 (Sept. 29, 1964). The bishops of the Church declared, “At a lower level of the hierarchy are to be found deacons, who receive the imposition of hands ‘not unto the priesthood, but unto the ministry.’ For, strengthened by sacramental grace they are dedicated to the People of God, in conjunction with the bishop and his body of priests, in the service of the liturgy, of the Gospel and of works of charity.” This was a part of the goal of the Council to bring more of the Catholic laity into the ministry and work of the Church. The restoration of the office of deacon enabled married men to have a place in the sacramental mystery of service to the people of God. Eventually, the Byzantine Catholic Church followed the call of the Council and restored the diaconate in accord with its own tradition. At first, for Eastern Christians living in the Western countries, only the office of deacon was open to married men, but Pope Francis in 2014 restored the Eastern tradition of a married priesthood. Now, however, this restoration did not affect the deacons, who were finding their own vocation and a call to service within the ministry of the Church. It may be a long process, but the Church is rediscovering how important the mission of service of deacons is for the life of its community. **ECL**

...continued from page 3



On the other bank of the River, the River Uzh is lined with chestnut trees.

cares for an ocean of refugees. The laws change during war, and he is appointed by the President and has much more power in the region than during peace. The government building is a magnificent building from the Czechoslovak interwar period. The most interesting part of the visit was an early elevator. I had seen one on the internet and it is called a “paternoster”, even in Ukraine. It is called that because most people say a prayer before using it. It is a continuous sort of vertical conveyor belt with little rooms that never stops. You jump in a compartment and jump off at your floor. You might look on the internet to see a video of one.

The most beautiful part of the trip was visiting the soldiers in the hospital. I didn’t take any pictures there. I happened to have fifty medals blessed by the Pope in my backpack, so was hoping to give those out, though I didn’t know how many soldiers there were. The bishop and the hospital chaplain got us organized in the lobby. There were gifts for the soldiers, ordinary shopping bags containing soap, toothbrush, and so on, and a roll of toilet paper. It tells you something about the poverty in the hospital if we were bringing them a roll of toilet paper. There is no privacy in hospitals there, and there are normally four to a room, not a very large room, just large enough for four beds and a sink. I didn’t think about it at the time, but there was never a smell,

so they must have kept things very clean. Entering each room looked like a horror movie. The men, mostly young men, were missing a hand or a foot or a leg or an arm. One young man only had his groin covered, and he seemed to have been stitched together over his entire body—though at least his body was intact. The chaplain was a Greek Catholic priest. The beautiful part was that the priest brought his five-year-old son each week. Children are so adaptable, and since he came every week, the boy was completely comfortable visiting the men. He walked up to each soldier to deliver their “gifts” and also gave them all a book on how to say the rosary. Bishop Teodor said that many of the men are bitter and angry, and you don’t know what to expect when a

man comes in wearing a black robe, but everything changes with the lad there. The soldiers were all glad to see him. One middle aged man in a wheelchair said that the visit was the bright spot of his week. I gave a medal to each one, and no one turned it down. From the medal count it seems we visited almost fifty soldiers. Of course, the boy was just a child, so when he got tired at the end, he climbed up on his daddy and put his head on his shoulder, and his father carried him. I wonder what that boy will be when he grows up?

+Kurt Bunette



Andriy Stepanovych Zayats
6/6/1986 - 4/7/2022



Shandor Shandorovych Kish
6/18/1992 - 2/24/2022



Nazar Aveniroych Chavarha
9/2/1990 - 1/17/2023



SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

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

PRESERVING US IN FREEDOM

“**O**Theotokos, we, although unworthy, shall never cease to proclaim your might; for if you should no longer intercede for us, who would deliver us from countless misfortunes? Who would preserve us in freedom until this day? We shall not abandon you, O Queen. For you, who are unsurpassed in blessedness, always save your servants from all calamities.”

This theotokion from the Paraklis service includes a word that is sacred to the modern, developed world: freedom.” It stirs up sentiments of patriotism, of rugged individuality, of the benefits of capitalism and democracy. We may recall some of the most famous American freedoms: free speech, free assembly, freedom of worship or freedom of the press. More basically, we may jealously defend our personal freedom from interference by civil authorities or our neighbors. We may remember saying as children: “It’s a free country! I can do anything I want!” Many people never quite outgrow that childish view of freedom, the view of the Prodigal Son before his harsh life-lesson (Luke 15:11-19).

Such a mention of “freedom” is rare if not actually unique in Byzantine litur-

gical hymns. Instead, for example, the kontakion of the Annunciation invokes the Theotokos as “valiant general” and “liberator” and asks her to “free” “her city” (Constantinople) from “every danger.” The verbs “liberate,” “rescue” or “redeem” occur far more frequently but we are never the liberators, always the liberated, like the Israelites set free from slavery by the Lord through Moses. Freedom, therefore, is something God gives us as an act of undeserved salvation, not as some sort of political right.

Aren’t we born free though? Our free will is, of course, an essential, uniquely human quality, a faculty of our immortal soul, a gift from God that leaves us free to choose for or against Him and His love for us. It was the bad choice of Adam and Eve that introduced sin into human experience. Sin remains the greatest threat to human freedom.

Although Jesus Himself promises freedom (John 8:33-36), it is Saint Paul who offers the most complete explanation of just what “the freedom of the sons of God” (Romans 8:21) means for Christians. He writes: “Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:2); and “for freedom Christ has set us free” (Galatians 5:1).

The sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans contains Paul’s most complete teaching on the subject of our freedom. In the simplest terms, Paul teaches that human beings are not independent. We owe our existence and everything around us to God, who created us for relationship with Himself. The original sin and every sinful choice made since turns us away from God and the service of worship and obedience that we owe to Him. Invariably we will turn to some other thing to provide us with hope and meaning for our lives. No created thing can take God’s place though, and no one else can give us life. Any other source of power, pleasure, entertainment, comfort, or convenience becomes restrictive, addictive, enslaving us. “The end of those things,” Paul teaches, “is death.” “But,” he continues, “now that you have been set free from sin (by Christ’s Cross and resurrection into which we are baptized), you have become the slaves of God and bear fruit to holiness and the end: everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:22-23).

What does that mean practically? “Where the Spirit is of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Corinthians 3:17). Even

after Baptism calls us to freedom, we will still be tempted to a childish, selfish exercise of our liberty (Galatians 5:13). Paul (Galatians 5:19-21) contrasts two sets of attitudes and behaviors that express either slavery to “works of the flesh” (adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, orgies) or authentic Christian freedom (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control). The choice is ours.

No power, not even the threat of death, can constrain what Paul calls “the freedom of the children of God” (Romans 8:21). The fearlessness of Daniel and the Three Hebrew Youths before the tyrannical kings of Babylon (Daniel 3-6) and the valor of Christian martyrs in every generation including our own prove this truth. We see that freedom at its purest and most powerful when the Virgin Mary turns to the Angel and says: “Let it be done to me according to your word” (Luke 1:38). She is most free, most pure, most holy when she surrenders her freedom for the Lord to transform. **ECL**

Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to empower the Apostles to evangelize the entire world. Before the day of Pentecost, the Apostles were weak, fearful, and incompetent. They weren’t up to the momentous task that Jesus gave them: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...” (Mt. 28:19).

They needed the power of the Holy Spirit. “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses... to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

The Apostles performed tremendous miracles, proving the truth of the message of salvation in Christ.

The Holy Spirit also inspired the Apostles with great boldness to preach the word of God. We see this throughout the book of Acts. “Now when they saw the **boldness** of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they wondered” (Acts 4:13). The Apostles prayed, “grant to thy servants to speak thy word with all **boldness**” (Acts 4:29). “They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with **boldness**” (Acts 4:31).

Barnabas introduced Saul and explained “how at Damascus he had preached **boldly** in the name of Jesus” (Acts 9:27). Paul was “preaching **boldly** in the name of the Lord. And he spoke and disputed against the Hellenists; but they were seeking to kill him” (Acts 9:29). “Paul and Barnabas spoke out **boldly**, saying,

“It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken first to you” (Acts 13:46). Paul and Barnabas “remained for a long time, speaking **boldly** for the Lord” (Acts 14:3).

Apollos “began to speak **boldly** in the synagogue” (Acts 18:26). Paul “entered the synagogue and for three months spoke **boldly**, arguing and pleading about the kingdom of God” (Acts 19:8).

We need boldness today. Too often, we are afraid to say what needs to be said. We care too much about what other people think. We fear being ridiculed, laughed at, or persecuted.

Our Lord said: “The world hates me because I testify of it that its works are evil” (Jn. 7:7). “If they persecuted me, they will persecute you” (Jn. 15:20). “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 5:7).

Today, we hear our Lord and our Lady blasphemed, the Gospel twisted, sin and vice praised and affirmed. Let’s be bold to stand up for what is right, even if we are persecuted.

In these days of apostasy (II Thess. 2:3), to say that only Christ saves (Jn. 14:6), that the Catholic Church is necessary for salvation (Lumen Gentium 14), that abortion is murder (Evangelium Vitae, 62) and transgender surgery is mutilation of the human body (CCC 2297) requires boldness.

Saint Peter boldly preached: “Be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man is standing before you well... And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Act 4:10, 12).

Be bold in proclaiming that sin is sin. We are not helping people by ignoring that sin damages the human person and leads to eternal condemnation.

“All are welcome.” “Who am I to judge?” No. Saint Paul boldly said, “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor

the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:9, 10 ESV).

Saint Alphonsus (1696-1787) writes, “when there is question of the Divine honor, we should not be frightened by the dignity of the man who offends God; let us say to him openly: That is sinful; it cannot be done.”

Saint Catherine of Sienna (1347-1380) knew that boldness was needed in her day. To a bishop, she wrote: “Be silent no more! Cry out with one hundred thousand tongues. I see that, because of this silence, the world is in ruins, the Spouse of Christ has grown pale; the color is taken from her face because her blood has been sucked out, that is the blood of Christ, which is given as a free gift and not by right” (Letter 16 to a Great Prelate).

Aren’t we in similar circumstances today? May the Holy Spirit inspire us all, bishops, priests, deacons, monastics, and lay people, with a holy boldness to “speak the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15), “for God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control (2 Tim. 1:7). **ECL**

SCHOOL OF PRAYER

Father G. Scott Boghossian



PRAY FOR BOLDNESS



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 Father Michael.

2025 Summer Camp Dates

—Teen Coed Camp and Girls Camp
Canceled due to lack of registration—

registration still open!

July 20-24, 2025
Altar Server Congress

Aug 10-14, 2025
Camp St Nicholas—Preteen Coed Camp, Ages 6-12

Register at:
<https://www.eparchyofpassaic.com/youthsummercamps>



CARPATHO-RUSYN SOCIETY

MANIFESTING CARPATHO-RUSYN CULTURE AND HISTORY

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

www.c-rs.org

The society offers regular educational Zoom presentations, genealogy help by professional Rusyn genealogists, a monthly newsletter, Our People, and scholarships to students. Also offered is an online/mail-in Heritage Store with books and gift items. Listen live on Sunday afternoons to Rusyn music on our Rusyn Heritage Program (also archived).

Visit the headings on our new website where you can find our chapters, genealogy forum, newsletter, events, Heritage Store, our Rusyn Heritage Program and much more information including how to become a member. The dues have not changed in 30 years!


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SAVE THE DATES

2025/26 Marriage Jubilarian Dates

<p>October 11, 2025 (Saturday) Marriage Jubilarians - Middle States Epiphany of Our Lord - Annandale, VA 4:00 PM - Banquet to Follow on Premise</p> <p>October 19, 2025 (Sunday) Marriage Jubilarians - New Jersey, New York, Connecticut Saint Mary's - Hillsborough, NJ 3:00 PM - Banquet to Follow on Premise</p> <p>October 26, 2025 (Sunday) Marriage Jubilarians - All Pennsylvania</p>	<p>Saint John's - Hazleton, PA 3:00 PM Banquet to Follow at Capriotti's Catering- McAdoo</p> <p>January 17, 2026 (Saturday) Marriage Jubilarians - Southern States Saint Nicholas - Orlando, FL 11:00 AM – Banquet to Follow on Premise</p> <p>If you are celebrating a special Wedding Anniversary – 5-year increments, Please submit your name to your pastor to be included in this year's Jubilarian Celebration.</p>
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CHARLESTON AREA OUTREACH INTEREST

Are you a Byzantine/Eastern Rite Catholic that has relocated to the Charleston, NC area and miss attending the Divine Liturgy and other services? The Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic is exploring the possibility of establishing an Outreach Community in the Charleston area. Currently the closest Mission is in the Myrtle Beach area. I'm working with one of the priests in Passaic to help gauge interest. If there is sufficient interest, the plan would be to have a Liturgy somewhere in the Charleston area in the next few months. If you are interested, please send me an e-mail at michael-meador@sbcglobal.net.

UPCOMING EPARCHIAL AND PARISH EVENTS

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JULY, 2025

4 Independants Day
Chancery Closed

20 Holy Prophet Elijah
Solemn Feast-Day

20-24 Altar Server Congress
Carpathian Village

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

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Maureen French – ECL circulation editor