

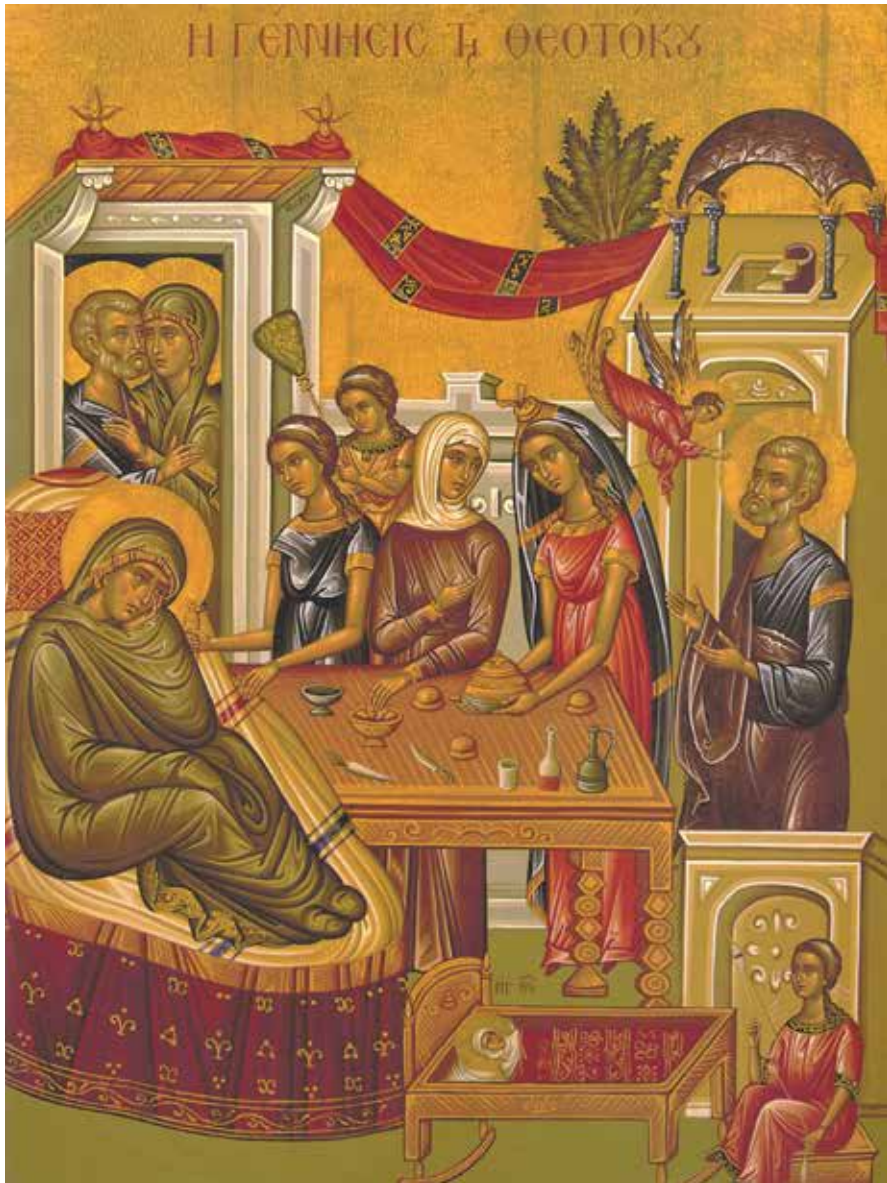


EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

Official Publication of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic

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SEPTEMBER 2025



*At your holy birth, O Immaculate One,
 Joachim and Anna were freed from the
 reproach of childlessness
 and Adam and Eve from the corruption of death.
 Your people, delivered from the guilt of their faults,
 celebrated your birth and cry out:
 The barren woman gives birth to the
 Theotokos and the Sustainer of our Life.*

—Kontakion of the Feast

Left: Icon of the Nativity of the Theotokos and Ever Virgin Mary

THE NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS

By +Rev. Monsignor John T. Sekellick, J.C.L. reprinted from the Eastern Catholic Life, September, 2015

Together with the Dormition of the Mother of God (which was celebrated August 15), the Nativity of the Theotokos is one of the most ancient and well-known Feasts of our Lady. Celebrated on September 8th, it is the first great feast of the cycle of Saints to come after the start of the liturgical year on September 1st. Our Church sets her birth during the first days of its new year to focus on the highest example of human holiness that the Church recognizes and venerates – that of the mother of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

It is noteworthy that for the most part our Church observes the death of its saints rather than the day of their birth since in a deeply spiritual sense, death itself marks the beginning of unending life so beautifully stated in the prayer attributed to Saint Francis of Assisi, “... it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.” Moreover, the Troparion for this feast explains how the birth of the Virgin Mary “heralded joy to the universe;” since from her God’s Son will be born and die “destroying Death, grant-

ing us everlasting life.” In addition to the birth of the Mother of God, only two other important birth days are actually celebrated liturgically – that of Jesus Himself (December 25) and His forerunner, John the Baptist (June 24).

At Vespers three meaningful selections are read from the Old Testament. The first gives the account of the night which Jacob spent at Luz (Gen. 28:10-17). While Jacob slept, with stones for a pillow, as he dreamt, he saw a ladder stretching from earth to heaven, and angels ascending and descending upon it. God Himself appears, blessing Jacob and his descendants. Upon awakening, Jacob blessed the stone pillow with oil and called the site Beth-el, meaning House of God. In a spiritual way, Mary, whose motherhood was the channel for the Incarnation is herself a mystical ladder between heaven and earth. As she carried God in her womb, she is truly the Beth-el of which Jacob declared, “This is none other but the house of God; this is the gate of heaven!”

The second lesson (Ezekiel 43:27-44) refers to the future Temple which is shown to Ezekiel. One line from this passage can well be applied to Mary’s virginity and motherhood: “This gate shall be shut. It shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it because the Lord, the God of Israel, has entered in by it; therefore, it shall be shut.” The Catechism of the Catholic Church instructs us, “The deepening of faith in the virginal motherhood led the Church to confess Mary’s real and perpetual virginity even in the act of giving birth to the Son of God made man. In fact, Christ’s birth did not diminish his mother’s virginal integrity but sanctified it. For this reason, the Church identifies Mary as Aeiparthenos, the “Ever-virgin.” (No. 499)

The third reading (Proverbs 9:1-11) describes a personified divine Wisdom: “Wisdom has built her house.... She has sent forth her maidens, proclaiming upon the highest places of the city.” Seat of Wisdom is among the titles accorded to Mary in the Western Church; in our Eastern Church, she is described as “...one who surpasses the wisdom of the wise.” (Akathist Hymn, Ode Two). This suggests that there is a link between holy Wisdom and Mary,

manifesting Wisdom to a world darkened with moral ignorance and bringing forth Truth in her Son, Who is the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6).

As we solemnly celebrate the holy birth of Mary, ever-Virgin and Mother, may we resonate with our Church as she proclaims, “Come, all you faithful, and let us hasten to the Virgin; for long before her conception in the womb, the One Who was to be born of the root of Jesse was destined to be the Mother of our God. The one who is the treasury of virginity, the flowering rod of Aaron, the object of the prophecies, the child of Joachim and Anna is born today, and the world is renewed in her. Through her birth, the Church is clothed with splendor. O holy Temple, vessel of the Godhead, model of virgins and strength of kings, in you the wondrous union of the two natures of Christ was realized. We worship Him and glorify your most pure birth, and the whole world extols you.” (Glory... now and ever at the Aposticha of Vespers)



I LIFT UP MY EYES

Pastoral Reflections of Bishop Kurt



UPON THIS ROCK, I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH

Reprinted from the Eastern Catholic Life June 2021 issue

Recently I read a sensational article from a respectable Catholic newspaper. It resembled investigative journalism and purported to reveal the actions of two powerful cardinals and claimed that it checked its story with its own sources in Rome, and so on. It really got me thinking about how people see their own Church. Why would a respectable Catholic newspaper be writing about the Body of Christ as if it were a secular government? I suppose people in every society see the Church in the same way they see their own society. People in an aristocracy see the Church like an aristocracy; people in a monarchy see the Church like a monarchy; and Americans have come to see the Church like our democratic republic. Americans believe that they should monitor the Church leaders the same way they monitor our elected politicians, and their news media respond by supplying the kind of stories that sell. There are many consequences to this view of the Church that are antithetical to the Good News of Jesus Christ. One consequence is that American Catholics divide the Church into parties just like the rest of our society, and they categorize each other as “liberal”, “conservative”, “radical”, “reactionary”, and so on. Whether or not those labels have any meaning in our Faith is a topic for another day. There is no question that people commit many sins against charity and crimes against reason because of these labels. All of the recent interest in cardinals inspired one wealthy American to undertake the project to compile dossiers on each cardinal, which he is planning to supply for the next papal election.

It is important for any Christian to understand that the Church is neither a monarchy, nor an aristocracy, nor a democracy, nor a republic. Since it is made up of people, it will always have features and procedures that resemble other human societies, but the Church is a people called out of the world by God for His own purposes, for the sanctification of its own members, but also for the enlightenment of the whole world. As an organization, we receive some guidance from the Sacred Scriptures of how we are to see ourselves. First of all, the name “church” in Greek is *ecclesia*, which in Greek society meant the assembly of all the people in contrast to a smaller council of leaders. So, Jesus gave us a clue to His idea of the Church by how He named it. And Jesus did use the word “*ecclesia*” or “church” three times: once when he gave the keys to St. Pe-

ter, and twice two chapters later when He talks about fraternal correction and the authority of the Church. St. Paul struggled in his ministry to teach the local churches how to live as a Spirit-filled community of mutual love, but without chaos or lawlessness. He gives us three ways to think about the Church. St. Paul is the one who refers consistently to the Church as the Body of Christ. He points out that a body has different parts that live to support each other, but have different forms, abilities, and purposes. The eye isn’t the foot, and the hand isn’t the ear. The parts of our bodies do not work against each other, but work to protect

Although the Church is neither a democracy nor a republic, interestingly enough, the Papacy is the oldest elected office in the world. The office of the Pope was never hereditary, nor is it taken by force, nor is it for sale. Even when a powerful family had one or two popes in the past, the office slipped away quickly from their grasp. Since the Pope is the Bishop of Rome, he was chosen by the church of Rome for the first thousand years, just as most other bishops were chosen by their churches. There is a lot to be said for election by the people. In fact, there was a bishop in southern France who was chosen (or elected) by

shoving and even mob action, until the community settled down on a single choice—at some point in the arguing, one side realized they were outnumbered. Occasionally, the people settled on a single outstanding candidate immediately, but just as often there was a lot of chaos. The election of St. Augustine is an instructive example. Because he was so well known, he avoided visiting any city in north Africa that was looking for a bishop. He made the mistake of visiting Hippo for some reason, and the local bishop died unexpectedly. The people grabbed him and forced him to be their bishop before he could get away. He found himself the bishop of a backwater town that was far below his talents and prestige. Nevertheless, in those days, these selections by the people were seen as an act of the Holy Spirit, and a bishop never moved. Bishops did not move “up the ladder” back then, but gave up their lives for their flock. And so, St. Augustine spent the rest of his life in Hippo.



When the cardinals vote for a new pope, they write only the name of the candidate on a ballot. They have not signed their ballots since the conclave of 1939.

and care for each other. St. Paul also calls the Church a building made of stones. Although that is his most lifeless analogy, he uses it for an important point. He refers to Jesus Christ as the cornerstone. This image teaches us that it is never our role or that of anyone else in the Church to replace Christ. In referring to Christ in this manner, St. Paul is evoking the scriptural prophecies that call the Messiah, “the stone that the builders rejected [which] has become the cornerstone.” St. Peter also uses the same image, calling Jesus a living stone. The third analogy that St. Paul uses for the Church is a community of people in which each one has a different gift or “charism.” Indeed, there is no better way to practice charity in the Church than to recognize that we all have different gifts, given by God, and our gifts were given for us to help others, never to glorify ourselves.

the metropolitan archbishop. The emperor Theodosian deposed the bishop when he found out. In his decree he said, the people won’t accept their bishop if they didn’t choose him themselves. In the early church, it seems that local churches often chose (or elected) their bishop, and then the other bishops in the area would come confirm the election and lay hands on the new bishop to ordain him, but only after interrogating him to make sure his faith was the faith of the Catholic Church.

When I say that the bishop was chosen or elected by the local church, and that the Pope of Rome was chosen by the church of Rome, that doesn’t mean that there was anything resembling what we would call an election in our society. When a local community elected someone, there was often a lot of arguing and

In the late 700’s, a papal succession sparked the very first rules for elections. Imagine, popes were “elected” by the Church of Rome for seven hundred years with no rules! When Pope Paul died in 767, a nobleman named Toto occupied the Lateran (the pope’s residence and cathedral) and had his brother Constantine elected. His opponents called on the Lombards for help, who invaded Rome and Toto was killed, but there was no popular support to remove the pope. A year later, the tide had turned, and the Roman clergy held an election at the forum and elected Pope Stephen III. Constantine was dragged from the Lateran and imprisoned in a monastery with his eyes gouged out. Stephen called a synod of all the Italian bishops and the first rules were laid down. The synod decreed that all the Roman clergy were eligible to choose the new pope, but only a cardinal deacon or cardinal priest could be chosen. Notice that there was still nothing like what we would call an organized election—just the power of a group to choose someone, but not procedure. In one significant way, this synod set the rule for the next thirteen centuries—a group of designated electors were tasked with choosing the pope. The general population of Rome regained their voice soon after and kept it until 1059.

A particularly chaotic time in papal elections was the late 800’s, but also an important period for the Slavs. Pope John, elected in 872, confirmed the use of the Slavic language in the liturgy and the Bible. The Germans were fiercely and ruthlessly opposed to the missionary work of Saints Cyril and Methodius, and claimed it was not allowed to pray except in Hebrew, Greek, or Latin. Pope John said, “He who made the three main languages, Hebrew, Greek, and Roman, also made all the other languages to sing His praise and glory.” Nevertheless, Pope John became the first pope in history to

be assassinated, killed by a member of his clergy after ten years in office. His successor also made history—Pope Marinus was the first pope in history who was already a bishop. As I mentioned above, bishops customarily never left their diocese, they did not move around, and were forbidden to do so by the Council of Nicaea. Pope Marinus was already consecrated as Bishop of Caere. This irregularity helped fuel the fighting in the next few years. Over the next decades, most popes reigned for only a few years, and many were murdered.

The Holy Roman Emperors began meddling in papal elections after the coronation of Otto in 962, and continued to do so until recently with other European monarchs. Indeed, the election of St. Pius X probably occurred because the Austrian Emperor vetoed another candidate in that election. During a brief interlude in the power of the emperors, Bishop Gerard of Florence was elected pope by the Cardinal Bishops meeting in Siena in 1059. He took the name of Nicholas, and this year became the most important in the history of papal elections. Because of the chaos and outside influence, Nicholas called a synod of all the bishops of Italy to lay down rules for papal elections. The procedure devised was that the Cardinal bishops should meet, but not before the burial of the previous pope. They were to choose a suitable member of the clergy of Rome but could choose someone else if there were no suitable candidates. But if Rome was too dangerous, the Cardinal bishops would meet in another place of their choosing along with the clergy and people. They were to present the candidate then for the approval of the Cardinal priests and Cardinal deacons, after which the candidate was presented to the people. Notice that even now, there is no specific procedure such as ballots or rules about majorities. The synod also ruled that the new pope had all the power of the office from the moment he was chosen, except that he could not ordain bishops if he were not yet a bishop himself.

Over the next century, the rules of the synod of 1059 were sometimes observed and sometimes ignored, but remained the standard until 1179 when Pope Stephen convoked the third Lateran Council. Previous elections presumed that the electoral body would eventually reach a consensus and then a unanimous vote. The Lateran Council eliminated distinctions between cardinals, and decreed that the new pope must be elected by two thirds of all the cardinals voting. We take detailed election laws for granted nowadays, although the reactions to our last election show that even the most careful laws are open to dispute. Believe it or not, the decree of the Lateran Council was the first institutional example in European history of defining a numerical majority for an election. Like previous decrees, this one was ignored off and on following the council, but with time came to be the sacred law of the Catholic Church. Pope St. John Paul rewrote the laws to allow for less than two thirds after many failed ballots, but Pope Benedict reinstated the eight-hundred-year-old rule.

Interestingly enough, the rule that a pope must receive two thirds of the voting cardinals was modified over time to include a provision that he cannot vote for himself. After the death of Pope St. Pius X, the last election in which a European monarch was able to veto a candidate, the election of 1914 in the shadow of World War One went through many ballots before Benedict XV was elected. The announcement was delayed for some time, and the new pope told a friend that it was because he was elected by exactly two thirds of the ballots. One of the cardinals demanded that the ballots be checked to ensure that he did not vote for himself. Indeed, he did not, but some speculate that the insult to the new pope influenced the eclipse of the cardinal who asked for the vote.

The choosing of the popes has been as varied and as fascinating as the history of the Church itself. No doubt you know many of the incidents when the cardinals could not decide for months or years, and the people took things into their own hands, cutting off their food or taking the roof off the meeting hall. When I told one professor in California about those incidents, he suggested we should do that to the state legislature when they can't approve a budget. If anything, though, the history of papal elections is a reminder that the Church is not a republic, nor an aristocracy, nor

a monarchy. From the time that Jesus chose St. Peter, and the dying St. Peter chose a former slave, until the election of 2013, the Church is not a secular institution, but the Body of Christ. The Pope is not our ruler nor our governor, but our shepherd, commissioned by Jesus Christ

after the Resurrection. "Simon Peter, do you love me more than these others?" "Yes, Lord. You know that I love you." "Then feed my sheep."

+Kurt Brunette



From the Office of the Bishop

—ORDINATION ANNOUNCEMENT—

*On Tuesday September 23 at 12 noon,
at Saint Catharine Catholic Church
215 Essex Avenue, Spring Lake, NJ 07762*


*Deacon Stephen Russo
will be ordained into the Priesthood of Jesus Christ
Ordination is open to the public.*

Come & See


A JOURNEY INTO EASTERN CATHOLICISM

A one-day workshop exploring the beauty, history, and spirituality of the Eastern Catholic tradition

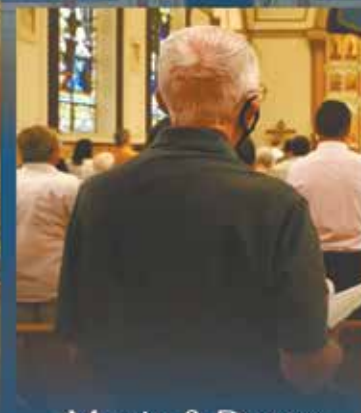
Whether new to the East or looking to deepen your understanding, this event offers prayer, music, conversation, and rich tradition and culminates in sung Divine Liturgy




Unity & Heritage




Liturgy & Tradition



Music & Prayer




October 11, 2025
10AM - 5PM



**ST. MARY OF THE ASSUMPTION
BYZANTINE CATHOLIC CHURCH**
CORNER OF GRAND & MALONE, TRENTON, NJ
<https://stmarybyzatholic.trenton.org/>

CATHOLIC SACRED MUSIC PROJECT

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PEOPLE YOU KNOW

IN PHILADELPHIA...

Byzantine Night at the Phillies

At Citizens Bank Park, Philadelphia, over 70 Parishioners from Holy Ghost and Holy Trinity in Philadelphia, Saint Michael's in Mont Clare, and Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Levittown were in attendance. Holy Trinity and Holy Ghost are served by Father Vasyl Kopyn, Saint Michael's in Mont Clare is served by Father Kovach, and OLPH is served by Father Paul West.

Right: Parishioners from the Philadelphia area are shown in enjoying their "Byzantine Night at the Phillies"



IN LINDEN...

Parish Celebrates the Feast of St. Elias with the blessing of Automobiles

Saint George the Great Martyr in Linden, NJ celebrated the Feast of Saint Elias with the blessing of automobiles, both large and small. Father Jack Custer was substituting on this Holy Day. Adult Altar Servers are Jerry Ferjo and Mike Hertz.



IN WILKES-BARRE TOWNSHIP...

On June 17th, Saint John the Baptist Parish presented a check to Saint Vincent de Paul Soup Kitchen for \$1,677.50 from a Lenten collection made by Saint John's parish family. A check from The GCU Community Matching Funds was presented at the same time in the amount of \$1,677.50 for a total donation of \$3,355.00. Father Mykhaylo Prodanets is Parochial Administrator of Saint John's Parish.



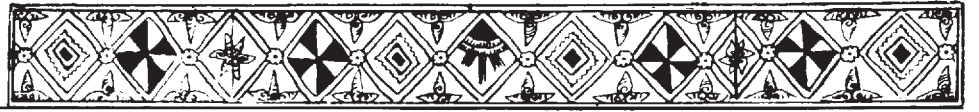
Saint John's GCU Parish Coordinator Ivanna Prodanets, Executive Director of Saint Vincent de Paul Kitchen Mike Cianciotta, Rev. Mykhaylo Prodanets and Steven Kozich.

IN CARTERET...

A processional icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help & Communion of the Apostles was recently discovered in the parish's former school. Many of the older parishioners remembered the icon displayed during events for decades. The icon was repaired, regilded, cleaned and "touched up" by the restoration artist Andrzej Praszcyk of Pennsylvania and returned to the church on Saturday, July 19th just in time for the feast day celebration. Our gratitude for Andrzej's artistic gifts: carving, replacement of missing and broken filigree, painting, re-designing and stabilizing the standing base. The annual blessing of cars at Saint Elias also took place during the Liturgy, followed by a family social at which a variety of sandwiches, salads and finger desserts were served. Father Michael Popson is the Parochial Administrator of Saint Elias.



AROUND THE EPARCHY



IN SLOATSBURG

Highlights from the Sloatsburg Pilgrimage
Photos by Gerald Wutkowski Jr.



You are invited
to the

3rd Annual SAINT THERESE PILGRIMAGE

on
September 20, 2025



Opening of Pilgrimage

Friday – September 19th at 4 PM

Akathist to the Theotokos with Small Compline
followed by Investiture / Commitment of Myrrhbearing Lay
Sisters

Saturday – September 20th

4:45 AM ~ Matins (Vigil)

6:15 AM ~ Life and Persons in the Life of Saint Theresia (video
from the previous year)

8:00 AM ~ Moleben to Saint Theresia

9:00 AM ~ Stations of the Cross

Confessions available from 9 AM to 11:30 AM in the Belvedere
area

9:45 AM ~ History of the Monastery

11:00 AM ~ Children's procession – bringing flowers to the
Mother of God

12:00 DIVINE LITURGY

Blessing of Roses

Most Reverend William Skurla, Metropolitan Archbishop of
Pittsburg

Most Reverend Kurt Burnette, Eparch of Passaic

LUNCH - Food available for purchase (Mobile Diner) or bring
your own lunch

3:30 PM - TOUR of the Monastery Farm

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

You're invited to a "Beatification Celebration!"

Saturday September 27th after 4pm Divine Liturgy

Celebrate the namesake of our mission, Bishop Petro Pavlo Oros, on the road to Sainthood!

FREE Dinner * Bake Sale * Mini "Byzantine Boutique" * Fellowship & Children's Activities!



PETRO OROS BYZANTINE CATHOLIC MISSION OF FORT MILL, SC (CHARLOTTE METRO)

292 MUNN ROAD
FORT MILL, SC 29715

(meeting at the St. Philip Ministry Center across from the main church)

EXIT 85 OF OFF I-77



RSVP by September 19th to petromissionfortmill@gmail.com

Who is Petro Oros?

- Greek Catholic Bishop of Eparchy of Mukachevo, who celebrated sacraments in secret during the Soviet occupation of Western Ukraine in the 1940's [at a time when the Ruthenian Byzantine church was outlawed]
- Martyred in 1953; gunned down at a train station
- Recognized by Pope Francis in 2022 for his dedication to the church and care for the poor
- Formal Beatification ceremony will take place in Rome on September 27th, 2025
- Beatification (2nd step in the canonization process) is when an individual is declared "Blessed", worthy of limited public veneration & honored for his holiness

ON THE GIFT OF SINGLENESS

By Kiana M. Cunningham, *Ascension of Our Lord, Williamsburg, VA*

Recently, the election of Pope Leo XIV and the death of Pope Francis has led me to a reflection on the nature of singleness and celibacy. This period of reflection continued over the past few months, especially after we drifted into June and recently celebrated the 4th of July.

I had the privilege of attending the pilgrimage in October. During the pilgrimage, our very own Bishop Kurt gave a homily where he touched on the person of Jesus and the idea that every human being was made in the image and likeness of God. We all hold the privilege of being unique, unrepeatable icons of Christ.

So often, we have this cookie cutter idea of what it means to be holy that doesn't seem to match that truth. Men and women are slated to this prepackaged ideal of either married life or religious life in the catholic church. In the secular world, there is this sense of having to check all of boxes and match up to societal pressures around career and family.

It's either that, or people are encouraged to slip into a sort of selfish hedonism about choosing "what's best for them" in a distorted way which is damaging for themselves and for society as a whole.

As a single Catholic woman in my thirties this can be a sort of no-man's-land (pun intended). In come the awkward questions about when I'll "settle down" or the unspoken expectation about convents or monasteries. You find yourself sandwiched between families during parish events or having to field awkward questions from well-meaning others. Parish events that are planned for families can be a challenge for single people of all ages. As a young woman you might scroll through harmful social media feeds of other women posting about their impossibly perfect families or impossibly perfect careers while feeling extremely lonely.

When you consider the people who experience same sex attraction (SSA) or the people who never marry due to other circumstances, it seems like the

voice of the single person is underrepresented. As I'm writing this in the month of July, the history of our great country is foremost in my mind. Living the single life in the face of hedonism is incredibly counter-cultural but there is a strong history of single, holy people within our country. I also call to mind the army of quiet single people, both men and women, who show up in the church and serve without asking for acclaim.

There is one other thing I would like to remind everyone of is these two men: one who has recently fallen asleep in the Lord, and one who is just at the start of his next chapter in life. Both were single, celibate men. Pope Francis was chaste and celibate his whole life as is Pope Leo. These two men shared a lot of commonalities, but they were unique, living icons made by their Creator. Pope Francis was from Argentina; Pope Leo XIV is from Chicago. They had similar missions and ideals but are not carbon copies of each other. They have different personalities. Francis carried a universal vocation of becoming a living icon of Christ, just like Leo carries that vocation today. Every human being, single or otherwise,

is called to be a unique icon of the one, true, living God. And just like icons, we are all unique. No two vocations, or people, are remotely the same.

By the time this will be published we will probably be very close to the feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God. The Theotokos consecrated her life and her virginity to God in service of the whole world when she called us all her children. Single people are called to emulate this in a particular way through their chastity. As we pass into our preparation for August 15th, let us remember that our whole lives lead to that end point where all will be all in all, even if the journey looks a bit different for some.

Kiana M. Cunningham holds an MA in Pastoral Theology from St. Joseph's College of Maine. She also served as a member of the Franciscan Volunteer Ministry for two years in Durham, North Carolina. She currently lives in Williamsburg, VA and is a member of Ascension of Our Lord Parish where she is involved in with the Young Adults, hospitality and other areas of parish life. She also enjoys spoiling her godson, Gabriel, and Olivia, her niece.



PRIESTLY REFLECTIONS

Father Paul Varchola West

LAKE REFLECTIONS

I am so very happy to announce that it is once again that time of the year for yet another installment of "Lake Reflections." Not only is this joyful news because it means that our family was blessed with yet another year at the lake, but I have also forgotten how many installments of this "series" there are at this point ... which is great because that means I am writing about the lake a lot!

As you may know, from my years of writing about it, I find the greatest stillness in my life while I am fishing. Fishing is a place where I can fully let my guard down, open inward to the Lord, and let Him in; sharing with him the more intimate parts of my being that often get shoved out of the way by the general goings on of life. Fishing has always been my "go to" way to decompress and let my mind wander through the grandeur of Creation. Even before I was ordained, or even before I attended seminary, I would often tell my wife, "Just so you know, I'm going to go and talk to God in the morning." She knew then, and still knows till this day, that that meant I was going fishing and would be out of the house before she woke up.

This year, regrettably the fish weren't all too enthused at the bait I had to of-

fer them, but my thoughts, on the other hand, were nibbling constantly on the hooks of my imagination. There was one particular moment while Alissa and I were cooking dinner that, for whatever reason, I began to playfully sing "Puff the Magic Dragon," immediately catching myself and saying, "Oh great - now I'm gonna start crying..." Anyone who knows that song knows what a tearjerker that little tune is!

Without missing a beat, Alissa looks at me and says, "Go and do it, that's what the boat is for, isn't it?" knowing very well that fishing is a prayerful activity for me. So, heeding her advice, I went fishing on the boat that evening. I mean, what man would say no to a wife who just told him to go fishing!

While out on the lake, I began to quietly sing though the song that, an hour or two earlier, had serendipitously entered my mind. When I got to the last verse, it hit me - the reason why the song crept out of my subconscious to excite my imagination.

A dragon lives forever, but not so little boys.

Painted wings and giant strings make way for other toys.

As those words rang out, what was brought to my attention was the realization that the baggage of our "adult lives" pushes away the things we enjoy. Far too often the "thing" we enjoy that goes neglected is God Himself. How often, on the busy days, is our prayer rule the first thing to go? How many times do we not read our daily Scripture because scrolling YouTube Shorts occupied all our time? How many times are we so busy, and so tired, that our head hits the pillow and we didn't even give God so much as a passing thought since we peeled our face off that very same pillow at the outset of the day?

My mind opened to the Lord, pondering these things, I realized what I was doing in that very moment. I wasn't simply fishing. I was playing with painted wings (my fishing lures) and giant strings, floating on the "high seas" attempting to coax scale-covered creatures out of the depths - I was actualizing my true humanity, and I was interacting with God in a quasi-playful manner. I realized then that a huge part of the "problem" of the human condition after the Fall is our propensity to forget that God made us to be relational beings, not only with one another, but relational with HIM!

To echo the sentiments of this well-known song, how sad God must have been when Adam and Eve, in a moment of cavalier curiosity, chose to listen to the beguiling words of the serpent over spending time with their best friend and Creator, obeying what he asks of them. In a manner of speaking, the Almighty God ceased His fearless roar as He no longer communed with Adam in the Cherry Lane-esque paradise of Eden; His voice was silent to them. No longer would Adam be connected to God in the Garden. And as the cherubim placed the flaming sword that blocked the way back, God most certainly slipped into his cave of Paradise, alone, sad that his friend would no longer come to play.

Let us not neglect this innocent time with the Lord. Let us look at prayer as a child looks at play, with exuberant joy and unbridled enthusiasm. Let us not forget that Jesus Christ reopened those gates of Paradise for us so that we can once again frolic, play, and commune with the very One Who Created us. Let us not look to prayer as something we "have" to do, but rather as something we are able to do because our Lord loves us and simply wants to hear from us, to interact with us, commune with us, and, dare I say, to play with us!

Brothers and sisters, let us pray like a child at play - with a clear mind, an open heart, and a smile on our face - for as the Psalmist exclaims: This is the day the Lord has made; let us be glad and rejoice in it! **ECL**

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LIFE, LOVE, AND THE HUMAN PERSON

By Ann M. Koshute, MTS

EMBRACE THE BEAUTIFUL FOLLY

Being a Christian has never been easy. Persecution in the early Church, through the centuries as missionaries brought the Gospel to new lands and were often tortured and killed by those in power, and even in our day, following Christ comes at a cost. If you are reading this column you're most likely not in imminent danger of death if you don't renounce the Faith. Yet each of us is tested in our own way and face days that leave us wondering where God is in all of it, and whether there might be an "easier road." Both the daily small crosses and the big, heavy ones do test our faith. Some days we find it easy to "pass the test" with flying colors. Other days, when the cross is especially heavy and its weight bears down hard on us, the test seems impossible to endure. This is life in a fallen world, and no one is immune to its trials. Knowing that "we're all in this together" doesn't make bearing our particular crosses any easier.

The crosses that we each carry are somehow, mysteriously and wonderfully, grafted onto the tree of Christ's Cross. His Cross, His death in a moment in time is mystically united with our crosses in real time, as we carry them. When we fall under their weight,

Jesus "spiritually falls" with us, just as He fell under the weight of His own Cross. This concept is very hard to wrap around our limited intellectual capacity, because none of us – regardless of how loving and generous – can ever match the generosity and self-sacrifice of Jesus for us. Every lash on His back, every thorn in His flesh, every nail in His hands and feet, and the gash from the spear that pierces His side: every pain, indignity and agonizing moment was spent by Him for our salvation. A love like that only exists in God, and only He could love us so completely.

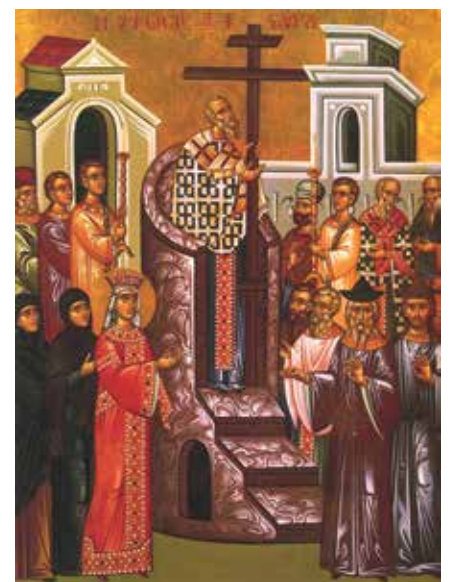
On September 14 we commemorate the finding of the Cross by Saint Helena with the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. I like to think of this feast as a little taste of Lent, an important signpost before finding ourselves once again preparing for the Nativity of Jesus in just a few months. It's a good reminder that the joy and season's greetings we revel in at Christmas have a serious undertone. Jesus came to us, small and vulnerable, so that on Calvary He could again become small and vulnerable for us. Jesus did not come as the larger-than-life King who would wield His might and throw off the Cross, breaking it into pieces and

conquering the world. No; instead, He allowed its weight to overpower Him, His body to be broken by His torturers, and finally "conquered" as He submitted Himself to death. What kind of love can endure such horrors? What body and mind can take such pain? Only God's, and only for love of you and me.

We know Jesus' free assent to "being conquered" was not a victory for death, and certainly not a win for the devil. We lift high the Cross on this great feast, exalting not the wood of the Cross or the death that came with it, but the One who used it as a means to set us free. His death opened the gate to Life for us, and His Cross has become not a symbol of shame or defeat, but a Tree of Life; a Tree whose fruits are available to nourish us when our own crosses seem too heavy to bear. Every step we take carrying our crosses, every time we fall under their weight, Jesus is there.

Being a Christian is not easy, whether in times of persecution or in the land of opportunity and prosperity. Saint Paul was right: "For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." (1 Corinthians 1:18, RSV-CE). Our suffering, our crosses, do so

often feel like "folly." As we celebrate the feast let's bring our crosses to Jesus, lifting them high to meet Him, uniting our crosses with His so that we can be strengthened by its power and embraced by the folly than only He can transform into the logic of love. **ECL**



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SEASONAL REFLECTIONS

Father Ronald Hatton



THE POWER OF THE LIFE-GIVING CROSS

In September of 2003, I was stationed at our parish in Williamsburg, VA. Our annual priest retreat was taking place at San Alfonso Retreat Center at the Jersey Shore, as usual, but the threat of Hurricane Isabel was greatly on my mind. The hurricane was heading for the Tidewater, VA, area, and threatened that area, changing constantly from a Category 4 to 5, then back again, as it headed our way. I had my Dachs-hund boarded at the veterinary clinic down the street, and I was imagining what would happen if the hurricane hit and no one was there to look after the boarded animals. Needless to say, my mind was not on the retreat that year!

I called one of my parishioners, who at that time was a Captain in the US Coast Guard, to get any information on what was going to happen back home. He quite succinctly told me if I didn't leave by Wednesday, not to come home until at least Friday. As "captain" of our "ship," I felt that I should be back in Williamsburg when we got hit—not that there was anything I could do except have my dog with me! So, Wednesday, September 17, I headed from the safety of the retreat center to brave the storm at home. I got my dog back home with me, and I awaited whatever was to come.

As more background, the subdivision where our parish rectory is located is called Baron Woods, and true to its name, it was lots cut out of a forest of

Loblolly Pines. These pines have a shallow root base apparently, and we had a history of whole trees just falling over, roots and all, so it was a tense time when the Isabel finally hit our area. Since (as you may have guessed!) we were still in the time of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Precious Cross of the Lord, and since we often refer to it as the Tree of the Cross, or speak of the Wood of the Cross, it felt natural, as long as I had light to see, that I take down my Book of Akathists and pray the Akathist to The Cross. Isabel came through as a Category 2 storm, but that was enough to make for a harrowing night.

The next morning, I went out to see the results of the storm. Most of the houses had trees down. The house across the street had a couple hit and moved it off its foundation. Parishioners down the street had a tree fall right across a practically-new car. Trees had fallen in the streets. Our little subdivision was devastated, yet not one tree on our property came down!

As I wandered around, talking to folks and assessing the damage, one neighbor asked me how I could be so lucky as to not have a single tree fall. I simply said, "I don't know what you were doing, but I was praying!"

Two things can be taken out of this story, as we once again enter the time of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross: one, that prayer does work; two, that

even though praying before a crucifix, or even more, to pray to the Cross, may feel like a superstitious act in this day and time, there is power in it. Yes, there is that tendency to anthropomorphize the Cross by "speaking" to it, but we must realize the power of the Tree of Life that bore on its branches the Author of Life, Who was crucified on it to destroy Death and to grant us everlasting life.

Some hymns from the Matins of the Feast:

Formerly, the tree in Paradise made me naked. In the temptation, the enemy brought death. He, the Tree of Life, Who became man and lived on earth, carried the Cross. Now the whole world is full of joy. Seeing the Cross raised up to God in faith, O people, let us cry aloud: Your Church is full of glory!

O famous Wood, you are blessed in song for being the Cross on which Christ was crucified. The fiery revolving sword by which Eden was guarded feared you, [cf. Gen. 3:22-24] and the awesome Cherubim bowed down to Christ Who was crucified upon you in the flesh. Through this mystery, peace has been granted to our souls.

And, finally:

Let all the trees of the forest exalt, for they are made holy by Christ Who

planted them in the beginning and Who was stretched out upon the Tree. On this day of its exaltation, we worship Him and extol you, O Cross.

Kind of wants you to pray the Matins, doesn't it?

Our liturgical life is so rich in the Eastern Church, and so much has fallen by the wayside as time has gone on. But we still have such feast days as the Exaltation of the Precious Cross to remind us of God's love and care for us. We are constantly reminded of all that has been done for us by Him that the chains of Death be loosened and that we attain everlasting life with Him.

May we ever stand in the shadow of the Tree of the Cross, looking upon Him Who died there for our salvation. May we always wear that Symbol of Symbols, around our necks, on our clothing, on our chotki and rosaries. May we never be ashamed of the Cross, or ashamed to venerate it with our kisses. May we always make the Sign of the Cross on ourselves, on our children.

"The Cross is the guardian of the universe; the Cross is the beauty of the Church. It is the power of kings, and it sustains the strength of our faith. It is the glory of the angels and the slayer of demons." ECL



WHY BYZANTINE CATHOLICS DO THAT

By Lisa Krochta Cipriani

THE LITURGICAL YEAR

In the homily closest to September 1st our priests typically include a reminder that the Church's "New Liturgical Year" has started. Only so much can be conveyed in a homily. So, let's expand a little more. Like any tradition that has survived almost two thousand years it is steeped in history.

Did you ever notice that Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) is in the same month that our liturgical year starts and that Passover is always very close to our Easter? I thought it was coincidental but there is an actual reason. As noted in the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic book *Come and See* we learn that "the Byzantine liturgical calendar is inherited from the Old Testament ..."

Let's first start with "Why September 1st?". In honor of Emperor Constantine the Great's victory over Emperor Maxentius, October 28th 312 A.D., the Byzantine Church chose the first

of September as the beginning of the liturgical year. Emperor Constantine attributed his victory over Maxentius to divine intervention. He had seen a vision of a cross in the sky (May 21st 312 A.D.) and said the vision was brought to him by what then was called the "Christian God". The cross he envisioned was painted on the shields of his warriors before the battle against Maxentius. The victory over Maxentius catapulted Emperor Constantine into playing a critical role in the Christianization of the Roman Empire. The practice of criminalizing and persecuting Christians ceased in February of 313 A.D. when the emperor issued the Edict of Milan declaring that Christianity would be an official religion of the Empire. Eventually the emperor himself would be baptized.

If you noticed above, February, May, and October are noted but not September. So how did we happen upon this first day of September. My research

found there is more than one explanation and the day and month is a combination of them all:

Our Ecclesiastical Wall Calendar lists September 1st as "The Beginning of the Indiction". The first definition of the word refers to the Roman Empire's periodic reassessment of taxes which was traditionally done on September 1st. The date of September 1st would later represent the beginning of the Roman new year. September 1st was eventually replaced with January 1st but the use of September 1st by Eastern churches as the first day of the new year continues to this day. The second definition is "full cycle". Another way to describe a full year.

Jesus came to Nazareth on September 1st to preach the good news and start His mission in life.

The Christian faithful, most having been converted from Judaism, were fa-

miliar with the New Year Rosh Hashanah which is celebrated in September. Continuing the practice of a new year starting in September was comfortable for them.

Lastly, the season of harvest began in August. Crops were put away for the upcoming year and it was time to reflect on the year's bounty and start planning the next year. Starting anew in September made logical sense. To celebrate the harvest, on August 6th we bless fruit to thank God for his generosity. This custom was passed on from the Old Testament.

Our liturgical year continues with the Nativity, Triodion (period before Easter), the Resurrection of our Lord (Pascha), Pentecostarian (period between Easter and Pentecost) and Pentecost. In between are thirty-four Immobile (Simple, Solemn, and Obligation) Feasts starting with the Nativity of the Theotokos on September 8th and end-

ing with the Beheading of St. John the Baptist on August 29th.

Circling back to why the Jewish Passover and our Easter are celebrated so close to each other, I found that it is all based on the cycle of the full moon. A practice that is mentioned in the Old Testament. The Jewish Passover is celebrated on the 14th day after the full moon during the month of Nisan (our equivalent of March/April). Passover can occur any day of the week. Our Easter is also determined by the moon. A carryover from the Old Testament. However, the calculations are slightly different. As the Ascension of Our Lord can only occur on a Sunday, our Easter is celebrated every year on the first Sunday following the full moon after the Spring Equinox (March 21st). Based on this formula Easter can only be celebrated as early as March 22nd but no later than April 25th with Easter always being on a Sunday. As the Jewish month has only 29 or 30 days and Passover can occur any day of the week the celebration of Passover and Easter can be very close to each other and occasionally on the same day.

As Byzantine Catholics we are twice blessed. We not only get to ring in a universal new year on January 1st but we get to celebrate our church's litur-

gical new year on September 1st. Our universal new year gives us the opportunity to set personal resolutions. Our liturgical new year gives us the opportunity to set our spiritual resolutions.

At the start of this year's liturgical new year challenge yourself to a spiritual resolution. If you've never volunteered in your church, find an activity to volunteer. Even if it is just once a year. If you typically don't attend a Divine Liturgy for a Solemn or Simple Holy Day, make it a point to attend one or two during the year. Once a week find time to pray the Rosary. You can even challenge yourself virtually by visiting the Eparchy of Passaic website [eparchyofpassaic.com] or the Archeparchy of Pittsburgh website [archpitt.org] and discovering something new about your Byzantine faith, traditions, and history.

Happy New Year!



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THE BYZANTINE LITURGY

By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD

PRIEST AND PRESBYTER

The second step, after deacon, in the sacramental mystery of ordination is the priest. He is probably the Church minister that the faithful are most familiar with. Not every parish has a deacon. They are usually men who have another job in the world and serve the Church part-time, though some receive full-time positions. The training of a deacon is less than that for a priest. Priests must receive a full-time formation for four and often more years. They are educated in theology, liturgy, morals, preaching and pastoral care. They are prepared for a lifetime of full service to the Church and serve as pastors, vicars, administrators, and educators. As every Christian must belong to some parish community, their connection to the Church will involve some interaction with a priest, who will celebrate the Liturgy, preach, baptize, perform weddings and funerals, hear confessions and provide counseling and guidance when needed.

Saint John Chrysostom proclaimed how important the priest is for our spiritual life. He said, "For when you see the Lord sacrificed, and laid upon the altar, and the priest standing and praying over the victim, and all the worshippers empurpled with that precious blood, can you then think that you are still among men, and standing upon the earth? Are you not, on the contrary, straightway translated to heaven, and casting out every carnal thought from the soul, do you not with disembodied

spirit and pure reason contemplate the things which are in heaven?"

We often find two words for this order of the Church: priest and presbyter. In English, both these words come from the Greek word, presbyteros, which means an elder, and who is therefore should more wisdom to advise and guide the community. We can see this in the letters they contain, priest, P-R-T and presbyter, P-R-T. This is the title we use when we pray for the priest in the Litany of Peace, "for the venerable presbyterate, the diaconate and all the clergy and people." This is the word used when a man is ordained, "Divine Grace ... ordains the pious deacon (name) to be a presbyter," and you have bestowed the name Elder on those found worthy to sanctify the word of your truth in this office Grant that he may live worthily in this honored presbyterate given to him by your foreknowing power." Here wisdom is joined to age, but an older person may not necessarily be wise. Wisdom may be given to the youth also and is more important for the priesthood than simply age. Saint Paul was to write to his disciple, Timothy, "Let no one have contempt for your youth, but set an example for those who believe, in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity" (1 Timothy 4:12). This is the meaning of the term "elder," someone who is mature and wise, for the priest.

In the first years of the Church, the first duty of the order of priests was to serve

as an advisor to the bishop, who was the celebrant of the Liturgy. The early presbyters had two functions: first, they gave comfort to the bishop by forming a consultative body that advised the bishop, not only in administration but also in doctrine. Saint Cyprian wrote that the bishop did nothing without consulting the presbyters. Even today, according to Canon Law, the bishop must consult the presbyters before making certain decisions. Secondly, their role in the community was reflected in their liturgical position – they con-celebrated the Liturgy with the bishop. As the Church began to grow, presbyters slowly began to preside at Liturgies by delegation of the bishop. We see this already in Ignatius of Antioch, "Let that be deemed a proper Eucharist, which is administered either by the bishop, or by one to whom he has entrusted it." (Smyr. 8,2). Eventually, only the presbyter could be licitly delegated by a bishop to celebrate the liturgy.

The laying on of hands confers a special ministry, where one devotes one's whole life to service of God and the Church. These are the people who preside over the community through a special gift of the Spirit given after baptism. Simeon of Thessalonica made the point that baptism confers all the charisms of the Spirit except orders. The universal tradition is that only the bishop or priest may celebrate the eucharist. This follows the principle that the one who presides over the church

as a whole presides also over the eucharist. In the beginning, only the bishop celebrated the eucharist, but the bishop began to delegate priests to preside and to hear confessions. As the church grew larger, the bishop began to delegate more and more, until by the fourth century, this is the established role of the priest. Jerome (Letter 146) for the West and John Chrysostom (Homily 2 on 1 Timothy) both witness that there is very little difference between what a bishop and a priest can do liturgically, and only the bishop could ordain and consecrate chrism.

If asked to identify what the priest does, most people today would probably answer – offer the sacrifice of the Divine Liturgy. The offering of sacrifice was a sacred function, enabling the person doing the offering as a mediator (we could say go-between) between God and human beings. In the theology of the Church, that belonged in the first place, and perhaps essentially, to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, true God and true man. This was stated most clearly in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God ... For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, (Jesus truly became a human being) but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:14-15). No one can take the place of our Lord as priest, but we can share in his priesthood. All the baptized are priests who share in the sacrifice of our Lord, but the ordained presbyter shares in it in a ministerial way by the power of the Holy Spirit. In our next article, we will consider how the priest is the one who offers, in the name of the community and in union with the Lord, the sacrifice of the Divine Liturgy. **ECL**



SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

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

MARY AND THE CROSS

Two different commemorations on the Byzantine liturgical calendar collide each September. The feast of the birth of the Theotokos on September 8 continues over four post-festive days. Meanwhile, the Exaltation of the Holy Cross reaches back to the previous Saturday and Sunday, extends to the following Saturday and Sunday, and is celebrated for a full octave through September 21. This coincidence invites us to consider how the mysteries of the Holy Cross and the Theotokos shed light on each other.

Our thoughts probably go immediately to the image of the Virgin Mother standing amidst a hostile crowd under the Cross as her only Son dies slowly (John 19:25-27). The liturgical offices on Wednesdays and Fridays are full of hymns reflecting on just this subject. Usually, they connect Mary's sorrow under the Cross with Simeon's prophecy (Luke 2:35) and or her painless childbirth (cf. Genesis 3:16). Much more recent spiritual songs like *Stradal'na Mat'i* (Sorrowful Mother) supply all the sentimentality that the Gospels strictly avoid.

Saint Paul describes the Cross as the sign of Jesus' humility. He said "yes" the

Father's will for all people to be saved, "accepting even death, death on a cross" (Philippians 2:8). We actually hear Jesus struggle to say that "yes" in His anguished prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:39-42).

Mary's experience of the Cross began long before that dark afternoon on Calvary. We hear Mary humbly accept the Archangel's invitation for her to become the mother of God's Son, even though she could hardly have understood or even imagined everything that might mean (Luke 1:38). The Gospels tell us that she was betrothed to Saint Joseph, but we are not told how that came about. We can be certain it was not the teenage Mary's decision; once again, she humbly said "yes." The Gospels say little about what must have been an awkward, even scandalous, pregnancy. Neither Matthew nor Luke mentions the discomfort and insecurity of her travels to Bethlehem to give birth in a cave. What about the intrusion of curious shepherds and the visit of foreign astrologers with their strange, expensive gifts? Saint Luke (2:19) tells us only that "Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart."

Saint Matthew (2:13-23) gives us no sense of Mary's emotions in his account of the Holy Family's flight to Egypt to escape King Herod's attempt to murder her baby. Saint Joseph followed the guidance of angels and Mary obediently followed Joseph to Egypt and back, and then to Nazareth. What must Mary have felt when her firstborn son attracted the attention of Simeon and Anna at His presentation in the Temple? How did she react to Simeon's prophecy about her son being "a sign of contradiction" and "the rise and fall of many in Israel" (Luke 2:33-35)? What of his prophecy to Mary that "a sword will pierce through your own soul also"?

Twelve years later, Mary lost her son on the way back from pilgrimage to Jerusalem only to find him three days later "in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions." Neither Mary nor Joseph understood His explanation: "Why did you search for me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business" (Luke 2: 46-50)? Once again, the Gospel says simply that Mary "kept all these things in her heart" (Luke 2:51).

Years later, what must Mary have felt when He responded to His family's interruption of His preaching by saying, "Who is my mother or my brothers? ...Whoever does the will of God is my brother and my sister and mother" (Mark 3:31-35)? In all these cases, and surely many more about which the Gospels are silent, Mary was asked to surrender her own expectations and simply accept as God's will situations she certainly would not have chosen for herself. In all these moments when Mary said "yes" to God's plan for our salvation, she was participating in the mystery of the Cross, even before Jesus announced, "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Mark 8:34). She was imitating her Son's humility.

Catholics like describe life's little inconveniences as our "crosses." True, we can learn patience from a toothache or humility from a failure. But Mary's example challenges us to more. Would we dare willingly to do something inconvenient, or uncomfortable, or unconventional, an act of charity or witness or sacrifice? Would we change our plans and surrender our expectations if it seemed God was calling us to something else? Can we imagine the Cross not as the passive acceptance of a problem we can't fix but rather as the faith-filled embrace of God's plan leading us to more than we might ever imagined for ourselves?

ECL

In September of 2024, the Wall Street Journal published an article entitled: "One Million Are Now Dead or Injured in the Russia-Ukraine War."

On August 21, 2025, Bishop Teodor Matsapula posted on social media: "Today, our city of Mukachevo suffered pain and destruction. Enemy missiles of the Russian aggressors and murderers hit the Flex factory, a place that was, for many of our people, not only a job, but also a hope for a decent life for their families."

The Russo-Ukrainian War is not the only significant conflict currently underway in the world. There are five other major wars in the world today, including the current Gaza conflict with over 70,000 dead, mostly civilians (The Economist, May 8, 2025).

In addition, there are around ten minor wars, nineteen conflicts, and nine "skirmishes and clashes" currently taking place.

War is a punishment for sin. Old Testament Israel was punished for her disobedience and idolatry by wars, foreign invasions, exile, and captivity. Wars waged by Babylon, Assyria, Egypt, and Rome (in A.D. 70) were used by God to chastise, punish, and correct the Old Covenant people of God.

"Wars are nothing but punishments for the sins of the world," said Saint Jacinta (1910-1920), the youngest of the three children of Fatima.

Père Lamy (1855-1931), referring to World War I, said, "Our Lord told me that the War had three causes: blasphemy, Sunday labor, and the desecration of marriage." Today, most Catholics don't think those kinds of sins are that serious. Yet there were around 20 million deaths caused by World War I.

God chastises us because He loves us and wants us to return to Him. Jesus Christ says, "Those whom I love, I reprove and chasten; so be zealous and repent" (Rev. 3:19).

"For the Lord disciplines him whom He loves, and chastises every son whom He receives" (Heb. 12:6).

"God does not afflict us in this life for our injury but for our good, in order that we may cease from sin, and by recovering His grace escape eternal punishment," says Saint Alphonsus (1696-1787).

Saint Augustine (354-430) prays, "Thou, O Lord, fillest us with tribulations, in order that, being thus afflicted, we may abandon our sins and return to Thee."

It's not enough to offer some extra prayers. Let's take this seriously and do penance. The saints performed heroic

penances to save souls and avert the justice of God, such as fasting for extended periods, praying all night, wearing hair shirts, and scourging themselves. We aren't saints yet, so we cannot do that. So, what can we do? Turn back to God.

Is there any sin in your life? Not putting God first, cursing and blaspheming, neglecting Divine Liturgy on Sundays and holy days of obligation, disobeying parents and lawful authorities, hating or mistreating others, premarital sex or pornography, etc., stealing, lying, being greedy? Please, stop sinning, go to confession, and live a life devoted to Christ.

The future of humanity may well depend on whether or not we repent.

"Many persons," Sister Lucia explained, "feeling that the word penance implies great austerities, and not feeling that they have the strength for great sacrifices, become discouraged and continue a life of lukewarmness and sin." But Our Lord explained to her: "The sacrifice required of every person is the fulfillment of his duties in life and the observance of My law. This is the penance that I now seek and require."

Saint Catherine Labouré (1806 – 1876) said to another nun, "Much prayer is

needed. There will be great misfortunes, but prayer will arrest their course." The nun replied, "But we do pray much, my Sister Catherine." Saint Catherine then said, "Yes, but still not enough. To prayer must be joined a spirit of penance and sacrifice. It is this that gives it strength, and there are many who do not pray well."

Our Lord told Saint Gemma Galgani (1878 – 1903), "I need souls who, by their sufferings, trials, and sacrifices, make amends for sinners and for their ingratitude."

In 1916, the Angel of Portugal appeared to the three children of Fatima and said, "Offer prayers and sacrifices constantly to the Most High." Lucia then asked the Angel, "How are we to make sacrifices?" "Make of everything you can a sacrifice and offer it to God as an act of reparation for the sins by which He is offended, and in supplication for the conversion of sinners... Above all, accept and bear with submission the sufferings which the Lord will send you."

Can there be an end to war? Will there be peace in our time? The choice is ours. Either we will repent or we will perish (Lk. 13:5). **ECL**

SCHOOL OF PRAYER

Father G. Scott Boghossian



PRAYER AND PENANCE END WAR



**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.

CHARLESTON AREA OUTREACH INTEREST


Are you a Byzantine/Eastern Rite Catholic that has relocated to the Charleston, SC 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.

SAVE THE DATES

2025/26 Marriage Jubilarian Dates

October 11, 2025 (Saturday) Marriage Jubilarians - Middle States Epiphany of Our Lord - Annandale, VA 4:00 PM - Banquet to Follow on Premise	Saint John's - Hazleton, PA 3:00 PM Banquet to Follow at Capriotti's Catering- McAdoo
October 19, 2025 (Sunday) Marriage Jubilarians - New Jersey, New York, Connecticut Saint Mary's - Hillsborough, NJ 3:00 PM - Banquet to Follow on Premise	January 17, 2026 (Saturday) Marriage Jubilarians - Southern States Saint Nicholas - Orlando, FL 11:00 AM - Banquet to Follow on Premise
October 26, 2025 (Sunday) Marriage Jubilarians - All Pennsylvania	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.

Iconography Workshop
Thursday Evenings This Fall
Woodland Park, New Jersey



Father Marek Visnovsky will be offering an iconography workshop at Saint 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 Father Marek at marekvisnovsky@yahoo.com.

Father Marek is a married Byzantine Catholic priest, serving as the Rector of the Cathedral of Saint 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.

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UPCOMING EPARCHIAL AND PARISH EVENTS

- SEPTEMBER, 2025**
- 1 Beginning of the Church Year / Labor Day
Chancery Office Closed
 - 8 Nativity of the Theotokos
Solemn Holyday
 - 14 Exaltation of the Cross
Solemn Holyday
-
- 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

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Maureen French - ECL circulation editor