



EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

Official Publication of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic

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DECEMBER, 2014



Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

Christmas Message from Bishop Kurt

Some 750 years before the birth of the Messiah, there arose in the Near East an empire of such astonishing greed and cruelty that all of Asia trembled. It was called the Assyrian Empire and was centered in the city of Nineveh. After conquering the main military forces of the times, they turned their attention to the Promised Land, and began to chip away at the borders established by Joshua, David, and Solomon. The first area where the chosen people were driven out of their heritage was the northernmost part, namely Zebulun and Naphtali. Eventually, the Assyrians captured all of the Northern Kingdom—the Kingdom of Israel. They “ethnically cleansed” the Northern Kingdom, as we say nowadays, and moved in other peoples to occupy the empty land. Since Zebulun and Naphtali were the farthest north, and the first to fall, they became a symbol of the Kingdom of Darkness making inroads into the chosen people, the people through whom God was preparing for the birth of Our Savior, Jesus Christ.

In his great prophecies of the Messiah, Isaiah says “the Land of Zebulun and the Land of Naphtali, the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.” According to St. Matthew, these words were fulfilled more than six centuries later when Our Lord began his public ministry around the Sea of Galilee. When God began his work to reclaim the entire world from sin and evil, He began in Zebulun and Naphtali.

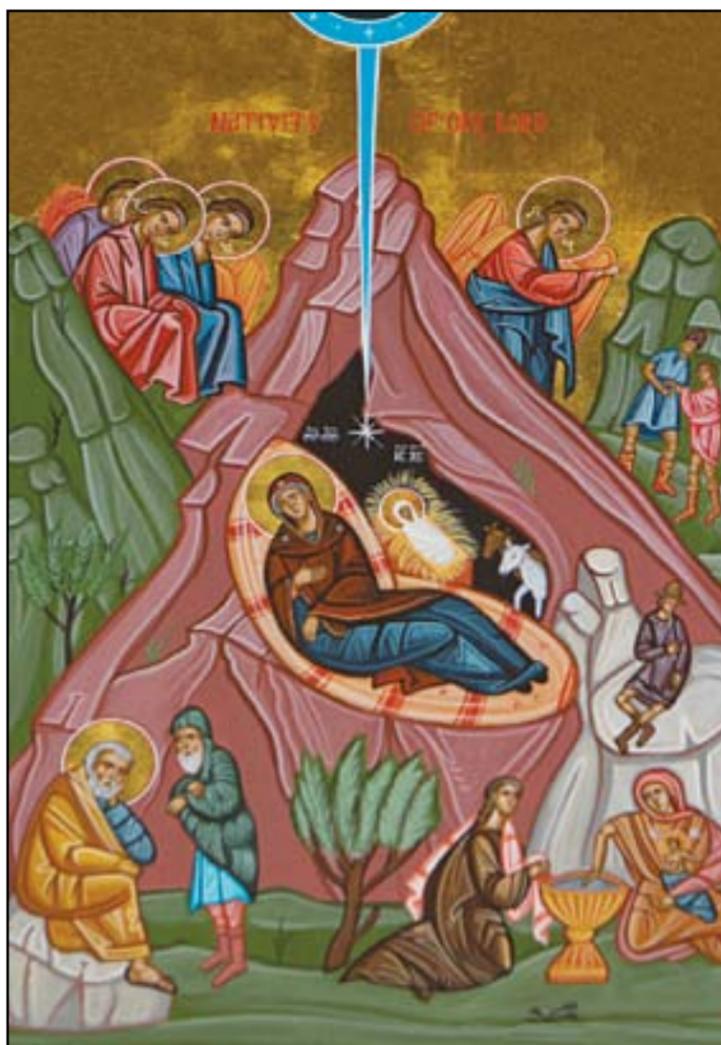
It can seem today as though great empires of greed and cruelty are once again advancing across the planet. How very comforting are these same prophecies from the ninth chapter of Isaiah about the birth of the Messiah. “For every boot of the trampling warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.”

“For to us a child is born.” No animal produces offspring as helpless as men. God sent a helpless baby into a dangerous world of infanticide and human sacrifice. Is there any joy greater than the birth of a child? Is there anything more beautiful than the perfect skin and clear innocent eyes of an infant? The tiny hands holding someone’s finger? The God made flesh came to us not as a full grown athlete but a laughing baby reaching out to be held.

“To us a Son is given.” Jesus was a descendant of King David on both sides of his family, and was born in the Royal City of Bethlehem, the City of David. Jesus is the eternal heir to David’s throne—David who slew lions and bears with his bare hands out of love for his gentle sheep, David who toppled Goliath the giant, David the poet, David the musician, David the loyal and affectionate friend, David most jealous for the holiness of God.

“And the government will be upon his shoulders.” As heir to the throne of David, Jesus would rule the cosmos, but not the way a sinner would—self aggrandizing and defensive. The scriptures say mercy and justice will meet. Jesus is the just ruler who never excuses sin or evil, but is also the merciful ruler because He pays the price himself for our debts.

“And his name will be called Wonderful.” God said let there be light, and there was light. From the beginning, God created the world by his Word. Whether it’s the pastel colored lights of aurora, or the clear brilliant light of midday, or the passionate searing light of sunset, or the quiet light of the moon and stars, the inexhaustible beauty of the world is carried to our eyes by the Light and fills our souls with awe and wonder.



“And his name will be called Counselor.” In times of fear or confusion, we have a trustworthy counselor. Unlike other counselors who can only guess our true thoughts, the God made flesh knows our thoughts better than we do ourselves, and also knows the thoughts of everyone else. Who better to turn to in times of difficulty? Who better to ask for advice? Oh, how many times we have searched for a solution, and then asked Jesus for help, and then the solution found us!

“And his name will be called the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father.” Sons are often named after their fathers. The Messiah bears the name of the One who begot him before all time, the Mighty God who made all things from nothing and sustains the existence of the cosmos, the Father who has no beginning and no source. “God from God, Light from Light, True God from True God.”

“And his name will be called Prince of Peace.” In our fallen world, no one ever became prince except by force or treachery, and those who inherit the title lose it if they are not just as strong as their enemies. We have a Messiah who became Prince through Peace. We read in the Gospels that he avoided confrontation as Isaiah prophesied, “He will not raise his voice or cry out in the street. A bruised reed he

will not break; a smoldering wick he will not quench.” When the Gadarene villagers asked Jesus to leave, he got back in the boat and crossed over the lake. When he was falsely accused in front of the judge, “Like a sheep that is silent before his shearers, he did not open his mouth.” He overcame death by dying on the cross, and paid the price for all the sins of his enemies. In our world today that glorifies competition, and payback, and force, and arguing, and acquisition—even encouraging infanticide again to increase worldly wealth—what a comfort to know that we are all ruled by the Prince of Peace, and the final victory belongs to the little child of Bethlehem.

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HAPPY FIRST ANNIVERSARY!

Most Reverend Kurt Burnette · Fifth Bishop of Passaic
Ordination and Enthronement – December 4, 2013

Finally, beloved Son, together with the protection of the Virgin Mary, We beseech for you the gifts of the Paraclete Spirit, so that aided by them you may nourish the faithful entrusted to your care, making use especially of charity, the chief virtue of Shepherds, which makes us close to people and pleasing to God.

*(from Letter of Appointment
of Pope Francis to Bishop Kurt)*



Art Exhibit Featuring the Mother of God

National Museum of Women in the Arts · Washington, DC
December 5, 2014 - April 12, 2015

Picturing Mary: Woman, Mother, Idea explores the concept of womanhood represented by the Virgin Mary as well as the social and sacred functions her image has served through time. It is organized by the National Museum of Women in the Arts and brings together more than 60 Renaissance and Baroque-era masterworks from the Vatican Museums, Uffizi Gallery, and other museums, churches, and private collections in Europe and the United States.

Divided into six thematic sections, the exhibition presents images of Mary as a daughter, cousin, and wife; the mother of an infant; a bereaved parent; the protagonist in a rich life story developed through the centuries; a link between heaven and earth; and an active participant in the lives of those who revere her.

The exhibition features works made by both female and male artists. Paintings by Sofonisba Anguissola, Artemisia Gentileschi, Orsola Maddalena Caccia (an Ursuline nun who ran a bustling painting studio in

her convent in northern Italy), and Elisabetta Sirani highlight the varied ways in which women artists conceptualized the subject of Mary. These artists' works are featured alongside treasured Marian paintings, sculptures, and drawings by Fra Filippo Lippi, Botticelli, Michelangelo, Pontorno, Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, and others.

During the presentation of *Picturing Mary*, NMWA's website will feature an online exhibition exploring global traditions in Marian imagery, further contextualizing the artworks on view in the galleries.

HOURS:

MON-SAT - 10 A.M.-5 P.M. SUNDAY- 12 P.M.-5 P.M.

INFORMATION: 1250 NEW YORK AVE NW, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005

PHONE: 202-783-5000 1-800-222-7270

WEB: WWW.NMWA.ORG/EXHIBITIONS

TICKETS:

HTTP://NMWA.ORG/PICTURING-MARY-TICKETS



TRENTON NJ – Deacon Thomas L. Vanisko, 73, of Hamilton fell asleep in the Lord on October 29, 2014, at Compassionate Care Hospice at Saint Francis Medical Center. He was ordained to the holy office of deacon in the Byzantine Catholic Church on May 10, 1980, and served at the Assumption of the Virgin Mary Byzantine Catholic Church for over 30 years in Trenton, NJ where Father Gregory Noga is Pastor. He was a lifelong member of Assumption Parish and was also active in the Men's Club.

The Office of Christian Burial with Divine Liturgy was celebrated on Wednesday, November 5, 2014, at the Assumption of the Virgin Mary Byzantine Catholic Church, Trenton, NJ by Father Gregory Noga, Pastor. Also Concelebrating was Father Edward Cimbala, who preached the homily, Father John Zeyack, Father Gregory Hosler, Deacon Nicholas Dadonna, Deacon Robert Behrens. In attendance were Archpriest James Hayer, Eparchial Protosyncellus, who conveyed a message from Bishop Kurt; Father Edward Higgins, who served as Liturgical Master of Ceremonies; Deacon Basil Soroka, Deacon Steve Russo, Deacon William Tizio, and Deacon Nicholas Sotak. Responses were led by Cantor Drew Skitko.

Eparchial Deacon Reposes in the Lord

Eternal Memory: +Deacon Thomas Vanisko

In his homily, Father Ed Cimbala commented on Deacon Tom's love for his family and his dedication to a life of service and challenged all present to complete the good works to charity and service that Deacon Thomas had begun. Father Gregory Noga, Pastor, expressed condolences on behalf of the parish family and acknowledged the dedication and commitment of Deacon Thomas over the years, which continued even in the face of grave illness.

can escape." Deacon Thomas believed in the words of Jesus at the Mystical Supper when he said, "I am going ahead of you to prepare a place for you." And we know that our brother Thomas is now in that place that Our Lord prepared after His suffering and death on the cross—a place of where there is no pain, sorrow, nor weeping, but rather light, joy, and peace.

Thomas shared with me his faith in God, but other people shared with me some things about Thomas. I learned

all of his children and grandchildren for giving Thomas Vanisko to the Church.

Jesus tells us the story of the master who gives each of his servants different talents, and some use their talents while one buries his. Thomas used the talents that God gave him for the good of others, and last week when Jesus came for his friend Thomas He said to Him, "Well done, good and faithful servant." "Whatever you did for the least of these my brothers you did for me... Come you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world."



Father Ed Cimbala reflects on the life of Deacon Thomas.

In his message to Deacon Thomas' family and friends, Bishop Kurt offered the following remarks:

"What joy is there in life that is not mixed with sorrow? A few weeks ago it was my joy as bishop to meet with one of the deacons of our church, Thomas Vanisko. It was a joy because he was a man of so much faith and virtue. He was unafraid of death because he placed his hope in Almighty God, and not in himself. He was waiting eagerly for the coming of His Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ. In his canticle of the creatures, St. Francis of Assisi thanks God for "Sister Death, whom no man

that he took his role as deacon or servant very seriously. He served the people in his area with his time and money outside of church as well. He drove elderly people to the store and to their medical appointments, and he bought food and other necessities for people without enough money to buy their own. Jesus told us to keep our works of charity secret, and like St. Nicholas, Thomas tried to keep his works of charity secret even from the pastor. He also faithfully visited the sick and home bound in the parish family, taking them the life giving body and blood of Jesus, and comforting them in their loneliness. I thank his mother Anna, his wife JoAnn and

Deacon Thomas was the son of the late Thomas V. Vanisko. He is survived by his wife, JoAnn Vanisko; his two daughters and sons-in-law, Catherine and Oliver Gritz of Bonn, Germany, and Suzanne and Alan Constance of Hamilton; his son and daughter-in-law, Thomas and Katie Vanisko of Hamilton; his mother, Anna Baval Vanisko, and his nine grandchildren, Emma, Ally, and Aidan Constance, Maxmilian, Alexandra, and Justinian Gritz, Jordan and Taylor Guest, and Madison Vanisko. He is also survived by his sister and brother-in-law, Patricia and Jack Hatala of Ellisdale, and his brother and sister-in-law, Raymond and Irene Vanisko of Columbus, along with several nieces, nephews and cousins. He is also survived by his aunts, Sister Theresa Baval, OSBM and Sister Stephanie Baval, OSBM.

Deacon Thomas retired from the State of New Jersey, Department of Health, in 2000, after 37 years of service and remained active in the community and in his parish. Interment follow in the parish cemetery. *May his memory be eternal!*

Vatican Lifts Ban on Married Priests for Eastern Catholics in Diaspora

By Laura Ieraci

VATICAN CITY – The Vatican has lifted its ban on the ordination of married men to the priesthood in Eastern Catholic churches outside their traditional territories, including in the United States, Canada and Australia.

Pope Francis approved lifting the ban, also doing away with the provision that, in exceptional cases, Eastern Catholic bishops in the diaspora could receive Vatican approval to ordain married men. In recent years, however, some Eastern Catholic bishops went ahead with such ordinations discreetly without Vatican approval.

Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, prefect of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, signed the decree June 14. It was published later online in the "Acta Apostolicae Sedis," the official periodical through which Vatican laws and decisions

are published.

The new law says the pope concedes to Eastern Catholic bishops outside their traditional territory the faculties to "allow pastoral service of Eastern married clergy" and "to ordain Eastern married candidates" in their eparchies or dioceses, although they must inform the local Latin-rite bishop in writing "in order to have his opinion and any relevant information."

"We are overjoyed with the lifting of the ban," Melkite Bishop Nicholas Samra of Newton, Mass., told Catholic News Service in a Nov. 15 email.

The Vatican decree explained that in response to the "protests" of the Latin-rite bishops in the United States, in 1890 the Congregation for the

Evangelization of Peoples prohibited married Ruthenian priests from living in the United States. And in 1929-30, the Congregation for Eastern Churches extended the ban to all Eastern-rite priests throughout North America, South America and Australia.

The 1929 prohibition, known as "Cum data fuerit," had significant repercussions for the Eastern Catholic churches in the United States. Cardinal Sandri's decree noted that soon after the law was promulgated, "an estimated 200,000 Ruthenian faithful became Orthodox."

Ruthenian Bishop John Kudrick of Parma, Ohio, told CNS Nov. 16 that he sees the end to im-

Continued on page 10.

PEOPLE YOU KNOW

AROUND THE EPARCHY



SAINT JOHN CHURCH • BAYONNE, NJ RESTORATION PROJECT REACHES NEW HEIGHTS

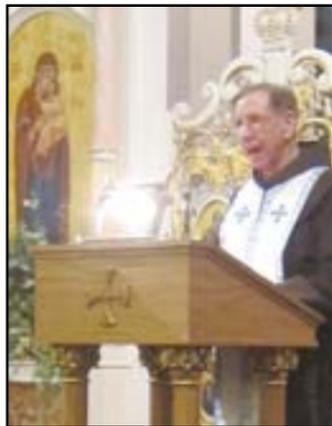


On Sunday, October 29, 2012, fierce winds from Hurricane Sandy ripped the three-bar cross off the dome atop the east tower of Saint John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church in Bayonne, NJ. Nearly two years later, the same cross was repaired and placed, once again, in its proper place - reaching towards the heavens, through the dedicated efforts of contractor Francis Hutta.

Teresa Demjanovich, who was recently beatified. A Divine Liturgy of Thanksgiving was celebrated by Bishop Kurt on the day following her beatification.

Saint John Church was the home parish of Blessed Miriam

Saint John Parish is served by Father Ronald Barusefski.



SAINT MARY CHURCH • WILKES-BARRE, PA CONCLUSION OF PARISH PILGRIMAGE

Every Wednesday evening during the month of October, the parishioners gathered at St. Mary Church in Wilkes-Barre to entrust their special petitions to the Mother of God and to sing the beautiful chants of a different Akathist in her honor.

On the final Wednesday of the month, the pilgrimage ended with a guest speaker and a fellowship social. The guest speaker this year was Father Carmen Scuderi, OFM of the Franciscan Friary in Sybertsville.

Saint Mary Parish is served by Archpriest James Hayer with the assistance of Deacon Edward Frey, Deacon Basil Soroka and the ministry of the Sisters of St. Basil the Great.

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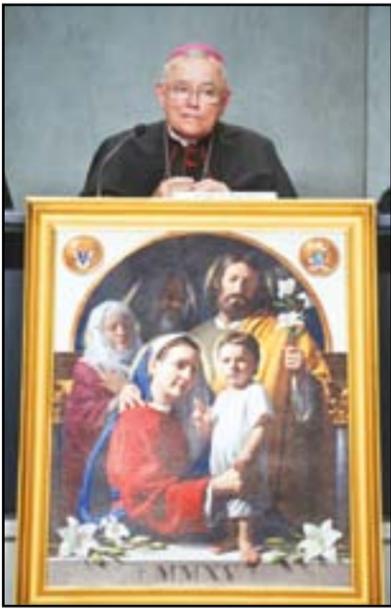
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Archbishop Chaput of Philadelphia pictured in front of official image for World Meeting of Families during Vatican press conference. The image is a portrait of the Holy Family by Philadelphia artist Neilson Carlin. (CNS)

PHILADELPHIA, PA – The city of Philadelphia formally opened its arms to the world as Archbishop Charles J. Chaput of Philadelphia told the U.S. Catholic bishops as registration recently began for the World Meeting of Families next year in the city.

World Meeting of Families to be held in Philadelphia September 22-27, 2015



Father Edward Cimbala has been appointed by Bishop Kurt to be the facilitator in the Eparchy of Passaic for the World meeting of Families. Additional information will soon be available.

With up to 15,000 attendees expected for the gathering of families from around the country and the world Sept. 22-25, 2015, organizers are planning hotel and other accommodations plus a full slate of top speakers and activities for what will be the largest convention for Philadelphia next year.

“The World Meeting of Families will deal with a wide range of family issues where our faith is both needed and tested,” the archbishop said. “These are matters that affect families not only here in the United States but on a global scale.”

Addressing those matters in six keynote speeches and 67 breakout sessions – will be speakers including Cardinal Sean P. O’Malley of Boston, Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle of Manila, Philippines,

and other bishops, priests and religious sisters, plus Helen Alvare, Supreme Knight Carl Anderson and author Scott Hahn.

Archbishop Chaput told the bishops in Baltimore that the meeting’s content will deal not only with “neuralgic sexual issues that seem to dominate the American media,” but also poverty, addiction, children with disabilities, the loss of a spouse, divorce and co-parenting, health and wellness and how these issues affect the family. Other themes such as “creating real intimacy between husband and wife” and the roles of grandparents and the parish community to help deal with the challenges of raising children would also be examined, the archbishop said.

It is also widely expected, though unconfirmed by the Vatican, that Pope Francis will visit Philadelphia for the occasion. “We’re not likely to get an announcement until the turn of the year,” Archbishop Chaput told the bishops. “But we do have many hopeful signs that he does intend to come.” (CNS)

A Letter of Invitation from Archbishop Chaput

Welcome to the World Meeting of Families – Philadelphia 2015! It is an honor to welcome the world to Philadelphia, a city founded as a Holy Experiment and the birthplace of religious freedom in the United States.

Saint John Paul II, hailed as the Pope of the Family, created the World Meeting of Families in 1994 in Rome to explore the critical role the family plays in society and to give families opportunities to talk about the challenges and blessings that all families have.

Our theme, “Love Is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive” was inspired by the early Church Father, St. Irenaeus, who wrote “the Glory of God is man fully

alive.” The glory of men and women is their capacity to love as God loves—and no better means exists to teach the meaning of love than the family. His Holiness, Pope Francis also inspired the theme. He embodies the message of mercy, joy and love at the heart of the Gospel.

I was in Milan for the conclusion of the previous World Meeting of Families and it was a joy to see how it inspired and energized everyone who participated. We are excited to see how this theme will inspire YOU and all that will happen during the week of September 22-27, 2015.

Archbishop Charles J. Chaput

VOCATIONS BBQ IN THE POCONOS

Could God Really Be Calling Me??

By Father Gary Mensinger



“Could God really be calling me?”

This was the question of a few good men, who recently came together at Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church in Pocono Summit, PA. Recently, Bishop Kurt made his wishes known to our Eparchial vocations committee that he would like to have regional events so we can help people try to begin answering this question. That being said, this was one of many more events to come in Pennsylvania and around the Eparchy.

The day started off with a Moleben for an increase of vocations to the diaconate and the priesthood. After the Moleben, Father Gary Mensinger, regional Syncellus and organizer for the day, addressed those in attendance with a talk entitled “If God called me, He could call anyone.” He stressed, in his presentation, that God chose him, a sinner,

who did not know how to sing, speak church Slavonic or, for that matter, was all that holy. But, yet here he was standing here addressing others discerning a vocation some twenty-one

years later, and encouraging them to search out the answer, “Could God really be calling me?”

Father Michael Salnicky then spoke about his own quest trying to



Left to right: Brian Bankovich, Rich Terza, Phil Galasso, Father Gary Mensinger, Bishop Kurt, Father Michael Salnicky, Andrew Girman, Michael Oser (Cook), and George Merenich.

answer the very same question. He shared his story about the path down which God led him, as well as the events that led to the confirmation of his decision to enter the seminary. Following this, everyone sat down to a wonderful meal with Bishop Kurt and had a chance to talk about their own struggles trying to answer this question.

Finally, after the meal, Bishop Kurt, spoke to those in attendance and stressed the importance of the ordained ministry. He noted how special it was to be the reflection of Christ in peoples’ lives in a very specific and special way.

The Vocations BBQ was a special and beautiful event that encouraged those in attendance to have the faith and trust in God to begin their own quest to answer: *Could God really be calling me?*

Bishop's Appeal 2014



"Charity is humility in blossom."

Without humility there can be no charity. This is self evident. The proud person loves neither God nor neighbor, only self ... and it is love, the essence of this life that is ... the expressed will of God.



Blessed Miriam Teresa
on Religious Charity; Greater Perfection



For your convenience, you may use the above QR code to go directly to the online giving page of our Eparchial website, www.EparchyofPassaic.com.

*Your Stewardship Gifts Support
Our Eparchial Programs*
OUR GOAL: \$495,000

TARGETED PARISH REVITALIZATION
Capital improvements and renovations in specific parishes
\$150,000

BIBLES FOR PARISHES
Providing beautiful new bibles to every parish for the people in the pews
\$100,000

ASSISTANCE TO EASTERN EUROPEAN PARISHES
Starting with Bishop Dudick, our Eparchy has fed the seminarians of the Uzhorod Seminary since it was reopened after communism. Bishop Sasik has ordained 154 priests in 11 years, some of whom serve in the Eparchy of Passaic.
\$50,000

DEACON FORMATION
A class of deacons is finishing this year, ready and eager to serve the faithful of Passaic. A new class is organizing now for the next four year program.
\$20,000

EDUCATION OF SEMINARIANS AND PRIESTS
Seminary studies and formation; pastoral training programs; vocations BBQ's and graduate studies. Tuition and room and board for one seminarian is \$22,000 for one year at Sts. Cyril and Methodius Seminary in Pittsburgh.
\$25,000

EASTERN CHRISTIAN FORMATION
Publications, Youth Ministry, Family Enrichment, Catechist and Coordinator Formation
\$25,000

PAROCHIAL SUPPORT
Grants to individual parishes for support, renovation, and maintenance
\$125,000



**BISHOP'S
APPEAL
2014**

“The real beginning of my life, the life of the spirit, occurred five days after my birth according to the flesh. I was baptized and confirmed in the Greek rite on the thirty-first of March, a Sunday, truly a day of resurrection.”
-Blessed Miriam Teresa



BYZANTINE CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF PASSAIC
BISHOP'S APPEAL 2014

Name: _____
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Parish: _____

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Address: _____
Parish: _____

Please remember the Church in your will and estate plans.

- Please send me more information.
- I have already included the Church in my will.

In gratitude to God and to honor my commitment to the Church, I have prayerfully considered my gift to the Eparchy of Passaic this year and faithfully pledge:

PLEDGE AMOUNT		6 MONTHLY PAYMENTS	
<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 500.00	or:	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 83.33 per month	
<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 200.00	or:	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 33.33 per month	
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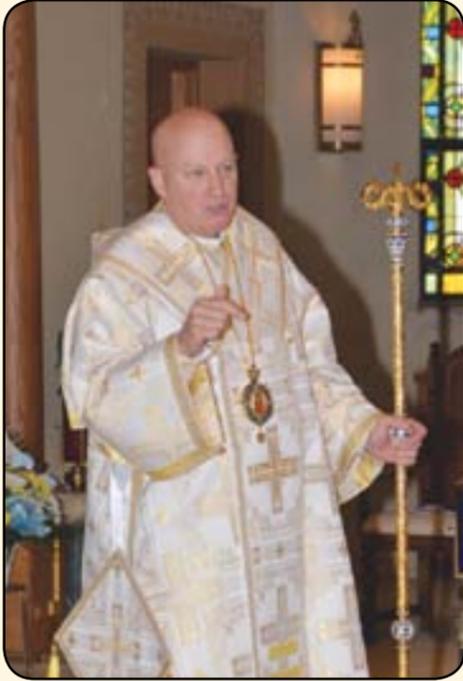
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Celebrating the Beatification

Hierarchical Liturgy of Thanksgiving



Bishop Kurt extols the life of Blessed Miriam Teresa in his homily.

Bishop Thomas Donato, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Newark was also in attendance.



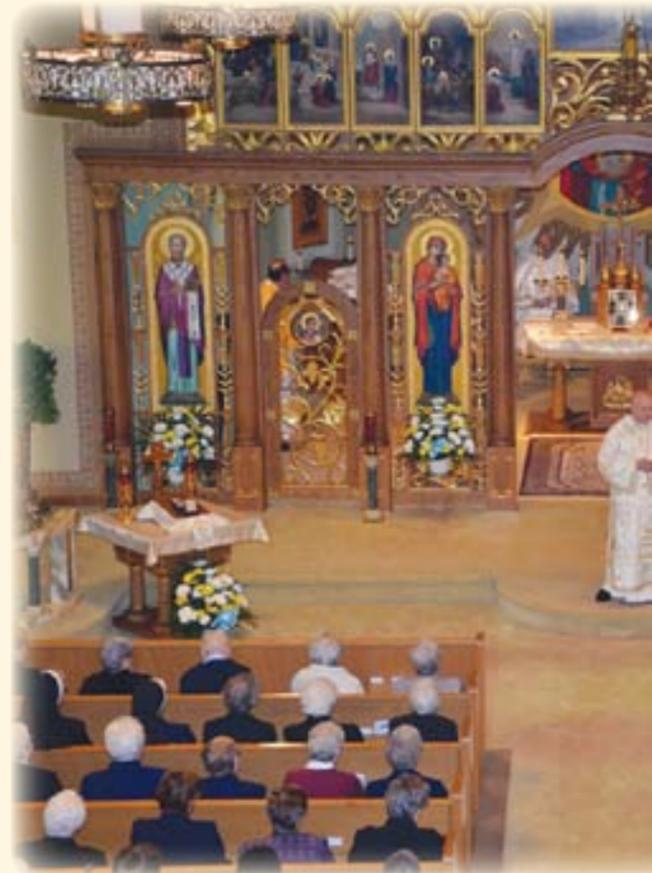
Bishop Kurt, with Bishop Donato and clergy members.

On Sunday, October 5, 2014, a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy of Thanksgiving to celebrate the beatification of Blessed Miriam Teresa Demjanovich was held at the parish of her baptism and chrismation: Saint John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church in Bayonne, NJ. The principal celebrant was Bishop Kurt Burnette, who also served as the homilist for that day. Also in attendance was Bishop Thomas Donato, auxiliary bishop of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Newark.

The concelebrants were Father Marcel Szabo, pastor of the Cathedral of Saint Michael the Archangel, Passaic and regional protopresbyter, Father Ronald Barusefski, pastor of Saint John the Baptist Church, Bayonne and administrator of Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church, Jersey City and Saint George Byzantine Catholic Church, Newark; Father Michael Yurista, in residence at Saint John the Baptist Church, Father Jody Baran, associate pastor of the Cathedral of Saint Michael, and Father Martin Vavrak, pastor of Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church, Perth Amboy. The liturgical master of ceremonies was Father Edward Higgins, protopresbyter of the Southern Pennsylvania Protopresbyterate and pastor of Holy Ghost Byzantine Catholic Church and Holy Trinity Byzantine Catholic Church, Philadelphia, PA. The altar servers of the Cathedral of Saint Michael assisted during the liturgy. Responses were led by parish cantor Kenneth M. Dilks, assisted by area cantors and singers.

Among the overflow crowd of nearly 300 people were Byzantine and Roman Catholic priests and deacons, members of the Sisters of Charity (the order of Blessed Miriam Teresa Demjanovich) and the Sisters of Saint Basil the Great, and Byzantine and Roman Catholic faithful.

In his homily, Bishop Kurt pointed to the golden rule and the precept to love our enemies as living and guiding principles in our Christian lives, but especially in the saintly life of Blessed Miriam Teresa Demjanovich. Bishop Kurt noted that these principles are beautifully summarized in the opening sentence of Blessed Miriam Teresa's uncompleted autobiography which are neither self-serving nor self-describing; rather, she begins with the simple and powerful statement: "Live Jesus forever in our hearts, my Sisters." At the conclusion of the liturgy, a special moleben was offered to Blessed Miriam Teresa seeking her prayerful intercession, and a first class relic was presented for veneration. Immediately following the liturgy, a buffet reception was held in the parish center. The Honorable



Beatification of Blessed Miriam Teresa Demjanovich

Thanksgiving · St. John Byzantine Catholic Church, Bayonne, NJ



...rgy, servers, and religious in attendance.



Father Ronald Barusefski, Pastor of Saint John Church, chants the Gospel during the Divine Liturgy of Thanksgiving for the Beatification of Blessed Miriam Teresa Demjanovich.

Jim Davis, mayor of Bayonne, presented a proclamation which declared October 5, 2014 "Blessed Miriam Teresa Demjanovich Day" in Bayonne.

cess is the acceptance of the *Positio Super Virtutibus* (Her heroic virtues and holiness). This has been approved by the theologians and ordinaries (Bishops and Cardinals). Her name was submitted to the prefect of the Congregation of Saints who then gave her name to Pope Benedict XVI.

Teresa Demjanovich was born in Bayonne, New Jersey in 1901, the youngest of seven children of Alexander and Johanna (Suchy) Demjanovich, Ruthenian immigrants to the United States from what is now Eastern Slovakia. Teresa received Baptism, Confirmation, and her First Holy Communion at Saint John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church, Bayonne, NJ in the Byzantine-Ruthenian rite of her parents. After attending Bayonne public schools Teresa entered the College of Saint Elizabeth in Convent Station, New Jersey. She was graduated with highest honors in 1923. Two years later, in 1925, she entered the community of Sisters of Charity at Convent Station. After profession of vows as a Sister of Charity, Teresa died in Saint Elizabeth Hospital, Elizabeth, New Jersey in 1927. She was 26 years of age.

On May 10, 2012, Pope Benedict XVI decreed that Sister Miriam Teresa Demjanovich, SC, was of heroic virtue and can now be called *Venerable*. The second part of the beatification process, the *Positio Super Miro* (a miraculous cure) can only be considered after the acceptance of the *Positio Super Virtutibus*. The case is one of a young boy who was declared legally blind due to bilateral macular degeneration. Through the intercession of Sister Miriam Teresa, his sight was restored. On December 17, 2013 a panel of Cardinals and Bishops agreed that the cause of the blind child has been accomplished through the intercession of Sister Miriam Teresa. On that same day, Pope Francis declared this an authentic miracle. Sister Miriam Teresa was declared Blessed at a Liturgy held on October 4, 2014 at Sacred Heart Basilica in Newark, NJ.

She is being considered for Saint-hood by the Catholic Church because of her saintly life, her striving for perfection in her religious life, her spiritual writings, the mystical privileges accorded her by God during life and the favors received by others after her death through her intercession with God, the Sisters of Charity petitioned Rome for permission to open her Cause for Beatification and Canonization. The first half of the beatification pro-



Mayor Jim Davis reading the proclamation declaring "Blessed Miriam Teresa Day" in Bayonne.





At the Right Place at the Right Time

Priest Called to Baptize while on Vacation

Father Joseph Bertha was in the right place at the right time! Baby Ilya Pukachev was born in Bushtino, Ukraine in early September. At the same time, Father Joseph Bertha, Pastor of Saint John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church in Trumbull, CT, was visiting with his Great Aunt Yolanda in Nyriedyhaza, Hungary, which is just across the border from Ukraine. Baby Ilya's father, Vitaly, contacted Father Bertha and invited him to celebrate the Holy Mysteries of Initiation for his new-born son.

The Baptism/Chrismation took place on Sunday, September 14th in the parish church in Bushtino, Ukraine. Vitaly, the proud father has finished his seminary training and is anxiously awaiting ordination and his assignment. May God grant to baby Ilya, his parents and family, many happy and blessed years!



Married Priests

Continued from page 3.

posed celibacy for Eastern priests in the diaspora as an acknowledgement of the Eastern churches' "obligation to maintain their integrity" and "of the right of the various churches to equal responsibility of evangelization throughout the world."

"The world needs the church in its fullness," he said, adding he believes the "change of policy results from the longstanding experience of married priests in the Western world, especially the Orthodox, but also Eastern Catholic."

Bishop Kudrick said Eastern churches in the diaspora have a responsibility to minister to new immigrants, who are accustomed to married priests.

"Because of the dual responsibilities to maintain continuity with our past and to reach out to the society to which we are called, some degree of freedom is necessary," he said.

Father Alexander Laschuk, a canon lawyer, said the new decree also "regularizes a situation" in which

some Eastern married men were being ordained despite the 1929 law. Father Laschuk is a Ukrainian Catholic married priest and university lecturer, who also works for the regional tribunal of the Archdiocese of Toronto.

In the 1970s and 1980s, in an attempt to circumvent the Vatican restriction, some Eastern Catholic married men were ordained clandestinely outside North America. Many of them received suspension notices from the Holy See, he said.

By the mid-1990s, Ukrainian Catholic bishops were ordaining married men in Canada, he said, and the suspension notices eventually stopped coming. Such ordinations, though few, were even less frequent in the United States.

Still, Father Laschuk said, the ordinations did not represent a "regular" situation in the church. "It was something that was happening. I wouldn't even say that it was tolerated," he said. "It was happening underground. The Holy See and the Latin bishops were being informed after the fact because I think it was understood that if they were told be-

fore, permission would not be coming and it would be stopped."

The *modus operandi* was that "it was better to ask for forgiveness than to ask for permission," he said.

"From a canonical point of view, the new legislation puts into universal law the possibility of (Eastern Catholic) married men being ordained throughout the world," Father Laschuk said, with the full faculty to ordain granted to each Eastern Catholic ordinary within his diocese.

Jesuit Father Brian Daley, a longtime member of the North American Catholic-Orthodox Theological Consultation, said he expects the new legislation will have a "very positive" impact on ecumenical relations. For many Eastern Catholics and Orthodox, he said, the ban "has been a wound and a source of resentment."

Consultation members had issued a statement June 6 urging an end to the ban, which was experienced as an injustice among Eastern Catholics. Among the Orthodox, the ban created mistrust toward the Catholic Church and a sense that

their tradition would not be respected in the event of full communion between the two churches, he explained.

"It's really important that this has finally been cleared up. It is one more divisive issue that has been taken away," said Father Daley, a theology professor at Notre Dame University in Indiana.

"It's good news for everybody in the Catholic Church, both East and West," he added. "Vatican II called for the church to respect the ancient traditions of the Eastern churches. It was true in principle but not in practice."

Father Laschuk said he also hopes the new legislation will create a culture in the church in North America, in which married clergy are more welcome.

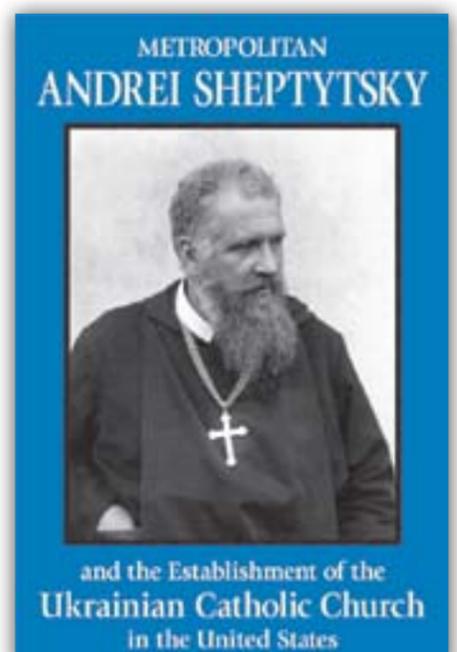
"Previously, there were cases where married priests were not treated fully as priests, as if they were somewhat less," he said. "I hope this will grant them greater respect, now that the Holy Father has approved it." (CNS)

New Book Available

This book by Father Ivan Kaszczak describes the beginning of the Ruthenian Greek Catholic Church in America from 1870s until about 1924. Metropolitan Sheptytsky was most responsible for the establishment of what would later be called the Ruthenian and Ukrainian Catholic Churches. The book contains 88 historical photographs.

The cost is \$20, plus \$5 for shipping and handling.

Books may be ordered by calling or writing to:
 Father Ivan Kaszczak · Holy Trinity Ukrainian Church
 211 Foordmore Road · Kerhonkson, NY 12446
 or call: 845-626-2864 email: kasivan@aol.com



60th Dormition Pilgrimage

Sloatsburg, NY



The procession for the celebration of the Akathist.

The Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate thank all of the Hierarchy, priests, religious and pilgrims who attended the 60th Dormition Pilgrimage on August 9th and 10th which numbered around 3,400 people. God blessed the pilgrimage with beautiful weather and many graces. It was an inspiring scene to witness 28 priests hearing confession with pilgrims waiting patiently in long lines. This year's theme: "The Holy Family is the Guide for the Evangelization of our Families: *Joy Ever New, A Joy Which is Shared*" (Pope Francis),



Bishop Kurt blesses the water.

was prevalent in the informative and spiritually motivating conferences as well as in the homilies and children's programs. Special highlights for the pilgrimage this year were: the Exhibit and Presentation of "The Church of

the Catacombs in the 20th Century" presented by Saint Sophia Religious Association of Ukrainian Catholics in Philadelphia and the children of "Mothers of Prayer" from Saint Michael Ukrainian Catholic Church in Yonkers, NY beautifully sang hymns to the Mother of God during the healing services.

On Saturday, the 60th Dormition pilgrimage began with the celebration of the Akafist to the Mother of God celebrated by Father Jack Custer, Pastor of Resurrection Byzantine Catholic Church in Smithtown, NY and Saint Andrew Church in Westbury, NY. Sister Kathleen Hutsko, Provincial Superior, welcomed the pilgrims at the Saturday 5:00 PM Divine Liturgy celebrated at the Grotto by Father Basil Hutsko. In the evening, clergy, sisters and pilgrims processed with candles to the Grotto to celebrate the Moleben to the Mother of God. Bishop Kurt Burnette, Bishop of Passaic, celebrated the moleben to the Mother of God. In his homily, Bishop Kurt used the symbol of the 7 branched candelabrum to comprehensively define the 7 virtues and vices and summarize that Mary, the Mother of God is the antidote for sin and the model of virtue.



Bishop Kurt and Deacon Nicholas Dadonna in procession.



Father Basil Hutsko preaches to the pilgrims.

On Sunday, a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy was celebrated by Metropolitan Archbishop Stefan Soroka, Bishop Paul Chomnycky, Bishop-Emeritus Basil Losten and Bishop-Elect Bohdan Danylo. Archbishop Stefan's captivating homily focused on evangelization and Pope Francis' message of the joy of the Gospel. "We are all called to be evangelizers through our smile, the time we give to others; Pope Francis calls us to share that joy with others". In concluding, Archbishop Stefan said that Evangelization also has to do with promoting vocations to the priesthood and religious life. "Look around at all that the sisters have provided for us today; if we are not going to support our religious through vocations and financially, in a few years, there will no longer be sisters in our church."



Deacon Nicholas Dadonna incenses around the water font prior to the Sanctification of the Water.

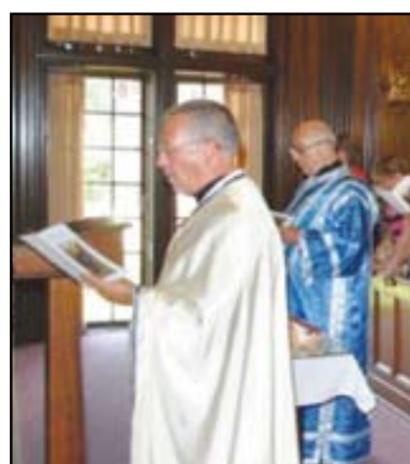
At 3:00 pm, Bishop Paul celebrated the Moleben to the Mother of God. In his homily, Bishop Paul spoke about the Ukrainian Catholic Church marking the 25th year of its emergence from the catacombs, after almost a half century of persecution in Ukraine. "One of my favorite places to visit in Kyiv is Saint Sofia Cathedral. As I look at the beautiful mosaic of the Mother of God (Oranta), with her outstretched arms



Sister Kathleen Hutsko, Provincial Superior, addresses the pilgrims.

in prayer to God I think of the difficult history of Ukraine and how - through everything - the Mother of God has always covered our people with her powerful omphor."

The Sisters Servants extend their sincere gratitude to all of the lay associates, parishioners from various parishes, and those from the town of Sloatsburg for their making pyrohy, holubchi, cleaning, setting up and all



Father Jack Custer leads the Akathist.



Sister Regina Adams (right) with Sister Albina, SSMI.



UNDERSTANDING ICONS

Father Joseph Bertha, Ph.D.

The Guadalupe Image of the Theotokos · December 12

On December 12th we liturgically commemorate the creation of the Guadalupe Virgin miraculous image not made by human hands. This image of the Theotokos appeared on Saint Juan Diego's tilma as Castillian roses tumbled out before the Franciscan Administrator Bishop of Mexico City on 12 December 1531, and is displayed in the Basilica to this very day. The sophisticated iconography of this image has not been adequately studied. In this article we will look closely at the meaning of the iconography of this image of Our Lady of the Americas, painted without human hands.

The Mother of God is depicted as an Aztec princess dressed in a teal colored mantle (maphorion), studded with forty six eight pointed stars, edged in gold. These stars correspond in arrangement with the constellations as they appear over the night sky in Mexico City on December 12th. She wears a rose colored damask tunic embroidered with gold flowers, tied at her waist, she is shown with child. The Virgin's left foot is poised as if ready to dance in a procession of joy, only two weeks away from giving birth on December 25th to the Savior of the world.

Her face and body are slightly orientated to the right, her parted brown hair appears as her glance is directed downward, her eyes are slightly opened. Her hands are clasped together palm to palm in a gesture of prayer. She is standing on a quarter moon supported by winged cherub whose arms are outspread. Many golden rays like so many tongues of fire radiate outward from her and form a body halo mandorla.

The audience for the image: at first was the Apostolic Administrator of Mexico, and Juan Diego, eventually as the image was displayed thousands viewed this image and were evangelized into the faith through their viewing and personal contact with this image.

One of the striking characteristics overlooked by viewers of this image is that the Virgin is shown as indigenous, an Aztec native to Mexico. What an important lesson for evangelizers to learn power of the evangelization by images the Virgin appears and speaks to Juan Diego in the

local language, and she appears as a local!

What is puzzling, however, is why we haven't further delved into the complex iconography and derived a policy for evangelization for other nations of the world. This image was and still is such



an important tool and resource in the evangelization of the world. What an under used instrument for evangelization!

The Guadalupe image has Baroque style contemporary with Spanish painting of the 16th cen-

tury. Some typical characteristics of the Baroque include: elaborate patterned garments of those depicted, dramatic lighting and highlighting, and perhaps most interesting emphasis on Catholic dogmas and doctrines to counter the Protestant reformers! All of these qualities are on display in the Guadalupe image.

Curiously, this was a time when images in Europe were under attack, and Iconoclasm ruled. How interesting that in the New World, which was being conquered by the Spanish in their conquest for gold, that the Virgin would appear to an Aztec lay person and inspire them to follow Christianity.

The image stylistically is linked to sixteenth century of the period Immaculate Conception images which show the Virgin usually unveiled, trampling on the moon, with the rays of sun radiating from her head. This iconography is linked to the liturgical celebration of the feast of the Immaculate Conception, which commemorates the Conception of Saint Ann (and Saint Joachim) of the Virgin Mary. The Guadalupe Virgin replicates almost exactly all of this Spanish iconography, except for the veiling of the Virgin Mary. Somewhat confusingly artists selected this image of the young Virgin Mary to illustrate her Immaculate Conception. This image is derived from the verse of the Apocalypse 12, which describes a Woman clothed with the sun, and is one of the Roman Church readings for the Liturgy of the Hours for this feast day.

It seems that the many texts written about this Guadalupe image of the Virgin are fascinated only with its actual historicity. As believers we need to put all of this aside. We need to concentrate on the iconography and its meaning. We need to understand how the Holy Mother evangelizes this world and those who dwell within it. She appears to a local native, speaks to him in his language, and promises her maternal protection. We too like Juan Diego, need to make ourselves present to the Holy Mother in prayer to beseech her to continue to protect, guard all human life. She who brings into this world on Christmas Day, the Light, Jesus Christ, God the Father's great Gift of Mercy.

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HOLIDAY REFLECTIONS

Msgr. John T. Sekellick, JCL



THE TIME OF PRE-CHRISTMAS

As the solemn Feast of the Holy birth of our Savior comes into prominent focus these few short weeks, our Church calls our attention to the site of His nativity with this hymn: "Bethlehem, make ready. Eden has been opened for all. Ephrata, prepare yourself; for the Tree of Life has blossomed from the Virgin in the cave. Her womb has become a spiritual paradise in which divinity was planted. If we partake of it, we shall live and not die like Adam. Christ is born to raise up the likeness that had fallen." (Troparion, Pre-festive)

At the time of Jesus' birth, Bethlehem was a small and politically insignificant village. It was important, however, because of the message proclaimed by the prophet Micha who connected it with a future time of peace under a royal deliverer from King David's line: "But you, O Bethlehem-Ephrathah, too small to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be the ruler of Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days." (5:2)

The city itself is situated about five miles south of Jerusalem. Today, Bethlehem numbers about 25,000 inhabitants of whom only some 40% are Christians who remain there after recent political turmoil. Muslims

are in the majority. The economy primarily is tourist-driven. During the second century A.D. it was destroyed by the Roman Emperor Hadrian because of a major political revolt but rebuilt by the Empress Helen, mother of Constantine the



Great, who commissioned the construction of the great church of the Nativity in 327 A.D. In 529 during a Samaritan revolt the church was severely damaged. A century later, Emperor Justinian had it rebuilt in very much its present form.

Bethlehem is mentioned in both the Gospels of Saints Matthew and

Luke. The narratives of Jesus' birth found in their Gospels are among our most cherished accounts from the life of Christ. In Luke, Joseph and Mary travel to Bethlehem from Nazareth for a census under the governor of Syria, Quirinius. Matthew



makes no mention of such a census. Traveling by foot would have been arduous. Tradition holds that Mary who was pregnant and near the time for child birth, rode on the back of a donkey. Because of this, a timeless legend explains why a cross can often be found on a donkey's back.

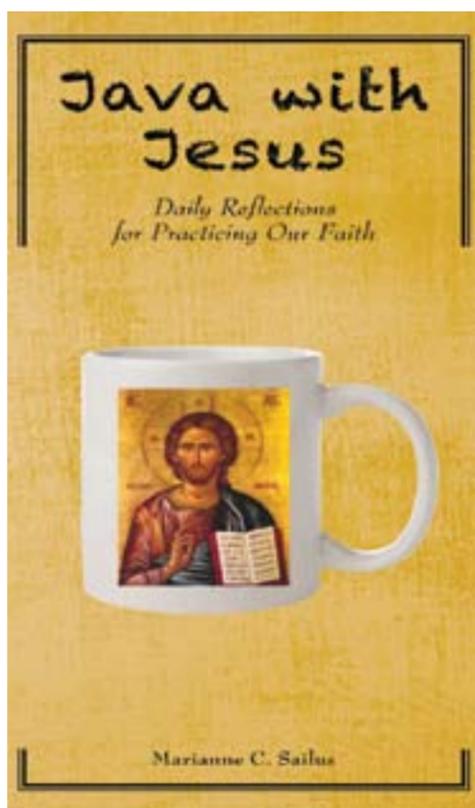
Its old Hebrew name beth

lehem, meaning "house of bread", has survived through the ages down to our own time. It is situated in a beautiful setting at an altitude of about a half mile. The land of Moab can be seen in the southeast, a detail from the inspiring story of Ruth. Numerous caves can be found in the area which were often used as stables; hence Jesus' birth in a cave would not have been unusual since there was no longer room in the local inn (cf. Luke 2:7). Our cherished Slavic carol, V Viflejemi Novina, extols this in a verse: "In a cave at Bethlehem, bed of straw His royal throne, Mary wondered, Joseph pondered how the Child was Son of God, the Savior." Among the well-known carols of Christmas, O Little Town of Bethlehem composed by Rev. Phillips Brooks and L. H. Redner, are found the inspiring lines, "In thy dark streets shineth the everlasting Light. The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight."

As we travel these few weeks with Mary and Joseph on the road to Bethlehem, may the blessings of the great joy and unconditional love of our heavenly Father in sending His Son bring us abiding peace and abundant happiness at Christmas and through the New Year.

Java with Jesus

BOOK OF DAILY MEDITATIONS FOR THE HOLIDAYS, HOLYDAYS AND EVERYDAY!



Java with Jesus, by Marianne Sailus, is a book of daily reflections by the author for practicing our faith. It covers a wide range of topics related to feasts, saints, and the liturgical cycle of the Byzantine Churches. It is the first of a trilogy of daily reflections, one for each day of the year, with suggested readings for meditation. 400 pages with a color icon for each month. \$30.00.

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A Day of Spirituality Benedictine Sisters Monastery of Warren, OH December 13, 2014

The Benedictine Sisters of the Byzantine Church at Queen of Heaven Monastery, Warren, Ohio, are offering a Day of Spirituality on Saturday, December 13, 2014, from 1:00 P.M. to 4:30 P.M. It will be held at Saints Peter and Paul Parish Center at 180 Belvedere Ave., N.E., Warren, OH.

To register, please call 330-856-1813 or e-mail qohm@netdotcom.com by Monday, December 8, 2014.

The presenter will be Reverend Christiaan Kappes, Professor of Liturgy and Patristics at Saints Cyril and Methodius Seminary in Pittsburgh, PA. His topic will explain the relationship of the Theotokos (Mother of God) to the Holy Eucharist and how this knowledge could transform us. There will be time for reflection, questions, and refreshments, and an opportunity to receive the Mystery (Sacrament) of Reconciliation. You are welcome to pray Vespers with the sisters.



FAITH AND COMMUNITY ISSUES

By Father Carmen Scuderi, OFM, Ed.D., P.C.C.

Women in the Family and Church

THE RIGHTS AND ROLE OF WOMEN

What place do women hold within the context of the family community? In the light of the women's rights movements this question has become central in the church. *Familiaris Consortio* begins this consideration with the understanding that the family is the place where within the context of a loving and supportive environment the individual is seen and respected as a person, whose dignity as an image of God is to be held in high esteem.

This vision is supported by the Synod Fathers who list as a moral criterion the fostering of the individual person's vocation and identity fulfilling their purpose as sincere, self-giving beings. The Synod Fathers made an especial point of emphasis the equality of dignity that exists between men and women, particularly regarding both their rights and role in family and society no less than men children or the elderly, each in their unique role as family members within the greater context of society.

The Fathers also strongly emphasize the equality in responsibility that women share with men as well as dignity which is realized in the mu-

tual self-giving found within the family context both to one another as spouses and to the children as parents. The Synod Fathers see this reality, intuited by the human mind through experience to be revealed in its fullness within the very Word of God itself, the context of Salvation history testifies to the dignity of the very nature of women a history that is both continuous and luminous.

The Fathers in addressing the inherent dignity of women cite the creation story of Genesis as the biblical foundation wherein the rights and dignity of man and women are fundamentally defined. In the words of the document:

In creating the human race "male and female,"(64) God gives man and woman an equal personal dignity, endowing them with the inalienable rights and responsibilities proper to the human person. God then manifests the dignity of women in the highest form possible, by assuming human flesh from the Virgin Mary, whom the Church honors as the Mother of God, calling her the new Eve and presenting her as the model of redeemed woman. The sensitive respect of Jesus towards the women that He called to His

following and His friendship, His appearing on Easter morning to a woman before the other disciples, the mission entrusted to women to carry the good news of the Resurrection to the apostles—these are all signs that confirm the special esteem of the Lord Jesus for women. The Apostle Paul will say: "In Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith.... There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."(*Familiaris Consortio*, 1981, §22).

The Role of Women in Society

How does society define the role of the women? The Synodal Fathers question whether or not the role of the women in society is limited solely to that of wife and homemaker. The Father's response is direct:

There is no doubt that the equal dignity and responsibility of men and women fully justifies women's access to public functions. On the other hand the true advancement of women requires that clear recognition be given to the value of their maternal and family role, by comparison with all other public roles and all other professions. Furthermore, these roles and professions should be harmoniously combined, if we wish the evolution of society and culture to be truly and fully human (*Familiaris Consortio*, 1981 §23).

The Synodal Fathers admit to a need to develop a deeper "theology of work" (§23) so that a proper context is developed regarding the relationship of home, office and family. These relationships can be harmoniously combined for the mutual benefit of all. The Fathers suggest as a starting point the recognition of the women's role in the home setting as irreplaceable and fundamental to properly setting the context of the women's role in society and family today. The specifics of these points will be approached in the next installment.

"My Beloved"
Matthew 3:17

Before we are married or single, rich or poor, young or old, we are "beloved".

Knowing this affects everything we say, do, and believe about ourselves. Join your fellow young adults for a weekend of skiing, praying, relaxing, community and discussion about how our Byzantine Catholic faith reveals our relationship with God, ourselves, and each other.

Who: Byzantine Catholic Young Adults aged 18-35.
What: Ski (or lodge-lounging) retreat.
When: January 2-5, 2015.
Where: Rocky Mountains outside Denver, CO.

Register at www.holyprotection.org

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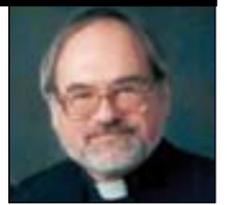
One of the most moving experiences for any Christian visitor to Rome is a visit to the catacombs. Here one is in the physical presence of the burial places of the first followers of Christ, who were often persecuted for their faith. Even more moving are the images (true pictures of faith) that were painted on the walls of these underground caves where the bodies of the faithful, who hoped for resurrection, were buried. You feel as you are standing on holy ground, that contains the energy of faith until this present day.

When I was a newly-ordained priest, in the Fall of 1967, I returned to Rome to begin my studies in Liturgy. One of the first things I did was to celebrate the Divine Liturgy in the Catacombs of Priscilla, one of the best preserved in Rome. As I prayed the Liturgy, before me on the wall of the catacomb was an ancient icon of the prophet Jonah being thrown out of the belly of the "great dish," sometimes called a "whale." It actually looked more like a big green dragon! Images of the Prophet Jonah can be found in almost every catacomb in Rome, because it was revered by the early faithful as a prophecy of the Resurrection of Christ, and, therefore, of our own resurrections.

The meaning of Resurrection was given to the story of Jonah by Jesus Himself. When the people demanded more and more miracles from Him, Jesus responded, "An evil and unfaithful generation seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it except the sign of Jonah the prophet." (Matthew 12:39)

THE BYZANTINE LITURGY

By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD



The Sign of Jonah

He immediately explained that this was a sign of His resurrection, "Just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights." (Matthew 12:40) The meaning of the prophecy is very clear, though it must be understood in broad terms, since Jesus rose in the second night. The church fathers consistently referred to the Resurrection as the sign of Jonah, for it was clearly about his burial in a tomb. The story of Jonah is that he tried to escape prophesying by taking a boat away from Niniveh, a great city in the Middle East, to which he was called to preach repentance. When a great storm arose, he sacrificed himself to save his fellow travelers. Thrown overboard, "... the Lord sent a great fish to swallow Jonah, and he remained in the belly of the fish three days and three nights." (Jonah 2:1) However, the Lord rescued him and "commanded the fish to vomit Jonah upon dry land." (Jonah 2:11) The sign of Jonah was more than just the resurrection. He was to fulfill his mission to preach repentance to the people of Nineveh. Jesus said, "Just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation." (Luke 11:30) The story may have made some people very uncomfortable, since the Ninevites were Gentiles and not of the chosen race. This, too, might be a sign to us, that God loves and saves those who are "not ours."

The story of Jonah as a sign of the resurrection is heightened by the canticle that Jonah is depicted as singing in the belly of the great fish, "From the womb of Hades I cried for help, and you heard my voice" and "you brought my life up from the pit, O Lord, my God." (Jonah 2:3.7) Christ likewise descended into Hades, the kingdom of death, and there destroyed the power of death, and arose on the third day. For all this, though, Jesus was not like Jonah. Jonah was a very reluctant prophet. He tried to escape his mission, because he was actually afraid of success. God, in His mercy, would have saved the people of Niniveh and Jonah would have been embarrassed. God had to correct Jonah, "Should I not be concerned over the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot know their right hand from their left, not to mention all

the animals?" (Jonah 4:11) Besides being a parable of the resurrection, the story of Jonah was about God's universal salvation and His merciful loving kindness, which are, of course, a part of resurrection. Yet the reluctant Jonah did complete his mission, and he is perhaps like the son commended by Jesus who at first said he would not go into his father's vineyard, but later changed his mind and went. (Matthew 21:28- 32) Jesus said that this son did his father's will. As an image of the Resurrection, the whole prophecy of Jonah, all four chapters, is traditionally read at the Paschal Vigil Liturgy.

The story of Jonah is a very enchanting tale of a real human being with all of his strengths and weaknesses. Because of the fantastic elements of the story, most modern Scripture scholars do not think it happened historically. However, as Jesus' parables, it is not necessary to accept it as an actual event to still accept it as a true sign of the resurrection. The book itself gives very few indications of Jonah's history, except to say that he was the son of Amittai. The historical book, 2 Kings, refers to Jonah, "... as the Lord, the God of Israel, had foretold through his servant, the prophet Jonah, son of Amittai, from Gath-hepher." (2 Kings 14:25) Gath-Hepher was a town five miles north of Nazareth. Today it is called Mashad, which means "the grave of a holy man," and there is still a tomb there which is said to be Jonah's burial site. The prophet Jonah's feast day on the church's calendar is September 22. In the life of the prophet read on this day in the Synaxarion, he is identified as the son of the widow of Zarephath who was raised from the dead by the great prophet Elijah. The reason for this attribution is probably because Jonah was always thought to be a sign of resurrection. The Orthodox Study Bible (p. 1020), without citing the source, gives a hymn about Jonah that very neatly summarizes the meaning of his story for our faith: "Jonah was enclosed but not held fast in the belly of the whale; for, serving as a figure of you who were buried in the tomb, he leapt forth from the monster as from a bridal chamber and he called out to the watch: O you who keep guard falsely and in vain, you have forsaken your own mercy."

International Christmas Dinner in Scranton December 11, 2014

Saint Mary's Byzantine Center,
320 Mifflin Ave., Scranton, PA is having their
International Dinner Club, Christmas Menu
on Thursday, December 11, 2014.

Seatings are at 5:30 and 6:30pm.

Please confirm reservations by:
Friday, Dec. 5, 2014 at 570-343-5151.

The menu will start with Cranberry and Poached Pear Salad with bleu cheese & orange vinaigrette and the entrée will be Roast Pork Tenderloin with a sausage cornbread & sage stuffing topped with a Shiraz demi-glaze, Mashed Sweet Potatoes with grilled pineapple and brown sugar, Sautéed Cauliflower & Broccoli Medley with Julienne roasted peppers. The dessert will be Mincemeat Pie drizzled with Crème Anglaise. Coffee, Tea, Soda and Water are included and a cash bar is available. The cost is only \$20.00 per person.



SEMINARIAN REFLECTIONS

Subdeacon Lewis Rabayda

“The Divine Birth, a Humble Act of Unconditional Love”

Our Western culture dictates much of our lives, and yes, we are western people who live in a western country. But our theology, the way in which we encounter Christ and how we think about God is Eastern (Middle Eastern of course). And there may be a slight risk in dwelling too much on the cute baby Jesus that we celebrate at the Feast of the Nativity. What I mean by cute, is not so much the physicality of a baby, but the way in which He is spoken about in the popular Christmas songs. Yes, these songs give joy to those who sing and hear them, and they are right to do so, for it is indeed a joyous season. But it is also a season filled with great wonder, great puzzlement at how God, the incomprehensible one, the creator of matter and the universe, how He condescended Himself to become part of His own creation and adhere to the laws of its nature.

God condescended Himself. This term is not often thought of as a good trait and usually is used to expose someone’s arrogance or haughtiness. But in the texts of our church, and indeed in our theology, this is the language that is used. But it is not said that God condescended Himself because He felt He was too good to be part of us, but we say that about Him to keep appropriate boundaries from the greatness that is God, and the sinfulness that is us. God is our creator, and He did not have to become one of us to show us His love, but He did. He brought Himself down to our level, He, the incomprehensible Good One, showed His great love and humility by allowing Himself to be subject to the physical world which He created. This indeed is one of the greatest acts of love, not a love of fleeting emotion, or simple affection, but *ἀγάπη* (agape), unconditional love. The Feast of the Nativity is a celebration of God loving us to much that He allowed Himself to become a vulnerable child of flesh, so that He could lead His people to salvation and give them a means for forgiveness and for a greater communion with their God.

Theotokos, the God-bearer virgin. Mary is our example of pure human love, for she is ever-pure and was chosen by God to be the vessel through which He would enter the world. Mary is the best example of following God’s commands who shows us how to say yes to the difficult way of life expressed as living in holiness. Mary did not have to accept

this task, indeed this great burden of responsibility, but she did by saying, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word” —Luke 1:38. Through Mary’s humility to accept the social shame of a pre-marital pregnancy, she mimics God’s humility of acceptance to become a man.

But the special place Mary holds in the birth of Jesus is also something so wondrous that it almost cannot be comprehended. I’m sure each mother would have difficulty knowing that the child inside of her is indeed the God who created us all. What a terrifying experience!? What pressure to know that the child you will give birth to is completely human and completely divine. In the stichera of vespers Mary is saying, “I cannot understand the mystery of your immeasurable lowliness. For the smallest of caves is a strange dwelling for You; yet it finds room for You within itself.”

Indeed, the Christmas hymns of the post-Reformation and Enlightenment do not speak of finding room within ourselves for Jesus. Jesus is the Divine One who ultimately, through His own act of humility, would allow Himself to be crucified so that we have a path to salvation and that our sins would be forgiven. And now the question arises, to what level have we humbled ourselves to allow Christ to enter in? It can be that we are so full of ourselves in many different ways, that there is no room for Christ. But luckily, we have the great gift of the Apostle Philip’s Fast to prepare ourselves for the great Feast of the Nativity of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ. As we have seen in these examples of great acts from both God and Man, humility is a necessary action in order for us to accomplish the holy works of God, in order for us to have a real effect on the world in which we live. God condescended Himself to become man so He could offer a way of salvation to man. Mary humbled herself to accept the difficult task of being the Mother of God. And Jesus humbled Himself to unjustly be tortured and crucified to show us the way to true selflessness. We too, during this fast, can empty ourselves of passions and vices through fasting, prayer, and almsgiving to allow God to enter in the void and to fill us with His *ἀγάπη* unconditional love.

Upcoming Events for December

Christ is Born!
Glorify Him!

Eparchial and Parish Events

DECEMBER

6 Feast of St. Nicholas of Myra
Solemn Holy Day

8 Feast of the Maternity of St. Anna
Solemn Holy Day · Chancery Closed

14 Sunday of the Forefathers

21 Sunday of the Ancestors

24 Vigil of Christmas · *Chancery Closed*

25 Christmas Day
Chancery Closed

26 Synaxis of the Theotokos
Solemn Holy Day · Chancery Closed

27 Feast of St. Stephen the Protomartyr
Simple Holy Day

28 Sunday After Christmas
Commemorating David, Joseph, and James

31 New Years Eve

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