



WHY DO YOU SEEK THE LIVING AMONG THE DEAD?

Pastoral Reflections of Bishop Kurt

“Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.” With these dramatic words, the angels announced the Resurrection of Jesus for the first time in history to these women who came on that first Easter Sunday to perform an act of kindness for their crucified Lord. The eye witness testimony in the four Gospels is quite variegated, but all four Gospels agree that the first witnesses to the Resurrection, and the first to tell the Apostles the good news, were women. To this day, most Christians first receive their faith from their mothers or grandmothers, although in this era, more and more people come to the faith as adults. In the early Church many of the great conversions were brought about by brave women, who risked their social standing and even their lives to share their faith in Jesus Christ.

After the apostles received the Good News from these women, and then saw and heard Jesus for themselves, “He opened their mind to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in His name to all nations beginning from Jerusalem.” Throughout all four gospels, and the rest of the New Testament, the suffering and death and resurrection is described as the fulfillment of the Scriptures. It might seem to those of us who live after the Resurrection, that the prophecies were only for those in ancient times who were waiting for the Messiah to come. But even Our Lord spent His short time between the Resurrection and the Ascension

illuminating the Scriptures, as He says explicitly, “everything written about me in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled”. As you just read, even when Jesus is telling them that “repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in His name to

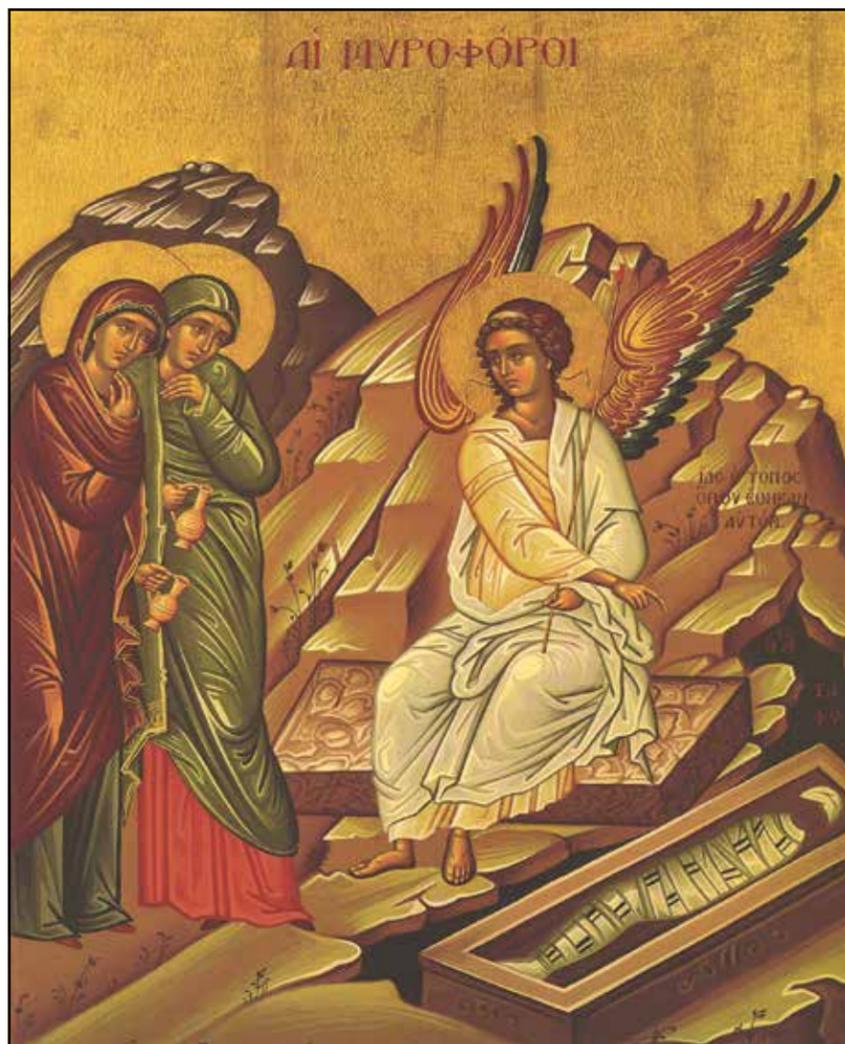
tance and forgiveness of sins as Jesus commanded beginning in Jerusalem, Saint Peter used no less than three different prophecies in his very short sermon, first from the awesome description of the Day of Lord by the Prophet Joel, “And in the last days, I will pour out my Spirit on all

corruption”, and the great Messianic Psalm, “The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.”

The fulfillment of the scriptures is such an important part of the Faith, that it is even included in the Creed that we sing every Sunday: when we recount the life of Jesus we sing, “He rose on the third day, in fulfillment of the Scriptures.” Or as we say in the Church Slavonic, *Po pisanijem*. It is common for scholars to say that the Gospel of Saint Matthew was written for a Jewish audience, because Saint Matthew quotes so many times from the prophecies about Jesus, starting from his infancy. But all of the passages that I quoted at the beginning of this article are from the Gospel of Saint Luke. The urgency to know the scriptural prophecies is even more clear in Saint Luke. Viz., on the road to Emmaus, Jesus says to his walking companions, “O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ would suffer these things and enter into his glory?” And then it says, “And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.”

The prophecies about the Messiah did not become irrelevant after they were fulfilled, but are powerful and life giving today, just as they were in those days between the Resurrection and the Ascension. As Saint Peter says regarding the prophets, “It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things which have now been announced to you by those who preached the Good News to you through they Holy Spirit sent

Continued on page 2



Icon of the Myrrh-Bearing Women

all nations”, Jesus first opens their minds to the Scriptures that foretold His actions. We cannot teach repentance and forgiveness until our minds are first opened to the Scriptures.

When the Apostles first began to preach the Good News of repen-

flesh, and your sons and daughters will prophesy and your old men will dream dreams and your young men will have visions...and the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood...”, and then two prophecies from the Psalms of King David, “You will not abandon my soul to Hades, nor let your Holy One see

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WHY DO YOU SEEK THE LIVING AMONG THE DEAD?

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from heaven, things into which angels long to look.”

When Saint Jerome said, “Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ”, he was simply repeating what Jesus himself had already told us. We cannot really know our own Faith unless we know the scriptures, and especially the Scriptures that foretold the Messiah. Saint Peter says, “Always be read to give a reason for the hope you have in you, yet do so with gentleness and respect.” How can we give a reason if we

don't really know the Resurrection, because we don't really know the writings of Moses and the prophets and the psalms? If Jesus joins us on a walk, do any of us want to hear Him say, “O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!” Even worse, if we say in reply, “What prophets?”

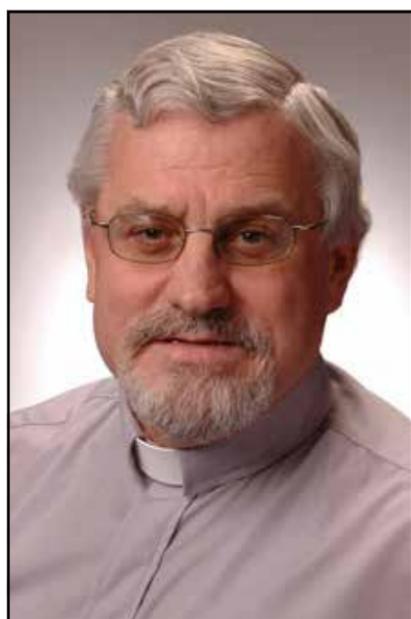
During the Great Lent, the priests of our Eparchy preached on the the great 52nd and 53rd chapters of the Prophet Isaiah, those astonishing poetic moving words about the suf-

fering of our Lord. I received letters from people thanking the priests for these sermons. Isaiah has many more treasures in him for you to discover. Some people say that the Book of Isaiah is like a mini-Bible. Isaiah has 39 chapters of judgment and the Hebrew bible has 39 books, and Isaiah has 27 chapters of comfort and the New Testament has 27 books. Isaiah is only one of the sixteen later prophets. You might say, why should I seek the living among the dead? But the Scriptures are not dead; they are alive and life-giving. I pray most fervently that you will be inspired to search out the many other references to the Christ in the ancient scriptures. It is really the task of a lifetime. It is like wishing your whole life that you had a friend who



would counsel you and comfort you and never leave you, and then you found out your friend was sitting on your bookshelf the whole time.

+Kurt Burnett



POPE FRANCIS NAMES FATHER GEORGE D. GALLARO BISHOP OF PIANA IN PALERMO

Will Serve Eparchy of Piana degli Albanesi in Italy

from the Byzantine Catholic World staff, photo courtesy of Robert Cifrutak

Archeparchy of Pittsburgh for the past ten years, during which time he fulfilled the positions of Syncellus for Canonical Services, Judicial Vicar, member of the Presbyteral Council and of the Intereparchial Canonical Commission, and Personal Formation Advisor and member of the faculty of Saints Cyril and Methodius Seminary. He also served as administrator of Saint Andrew Byzantine Catholic Church, Gibsonia, Pa.

Additionally, the bishop-designate is a consultant for the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, a member and past president of the Society for the Law of the Eastern Churches and member of the Canon Law Society of America.

A prolific writer, Father Gallaro has authored several books and has published numerous articles

dealing largely with issues from the perspective of Eastern Catholics, including ecumenism, marriage and Canon Law, many of which have appeared in *The Byzantine Catholic World*. He speaks English, Italian, French, Spanish, Latin, Greek, and some Albanian, Portuguese, and Arabic.

In his own Eparchy of Newton, Father Gallaro served as Chancellor and Eparchial Consultor, Judicial Vicar, Rector of Saint Gregory Melkite Seminary, Director of the Diaconate Program, and Coordinator of Continuing Education for Clergy. Among other past duties, he also was an Instructor of Catechetics and Defender of the Bond in the Marriage Tribunal of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, a Lecturer of Canon Law at Boston Theological Institute, and pastor of several Melkite and Ukrainian parishes.

Giorgio Demetrio Gallaro was born January 16, 1948 in Pozzallo, Sicily in Italy. After graduation from the Diocesan Seminary of Noto, Italy, with the degree of Bachelor of Philosophy (PhB 1968), his theological studies were completed at Saint John Major Seminary, Camarillo, Calif. He was ordained a deacon in 1971, followed by priestly ordination on May 27, 1972, in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. The bishop-designate's advanced degrees were earned at the Pontifical Oriental Institute (1981) and the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (1994), both in Rome.

The Byzantine Eparchy of Piana degli Albanesi has been vacant since the retirement of Bishop Sotir Ferrara in April, 2013. The eparchy has 29,000 Catholics, 28 priests, 4 deacons and 159 religious.

Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, Apostolic Nuncio to the U.S., announced at the Vatican 31 March 2015 that Holy Father Pope Francis has appointed Very Reverend George D. Gallaro, JCOL, JCOD, STL, Bishop of the Byzantine (Italo-Albanese) Eparchy of Piana degli Albanesi in Palermo, Italy.

Bishop-designate George, 67, is a priest of the Melkite Eparchy of Newton, MA, who has served in the Byzantine Catholic



FROM THE OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

TO BE TONSURED AND ORDAINED TO MINOR ORDERS

Michael P. Tisma and James Smith
Sunday, May 17th, at 10:00 a.m.
Epiphany of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church, Roswell, GA

Edward Quinn
Sunday, May 24th at 10:30 a.m.
Saint John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church, Pottstown, PA

TO BE ORDAINED TO THE ORDER OF DEACON
Subdeacon Thomas Shubeck
Sunday, June 14th at 3 p.m.
Saint Thomas Byzantine Catholic Church, Rahway, NJ

OFFICE OF EASTERN CHRISTIAN FORMATION

The Office of Eastern Christian Formation is pleased to announce that Bishop Kurt has established the Order of Saints Cyril and Methodius for Catechists. A medal bearing a bas relief of the Slavic Saints known for their missionary activity among the peoples of Eastern Europe on the front with the inscription “Order of SS. Cyril and Methodius—Eparchy of Passaic—Catechist” on the reverse, suspended from an award ribbon will be given to all the Catechists in the Eparchy.

These medals will be given to the Catechists in recognition of their service to the Church of Passaic at an Akathist Service on June 6, 2015, at 11 a.m. at the Chapel of the Cathedral of Saint Michael. A reception in their honor will be held immedi-

ately afterwards in the Chapel Hall.

On June 20, 2015, Bishop Kurt will bestow the medal on the Catechists at Epiphany Byzantine Catholic Church, Annandale, VA at 11 a.m. followed by a reception in the Church Hall.

A third bestowal of the medals will take place in Florida at a date to be announced.



THE EPARCHY OF PASSAIC IS PARTICIPATING IN THE 8TH ANNUAL WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES IN A PROFOUND WAY. BISHOP KURT BELIEVES THIS WILL BE A LIFE-CHANGING SPIRITUAL EVENT, AND IN ORDER FOR AS MANY AS POSSIBLE TO ATTEND AND BENEFIT FROM THIS MEETING, THE EPARCHY OF PASSAIC IS SPONSORING OUR CHILDREN, TEENS, AND FULL-TIME STUDENTS, AT \$125 PER DAY.

SEPTEMBER 22-27

LOVE IS OUR MISSION THE FAMILY FULLY ALIVE



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REGISTER NOW!
REGISTER NOW!
REGISTER NOW!
REGISTER NOW!

FAMILIES WILL BE REIMBURSED AFTER THEY REGISTER ON THE OFFICIAL WEBSITE FOR THE WORLD MEETING.

BISHOP KURT INVITES ALL THOSE ATTENDING TO JOIN HIM FOR A SPECIAL DINNER. MORE DETAILS WILL BE PROVIDED AFTER YOU REGISTER.

The World Meeting of Families will take place in Philadelphia, PA, from September 22-25, 2015. This gathering will offer an Adult Congress and a Youth Congress for ages 6 to 17. The Adult Congress, for ages 18 and older, will consist of keynote presentations and breakout sessions that address the many ways in which families can strengthen their bonds, especially in the face of significant challenges facing the family globally in the 21st century. The Youth Congress will provide interactive programs designed for young people to play, listen, serve, build and embrace the mission of love in a family.

Held every three years and sponsored by the Holy See's Pontifical Council for the Family, the World Meeting of Families is the world's largest Catholic gathering of families. Each World Meeting of Families has a theme that energizes and enlivens the event while adding great depth of meaning to our understanding of families. The theme of the World Meeting of Families –Philadelphia 2015 is "Love Is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive," emphasizing the impact of the love and life of families on our society.

We are hopeful that many of our families of the Eparchy of Passaic will participate.

1 Please go to <http://www.worldmeeting2015.org> for more information and to register.

2 Once you have registered, please forward a copy of your registration to the Eparchy of Passaic at secretary@dioceseofpassaic.org.

Bishop Kurt is planning a special event that will bring together everyone who will be attending. The Eparchy will also be offering a partial registration reimbursement to families who attend with children.

If you have any questions, please e-mail Father Ed Cimbala at: FREDSTMARY@aol.com



WORLDMEETING2015.ORG



PEOPLE YOU KNOW

IN BALTIMORE...

Nun Gives Presentation

Patronage of the Mother of God Byzantine Catholic Parish in Baltimore, MD, recently held a luncheon at which Sister Marcia Hall, of the Oblate Sisters of Providence, gave a presentation on Mother Mary Lange, the foundress of the Oblate Sisters of Providence. The Oblate Sisters have their motherhouse close to our Patronage Church. The Sisters community was founded during the Civil War for Women of Color. Sister Marcia Hall spoke to the assembled group on the canonical process for the canonization of Mother Mary Lange. Father Conan Howard Timoney is the pastor of Patronage Parish.



Sister Marcia Hall with Father Conan Timoney and parishioners

IN HARRISBURG...

Mardi Gras—Slavic Style

On February 9, Mardi Gras-Slavic Style was celebrated at Saint Ann Church in Harrisburg, PA. The event took place in the decorated parish center, filled with purple, green, and yellow balloons hanging from the ceiling. From 4 until 10 p.m., parishioners and guests enjoyed delicious ethnic food and danced to the music by The Polka Whoo and DJ Pete. Included in the festivities were children games and a Slavic Auction that had over 51 prizes.

Part of this festivity was an almsgiving project sponsored by the youth of the parish. The junior and senior high students greeted the guests and sold Mardi Gras beads for one dollar. The students collected the money for the orphans in Ukraine. On the table at the entrance was a poster with a thank you note from the orphans and pictures from the orphanages. This year the students collected \$125.

This almsgiving project continued throughout Lent. Children were encouraged to add to the "Coins for Kids" Jar that was located near the ECF classrooms. All other parishioners were encouraged by the Helping Hands Committee of Saint Ann's to donate to this mission, begun by Sister Mary Bernarda Arkatin, to bring food, clothing, medicine, and other necessities to orphans throughout Ukraine. Today, Sister Ann Laszok and Sister Joann Sosler continue this mission with annual trips to Ukraine. Christine Smith, a parishioner of Saint Ann's, joined Sister Bernarda for two trips to Ukraine.



ECF Teacher and students gathered with their Lenten Almsgiving

IN SWOYERSVILLE...

Altar Rosary Society Donates to Parish

On Sunday, December 14, 2014, the members of Saint Nicholas of Myra Byzantine Catholic Church, Swoyersville, PA, gathered as a parish family to celebrate the feast day of their patron, Saint Nicholas. The parish enjoyed a tasty brunch together, a visit from Saint Nicholas himself, and the Altar and Rosary Society presented their pastor, Father Gary Messinger, with a check and donation to the parish in the amount of \$8,000, as pictured.



Standing from left to right: Mary Ann Kolesar (parish secretary), Dolores Cebrick, Josephine Wozniak, Marge Lukas, Marie Urban, Father Gary Messinger, Arlene Gomba, Marie Havrilla, Joan Chisarick, Jean Kapral, Mary Kopin, Helen Myzliński, Joanne Kovaleski, Deacon Larry Worlinsky.

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Saturday at 6:00 p.m. and Sunday at 9:30 a.m.
(coffee and fellowship after Liturgy)

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AROUND THE EPARCHY



BASILIAN SISTERS ELECT NEW PROVINCE LEADERSHIP AT CHAPTER

With Paschal joy, the Sisters of the Order of Saint Basil the Great, Our Lady of Perpetual Help Province, Uniontown, PA, announce the election of their new Province Leadership, which occurred during the recent Provincial Chapter, April 16 -19, at which the Sisters gather every five years. The new Provincial is Sister Ruth Plante with Sister Margaret Ann Andrako as Assistant. Councilors are Sister Sylvia Burnett and Sister Joanne Lickvar. With

gratitude, the Sisters of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Province recognize the previous Province Leadership of Sister Seraphim Olsafsky, outgoing Provincial, Sister Carol Petrasovich, outgoing Assistant, and Sister Barbara Jean Mihalchik and Sister Susan Sisko, outgoing Councilors. The Sisters are grateful for the prayerful support of the faithful during this period of discussion and discernment.



Sisters Joanne Lickvar, Sylvia Burnett, Margaret Andrako, and Sister Ruth

Now Open to All Ages

Young Adult Marian Pilgrimage

Sponsored by the Orientale Lumen Foundation

The Orientale Lumen Foundation, a “grass roots” non-profit organization that promotes Eastern Christianity, will sponsor a Marian Pilgrimage to Slovakia, Hungary, and Austria on August 7-18, 2015. Byzantine Catholic young adults, age 20-29, from across the US, are invited to participate in this exciting trip to religious sites, churches, and cultural centers of Eastern Europe. In addition to learning more about their “roots,” they will meet other Byzantine Catholic young adults in Presov and Bratislava, and experience the vibrant, growing Churches in that region. This pilgrimage is designed to provide those who attended the ByzanTeen Rallies, and are now in their twenties, with an enjoyable and educational way to keep involved in the Byzantine Catholic Church. Similar to the seminary Concert Tours organized by the OL Foundation, this pilgrimage will also promote further direct communication between young American and European Byzantine Catholics.

Father Andrew Deskevich, Protosyncellus of the Archeparchy of Pittsburgh, and frequent visitor to Eastern Europe, will be the pilgrimage Chaplain. The Tour Director will be Lector Jack Figel, who has been traveling to this area for more than 30 years. He also successfully arranged the Ecumenical Pilgrimage in October 2014 that had private audiences with Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. He is directly

arranging events for this pilgrimage.

The pilgrimage will include attending the large outdoor gathering on Zvir Mountain near Litmanova, Slovakia where an apparition of Mary appeared to several Greek Catholics 20-25 years ago. This year is the 25th anniversary of the last apparition. It will also include touring wooden churches of the Carpathian Mountains, visiting the cathedrals of our eparchies, and traveling to the famous Mariapocs icons in Hungary and Vienna, Austria.

Local transportation, accommodations, and some meals are included in the pilgrimage package for only \$1,995 per person, double occupancy. Any who do not register with another person will be assigned a roommate. Air travel to and from Vienna is not included, but can be arranged through the OL Foundation office.

A registration deposit of \$500 is due by May 1, 2015, with monthly payments due until August 1st. Only a limited number of spaces are available, so register early to insure your place in this wonderful spiritual and cultural experience. Parents and grandparents of young adults might want to consider this pilgrimage as a gift for graduation, or some other purpose, to help younger generations learn about their religious background in Eastern Europe.



Visit the website for more details, to download a flier or detail itinerary, or to register online. Click on the Pilgrimage button at www.olconference.com. Or call 703-691-8862 for more information.

August 7-18,
2015

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 PO Box 192, Fairfax, VA 22030-0192

Reservation deposit of \$500 due by May 1, 2015.
 Full payment due by August 1, 2015.
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50TH ANNIVERSARY OF SAINT THERESE PARISH

Saint Petersburg, FL

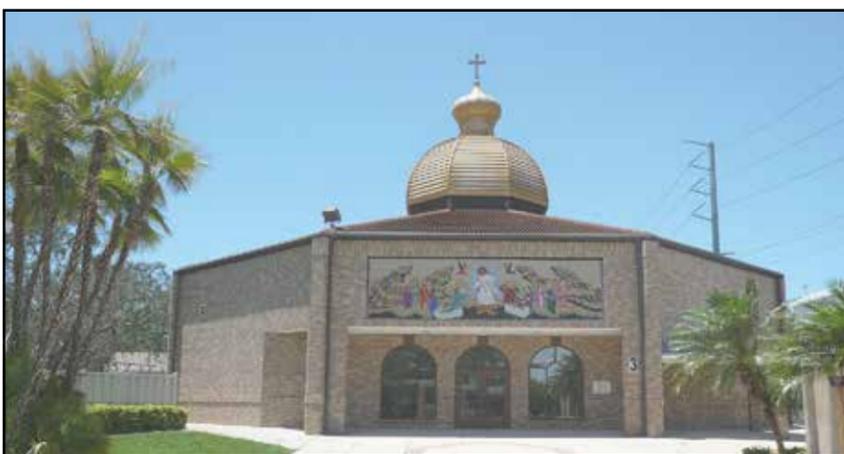
On December 20, 2014, the parish of Saint Therese in Saint Petersburg, FL, celebrated the 50th Anniversary of its founding, on the actual day in 1964. A Liturgy of Thanksgiving was celebrated by Bishop Kurt Burnette to mark the occasion. A dinner reception was held directly after the services in the parish hall.

The parish of Saint Therese was the first Byzantine parish to be established in the state of Florida. It began in a small chapel in a home on the church property.

Saint Therese, the patron saint of missionaries, was chosen to bless the parish's mission to bring the Eastern tradition into the South. At the time, no Byzantine churches existed in the South. The parishioners and guest gave thanks to the Almighty for the past 50 years of blessings and growth, and continue to pray for many more years ahead. Father Robert Evancho is pastor of Saint Therese Parish.



Parish children salute their Chief Shepherd



Exterior of Saint Therese Parish



Iconostas and Holy Place of Saint Therese Parish



Parishioners greet Bishop Kurt with bread and salt, traditional signs of Slavic hospitality

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15TH ANNUAL SAINTS CYRIL AND METHODIUS LECTURE

Sponsored by the Byzantine Catholic Seminary of
Saints Cyril and Methodius, Pittsburgh, PA

Hosted by Saint John Byzantine Catholic Cathedral

DR. SCOTT HAHN

Guest Speaker

THE "OUR FATHER" AS A SYNTHESIS OF THE PATTERN OF SCRIPTURE

THURSDAY, MAY 7, 2015

Lecture at 7:00 p.m.
Reception to follow



Dr. Scott Hahn is the author/editor of over forty books, including best-selling titles such as *Understanding Our Father*, *The Lamb's Supper*, "Spirit and Life", "Understanding the Scripture", and "Answering the New Atheism". His academic publications include "Letter and Spirit: From Written Text to Living Word in the Liturgy", along with a forthcoming title, "Politicizing the Bible: The Roots of Historical Criticism and the Secularization of Scripture (1300-1700)".

An exceptional speaker and teacher, Dr. Scott Hahn has delivered thousands

of popular talks and academic lectures, nationally and internationally, on a wide range of topics related to Scripture, Theology, and the Catholic faith. He has appeared on hundreds of television programs on the Eternal Word Television Network, where he has also been the regular host and presenter on several popular 13-week series (including *Our Father's Plan*, *The Lamb's Super*, and *Genesis to Jesus*).

He is the founder and president of the Saint Paul Center for Biblical Theology. In 2005, he was awarded the Pope Benedict XVI Chair of Biblical Theology and Litur-

gical Proclamation at Saint Vincent Seminary, Latrobe, PA, which he held through 2011. In 2002, he was awarded Pio Cardinal Laghi Chair of Catholic Theology at the Pontifical Seminary Josephinum in Columbus, OH, which he held through 2004. Dr. Hahn graduated from Grove City College in 1979 with a BA in Theology, Philosophy, and Economics (*magna cum laude*). He graduated from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in 1982 with a Masters of Divinity (*summa cum laude*). Scott received his Ph.D. in Theology from Marquette University in 1995 (*summa cum laude*, Phi Beta Kappa).

THIS EVENT IS FREE BUT, DUE TO SPACE LIMITATIONS, REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED BY APRIL 30TH. PLEASE CALL 412-321-8383 OR EMAIL OFFICE@BCS.EDU. LECTURE WILL BE HELD AT SAINT JOHN CATHEDRAL CENTER, 210 GREENTREE ROAD, MUNHALL, PA 15120

BLESSED BASIL HOPKO BYZANTINE CATHOLIC MISSION CELEBRATES GREAT WEEK AND PASCHA

Myrtle Beach, SC

The parishioners of Blessed Basil Hopko Byzantine Catholic Mission, in Myrtle Beach, SC, were able to gather for Holy Week services with the assistance of Father Dennis Logue, SVD, of the Divine Word Fathers. He is a former pastor in the Archeparchy of Pittsburgh. On Pascha, some thirty five faithful gathered to celebrate the Resurrection of the Lord. Mr. Jack Securda, formerly of Epiphany Byzantine Catholic Parish in Roswell, GA, where he was a founder, was the photographer. He now resides in the Carolinas and is an active member of our newest mission.



Where the Mission parishioners and guests gather to worship



Father Dennis processes with the shroud on Great and Holy Friday



Parishioners get their baskets ready for the blessing



Father Dennis incenses the shroud



Father Dennis intones the prayers to bless the Paschal foods



Venerating the Five Wounds of the Savior



Look at the beautiful basket covers!

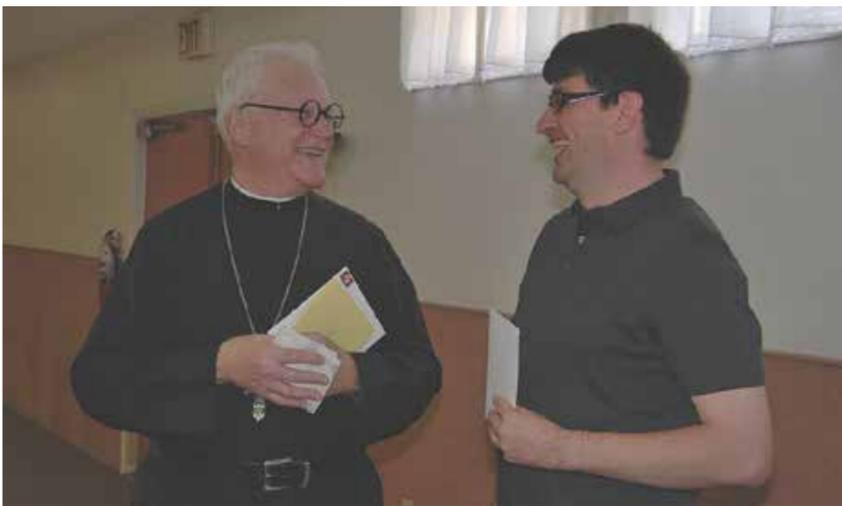


SAINT ANNE PARISH CELEBRATES PASCHA WITH PARISH BREAKFAST

New Port Richey, FL

Parishioners of Saint Anne Byzantine Catholic Church, New Port Richey, FL, gathered together, following the blessing of Paschal foods on Holy Pascha, for a traditional Easter breakfast. The parish faithful were treated to ham, kolbasi, hrudka, pascha, eggs, and a variety of side dishes, all donated by a small group of parishioners. The parish tradition of having a breakfast on Holy Pascha was started at the suggestion of former pastor, Father Basil Kraynyak, of happy memory, since he noted that many

of the parishioners were made up of older adults without local family ties, and therefore would be celebrating the day alone. After all, what better way is there to celebrate the Feast of Feasts, than to come together as a parish family, and celebrate Holy Pascha? This tradition continues in Father Basil's memory, and this joyful time of sharing good food with family is enjoyed by everyone. The parish is served by Father Timothy Clegg.



Father Timothy Clegg and Kurt Stoltz share a moment of Paschal joy



Enjoying good food and good company.

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Please add \$3.00 Shipping and handling for each order. Items 1 through 8 are offered digitally re-mastered \$12.95 CD format. Make checks payable to: Holy Ghost Choir, 2310 South 24th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19145-3207.



SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

Father Jack Custer, S.T.D.

MARY: THE LIVING TEMPLE

Have you ever wondered why the Epistle read at the Liturgy for most feasts of the Mother of God (Hebrews 9:1-7) is all about the Old Testament Temple?

The saints who introduced these feasts of Mary in the 5th and 6th centuries believed that no part of God's Word could ever go "out of date." The Old Testament Tent of Meeting set up by Moses (Exodus 25ff), the first Temple erected by Solomon and the second Temple (Ezra 3-6) that Jesus knew had all come and gone. But every page of God's Word reveals His one and only plan for humanity so there must be some more enduring meaning to what the Bible says about the Temple.

The purpose of the Tent during the Exodus and the Temples in Jerusalem was that God might dwell among His people (Exodus 25:8; 1 Kings 8). God's glory was present in these earthly spaces (Exodus 40; Ezekiel 10 and 43); the Psalms (99:5; 132:7) talk about the Ark of the Covenant as the "footrest" of God's heavenly throne. But the Scriptures were always clear on the point that no building could actually "contain" God (1 Kings 8:27).

But Mary did. The title "Theotokos," defined by the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus in 431, asserts a very important truth: the person carried in Mary's virginal womb and born of her was, from the very first moment of His conception, indivis-

ibly both truly God and truly Man. So it is perfectly correct to say that Mary contained God in her womb in a way that the Jerusalem Temple never did and never could.

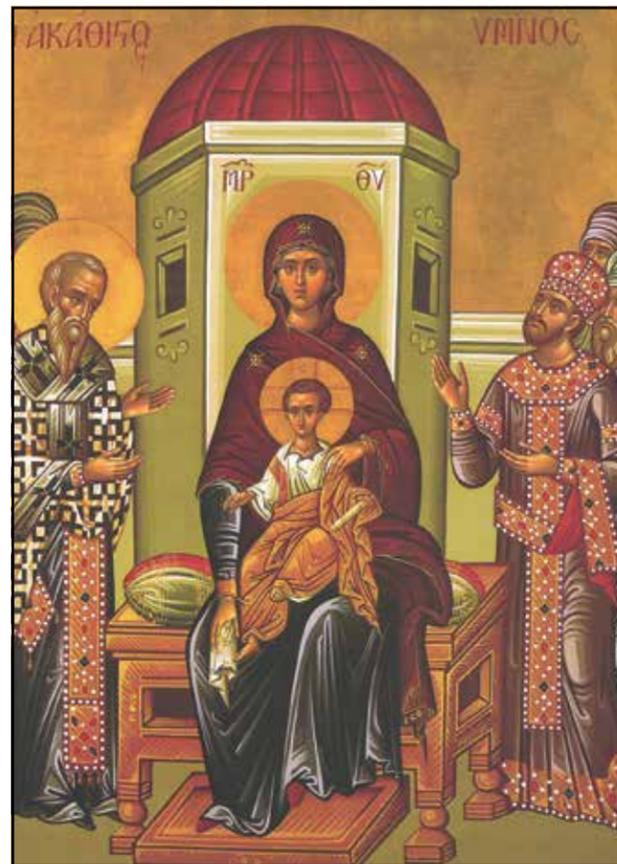
The Akathist Hymn, composed soon after the Council of Ephesus, searches the whole Bible for images with which to portray Mary's virginal motherhood and its meaning for us. In the second to last stanza, the Akathist praises Mary as a "living Temple." This is how the Liturgy invites us to understand the quick tour of the Temple in Hebrews 9:1-7 (based largely on Exodus 25). Jesus is the Light of the World (John 9:5); Mary is the lampstand that bore that light. Jesus is the Bread of Life (John 6:35); Mary is the table on which the showbread was placed and the golden jar in which the manna was preserved (Exodus 16:33). Aaron's rod—a dead piece of wood—blossomed miraculously (Numbers 17:1-10). Mary, a virgin, miraculously conceived her son. The Ark of the Covenant was a gilded box, overshadowed by cherubim, that contained souvenirs of God's miracles for his people during the Exodus. Mary, overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, conceived and contained God Himself, not merely souvenirs and symbols of His presence.

The Theotokos was not simply a container performing a function. The very words "son" and "mother" remind us that this was an intense,

living, loving relationship. The divine Son of God became the human Son of Mary to dwell among us (John 1:14), Mary was the first to be initiated into that new relationship, but she was not the only one. God has not done anything for Mary that He does not also want to do for every human being. Can we also be living temples? This is exactly what Saint Paul claims both for the individual Christian and for the whole Church (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 2:20-22).

The various tabernacles and Temples of the Old Testament enabled people to encounter God but none of them endured. The first Temple fell to the Babylonians in 587 B.C. The second Temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D. God's plan was for more than a passing encounter with His human creation: God desires us to be united with Him. That union of God and Man begins in Mary's womb but it continues in

the life of every person who is baptized into Christ, sealed with the Holy Spirit and invited to share in the Body and Blood of Christ—the same Body and Blood He received from Mary. Mary became a living Temple through the mystery of her virginal motherhood. We are also invited to become living Temples—individually and together as the Church—through our sacramental union with Christ. **ECL**



Icon of the Akathist to the Theotokos

BYZANTINE CATHOLIC FAMILY DAY — 2015

Knoebels Amusement Resort

Elysburg, PA

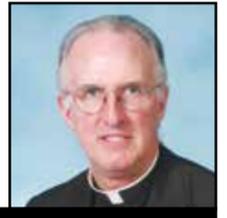
Sunday, May 17, 2015



GCU

CATECHETICAL REFLECTIONS

Father Robert F. Slesinski, Ph.D.



OMG: A SHOUT IN THE STREET?

Installment 3 of 6

The significance of Saint Justin Martyr's insight concerning the "seeds of the Logos" being implanted in the hearts and minds of the great pre-Christian thinkers, as mentioned in our last column, cannot be stressed enough. It is, indeed, precisely this insight that allows us to pursue a comparative study of religions as they all try to make a statement about the Godhead and the humanity the Almighty, however understood, intends to enlighten and serve. The same, I would argue, applies to the humanists all around us, who may well deny the existence of God, but who, for that reason alone, should be the natural focus of our own dialogue, if only to try to promote mutual understanding and respect if nothing else.

Of course, I would like to extend the concept of the "seeds of the Logos" to all avenues of life, acknowledging again that it was through the Logos, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, that "all things came into being" (Jn 1:3), the Logos thereby leaving his imprint on all aspects of the world in which we live. The most obvious of these phenomena is the fact of language itself. What an incredible mystery this everyday "fact" of life is! No full explanation of the origins and development of human communication—the obvious reality of interpersonal dialogue—has ever been given to anyone's ultimate satisfaction. Words, after all, are not reducible to mere sounds as they are replete with meaning. Because words enjoy meaning we can understand one another in our speech. But whence this meaning, we may well ask? Is it totally arbitrary or does it somehow come from being itself? However one ultimately answers this question, one thing remains for sure: In order to be understood—i.e., recognized—entity, person or thing, in this world, the being at stake (person or thing) must have a name. Without a name a "being-out-there" is not understood; in other words, outside of the context of language, it is as if a being does not exist—in truth it is a "nameless," virtual non-entity, as it were.

And, so, we come back to a fundamental theme of the "seeds of the Logos"—Almighty God, in fine, has not only been in charge, but is in charge! What we are trying to explicate is how God Himself is at the root of all human—yes, trite, humdrum, even callous—communication. OMG!

To understand this point—this very essential point—in face of all the agnostics and "atheists"—we need to grasp how language—in its very explicit way—is nothing less than a gift of Almighty God—we can, incredibly after all—speak to one another. No small "miracle," I would say.

It is, indeed, language in fine that puts us in not only verbal, but also physical contact with one another. A baby, after all—even in the brute animal world—never grows up deprived of human/animal contact! So before us stands the "miracle" of language. Do we understand one another? Let's get back to the family dinner table...do we understand one another? But, of course, we do—so there is the "mystery."

So, yes, the enigmatic reality of real life, one can rightfully exclaim, begins with the very fact of language, of human discourse itself. And, here, at this point, a believer can rightfully challenge a non-believer. How can we—do we—account for the blasé, everyday phenomenon of language apart from it being a gift "from without" in the first place?

Dwelling upon an answer to this question, a piece of twentieth-century poetry comes to mind. Conceivably the finest English-language poet of the last century, T. S. Eliot (1888–1965) wrote the following thought-provoking lines in his "Choruses from 'The Rock'":

O world of spring and autumn, birth and dying!
 The endless cycle of idea and action,
 Endless invention, endless experiment,
 Brings knowledge of motion, but not of stillness;
 Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word.
 All our knowledge brings us nearer to our ignorance,
 All our ignorance brings us nearer to death,
 But nearness to death no nearer to God.
 Where is the Life we have lost in living?
 Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
 Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?
 The cycles of Heaven in twenty centuries
 Bring us farther from God and nearer to the Dust. **ECL**

Open to ALL Parishioners, Family, Friends, GCU Members and Guests - Rain or Shine!



Tentative Schedule

12:00 pm
 1 pm - 2 pm
 3:00 pm
 4:00 pm
 4:30 pm
 5:30 pm
 7:00 pm

Park Opens
 Catered Lunch! (optional)
 Bingo / Games for Adults (with prizes!)
 PRAYER SERVICE (Moleben)
 Kids Games with prizes!
 Evening Entertainment / Sing-A-Long!
 Park Closes - hope you had a great day!

Discounted ride-all-day passes and tickets! Free admission! Free Parking!
 Lunch ticket purchase will not be required to join us in Pavilion "O"
 Families may instead bring a picnic lunch or buy food in the park.
 Questions? Call Christie Petty: 1-800-722-4428 x3923.



UNDERSTANDING ICONS

Father Joseph Bertha, Ph.D.

JEREMIAH THE PROPHET

Feast day liturgical commemoration May 1st

Tropar:

As we celebrate the memory of your prophet Jeremiah, O Lord, through him we beseech you to save our souls.

Kondak:

O blessed Jeremiah, being chosen of God from your mother's womb in your compassion, you sorely did mourn for the falling away of Israel, and in Egypt, O prophet, you were murdered by stoning for your most just rebukes, by them that understood not to cry with you, "alleluia."

Jeremiah means God is exalted!

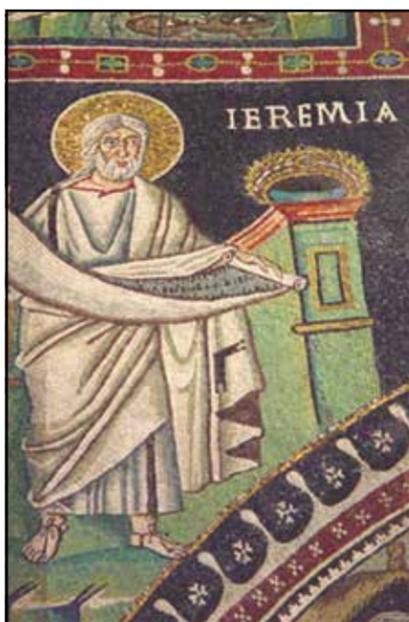
He served as a prophet between 613 and 583 B.C.

Jeremiah in Sacred Scripture

His prophecy consists of 52 chapters, followed by 5 chapters of lamentations over the city of Jerusalem which had been devastated by the Chaldeans. Jeremiah was left there among the ruins with a few remnants by Captain Nabuzardan, with the blessing of King Nebuchadnezzar. Even some who were left in the holy city transgressed against the Lord once again and fearing the vengeance of the Chaldeans they fled to Egypt. There Jeremiah prophesied again and was stoned by his own people in 583 BC because they would not listen to his rebukes.

The portrayal of prophets in icons

In general, individual Old Testament prophets are portrayed as bearded old men wearing chitons (albs) and himations (cloaks). They usually hold a scroll with a fragment of their prophecy inscribed on it.



Icon of the Prophet Jeremiah in San Vitale

The Hebrew prophets are forerunners of one of the major ministries of the Christian priesthood: the reconciliation of sinners with God. Prophets preached incessantly about God's rich mercy of reconciliation. God's unfathomable mercy is visualized in icons by the very clothing the prophet wears. The holy prophets wear Greek chitons and himations rather than traditional Jewish priestly garb. Significantly these garments are depicted with manifold bends, twists, and turns in the lines, which are not used to delineate their underlying anatomy. Rather these limitless, without beginning or end, lines denote God's rich mercy from within.

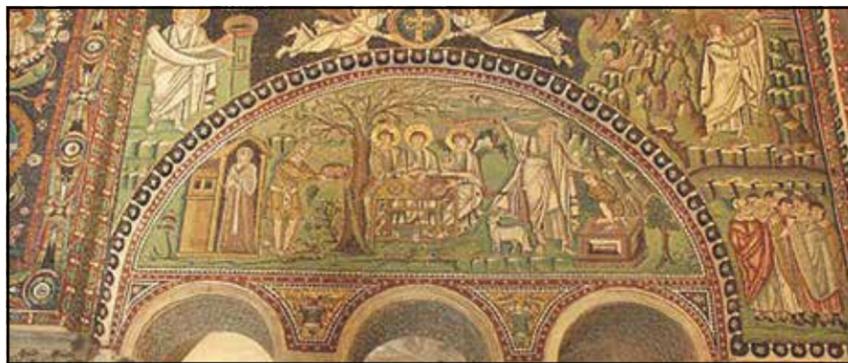
The signification of the garment creases is derived from two direct quotations from Our Lord. First, when Our Lord describes the water of graces flowing from within to the Samaritan woman at the well. (John 4:10) Second, as Jesus describes good measure flowing your lap is an indirect reference to God's mercy freely given. (Luke 6:38)

Jeremiah in the iconography of San Vitale

Art historians are always searching for the earliest surviving icons. The oldest icon of Prophet Jeremiah from the sixth century is astonishingly preserved at San Vitale in Ravenna, Italy. The Prophet is inserted into a sophisticated chancel iconographic program which adorns the north wall of the sanctuary in this far flung colony of Byzantium. Usually visitors at San Vitale's vie to view dedication panels depicting Justinian and Theodora flanking either side of the apse. However, there is much more compelling iconographic detail found on the walls to either side of the holy of holies.

On the north side, the lunette depicts two scenes from the life of Abraham, the visit of the three angels, and the sacrifice of Isaac. In the spandrels in both corners are two prophets: Jeremiah holding a long piece of cloth with scripture rolls (surprisingly he resembles King Cosmos in the Pentecost image). In the opposite spandrel is Moses walks up Mount Sinai to receive the law.

Paired and compliment to this is the south lunette which shows Abel with a yearling lamb standing next



Interior of San Vitale in Ravenna, Italy

to Melchizedek at the high altar. In these spandrels Prophet Isaiah and then Moses twice, once removing his sandals before the burning bush, tending sheep.

What is completely compelling is that the iconography depicts Old Testament Eucharistic prototypes. These in turn reflect the sacramental mystery of the Eucharist which transpires on the altar directly below

An enumeration of the Eucharistic scenes:

—Prophet Jeremiah is portrayed offering God's outpouring of his rich mercy by the multiple scrolls resting on the outstretched cloth.
—The Sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham is a direct type of God the Father's sacrifice of his son Jesus.
—Moses tends the sheep of Jethro's flock, receives the ten commandments on Mount Sinai and becomes the deliverer for the chosen people.
—Isaiah clearly sees the Virgin Birth, the Suffering Servant and the redemptive death of the Messiah.

Location, location, location

The San Vitale Byzantine mosaics demonstrate their virtuosity and familiarization in a sophisticated arrangement of scenes all intended to be read as an ensemble which portrays the Great Mercy of God offered to all through the Eucharist. This was prophesied so long ago by Abraham, Moses, Isaiah and Jeremiah.

Those glittering Byzantines!

Even though Justinian and Theodora never set foot in Ravenna they are featured prominently in the sanctuary here at San Vitale, adjacent to Old Testament scenes. Surrounded by their retinues on either side they offer a chalice and paten as gifts for the Eucharistic celebration. It is important to recall that Justinian, the builder of Hagia Sophia only twenty

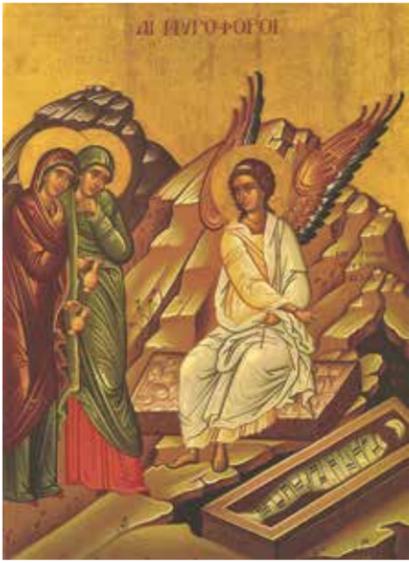
years earlier, on its dedication on Christmas Day is known to have remarked O Solomon I have outdone you! By implication and extension, the Hagia Sophia is the New Temple in the Holy City of Constantinople.

He makes a boast about having bettered the Temple in Jerusalem, the Holy of Holies has been erected by the Byzantines. Here at San Vitale in Ravenna this boast is once again proclaimed in architecture and mosaics.

One of the main goals of the portrayal of individuals in sacred icons is to serve as an inspiration to read the Sacred Scriptures. Studying the prophecy of Jeremiah and lamentations over the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem foresees the tragedy of Our Lord's weeping over the city in Matthew 23 and His own death. When we view the Prophet Jeremiah inserted into the complex iconographic program at San Vitale we can connect the puzzle pieces together which form the icon of the outpouring of God's rich outpouring of mercy in Jesus Christ upon us all.

Jeremiah thus becomes a symbol of the mercy of God, which is extended to all no matter how dire the circumstances. Consonant with the Old Testament prophets, who are the priests he proclaims God's mercies even when everyone has abandoned the Lord. But true to form, he is martyred by his very own people, who are blinded to seeing the hand of God extended to them. This is the same pattern or type which happens to our Lord Jesus as well. God the Father sends His Son into the world to bring it to His great and abundant mercy, and His own reject Him. Out of this rejection comes the great gift of reconciliation which is the glorious resurrection of Christ from the dead as he offers eternal life to all who follow in his footsteps.

ECL



Icon of the Ointment-Bearing Women

After Pascha, on Bright Tuesday, our Church prescribes the Gospel account (Luke 24:13-35) of our Lord's encounter with two disciples walking from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus, a distance of about seven miles, on the day of His resurrection. A very brief mention of this is also made by Saint Mark in his Gospel, chapter 16, verses 12-13. Both accounts bring out a strong disbelief among the disciples that Jesus had, in fact, risen from the dead.

The women who wanted to give Jesus a decent burial after the hasty entombment following His crucifixion had to be reminded by two angels disguised as men there at the empty tomb of Jesus' statement, "the Son of Man must be betrayed into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and rise on the third day." (Luke 24:7). A doubting Thomas came face to face with the risen Christ a week later (John 20:24-29). A third occasion of the risen Jesus is found in Saint John's Gospel as Jesus manifests Himself in Galilee at the sea of Tiberias (John 21:1-14).

Several factors in the "Emmaus" story are common to Jesus' appearances among the disciples: the two men represent all of Jesus' followers as they grapple with the very dramatic events of His passion, death, and – now – purported resurrection; they are troubled and at a loss to understand the reports of His being

seen by others; at first they do not recognize Him as His appearance has changed; even the apostles who see Him do not believe their own senses; and once He is recognized, they do not hesitate to believe.

The Emmaus account is rather simple, straightforward, and even charming. It features a clear Eucharistic and liturgical symbolism in the references Jesus makes to the Scriptures as He goes over the events of the past several days with the two men and the breaking of the bread. It is a window into the life of the early Church gathered into community to keep Jesus' instruction, "Do this in memory of Me" as He instituted the Eucharist for all time the night before He underwent His passion and death on the Cross.

The details of the Emmaus event encourage us to strengthen belief of resurrection since Christ's rising

from the dead cannot be the result of any human evidence and proof but rests on the conviction of faith in the very words of Jesus to Thomas, "Because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed." (John 20:29)

May the Emmaus story remind us how Jesus accompanies us when we are troubled, face problems and perhaps fail to recognize Him at such times. It happened to the two men on the road to Emmaus. Jesus walked with them and spent time with them. Such divine support assuredly is ours when we welcome the risen Lord along our spiritual road: "Let sorrow now pass away. I have calmed the tempest of your souls. I have banished the Enemy, and for those who believe in Me, I have made the spiritual spring to bloom." (Thursday Matins, Week of Thomas, At the Praises) **ECL**



SEASONAL REFLECTIONS

Monsignor John T. Sekellick, JCL

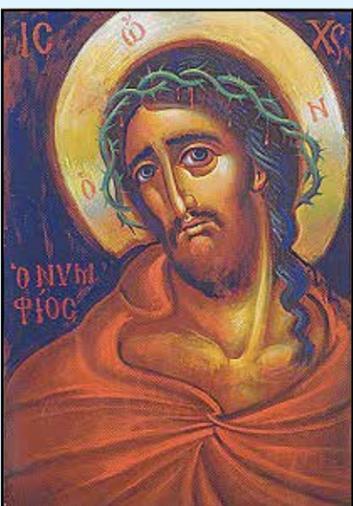
THE EMMAUS ACCOUNT



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Contact: Father Carmen at holydormition@gmail.com or 570-788-1212 x406

CHRIST THE BRIDEGROOM Icon Retreat with Peter Pearson



Peter Pearson has forty years experience writing icons for churches, private individuals, and institutions around the world. He is noted for teaching both painting technique and the spirituality of creating icons. He has given presentations to groups ranging from school children and senior citizen groups to artists and seminarians and is the author of *A Brush with God: An Icon Workbook*. Samples of his iconography are available online at <http://www.peterpearsonicons.com/> or may be seen in Hazleton at St John Byzantine Catholic Church or Holy Rosary Roman Catholic Church.

COST: \$280
MAY 7-9, 2015

THURSDAY—SUNDAY

Retreatants will follow step by step instructions to produce an icon of Christ the Bridegroom similar to the image on this flier. We will also discuss the development of iconography, the spirituality of creating an icon, and praying with icons.

GUARDIAN ANGEL Icon Retreat with Marylyn Barone



Having studied under Phil Zimmerman, Marylyn has written icons since 1997. She gives workshops in parishes from Ohio to New Jersey. She has written icons for many parishes and individuals, also teaching individuals and groups of all ages and abilities.

COST: \$250
JULY 23-26, 2015

THURSDAY—SUNDAY

Each Student will write a 10"x12" icon of a Guardian Angel on a gesso covered board, using a prepared prototype and 23k gold-leaf gilding, learning techniques for painting details. All supplies included.

Housing and other meals available at added charge: room & board \$50/night, shared bath



FAITH AND COMMUNITY ISSUES

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

WHAT IS SUICIDE: THE STATISTICS

How often is suicide attempted? According to Comer (2011) who quotes Ohayon (2009) and Stolberg et al. (2002), the estimate is that “700,000 or more people may die by it each year, more than 31,000 in the United States alone”. Comer (2001) also states that “Millions of other people throughout the world—600,000 in the United States—make unsuccessful attempts to kill themselves; such attempts are called parasuicides (emphasis Comer’s).”

There are difficulties with accuracy however. Comer believes that investigators believe estimates are low because of the difficulty of being able to tell a suicide from accidents i.e. drug overdoses of prescription pain killing drugs, auto crash accidents, accidental drowning victims and various unintended accidents; conversely, there are also accidents that appear so but in high probability were intended to happen (cited by Comer 2011 from Wertheimer, 2001; Lester, 2000). Another element Comer cites is that of shame or embarrassment due to the negative perspective our society has toward the act of suicide. This perspective is a powerful deterrent in keeping families and relations of the victim from acknowledging that the death of the loved one had suicide as the cause.

According to Comer (2011) the Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders as published by the American Psychological Association, did not classify suicide as a mental disorder (Since the Publishing of Comer’s text a new edition of the Manual, the DSM-5TM has come out and it lists suicide as a condition for further study inviting researchers to investigate suicide with scientific method to develop a credible accurate and scientific classification system for suicide diagnosis and treatment). Clinicians are very aware of the high level of dysfunction on many psychological levels: coping skill disorders, emotional chaos, and a distorted perspective on life in general, all of which contribute vitally to the suicide scenario. Comer makes the point that there is a high frequency between depression and suicide; there are also a high number of links to Schizo-

phrenia, Alcoholism as well as no apparent psychological diagnosis at all.

With the advent of more study into Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), particularly with veterans returning from war zones, there is compelling evidence that PTSD has significant impact upon the decision to commit and successfully complete an act of suicide.

What is Suicide?

Comer (2011) quotes Edwin Shneidman (2005, 1993, 1963) whom Comer identifies as “one of the most influential writers on this topic” (Comer, 2011, p.231), as giving suicide the definition: “An intentioned death—a self-inflicted death in which one makes an intentional, direct, and conscious effort to end one’s life” (Comer, 2011, p. 231). There are many different reasons and ways in which this self-inflicted death is committed; in order to accurately comprehend and effectively treat suicide and parasuicides it is important to give some order to the kind of persons who commit suicide.

Comer (2011) again quotes Shneidman as presenting four types of personalities who have intentions of ending their lives, they are: “the death seeker, death initiator, death ignorer, and death darer” (p.232).

Death Seekers

Schneidman according to Comer defines the Death Seekers as those who “clearly intend to end their lives at the time they attempt suicide. This singleness of purpose may last only a short time, It can change to confusion the very next hour or day, and then return again in short order” (p.232).

Death Initiators

According to Shneidman as quoted by Comer (2011) the death initiators “clearly intend to end their lives, but they act out of a belief that the process of death is already underway and that they are simply quickening the process. Some ex-

pect they will die in a matter of days or weeks” (p.232). Comer gives the elderly and very sick as examples of this kind of suicide victim. Ernest Hemmingway is given as prime example of such a suicide because of his profound concern over his assessment of his body as failing at the age of 62.

Death Ignorers

Again, Schneidman, quoted by Comer (2011) defines Death Ignorers as those who “Do not believe that their self-inflicted death will mean the end of their existence. They believe they are trading their present lives for a better existence” (p.232). Comer cites the cult group “Heaven’s Gate” (p.232) mass suicide as acting “out of the belief that their deaths would free their spirits and enable them to ascend to a ‘Higher Kingdom” (p.232).

Death Darers

Comer (2011) cites Schneidman defining Death Darers those who “Experience mixed feelings, or ambivalence, in their intent to die even at the moment of their attempt, and they show this ambivalence in the act itself. Although to some degree they wish to die and they often do die, their risk-taking behavior does not guarantee death” (p.232).

Comer (2011) also cites Schneidman making a sub-classification for those individuals who play roles that are indirect, covert, partial, or unconscious into a category that is similar to suicide called “subintentional death” (p.232). Comer cites Schneidman as classifying people who are critically ill and chronic in their illness and mismanage their medication dosages regularly as possible examples. The reason for this not being classified as a suicidal category is that “Although their deaths may represent a form of suicide, their true intent is unclear” (p.233).

How is suicide understood in the scientific world? What do the statistics mean for me and my loved ones today? What events trigger an act of suicide? These questions will begin to be addressed beginning with the next installment. **ECL**



11 DAYS GREECE & THE GREEK ISLES IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF SAINT PAUL OCTOBER 20—30, 2015

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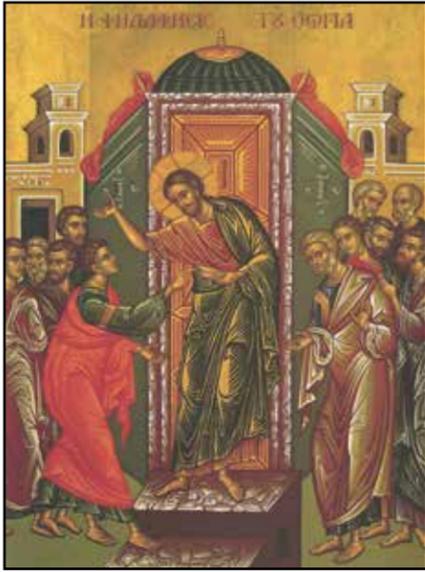
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Icon of Thomas Sunday

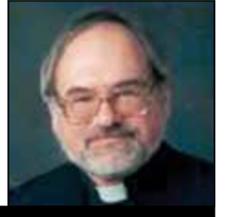
The four gospels contain many stories of the risen Jesus. These stories have two goals: first, to witness to the reality of the bodily resurrection of our Lord. He appears to them, eats with them, they are able to touch his body and they are able to see him and speak with him. In the Gospel of Saint Luke, Jesus tells his disciples: "Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have." And as he said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. (Luke 24:39-40)" This passage is important in the story of Thomas. Second, the risen Lord gives a mission to his disciples. They are to be the witnesses to his resurrection, and are to proclaim this good news and to establish and guide his Church. This is probably why the Lord chose twelve apostles. They represent the twelve tribes of Israel, in the church he was now establishing. In the Acts of the Apostles, Saint Peter declares that this is the mission of the apostles. At the election of Matthias to replace Judas, who had betrayed Jesus, he says, "Therefore, it is necessary that one of the men who accompanied us the whole time the Lord Jesus came and went among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day on which he was taken up from us, become with us a witness to his resurrection. (Acts 1:21-22)" This would become the mission of the Church for all time, as the Lord teaches in the Gospel of Matthew, "behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age

(Matthew 28:20)"

I don't often hear the question asked, but some believers might wonder: if the Lord is truly risen, why didn't he stay with the Church bodily to continually guide us? The reason, however, is fairly clear. If a risen human being stayed forever among us, he would have to become the physical Master of the kingdom. This would completely

THE BYZANTINE LITURGY

By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD



WITNESSES OF THE RESURRECTION: The Story of Thomas

change the nature of the kingdom of God established by our Lord's death on the Cross. When he was tried for treason and blasphemy, the Roman procurator asked Jesus if he was, indeed, as his accusers claimed, "a king." Jesus replied, "My kingdom does not belong to this world. If my kingdom did belong to this world, my attendants would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not here You say I am a king. For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice. (John 18:36-37)" Observe carefully that Jesus does not say that his kingdom is not in the world, only that it "does not belong to this world." The kingdom is real. It is all those who hear the word of Jesus, keep his commandments and belong to the truth. It is not a kingdom of worldly power, which might have happened if Jesus stayed bodily among us, though he is with us bodily by way of mystery, in Holy Communion. We are not distracted by the apparatus of a kingdom "of this world," but are free to be members of God's true kingdom in faith, in hope, and in love for one another.

When our Lord first appeared to his disciples, he gave them the mission to witness to the truth of his resurrection. The apostles began immediately to fulfill this mission, but at this first encounter with the risen Christ, Thomas was not with the other ten. In the subsequent story, Thomas represents all of the faithful who are to hear the good news of the Resurrection through the apostolic witness. He also images our problem, the inability to see the physical presence of the fleshy body of Jesus. The reaction of Thomas is to doubt: "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nailmarks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe. (John 20:25)" This expresses the dilemma that every one of us faces. This tension is resolved when Jesus appears again to the disciples, this time with Thomas present. To confirm the reality of the Resurrection, Jesus tells Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe. (John 20:27)"

The story, therefore, does not end in doubt, as the holy Apostle Thomas then makes the acts of faith which every believer must make, "My Lord and my God! (John 20:28)" The purpose of this story is now unveiled, and, speaking to all people (and to every one of us in particular), wherever and whenever, Jesus reveals the rock of faith of his kingdom, "Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed. (John 20:29)"

This appearance to Saint Thomas also reveals another mystery. When Jesus appears in his real, physical body, it has been glorified, yet retains the marks of his passion and death on the Cross, specifically, the marks made by the nails in his hands and feet and the wound of the lance in his side. This is because his passion and suffering are a part of his glory. They reveal for all time the infinite love of God for his creation. Jesus is the "lamb" of God, who has been sacrificed to destroy sin and bring unity between God and his people. Saint John saw this as a revelation from above, "Then I saw standing in the midst of the throne and the four living creatures and the elders, a Lamb that seemed to have been slain. (Revelation 5:6)" This tradition has been continued in the Divine Liturgy. When the priest prepares the bread that is to be consecrated, he cuts from the loaf a square piece called the "lamb" (Greek "ahnec"). He then thrusts a knife (called the liturgical lance) into the side of this square of bread, saying, "one of the soldiers pierced his side with a lance, and immediately there flowed out blood and water; and he who saw it has borne witness and his witness is true. (John 19:34-35)" The Communion that we receive, then, is bread that has become the risen, glorious body of Christ marked with the signs of his passion. This is an expression of our faith in the resurrection. Our own bodies, which are marked with signs of physical suffering and eventual death, or even marked with spiritual sufferings, share in the glory of the resurrection of Jesus. In the mysticism of the Western Church, this shows up in those very holy people, like Saint Francis of Assisi, who received the stigmata, the signs of the passion in their physical bodies. Indeed, Jesus will be with us always. **ECL**

ARTICLE SUBMISSION REQUEST

Does your parish have Feast Day events, fundraisers, community service projects, special liturgical services, or any other type of happening? Speak with your pastor and become your parish media liaison!

Articles can be emailed to the editor at:

ECL@dioceseofpassaic.org

Article Submission Requirements:

- Article must be approved by the pastor
- Article written in Microsoft Word
- Author's name
- Photographer's name
- Key people present in photographs

- Photographs preferred at a resolution of 300ppi, 150ppi minimum
- Photographs must be attached to an email; they may not be embedded in the body of the text.

Please Note Regarding Photos of Children:

We cannot publish photos containing only one child. Photos of children must be in groups of two or more.



SPIRITUAL REFLECTIONS

Deacon Lewis Rabayda

REFLECTING CHRIST TO THE WORLD

What is the “job” of the Christian? And what will help to rebuild a church that seems to be in remission in the North and West Hemispheres of the world? When we look around us while sitting in our pew, the state of the Church may seem dismal, especially in the North-Eastern parts of the country. The Churches were built to hold congregations much larger than what we experience now; they were built to accommodate the faithful communities of a post-industrial immigrant population in an ever growing nation of freedom. Those who filled these empty pews brought with them to their new country a deep faith that was lived out and practiced in the villages they left behind. In the villages of Transcarpathia, there were few alternate theologies and philosophies to entice people away from the True Faith. They knew their faith in Jesus Christ, they practiced it, and they prayed it in the fabric of their family and village lives.

Now, in the United States, we have a different landscape. While there is still immigration, we no longer have the huge waves of immigrants from Slavic lands like we did 100 years ago. And when we do, they don't exactly settle in the same towns and form small communities in which they can share a connection with the land and culture they left behind.

What we have lost, is this sense of community; both in our Slavic churches and in our towns and neighborhoods. Each generation has lost more of that sense of community, that sense of connectedness to something

larger than themselves, something that binds them to keeping the practice of the Faith. American individualism is not so much a choice, but an inherited trait that will not go away. It is our national duty as citizens of the greatest country on earth, to “be ourselves.” It is therefore unAmerican to participate in anything that is seen as an act of “masses” of people. The premise is: if one acts just how others act—more importantly, how our parents and grandparents act—then we cannot be exhibiting our freedom, and we must choose ideas and lifestyles that contradict those “outdated” ideals of the “old” masses, so that we blaze our own tail, tailor-made by no one else but our own malformed consciences.

The deteriorating sense of community in the new American life coupled with rejecting the “old” communities, has not led to a society of individuals as was promised. Instead, there is a deep need for each person to belong to something, to have a sense of community; this desire is built into us from our creation. God Himself is a communal being, He is not one, but Three in One. God created us to be with others, and when Jesus came to earth to lead us to salvation, He was constantly in community and only withdrew for periods of serious prayer. But when contemporary people choose to reject the communities they came from, they, in fact, end up replacing them with new ones. These new communities are built on a supposed sense of rationality and logical thinking. But instead, they are built on a rejection of rationality and revel

in misinformation and poor scholarship, and much less insightful wisdom of the totality of human experience.

In order for contemporary society to accept this new individualism, read, this new community of “masses” that is seen as an active choice of each of its members, they in turn must rationalize it to a point of where it is not only valid, but is indeed virtuous.

By rejecting the former communities built on Jesus Christ, contemporary people have built their own communities based on individualism, based on complete self-centeredness. They will deny this influence, because they see it as not being for the self, but that their ideals are based on what they perceive is good for others. And they do have a general concern for others, but it is not a concern of what is best for them in relation to their eternal salvation, but what is most comfortable for their earthly lives. Jesus said, “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon” Matt 6:24.

Contemporary news sources love to refer to the Bible when Jesus is speaking about loving one's neighbor and to show compassion, but they never bring up the hard decrees that Jesus Himself directed us to follow. Jesus is the God of love and compassion, but He also said, “Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword... and he who does not take

his cross and follow me is not worthy of me” Matt 10:34,38. This isn't such a “feel-good” passage that the media and contemporary people want to hear. They want to be affirmed in their newfound communities of individualism and told that whatever they choose is not only ok, but is celebrated.

So again, what is the “job” of the Christian? And how do we help to rebuild our churches? Our job is to reclaim and revitalize the communities where Christian ideals are known, upheld, and practiced. We are to wield swords of righteousness and shields of compassion. We are to love one another, beginning with our families, spreading to our church communities, and then to our neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces. We are to be the face of Christ to those who have not heard of His love and eternal salvation. Because, if we, the Christian community, do not show Christ in ourselves, then how can we evangelize the world? How can we reform the American sense of community if we are using our own power, opposed to the power of Jesus Christ? It is Christ who died for His Church, it is Christ who rose from the dead to bring everlasting life to the world. Who are we to keep it to ourselves, to our diminishing community, to our own home, and to our own individual conviction? Jesus is working through us and in us, we just have to get out of His way and accept His will, so He can complete the work He started. Christ is risen! Sin and death have been conquered! And the kingdom of heaven is upon us. **ECL**

UPCOMING EVENTS FOR MAY

Eparchial and Parish Events

*Christ is risen!
Indeed He is risen!!*

Eastern Catholic Life

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

8 Prayer Service at 4 p.m. to honor Blessed Miriam Teresa Demjanovich on her first Feast Day. Bishop Kurt presiding.
Holy Family Chapel of the Sisters of Charity, Convent Station, NJ

14 Holy Ascension of Our Lord
*Chancery closed * Holy Day of Obligation*

17 Tonsure and Ordination to Minor Orders of Deacon Candidates Michael P. Tisma and James Smith
Epiphany of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church, Roswell, GA, 10:00 a.m.

24 Pentecost * Tonsure and Ordination to Minor Orders of Deacon Candidate Edward Quinn
Saint John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church, Pottstown, PA, 10:30 a.m.

25 Pentecost Monday * Memorial Day
Chancery closed