

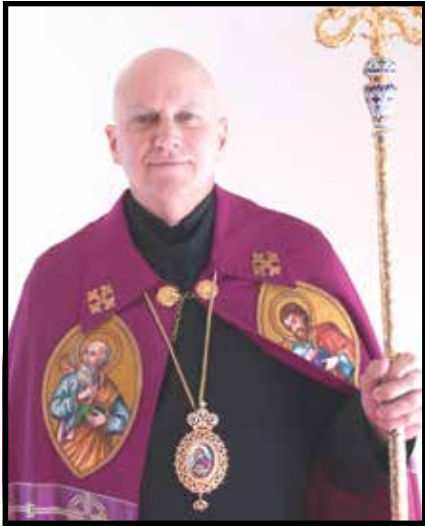


# EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

Official Publication of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic

VOL. LIV, NO. 2

FEBRUARY 2018



## CREATE IN ME, O GOD, A CLEAN HEART! Bishop Kurt's Reflection on the Beginning of the Great Fast

**“W**ho am I, Lord God, and who is my family that you have brought me this far?” King David prays this remarkable prayer when God reveals to him his exalted future, and the future of his family. King David was one of the most remarkable men in history. The smallest of his brothers, he was famous as a mighty warrior, a king, a prophet, a poet, a musician, a friend, a lover, and a penitent. Throughout his life, David gave praise to God for these many blessings. And for his great sins—he gave himself the blame. When David sinned greatly, he prayed, “Create in me, O God, a clean heart.” David was aware that he could not even repent except as a gift from God. He took the blame for his sin, but he gave God the credit for his repentance.

The most beautiful aspect of King David was not his many accomplishments, but his simple and straightforward heart. The prophet Samuel said about him, “the Lord has sought out a man after His own heart and appointed him ruler of his people.” When David was anointed king by Samuel at his father’s house in Bethlehem, the scriptures do not record that he said a single word.

The first time that David speaks is not about himself. When he visits the army encampment that is covering before the giant Goliath, David is incensed and cries out, “Who is this that he should defy the armies of the living God?” Even defeating Goliath, David gives the credit to the Lord. He tells Goliath, “You come against me with sword

and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, Whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hands, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord’s, and He will give all of you into our hands.”

Jesus is often called by the title “Son of David.” In his simplicity

ing wick He will not quench.” In Saint Matthew’s Gospel, we read that when his enemies plotted to kill Jesus, He withdrew peacefully from that place, and Saint Matthew says this is a fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah, “He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed He will not break, and a smoldering wick He will not quench.” Even when Jesus is facing the men who will hand him over for death, and the high priest says “I charge you under oath by the Living God, tell us if you are

ing, always complex. The depraved heart is always putting on an act, and the mask changes constantly. The depraved heart is never satisfied, never happy with itself, never happy with others, and angry at the happiness or success of others. The truth is simple and deceit is complicated.

The simple heart is compassionate. Saint Paul tells us, “rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.” The depraved heart on the other hand takes pleasure in the pain of others and is angry at their success. The simple heart is never lonely, finding companionship in everyone. The depraved heart is always lonely, because it is superior to everyone. I’ve heard more than one egotist say, “I like to sit back and enjoy being the most intelligent man in the room.” There is no question—pride is a lonely sin, and the humble are always in pleasant company.

When Hannah was childless, and her rival Penuel mocked her, their husband tried to comfort Hannah by saying, “I am enough for you.” But in her simplicity, Hannah went to God and begged for a child during their annual pilgrimage to Shiloh. Hannah was so unrestrained in her pleas that the priest there mistook her for a drunk. So, God blessed her with a child, and in her simplicity, she gave him back to God—the great prophet Samuel. Hannah gave full credit to God and sang out without inhibition, “My heart rejoices in God, and my horn is exalted in my God. He has made my mouth great over my enemies, because I have taken joy in your salvation... the bow of the mighty is broken and the weak are girt with strength. The ones who were full have hired themselves out for bread, and the hungry are filled. The barren have borne many... The Lord kills and makes alive, He makes the poor rich, and humbles the exalted. He raises up the needy from the dust, and the



Engraving of the Prophet David the King

of heart, David was an appropriate ancestor of our Lord, because Jesus says to us, “Learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest.” When Isaiah spoke about the coming Messiah (or Anointed One) he said, “a bruised reed He will not break, a smolder-

the Messiah, the Son of God,” Jesus replies by saying, “You have said it.”

What a beautiful virtue it is to have a simple heart! The depraved heart is never simple. It is always studying the angles, always grasping and acquiring, always manipul-

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# CREATE IN ME, O GOD, A CLEAN HEART!

*Continued from page 1*

poor from the dunghill: that he may sit among princes, and behold the throne of glory. For the poles of the earth are the Lord's and upon them He has set the world. He will guard the feet of the saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness, because no man may prevail by his own strength... The Lord shall judge the ends of the earth, and He shall give empire to His king, and shall exalt the horn of His Christ." Her son, the answer to her prayers, became one of the greatest prophets in history: Samuel, the kingmaker, who anointed both Saul and David.

The greatest person in the Bible, after God of course, is Mary, the mother of our Lord. Her simplicity of heart is astonishing. How seldom she speaks, and how piercing her words. When the Angel Gabriel reveals wondrous news to her, she replies, "Behold the servant of the Lord, be it done to me according to your words." When Elizabeth praises her as the "Mother of my Lord", Mary responds like Hannah with a poem of surpassing beauty, "My soul praises the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." At the wedding in Cana, before Jesus works the first of his

great signs and changes water into wine, Mary says to the steward, "Do whatever He tells you."

Lent has lost its popularity in the western world. Could it be because Lent is so simple, and the world now is so complicated? We are flooded with information from all over the world about great dramas being played out by people we never met and will never know. We are not satisfied with a few simple games that satisfied our relatives and built companionship, but rather we need to rent new games from the video game store or online. Our smart phones are constantly dinging with texts and alerts and updates. When I go to visit some people, the television is always on with cable news maintaining a constant level of fear and terror over the newest crisis, real or imagined. But Lent is so very simple. Lent means giving things up instead of getting more things. It starts with the simple idea of giving up food. We simplify our basic physical needs and limit our food. From there we can simplify other things as well. Turn off the twenty-four-hour news channel. Turn off the cell phone for part of the day. Stop checking things online.

And with the extra time, what might we do? We can spend time with the One who is important, the One who made us and watches over us, the One who desires us so lovingly. We can read the scriptures and the lives of the saints. We can help at church, or attend more services. This Lent, please simplify your life. Discipline your senses, and ask the kind and generous God to bless you in return with the gift of a simple heart, a heart whose only desire is to beat with the heart of God. Ask God for the gift of simplicity.

God tells us in the scriptures that we cannot give ourselves a simple heart, only He has the power to do that for us. He says through the prophet Ezekiel, "I will remove your heart of stone, and put in you a heart of flesh." King David in his repentance begs God, "Create in me a clean heart." This Lent, in the simplicity of fasting, beg God for a simple heart, a heart that does not deceive, a heart that is not greedy, a heart that rejoices in the good of others and weeps at their misfortunes, a heart that knows the best in others, a heart that is pure and simple. Pray to be like King David, a man after God's own heart.

+Kurt Bennette

## DIRECTIVES FOR THE GREAT FAST

*From the Office of the Bishop*



### FASTING REGULATIONS

- +All who receive Communion in the Eparchy of Passaic are required to abstain from meat on Wednesdays and Fridays of the Great Fast.
- +All adults who receive Communion in the Eparchy of Passaic are required to abstain from meat, eggs, and milk products on the first day of Lent, Monday, February 12, and on Great and Holy Friday, March 30.
- +These are the minimum requirements; however, the faithful are encouraged to do more.

#### Dispensation

+Pastors and Administrators may, for a just cause, grant to the individual faithful and to individual families, dispensations or commutations of the fasting rules into other pious practices.

### LITURGICAL DIRECTIVES

#### Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

- +All Pastors and Administrators are encouraged to celebrate the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts on Wednesdays and Fridays of the Great Fast.
- +A liturgical service at which Holy Communion is distributed may be celebrated on the other weekdays of the Great Fast.

We ask you to pray for peace throughout the world, and for the victims of war. Please remember in your prayers all those in the military who are serving our country throughout the world.

## LENTEN VESPERS SCHEDULE

### Wyoming Valley Protopresbyterate

- Sun., February 18, 2018..... Saint Michael, Pittston
- Sun., February 25, 2018..... Saint John, Wilkes-Barre Twp.
- Sun., March 4, 2018..... Saint Mary, Wilkes-Barre
- Sun., March 11, 2018 ..... Saint Nicholas Swoyersville
- Sun., March 18, 2018 ..... Saint Mary, Kingston

### Susquehanna Valley Protopresbyterate

- Sun., February 18, 2018..... Saint Mary, Scranton
- Sun., February 25, 2018..... Saint Nicholas, Old Forge
- Sun., March 4, 2018..... Saint Michael, Dunmore
- Sun., March 11, 2018 ..... Saint Mary, Taylor

*All Vespers will start at 3 PM and there will be light Lenten refreshments provided by the host parishes afterward.*





## ALTAR SERVER REPOSES IN THE LORD

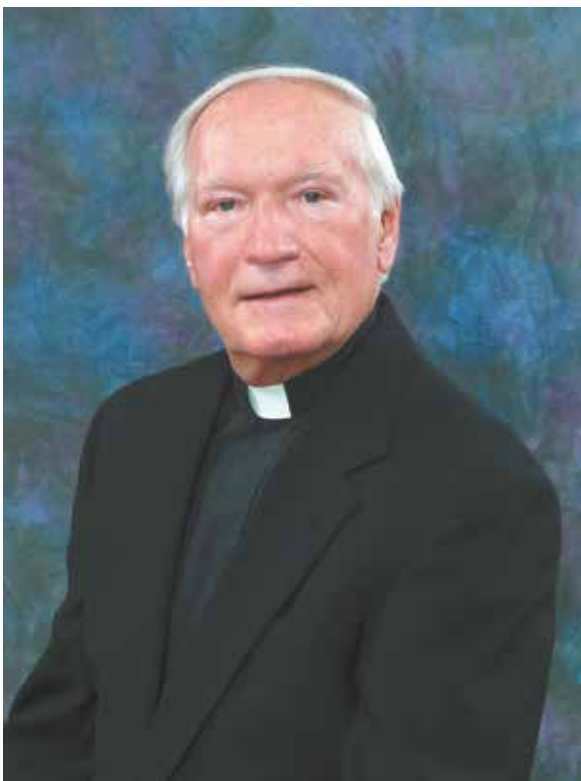
Harrisburg, PA

**E**lijah Francis Setlock, 18, of Annville, PA, died Tuesday, December 5, 2017, in Allegheny General Hospital, Pittsburgh, following an asthma episode in his dorm room at college.

Born in Hershey on April 7, 1999, he was the son of Bohdan Francis and Amy Jo Daugherty Setlock. He was a freshman at California University of Pennsylvania. In his younger years, Eli was a member of the Lebanon Valley Teener baseball team that won back to back State Championships. He was a 2017 graduate of Annville-Cleona High School where he was a dedicated athlete in soccer, golf, and baseball. In soccer, he was the second highest leading scorer in the history of the program and was named All Lebanon County as a junior and senior as well as a First Team All-star of the Lebanon-Lancaster League his senior year. In baseball, he was also named a First Team All-star of the Lebanon-Lancaster League as well as All Lebanon County. He had

just completed his freshman season with the California University soccer team. Eli was a member of Saint Ann Byzantine Catholic Church, Harrisburg, where he was an altar server. Eli enjoyed hunting, fishing, golfing, and goofing around with friends. Surviving in addition to his parents are a brother, Caleb R. Setlock, a sister, Danika P. Setlock, both at home; paternal grandmother, Lorraine A. Melnic Setlock, of Annville, and the late Ronald F. Setlock, maternal grandmother Janet M., wife of Rich Bonser of Annville, maternal grandfather, Gary R. Daugherty, and fiancée, Gail Rohland, of Lebanon, and many aunts, uncles, cousins, friends, and teammates.

The Funeral Divine Liturgy was celebrated on Saturday, December 16, 2017, at 11:00 AM at Saint Ann Byzantine Catholic Church, Harrisburg, PA, attended by over 350 loving family and friends. The clergy present were Eli's uncles, Msgr. James Melnic and Deacon John Setlock; Eli's cousin Father Charles Yastishock; and his pastor, Father Michael Popson; and 20 altar servers. A reception in the Church Social Hall was held following the service, followed by interment in Grand View Memorial Park, Annville.



## +FATHER JOHN H. SALKO, BORN IN THE EPARCHY OF PASSAIC, ENTERS ETERNAL REST

His early education was at the public schools in Coxeville and Hazleton, PA. He graduated from Hazleton High School on June of 1951. He attended Penn State University and Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, PA, where he earned the Bachelor of Arts Degree. After completing his studies at Saints Cyril and Methodius Seminary, Father John was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Nicholas T. Elko at Saint John Cathedral in Munhall, PA, on April 23, 1960.

His first parochial assignment was Assistant Pastor at Saint Mary Church in Trenton, NJ, where he served from May of 1960 to December of 1961. He then assumed the pastorate of Saint John the Baptist Church, Scottsdale, PA, where he would fulfill his priestly obligations until his retirement on December 15, 2016. He was also the Protopresbyter (Dean) of the Mon-Valley Protopresbyterate from 1996 to 2013.

When Saint John Parish celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1962, the ceremony was highlighted by the breaking of ground for a new church, and Thanksgiving Day, 1971, saw the first Divine Liturgy celebrated in this beautiful new edifice for worship. Father John was responsible for developing the entire complex and, in 1979, he created a shrine to Our Lady of the Highways on the front lawn of the church.

He was preceded in death by his brothers: Robert, William, Andrew, Joseph, and two who died in infancy. He is survived by his sister-in-law, Berdene Salko, and his nieces and nephews: Kathleen Dziak, Nadine Donahue, Robert Salko, Richard Salko, and many great-nieces and great-nephews.

**F**ather John Harry Salko, a retired priest of the Archeparchy of Pittsburgh, fell asleep in the Lord on Friday, December 8, 2017. The son of the late Andrew and Ann O'Hazzo Salko, he was born on May 30, 1933 in Coxeville, PA.

### EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

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# PEOPLE YOU KNOW AROUND THE EPARCHY

## IN CARY...

*Parish Holds Tenth Annual Christmas Market*

Parishioners from Saints Cyril and Methodius Parish in Cary, NC, busied themselves moving freezers full of pirohi and kielbasa, boxes of nut rolls, merchandise from Old World craftsmen, and generally preparing to host their tenth Saint Nicholas European Christmas Market. Months of planning, cooking, and baking had come to a close and now they would find out if the relocation of the fundraiser from outdoors on the small church property to the state fairgrounds was the right move.

The weather on the December 8 weekend was a mix of sleet, snow, and rain; thankfully, with the Holshouser Building providing shelter and heat, the crowds poured in. Soon delicious smells drifted from

the grills, Rince Go Halainn Irish Dance Academy dancers tapped and twirled, Saint Nicholas greeted toddlers and seniors alike. People from all around the Raleigh area were able to purchase *matry-oshka* nesting dolls, hand-carved walking sticks, mustards, straw ornaments, vintage handmade tapestries, almond cakes, stollens, puzzles, scarves, and more. The Little German Band serenaded the customers as they ate their hearty Slavic lunch or sipped mulled wine with a slice of cake. Father Mark Shuey, parish administrator, and volunteers chatted with those who stopped by the church information booth. The prayers and efforts of all involved had successfully spread a bit of Advent and Christmas tradition!



*Father Mark Shuey and visitors*



*Saint Nicholas with market manager, Nancy Driscoll*



*A group of young ladies surveys the desserts*



*Irish dancers in traditional costumes*



*The alpenhorns of the Little German Band*

## IN VIRGINIA BEACH...

*A Visit from Bishop Kurt*

On Sunday, January 21, Bishop Kurt visited Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in Virginia Beach, VA. He celebrated the Divine Liturgy, which concluded with blessing of new vestments. Bishop Kurt gave an inspirational homily, thanking the congregation for their support.



*Second row, left to right: Reader Joe Bernard, Father Alex Shuter, Deacon Daniel Wolf, Altar server Mark Liedl. Front row, left to right: Michael P., Bishop Kurt, Eben M.*



*Bishop Kurt distributes the Body and Blood of Our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ*



*The newly-blessed vestments*

# NJ AREA CHURCHES DAMAGED DUE TO UNFORGIVING COLD WEATHER

As the Northeast was suffering unrelent- ing, bitterly cold weather for a few weeks, on Wednesday, January 3, 2018, Glenn Sedar, a parishioner of Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church in Hillsborough, NJ, was exiting the church after having attended the weekly Moleben celebrated in the rectory chapel. As he was leaving, he decided to go up to the front of the church to venerate the icon on the tetrapod. When he got to within 3 feet of the tetrapod, he realized he was standing in water! He alerted Father Jim Badeaux, the pastor of Saint Mary Parish, and parishioners, Elias Zareva and John Esock, who sprang into action with shop vacs, aided by the parish maintenance man, Mark Vinchur.

A hot water pipe from the heating system had burst in the wall of the church behind the altar.

Immediately realizing that they needed to turn off the water, they called the fire department, who arrived and accomplished that important task. After beginning the cleanup of the water with shop vacs, they noticed that the icons in the holy place were in danger of being destroyed, not only from being drenched in water by the burst pipe, but also by the plumber, who would need to chop through them to get to the broken hot water pipe.

By Divine Providence, the iconographer, Austin Kachek, lives in Manville, NJ, five minutes away from the parish, and he was able to come that evening and the entire next day, working feverishly to remove the icons from the walls to save them. With God's grace, he was successful and the icons are temporarily stored offsite un-

til the root cause for the pipe failure can be addressed and the wall patched up.

Father Jim Badeaux, the pastor, is grateful to the hardworking parishioners who worked so diligently that evening to keep from turning into a disaster what was an already difficult situation.

Other parishes were also affected by the cold. Nativity of Our Lord in East Brunswick had pipes burst in the ceiling of the church due to the cold and a water pipe burst at the Carpathian Village, which will not be able to fixed until spring due to the frozen ground!

*If anyone else had damage at the parish(es) from the recent spate of unusually cold weather, the ECL would gladly publish photos and a synopsis of what occurred.*



Damage to the parish in East Brunswick



**Knight of Columbus Council # 1146**  
*Dance to be held at St Thomas Hall*  
*Rahway, New Jersey 07065*




## Valentine's Dance

### Saturday, February 10, 2018

### 7:00pm to 11:00pm

**Featuring the live sounds of "Family Tradition"**  
 A local band that will have you on your feet all night long  
 Join us for an evening of great music and lots of fun!

**Buffet Dinner will be served at 7:30 p.m.**

**Admission is \$25.00 per person**  
**Price includes:**  
 Buffet dinner, soda, coffee/tea, dessert  
 (Cash Bar – Beer & Wine)  
**SORRY – no BYOB's allowed**

Tickets are limited...so get your sweetie and your best pals together and make your reservations early! Advanced ticket sales are preferred.  
 Tables of 8 will be reserved for larger parties.

**NO ONE UNDER THE AGE OF 21 WILL BE ADMITTED**  
**Call Deacon Charlie Laskowski at 908-821-2296 or**  
**Bob Devitt at 908-636-9891**







## 2018 ALL NIGHT VIGIL FOR LIFE

Washington, DC

Written by Christian Braunlich, photos by Father Lewis Rabayda, Jonathan Aponick, Christopher LoGrippe, and Lillian Baron

The All-Night Vigil for Life at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception first began 38 years ago, but formal Byzantine-Ruthenian involvement in the vigil did not begin until the 1990's, when Bishop Andrew Pataki became Bishop of Passaic. As a member of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Secretariat for Pro-Life Concerns, when the USCCB resolved to turn over a part of the vigil to Eastern Catholics, Bishop Andrew suggested that Byzantine Catholics should be given the place of "prayer to open the vigil."

Since then, the Byzantine-Ruthenian Church has anchored the vigil with the Order of Compline, offering Eastern Catholics a familiar prayer service of quiet contemplation in preparation for the next day's March for Life. It is also an introduction for many Roman Catholics to one of Eastern Catholicism's most beautiful services. In fact, on leaving, many ask for extra copies of the service booklet, commenting on the "beautiful prayers" they want to share with friends.

Conducted in the Basilica's evocative Crypt Church, Compline attracts nearly 300 of the faith-

ful from both Eastern and Western Churches, including a large number of priests, seminarians, and other religious. When the allocated time was doubled, Bishop William Skurla, then Bishop of Passaic, added a homilist to the program.

Among those homilists have been Ukrainian Greek Catholic Archbishop Stefan Soroka, Metropolitan Archbishop of Philadelphia, whose homily remains on the USCCB website; bi-ritual Bishop Peter Libasci, Bishop of Manchester, NH, who once frequently substituted at Saint Andrew the Apostle Byzantine Catholic Church in Westbury, NY; and Bishop Gregory Mansour, Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Maron in Brooklyn, NY.

This year's Compline was no different. With details overseen by Father John Basarab and the Slava Men's Choir, cantors, and ushers from Epiphany of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church in Annandale, VA, Bishop Kurt was again the celebrant, joined by Bishop Milan Lach, Apostolic Administrator of the Eparchy of Parma. More than 6 priests and 4 seminarians from Saints Cyril and Methodius Seminary in Pittsburgh.

The homilist, Archbishop Leonard Blair, Archbishop of Hartford, CT, acknowledged the vital role of the Eastern Church, referencing the "Slavic Pope," Saint John Paul II's oft-quoted admonition that "the Church must breathe with two lungs" – the East and the West. Archbishop Blair applauded those who had come to participate in the March for Life, encouraging them to repudiate the current "culture of death" by becoming more like Christ.

In what has become an annual ritual, many March for Life pilgrims gathered the next morning at Epiphany with Bishop Kurt, Bishop Milan, and 13 other clergy for a Divine Liturgy giving thanks for the Gift of Life. This was followed by a brunch provided by Epiphany parishioners, where attendees watched early reports on EWTN, before heading off to join 100,000 for the 45th annual March for Life, praying for the day when there would be no need for such a March.



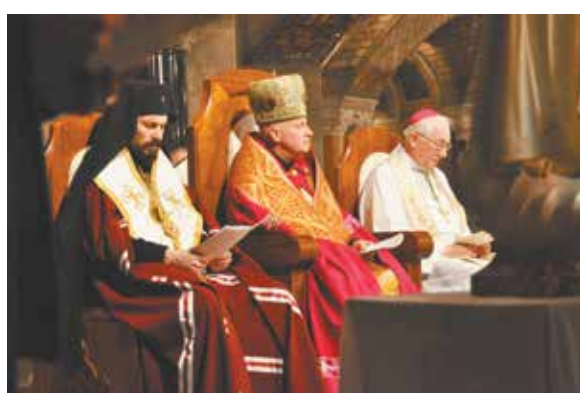
Archbishop Leonard Blair, Bishop Kurt, Bishop Milan, Deacon Peter Turko



The Slava Men's Choir of Epiphany of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church in Annandale, VA



The faithful sing Compline



Bishop Milan, Bishop Kurt, and Archbishop Leonard Blair



Archbishop Leonard Blair gives the homily



Seminarian Michael Kunitz (Eparchy of Parma); Deacon Peter Turko; Father Nathaniel Block (Diocese of Gallup, NM); Father G. Scott Boghosian; Father John G. Basarab, pastor of Epiphany Parish; Bishop Kurt; Bishop Milan, Apostolic Administrator of the Eparchy of Parma; Monsignor George Dobes; Father Frank Hanincik; Father Lewis Rabayda; Deacon Elmer Pekarik; Seminarian Timothy Farris; Lector Jack Figel; Seminarian Eugene Yeo (Archeparchy of Pittsburgh)



Father Lewis Rabayda and Marlene McCracken prepare to sing the Akathist to the Theotokos across the street from the Supreme Court during the March For Life

**SAINT ANN BYZANTINE CATHOLIC CHURCH**  
Harrisburg, PA  
Parish Education Calendar: Spring 2018

**Saturday February 17, 2018** from 10 AM - 3 PM: Pysanky Workshop taught by Maria Cicarelli and assisted by Keith Koshute. Fee: \$5 per family, includes materials.

**Wednesday February 21, 2018** Same session given at Noon AND 6 PM followed by prayer: Parish Lenten Education session with Fr. Jim Spera "Living As Missionary Disciples" (snow date Wednesday Feb 28)

**Saturday March 3, 2018** from 11:30 AM - 3 PM: Parish Education Day on End-of-Life Issues and Ethics with Mr. Dominic Lombardi

**Sunday March 25, 2018** at 9 AM: Palm Sunday & The Feast of the Annunciation Liturgy followed by Parish Brunch and Easter Egg Hunt

**Saturday June 2, 2018** from 10 AM - 3 PM: Parish Education Day with Fr. Alexei Michalenko with Sr. Victoria and Sr. Mary Ann of the Community of the Mother of God of Tenderness (CMGT), "Living As Missionary Disciples"

All programs take place at St. Ann Byzantine Catholic Church, 5408 Locust Lane, Harrisburg, PA 17109. For more details on events, location, or speakers, please contact Angela Sedun at StAnnByzEvents@gmail.com or at 717-490-1284.

**COME JOIN US AT THE 31st ANNUAL SLAVONIC FESTIVAL AT**

**ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE Byzantine Catholic Church Parish Center**  
1407 St. Georges Ave. Rahway, New Jersey

**Saturday, February 3, 2018**  
12:00 NOON TO 9:00 PM  
FOR INFORMATION CALL: 732-382-5300  
FREE ADMISSION AND PARKING

---

**FOOD SPECIALTIES**  
Pirohi, Haluski, Holupki, Palacinka  
Potato Pancakes, Beef Goulash,  
Chicken Paprikash, Funnel Cakes,  
Kielbasi Subs, Bratwurst Subs &  
Homemade "Slavic Burgers"

**International Live Music**  
*The Adlers Band*  
2:30-5:30 PM & 6:30-8:30 PM  
<http://www.theadlersband.com>  
Come and Dance at the Festival!

---

**Festival Activities:**  
Ethnic Foods are served in (3) Areas:  
⇒ Cafeteria Style Dinners  
⇒ Picnic Window  
⇒ Take Out Window  
⇒ Church Tours will be available

**WHEELS & GAMES**  
50/50 RAFFLE  
Religious Articles Gift Shop  
Beer, Wine & Soda

**Divine Liturgy served at 5:30pm**

**COME ONE AND ALL LENTEN RETREAT**  
Saturday, February 17, 2018

**RETREAT DIRECTOR:**  
FATHER JAMES SPERA

*As we enter this Holy Season, it is our pleasure to invite our faithful parishioners and guests to Saint Thomas Parish Center for a Retreat to help us find spiritual meaning in preparation for Holy Pasch.*

**Presented by: ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE CHURCH-**  
The retreat will be held in the church and parish center –  
1407 St. Georges Ave. Rahway, NJ Office # 732-382-5300

**Admission: Free**

**PROGRAM**

**Saturday, February 17 2018**

12:30 PM - REGISTRATION AND SOCIAL  
12:45 PM - LUNCH  
1:30 PM - FIRST SESSION  
2:15 PM - BREAK  
2:30 PM - SECOND SESSION  
3:15 PM - BREAK  
3:30 PM - FINAL SESSION  
4:15 PM - REFLECTION AND CONFESSION  
5:30 PM - VIGIL LITURGY CELEBRATED BY FATHER JAMES SPERA

**RETREAT ENDS ~ 6:45 PM**

Please RSVP by Feb. 10th, so we can prepare for the meals accordingly.  
Call: Deacon Dr. Tom Shubeck 973-635-6354 or  
Deacon Charles Laskowski 908-518-0107

# ASK A PRIEST A QUESTION

Father Vasyl Chepelsky



## A HEALTHY REMEMBRANCE OF DEATH

*How not to be afraid of death and be prepared for it? Can remembrance about death be healthy?*

When we look on the clock—the arrows continue to run forward, each moment which was in the future is changed by another; it becomes present and then it becomes past so quickly. Those moments are not possible to recover; they become past. We can hold on to them in our memories and thoughts, but are unable to enter them again, to change anything or to live them again. That is why the ancient philosopher Heraclius said his famous phrase: *πάντα ῥεῖ* (*panta rhei*), “Everything flows” and “you cannot step twice into the same river.” We are subjected to time, we are born in time, we live in time, and at a certain time we die. “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to be born and a time to die...,” says the Book of Ecclesiastes (cf. Ecclesiastes, 3:1-8).

We all come to this world as guests and we have to remember about our destiny. Saint Augustine nicely put it: “I came from You, O Lord, and my heart is restless until it rests in Thee.” Every day we have to remember that Jesus called us to come back to our Heavenly Father, and each day takes us closer to meet Him. Each life is a mystery, a gift from God, a blessing. Each person begins his life journey, when God gives life and God calls back when the time comes. That is why Saint Francis De Sales said: “Let God gather what He planted for He takes nothing out of season.”

Of all human experiences, none is more overwhelming in its implications than death. Yet, we tend to push death to the periphery of our lives. Where death is concerned, the adage “What you don’t know won’t hurt you” is false, say Lynne Ann DeSpelder and Albert Lee Strickland, the authors of the “Last Dance,” a book on encountering death and dying. The language to describe the dead person and death in last decades is often very indirect. The words dead and dying tend to be avoided; instead loved ones “pass away,” the deceased is “laid to rest,” burial becomes “internment,” the tombstone is a “monument” and the

undertaker is transformed into “funeral director.” But even if we “forget” about death, even if we push memories about it into our subconsciousness, it still continues to affect us and our lives, often—without us realizing it. Then we are at risk of putting wrong priorities in life, facing death much more unprepared and having many regrets about things we could have done.

At one time or another in our lives, we have all had to deal with the emotion of fear. Perhaps we can remember how we were afraid of the dark and how our mother or father would have to lead us into the dark room and turn on the light to show us that there was really nothing in the room that could harm us. As we think about the things we were are afraid of, or the circumstances which arouse fear in us, we realize that what we are actually afraid of is that we do not know what to expect. We always feel uncomfortable with the unexpected or the unknown. This is also true when we talk about death. Most people are afraid of it because of the unknown they have to face.

Death is an unavoidable part of human existence. It entered human history because of sin. It was not part of God’s plan in creation. Very often when people hear about death, they do not feel comfortable. Many of our contemporaries prefer not to discuss it, not to think about it, and pretend as if it never comes. For this reason, “People live as if they never die, and they die as if they never lived,” as the saying goes.

*Can remembrance of death be healthy? How not to be afraid of death? Is it even possible?*

Death always seems to us unjust and cruel. It takes away somebody we love. It always brings sadness, separation. It is natural to mourn and to be sad if somebody from the family or a close friend dies. Jesus cried when He heard that His friend Lazarus had died (cf. John, 11:35). He did not rejoice in the fact of death of His friend; He expressed natural human reaction. While Saint Paul does say in 2 Cor. 5:8, “I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with

the Lord,” it is not common and very often it may not be healthy today for an average person to look forward to death or desire it. It might even indicate some internal psychological problems if one desires to die, and may indicate the presence of certain psychological traumatic experiences which took place in the life of a person. It is more complex than it appears to be at first and could easily be a topic for another presentation. Remembrance of death—*mneme thanatou*—on the other hand, is healthy and helpful. It allows us to concentrate on what is important in life. It is reflected in the teachings of the Fathers. This remembrance brings sadness when we are afraid and not ready to die, but by accepting the fragility of life and trusting God, we are ready to accept the last part of life, which is death. It stimulates our efforts to live and to achieve something. “This fundamental ascetic practice consists of the individual continually remembering that he is mortal and might die at any moment. To this ‘remembrance of death’ is attached the counsel often formulated by the Fathers that one should ‘live as if each day was one’s last,’ a counsel which is not so much about preparing a man to die well as to live well. The ‘remembrance of death’ has as its principal purpose to help man not squander the precious time given to him for the saving of his soul; to allow him, in the words of Saint Paul, to ‘redeem the time’ (Eph. 5:16), and so to live each moment with maximum spiritual intensity, avoid sin, practice the commandments, and give himself totally to God” (cf. Larchet, *Mental Disorders*, pp. 119-120). The Knights of Columbus’ fraternal motto is very explicit in this regard: “*Tempus Fugit, Memento Mori*,” which means: “Time Flies, Remember Death.” According to John P. Martin, the Grand Knight of Council 14557, New Bedford, Massachusetts, “The Knights of Columbus are called to constantly reflect on the fact that we have only a short earthly existence in which to prove ourselves worthy of eternal life.” This remembrance helps us to set right priorities in life, to live each day to the fullest, to enjoy each moment, knowing it is unrepeatable. Each person is a flower God planted in the earthly garden for a

## CANTOR INSTITUTE ANNOUNCES COMPREHENSIVE SINGING PROGRAM

Deacon Jeffrey Mierzejewski

Over the past two years, the Metropolitan Cantor Institute has been experimenting with ways to provide cantor education throughout the United States. Based on our experiences, we are inaugurating a comprehensive program beginning in 2018, aimed at ensuring that every parish in the Byzantine Catholic Church has a cantor who can lead the liturgical singing of the parish well, to the glory of God, and in support of the prayer of the faithful.

The new program consists of online classes using the Internet combined with local mentoring where available, and an optional week-

long summer program in Pittsburgh. All classes are taught each year (some twice per year), allowing students to complete the work at their own pace. New students can enter the program in January or July, and complete the entire program in as little as two years.

Two classes are free, open to the public, and can be taken at any time: Introduction to Liturgy and Introduction to the Typikon. Students can register for further courses by submitting a registration form and the course tuition (usually \$75.00 for each eight week course, with discounts available). Course tuition allows us to engage trained voice teachers who are also

cantors to review student work and provide feedback.

We recommend that ALL cantors consider taking the initial class, Introduction to Church Singing, which starts in January. This class covers the essentials of vocal production, the basics of music theory for cantors, and the fundamentals of reading music, and also provides an essential introduction to rhythm and duch (spirit) of our plain chant.

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while, but from the beginning His plan was for us to be in the heavenly garden, together with Him.

The monks of the monastic order of Trappists always greet each other: *"Memento Mori"*—"Remember about Death." Very often many of our contemporaries ask the question: "Is there life after death?" As believers, we know this life exists. We can even rephrase the question: "Is there life before death?" Do we do everything we can to live our life fully? To enjoy each moment God gives us as a gift? Because Jesus says: "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." Let us live our life the way Jesus expects us: doing good, loving others, praying and fulfilling our obligations... because this life is a journey to another life—a life we are called to from the very beginning. We came from God and we have to return to our Creator. Our whole life is the trip back home to our Heavenly Father. For some of us this trip lasts many years; for others it is a shorter period. It is not up to us to begin our own life, and none of us knows when it is going to come to an end. This period of time we are given is an opportunity to love God and people, to do good on earth, and to grow in love. How do we use this time? Do we love enough? How can we become better spouse, parent, neighbor, co-worker, Christian?

Saint Gregory the Theologian says, as Christians we undergo three births. The first is our physical birth from our mother, when we are born into the life of this world. The second is our Baptism, when we are reborn through water and the Holy Spirit as members of the Body of Christ. The third birth is the Resurrection, when all of us hope to be born anew into the Kingdom of Heaven.

When we think about one's physical birth, we know the baby usually feels very comfortable in the womb of its mother and considers it the best place to be. We all know, there is a lot of stress and shock for that baby to be born, to "lose" the comfort zone, to face the unknown. It is like "dying" for it, because everything familiar that it was accustomed to is in the past, when the moment of birth comes: the warmth, the nourishment, etc. Nevertheless, we also know, it is only the beginning of the wonderful journey called life which the baby knows nothing about yet. The same with the physical death—it seems like we are losing the comfort zone we are accustomed to, we face the unknown, which scares us, but the beautiful journey is ahead of us, and we are about to start our adventure and our real life to which we were destined from the beginning.

We all have fears, things we are afraid of. As children we were afraid of the dark. Many things, or even a thought about them, can scare us today. We all are scared of death: when will it come? Will I be prepared? The more I teach a course on Death and Dying the more I hear from my students that what scares them about death is the fear of the unknown. We all are scared of the unknown. One story illustrates this point and helps us in our reflection today: "A sick man turned to his doctor, as he was leaving the room after paying a visit, and said, 'Doctor, I am afraid to die. Tell me what lies on the other side.' Very quietly the doctor said, 'I don't know.' 'You don't know?' the man said. 'You, a Christian man, do not know what is on the other side?' The doctor was holding the handle of the door, on the other side of which came a sound of scratching and whining. As he opened the door, a dog sprang into the room and leaped on him with an eager show of

gladness. Turning to the patient, the doctor said, 'Did you notice my dog? He's never been in this room before. He didn't know what was inside. He knew nothing except that his master was here, and when the door opened, he sprang in without fear. I know little of what is on the other side of death,' the doctor continued, 'but I do know one thing: I know my Master is there, and that is enough. And when the door opens, I shall pass



*Icon of the Resurrection of Our Lord*

through with no fear, but with gladness.”

I often encourage my students in the course on Death and Dying to make a visit to the cemetery and once there, to allow some time for reflection and absorbing the experience, to pay attention to their thoughts as they walk there, and to write a reflection about how this experience of visiting affected them. They find it very helpful and share great stories about it, it brings to them questions they never asked themselves before, it helps them to deal more effectively with the unknown...

We think of death as separation and, while it is true, it is also a union—with our loving God. Saint Paul helps us to understand what awaits us: "What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived... the things God has prepared for those who love Him," (cf. 1 Cor. 2:9). So now death becomes a step between this life and the life eternal. Our whole life is a journey back Home, a place we came from, the Father's House.

When we die, we are going to meet our God, Somebody Who is complete Love; Somebody Who is our Creator; Somebody, Who said: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart." This will be a meeting with our God, where all of our questions will be answered, where all of our fears will disappear, where we will be surrounded by light and love we could not possibly imagine existed.

Let us look on our life as a big adventure, a great journey God gave us a ticket for by giving us life, and let us remember—one day we all are going to reach the destination of that journey. As we live this life, God forbid we do not do good to those around us, since we travel this road only once.

Every time I visit the parish cemetery at Saint John's in Summit Hill, PA, I pass by a grave with the following inscription: "Weep not for me, friendly passerby, I have begun to live, you have yet to die!"

Once I was next to the dying man, and asked him, how did he feel about what is coming next? His answer was: "I am ready and I am in peace." While it is always sad to see one die, there is a sense of something deeply spiritual and profound, if one could face his own death with peace and acceptance and to know that it is just a step into another life.

While this personal experience can be the most intimidating, and raises so many different questions, the following story sheds some light how to approach it in a positive way and to look at it from a different perspective. "In a mother's womb were two babies. One asked the other: 'Do you believe in life after delivery?' The other replied, 'Why, of course. There has to be something after delivery. Maybe we are here to prepare ourselves for what we will be later.' 'Nonsense,' said the first. 'There is no life after delivery. What kind of life would that be?' The second said, 'I don't know, but there will be more light than here. Maybe we will walk with our legs and eat from our mouths. Maybe we will have other senses that we can't understand now.' The first replied, 'That is absurd. Walking is impossible. And eating with our mouths? Ridiculous! The umbilical cord supplies nutrition and everything we need. But the umbilical cord is so short. Life after delivery is to be logically excluded.' The second insisted, 'Well, I think there is something and maybe it's different from it is here. Maybe we won't need this physical cord anymore.' The first replied, 'Nonsense. And moreover, if there is life, then why no one has ever come back from there? Delivery is the end of life, and in the after-delivery there is nothing but darkness and silence and oblivion. It takes us nowhere.' 'Well, I don't know,' said the second, 'but certainly we will meet Mother and she will take care of us.' The first replied 'Mother? You actually believe in Mother? That's laughable! If Mother exists then where is She now?' The second said, 'She is all around us. We are surrounded by her. We are of Her. It is in Her that we live. Without Her this world would not and could not exist.' Said the first: "Well I don't see Her, so it is only logical that She doesn't exist." To which the second replied, 'Sometimes, when you're in silence and you focus and you really listen, you can perceive Her presence, and you can hear Her loving voice, calling down from above,' (cf. [http://www.stjosephparishhanover.org/site/1611stjo/Homily\\_Transfiguration\\_of\\_the\\_Lord.pdf](http://www.stjosephparishhanover.org/site/1611stjo/Homily_Transfiguration_of_the_Lord.pdf)).

We are the children of God, and one day we all just will be reborn to another life, a life, which we were destined to from the very beginning.

As human beings we constantly live in search, our human minds always wander about things, trying to find explanation and understanding. The quest for integral human fulfillment and our own destiny, other more or less important matters can leave us with many questions. In our lives it is very important to find right answers to all the questions we have. Especially it is important when it concerns our faith and our spiritual journey. Finding the truth and getting a right answer is always liberating and helps us to make better choices, it brings us inner peace. It can be life changing. **ECL**

*If you have ever wondered what Catholics really believe or just questioned "why is that?" about a certain topic, you now have the opportunity to find out.*

*We look forward to your many questions... so ask away!*

# CATECHETICAL REFLECTIONS

Father Robert F. Slesinski, Ph.D.



## MAN BEFORE GOD

### Being in its Unfolding: The Primacy of Being in All Things—Installment 1/9

In our marveling at the very mystery of ourselves finding ourselves—not due to ourselves—in the world—being-in-the-world—we affirm our own existence, that somehow it has come to us, indeed, is a true *gift* to ourselves, ultimately coming to us “from without”—from empirical forces, from parents, from God?...we can only begin to opine. Our wonder before being, as we have already stated, marks all our reflection on *be-ing*, on being existent in the world of objects and persons. The word itself “existence” bespeaks the *is-ness* of being with our own existence emerging from the backdrop of being itself, our selves *standing forth* from other existing beings (Lat. *ex-forth*, *sistere*-to stand), in this way rendering us subsisting beings in our own right, standing firm (*sub-sistere*) under our own weight, as it were, at once, free-standing from others, however co-dependent on them we may be at the same time.

Our existing as subsistent beings, however, does not render us as “things.” I am not a “thing,” but a *presence*, a being-not-only-for-myself, but also a being-for-others, my very being enjoying “personality,” not a mere “thingness.” And just as I can proclaim that “I am,” in the presence of others, we equally know “we are,” inchoately

knowing ourselves and others as “persons,” and not merely some impersonal being or blunt object subject to empirical observation alone. But as persons, we know we come from somewhere. We know we come from parents (test tube and cloned embryos excluded), who in turn come into the world from parents, on down the line. Does this process ever end, we ask ourselves? Logically, we find ourselves in a *regressus ad infinitum* (an infinite regress), endlessly questioning for an ultimate justification for personal existence, contingent beings like ourselves in the end needing a Necessary Being that stands apart from the endless series of causes that have made our existences possible in the first place. Thus we intuitively grasp that there must be some *ipsum esse* (existence itself) that founds the causal process, an Uncaused Cause, as it were. This Being Itself we call God. This intuitive grasping, it must be stressed, is not the end result of some “demonstration” or “logical proof,” but one of true intellectual *insight*. Being be-ings we intuitively know there must ultimately be an Absolute Being that founds all being, a foundational truth thereby being grasped. Just acknowledging ourselves as contingent beings, as *creatures*, we know we *belong* to being and are grateful for this belonging and, in the end, praise the Creator himself, Abso-

lute Being in his Unfathomable Glory.

In St. Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians, in one passage we read that “we are truly His [God’s] handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to lead the life of good deeds which God prepared for us in advance” (Eph 2:10). This is a clear acknowledgment of our being the result of an Author of all, a Creator being the *efficient* cause of our being, we being beholden to him. Elsewhere St. Paul also remarks that “when, finally, all has been subjected to the Son, He will then subject Himself to the One who made all things subject to Him, so that *God may be all in all*” (1 Cor 15:28, emphasis added). In this fashion, we grasp how the purpose of our existence is the ultimate glorification of Almighty God, the *final* cause of our human striving, its ultimate fulfillment. Or in the moving words of St. Augustine, “Great art Thou, O Lord, and greatly to be praised; great is Thy power, and infinite is Thy wisdom...Thou hast made us for Thyself and restless is our heart until it comes to rest in Thee” (*Confessions*, Bk I, I, 1). Thus, we affirm and glorify a Primal Being, the Cause of all beings (persons and things) to Whom is due all honor and glory for all time. **ECL**



## LIFE, LOVE, AND THE HUMAN PERSON

By Ann M. Koshute, MTS

### PUTTING SIN IN ITS PLACE

These days sin gets a bad rap. No, I haven’t fallen off the theological deep end. Here’s what I mean: in his second letter to Timothy (4:3,4), the Apostle Paul warns, “...the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine but, following their own desires and insatiable curiosity, will accumulate teachers and will stop listening to the truth and will be diverted to myths.” In other words, people won’t follow God’s word, or will bend it to suit their interpretation of reality. Truth will be changeable, depending on one’s circumstances or feelings. A time will come when what’s considered *sinful* will be thought neutral, or even *good*. The very notion of *sin* will become an antiquated belief of the unenlightened. Sin will “get a bad rap” by being downgraded, becoming a word we mustn’t use because it judges others, and makes us feel personally uncomfortable. While the Apostle only identified a “time to come,” he could’ve been addressing us. That *time*, unfortunately, is *now*.

Sin is getting a bad rap because we’re not giving it its due. We often dismiss it as breaking irrelevant rules that stifle our freedom. Fundamentally, sin is not so much “breaking rules,” but a *break in relationships*: our relationship with God, with others, and an inner fracturing of ourselves. Of course, sin is “breaking rules” like the Com-

mandments, or ignoring our responsibility to be merciful and charitable; it’s openly defying God. Yet God didn’t create us for rules; He created us for *Love*. The “rules” are in place to help us to love well and completely – to love as God loves, and allow ourselves to be loved. God makes rules not to rein us in, but so that we’ll flourish; not to keep us in line, but to protect us from spiritual, emotional and physical harm.

Don’t be misled by the emphasis on *love over rules*, thinking it’s watering down the Faith, or an easier way. In some ways it’s harder, because it requires greater personal investment, and a willingness to surrender our selfish egos and be open to constant conversion of heart. We think it ought to be as smooth and sweet as Valentine chocolates, but Love is demanding. Just look at the Cross. That’s the perfection of Love, and it’s what you and I are not only called to, but *created* to emulate. As a kid, I remember my mom watching the film *Love Story*, a sappy tale of love ripped apart by illness (and selfishness). Even if you’ve never seen the film, you know its most famous line, uttered with emotion by Ali McGraw’s *Jenny* to Ryan O’Neill’s *Oliver*: “Love means never having to say you’re sorry.” I remember being confused by that line. I *loved* my mom and dad, but I said “Sorry” all the time! The movie gets it

wrong: saying we’re sorry – and the prior requirement of self-reflection and acknowledgment that we’ve missed the mark, or have done serious damage – is essential to Love. Jesus Christ is God, and though He became man, He was without sin. Yet, He freely chose to be yoked with our sins. He *became sorrow itself* for our sakes. When He cried out, “Father, forgive them...” (Luke 23:34), Jesus was begging forgiveness on our behalf, and casting us upon the Father’s mercy. Love *does*, among many things, mean having the humility to say we’re sorry, and Jesus taught us how from the Cross.

Love isn’t a feeling, but *desiring and choosing another’s good*, regardless of how we feel about them or the circumstance. Love is all of the things Saint Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 – patient, kind, not jealous or pompous; you can (and should) read the rest. But these aren’t shiny clichés. Read what Paul has to say, but in place of “Love,” insert your own name. The word begins to take on a whole new meaning, and its demands become clear. Sin offends Love, disrupts it, creates distance and division. Chronic sin without the desire and actions to overcome it makes us less able to love, and less like Jesus. Sin, of our own choosing, separates us from God. That goes for the big ones as well as the “small”

sins we often discount as “just being human.” Sins separate us from God because they’re selfishly attack Love. Don’t dismiss sin as “human nature,” because it goes against our humanity. Sin negatively impacts our relationships with others when our actions cause physical, emotional or spiritual harm, and it wounds the Body of Christ as a whole. As our prayers and good works uplift each other, so our sins pull us down. If we accept sin as “normal,” refusing to regularly repent (by

going to Confession, and making amends when we hurt others) how can we have the strength and desire to love? If we selfishly cling to sin, how can we embrace others? Finally, sin creates fractures within us. The more we’re attached to sin, the less we’ll want anything or anyone else. If we let our sins build up they’ll create a hard shell around our heart. Such hardness changes us, and makes us less ourselves – less human. Sin drives us further from God, from others, and from the

image of God within us.

As we make our way through this period of the Great Fast, let’s resolve to put sin in its proper place, by going to Confession often, cultivating an active prayer life, and loving others with abandon, as we’re loved by God. Let’s help sin make a comeback by recognizing it – then cooperate with God’s grace to send it back to where it belongs. **ECL**



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**SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES**

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

**ZACCHAEUS: WHAT IF?**

The Triodion, our Church’s Lenten prayer book, invites us to read Jesus’ encounter with Zacchaeus the tax collector (Luke 19: 1-9), as an example of desiring repentance and doing something extraordinary to let repentance happen.

The Gospel introduces Zacchaeus as the “chief tax collector” in Jericho and “a wealthy man.” Following the Greek text literally: “he desired to see Jesus, who he was” but could not see over the crowd because he was so short. It is extraordinary to think of an important adult running, and unthinkable that such a man would climb a tree, but so he did. Jesus saw Zacchaeus, called him by name, and said “I must stay at your house today.”

Zacchaeus wants to see Jesus, but Jesus sees HIM first and, being God, sees him as he truly is. We don’t often learn the names of the people with whom Jesus interacts. The centurion, the man born blind, various paralytics and lepers, the repentant thief, the widow of Nain and her resurrected son are all among the many nameless characters in the Gospels.

The grumblers grumble as usual that Jesus is going to the house of a “sinner.” Notice that *they* are the only people in the text to accuse Zacchaeus of sin. People assumed that all tax collectors were crooked because they made their living off the taxes they collected by inflating the rates. Jesus never says a word about sin and Zacchaeus’ re-

sponse to the criticism is open to several interpretations. He says: “Look, Lord: I give half of my belongings to the poor, and if I cheated anyone, I pay them back four times over” (19:8). Whether in Greek or in English, Zacchaeus’ words can mean either: 1.) this is what I always do, as a matter of policy; or 2.) this is what I will do now, as proof of my repentance. The Bible demands that God’s people tithe by giving 10% of their produce back to God (Numbers 18). Zacchaeus gives 50%. The Bible demands that thieves restore stolen goods plus 20% (Leviticus 5:16; Numbers 5:7). Zacchaeus does much more.

The name Zacchaeus means “pure” or “innocent.” Does Saint Luke tell us his name because it’s ironic that a tax collector should be so named or because he actually IS what his name says? What if Zacchaeus was innocent? What if his need to see Jesus came out of his hope that at least the Lord would recognize that he was not what people said he was? What if Zacchaeus HAD made a habit of tithing 50% instead of 10%? What if Zacchaeus had made it a practice to repay many times more than what the Jewish Law required when he did overcharge? What if Zacchaeus was lost only because he had been ostracized by the judgmental and self-righteous crowd?

Such a reading of Zacchaeus leads us to a very Lenten conclusion: Look what happens when we rush to judge others! Only God truly knows us. We will know ourselves better if we look to



*Icon of Jesus and Zacchaeus*

Him this Lent. We will use this Lent better if we try to see ourselves as God sees us and let God show us what we could be by His grace.

All of which Saint Ephrem the Syrian told us when he taught us to pray: “Let me see my own sins and not judge my brothers and sisters.” **ECL**

*Thanks to Father Michael Salnicky for the insight behind this approach to Zacchaeus.*



# UNDERSTANDING ICONS

Father Joseph Bertha, Ph.D.

## MARIAPOCS

### Part 2

*The iconographic details of both the Vienna and Mariapocs Theotokos and Christ Child icons*

In this section, we examine both Mariapocs icons; the original presently located at Saint Stephen Cathedral Basilica in Vienna, Austria; and the copy located at the Pocs Basilica in Mariapocs, Hungary. In a most remarkable manner, and probably because both were painted by the same iconographer, the two icons are virtually identical in every way. This has become even more clearer since the 2005 removal of the white cloth covering of the Pocs icon in Hungary; which reveals several details which had been covered for decades. Both have been painted with egg tempera on maple panels and are 50 x 70 centimeters (19.6 x 27.6 inches) in size. The iconographer of both icons was Istvan Pap, who was the brother of the Pocs Parish priest in 1696.

When either of the Mariapocs icons are first encountered by many, the Mother of God and Christ Child appear to be in primitive or folk-art appearance. Primarily, we have to recall that the icon is over three centuries old, and belongs to a very different day and age than the contemporary world we live in.

The icons, although painted in the typical Byzantine style of employing egg tempera, exhibit seventeenth century Baroque characteristics such as the use of chiaroscuro, which emphasizes the contrasts between light and dark. This technique replicates especially the contemporary Netherlandish artist Rembrandt, who dramatically depicted the Virgin and Child emerging out of dark backgrounds. The Holy figures shimmer with candle lighted brilliance, illuminating the dark interiors of homes and churches during the Baroque era.

The Mariapocs icon also demonstrates a Byzantine pedigree by the arrangements of the figures of the Christ Child and the Holy Mother: it belongs to the *Hodegetria* "Shower of the Way" type of Theotokos and Christ Child icons. The *Hodegetria* is the most ancient and earliest of their portrayals and can be traced back to the third century Roman

catacombs. In the original, the Virgin, usually seated, presents the Christ Child to the visiting Magi, by indicating or pointing to him with her right arm and hand. The Mariapocs icon shows the Virgin and Child in bust or half figured.

*The individual figures in the Mariapocs icon*

#### Mother of God

The Theotokos is depicted in this



*Mariapocs Icon in Pocs Basilica, Mariapocs, Hungary*

icon as a very young virgin, barely turned into a young woman capable of child bearing. Her haloed head is shown with very high-templed forehead which in icons indicates divine wisdom. At the Annunciation, she articulates this deep understanding of God's plan for salvation when she prays the Magnificat, and accepts the will of God.

She wears a vermillion *maphorion*, the veil which covers her head and shoulders and reaches to her knees, and replicates the Jewish prayer shawl, the *tallit*. The maphorion is festooned with delicate gold embroidery, and her forehead and right shoulder an eight-pointed star of virginity is visible. The red colored maphorion also symbolizes virginity in icons, while the ripples and folds in her garment visualize the calm and safety of the waters of the harbor of the church.

She shows or indicates Christ with her right arm and hand, the most significant characteristic of the *Hodegetria* icon. Her right eye is fixed directly at the viewer while her left eye focuses on her divine son. Her long and slender nose indicates the long and tender mercies of God,

while her lips are closed, as if silently whispering intercessions to her Son. Around her neck is strung a necklace composed of a decade of black beads covering her Adam's (or is it her Eve's) apple of her throat. These vivid black pods are actually canna lily seeds, which symbolize the Hail Marys of the rosary according to medieval Christian symbolism. (more about this flower under the Christ figure).



*Mariapocs Icon in Saint Stephen Cathedral, Vienna*

The Virgin is identified with the four-letter Greek abbreviation: MP OY, *μητηρ θεου*, Theotokos, God Bearer, Mother of God. This derivation from the tetragrammaton (four-letter abbreviation of the name of God, that is YHWH) is accorded only to Our Lord, and His Holy Mother. Iconographers defer from spelling out the entire name, omitting letters and vowels in reverence for the Holy Names and replicate our Jewish ancestors by showing deference for the mystery of God by not spelling out the whole word.

#### Christ Child

The Christ Child is depicted seated on the left arm of his mother as the pre-existing God Head, the Holy Wisdom, a miniature adult. He wears a brown or soil colored *himation*, cloak over both shoulders over a white chiton, the alb or baptismal garment. His haloed head too is shown with high temples indicating wisdom beyond his physical age. Both of his eyes are directed towards his mother and his right blessing hand, his fingers form the four-lettered acronym IC XC, *Ἰησους Χριστως*. Notice that his fingers and blessing are depicted directly over

the necklace and throat of the Holy Virgin. His gesture and his gaze both indirectly indicate his listening and granting the intercessions silently voiced by his Holy Mother.

Distinctive and unique to the Mariapocs icon, around his neck Our Lord wears a vermillion colored cross, while in his right hand he holds a sprig of scarlet flowers. This branch of asymmetrical blossoms I identify as belonging to the canna lily, a flower not native to Europe!

It is certainly plausible that the Mariapocs icon portrays a vermillion canna lily. During my pilgrimages to the Shrine when I inquire from faithful as to what kind of flower they see in the Mariapocs icon, all invariably reply simply and generically: "it's a lily."

The canna lily *canna indica*, named "canna" after its reed-shaped spears, and "indica" because of their origin in the West Indies, that is, the Caribbean. The flowers are a vibrant vermillion red, and indigenous to the Americas. The flower was quite possibly imported by Bathory family, the landholders of Pocs in the seventeenth century. This blood red canna flower growing atop a cane or reed stalk is redolent of the Passion, Suffering and Death of Our Lord. This Christian symbolism must have appealed to Istvan Popp so ardently that he inserted it into the Mariapocs icon.

In sacred Scripture, a bruised reed is mentioned in two key texts in reference to the Messiah. In Isaiah 42:3, the Messiah does no damage to a bruised reed, an emblem of those believers who are weak in faith. In Matthew 27:29, a reed is placed in Our Lord's hands in derision, and they struck him on the head with a reed. The inclusion of the sprig of canna lilies in the Lord's left hand bears quite a significant reference to his eventual suffering, death and ultimately his Resurrection!

Our Lord is shown discaled, without sandals. When he is shown in this manner iconographers indirectly reference Christ as the Prodigal Son, the replacement (ransom) for sinners. They reference the Lukan parable of the return of the Prodigal Son as his Father immediately orders sandals for his son's un-

<sup>1</sup> Vermillion is a red color closely resembling blood. Alternately two other shades of red are used; scarlet, which is orange red, and crimson which is lighter shade of red. The account of Isaiah 1:18 employs the two terms: "Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool."

shod feet!

The Christ Child is identified with the Greek abbreviation: IC XC, Ἰησοῦς Χριστῶς; the four-letter abbreviation of his divine name, the tetragrammaton.

### Cherubs

In both upper corners of the Mariapoc icon cherubs have been painted, they are depicted as two wings and a face.

Their presence on either side of the Virgin recalls the liturgical hymn prayed during the Byzantine Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom: "It is truly proper to glorify you, more honorable than the *cherubim*..." **ECL**

## SPIRITUAL REFLECTIONS

Father Lewis Rabayda



### THE PROBLEM WITH HUMILITY ACCEPTING GOD'S WILL

"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well" (Mt. 6:33). Our daily work and toil is necessary for our survival. We are obligated to work for our bread and to work to provide for our families and those who are dependent upon us for their wellbeing and basic needs. And in providing for these basic needs, and in utilizing the talents and wisdom that God has given us, we work for projects that go well beyond our needs of food, shelter, and clothing. We now work for engineering marvels that help society accomplish more work with less energy. We work to produce medicines that help cure diseases and comfort those afflicted with a myriad of maladies. We work to entertain and to bring laughter, joy, astonishment, and dramatic tears to those who enjoy the arts. We work to bring new ideas and methods through education to those who were previously unaware. We work to achieve our goals and to be good stewards of God's creation. We work and toil for many things, and our human efforts have proven to have great effect on our societies and our world.

But what exactly has all of this toiling for produced? Because in our pursuit of these good

things we need as people, we can become very anxious, and very distracted. We can too easily forget who is the original Creator, and where our place falls within this great scheme of life, let alone where we fall in the course of salvation history. In our pursuit of providing for ourselves and our families, and by utilizing the talents we have been given, we can too easily lose sight that we are not the ultimate creators, and that we are not the rulers of the universe. Man's astonishing achievements can too easily puff up our reliance on our own abilities to direct the future of Man. This is evident when we make conscious decisions in favor of human achievement which are contrary to God's commandments and His Word. We rationalize these decisions based on our own ideas of what is good for us and not based on God's plan.

When humans actively choose to make wide-sweeping adjustments to society and our daily lives which are contrary to God's laws, then we have actively chosen to place another god before the One, True God. When we neglect to discern the real outcome of our actions and look only towards our perceived earthly benefit, then we have traded our salvation for the fleeting moment. In this action we have proved that we seek other

things and other powers before we seek the righteousness of the Holy Trinity.

However, if we approach our lives, our actions, our hopes for humanity, and our desire for utopia through the gate of the Holy Scriptures, then we will have offered our submission to God. When we turn to God in humility, and when we submit to His Will for humanity, then we will see that some of our efforts on this earth are not in line with the faith that we claim to profess, but are actually in subversion to It. Because when we shed the ways of the world, and when we shed our own notion of progress which comes from pride, we will be shown

God's will for our life and for the life of the world. We will be given every good thing which leads us towards our eternal salvation, if we seek first His righteousness. **ECL**



## SCHOOL OF PRAYER

Father G. Scott Boghossian

### THY KINGDOM COME!

The second petition of the Our Father is, "Thy kingdom come." The Father's kingdom will come in its fullness at the glorious Second Coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ will consummate His final victory when He returns in glory. He will raise the dead, judge all humanity, and say to His heaven-born brethren, "Come, blessed of my Father, and inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Mt. 25:34). Then He will declare to the wicked lost, "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mt. 25:41).

When we pray for God's kingdom to come, we are praying that these final events of history would take place soon. The early Christians prayed, "Maranatha!" meaning "Come, Lord!" and the book of Revelation ends with the words, "Surely I am coming soon. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20).

The grace of the Holy Spirit that we receive at our baptism, our chrismation, and our frequent reception of the Holy Eucharist is a "down payment," "guarantee," or "pledge" of that fullness of salvation we shall receive when Jesus returns.

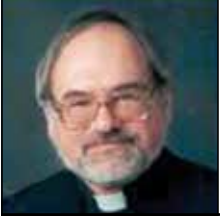
Saint Augustine prays, "O God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you." Only when Christ returns will we enjoy this final rest in body and soul. For this reason, we strongly desire and pray for the coming of the fullness of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ at His Final Advent. "Our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20).

In another sense, when we pray, "Thy kingdom come," we are praying for the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. Our prayer intention is that the Church in communion with the Successor of Peter would grow, flourish, and prosper in the world. The Church on earth is the Kingdom of God present in mystery (Col. 1:13). We pray that the Church be ever more of what God intends it to be, the light of the nations, the salt of the earth, and the universal sacrament of salvation. To pray "Thy kingdom come" is to pray that every tribe, language, people, and nation (Rev. 7:9) would enter the Church through faith, repentance, and baptism. It is to pray that all who have fallen away from the Church would return to her in heartfelt repentance. It is to pray that

the Church triumphs over all heresy, schism, and division, resulting in the unity of one flock under one shepherd (Jn. 10:16).

Finally, to pray "Thy kingdom come," is to pray for our conversion. Jesus Christ is the King, and His Kingdom comes to us individually when we submit to His sovereign Lordship. The Father's kingdom manifests in our hearts when we stop trying to live our own way, according to our own passions and lusts. His Kingdom comes when we surrender all to Christ and become His faithful disciples. Sadly, many Catholics have never taken personal possession of their Faith. The Catholic Faith remains the Faith of their ancestors, their family, or their cultural background. The kingdom of our Father comes when we find the reality of Christ and His Church for ourselves and make the Catholic Faith our own. "Thy kingdom come" is also a prayer for our growth in holiness. After our personal conversion, we must grow every day in the knowledge of God. We must mature in Faith, Hope, and Love. We must live as new creatures in Christ, seeking always to do God's will.

When we pray "Thy kingdom come" we ask that God's kingdom comes gloriously, at the Second Coming of Christ, mystically, in the expansion and well-being of His Church on earth, and individually, in our hearts through personal conversion and growth in holiness. **ECL**



# THE BYZANTINE LITURGY

By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD

## OUR FAITH IN CHRIST

The Nicene Creed in the Divine Liturgy tells us what our faith is Christ is: we believe “in one Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, the only-begotten, born of the Father before all ages. Light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in essence with the Father, through Whom all things were made. For us and for our salvation, He came down from heaven and was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man. He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried. He rose on the third day according to the scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father, and He is coming again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom will have no end.” I have quoted this at length for two reasons. The first is that the Gospel of Jesus the Messiah is a great part of our faith. Yes, we believe that there is a God, but what we also believe is that God has manifested Himself to us in a very specific way. The second reason is that so many people today find it hard to believe in this whole statement.

The Creed also tells us the way in which we come to faith in Christ. We profess our faith “in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church,” that is, we come to know the Lord

through the Church because it is “apostolic,” it continues for all time the witness of the holy apostles to the Son of God Who became a human being for us. This witness is clearly expressed. Saint John tells us, “What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we looked upon and touched with our hands concerns the Word of life—for the life was made visible; we have seen it and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was made visible to us” (1 John 1:1-2). Many of the people that witnessed Christ directly could see the presence of God. Saint Paul, who saw him only in a vision after the Resurrection, was to write, “For in him dwells the whole fullness of the deity bodily” (Colossians 2:9). The author of the Letter to the Hebrews begins: “[The Son] is the refulgence of his (God’s) glory, the very imprint of His being, and Who sustains all things by His mighty word” (Hebrews 1:3).

We do not need endless argumentation about the reality of Christ. The witness of the apostles is self-evident. They saw what they saw, they were not men who were delusional, who could not tell the difference between a ghost or a hallucination or a real person. Their words ring clearly with honesty about what they saw,

and their words have convinced millions upon millions of people who never saw Christ in his human life. We cannot simply dismiss their words as “partisan” or “concocted,” for no one could perceive what they perceived and not be transformed. C. S. Lewis understood this and expressed it well: “That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice” (*Mere Christianity*).

Other people dismiss Jesus because they say they cannot believe in miracles. They say that miracles are impossible, that you cannot break scientific laws. The problem here is that the “laws” of science are generalizations based on observation. No one should be a scientific “moron,” and we respect the laws of science because they do, in fact, work, and we can order our lives and our activities around them. But who can say that we cannot observe the direct activity of God in his creation, which bring about wondrous and unexplainable blessings?

We must listen to Jesus, who actually dismisses miracles as “proofs” of his divine power, “Then some of the

scribes and Pharisees said to him, ‘Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.’ He said to them in reply, ‘An evil and unfaithful generation seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it except the sign of Jonah the prophet’” (Matthew 12:38-39). Jesus, of course, was referring to His resurrection, the manifestation that He is the Son of God and the Giver of Life, the Savior of Mankind. After the resurrection, Jesus “presented Himself alive to them (the apostles) by many proofs after He had suffered, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). Peter observed that Judas has betrayed Christ, but that there needed to be twelve witnesses: “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). As faithful, we must be fully aware that God’s wonders unfold in our lives quietly and subtly, without blare of trumpet or fireworks. This is what Elijah observed on the mountain, when God appeared to him in the soft and quiet breeze (1 Kings 19:12). The mechanics of how miracles happen should not be an object of vain speculation, but faith is grounded in hope and love of God. **ECL**

THE BYZANTINE CATHOLIC  
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## NEW BYZANTINE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY FORMING IN GREATER CHARLOTTE, NC, AREA

A Byzantine Catholic community is forming at Saint Philip Neri Church, 292 Munn Rd., Fort Mill, SC. Please join us as we grow our community and celebrate the Byzantine Divine Liturgy. Father Steven Galuschik of All Saints Byzantine Catholic Church in North Fort Myers, FL, celebrated Liturgy at the end

of October and is now offering weekly Divine Liturgy in the area. This community will serve the northern part of South Carolina as well as Charlotte, North Carolina. Please share this information with your friends and family – especially those who have moved “down South.” We will be celebrating the Byzantine Divine

Liturgy on Saturdays at 4 PM. If you would like to participate in any way, or have questions please contact Ron Somich at 440.477.6389 or ron.somich@gmail.com. The website <https://carolinabyzantine.com/> will be coming soon – please check that out for news, upcoming gatherings, and service times.

### Byzantine Divine Liturgy on Saturdays at 4 PM: February 3, 10, 17, & 24

## Come Join Us!

## SEASONAL REFLECTIONS

Father Ronald Hatton



### OUR ENTRY INTO THE GREAT FAST

The Liturgical year moves quickly, but it does not just drop us, cold-turkey, from one season to the next. One great example of this is our pre-Lenten Sundays and the beginning of The Great Fast. This year, Easter comes early, and so we go directly from the Sunday after Theophany straight into the Sunday of Zacchaeus. One thing you will notice, though, is that the only thing that distinguishes this particular Sunday is the Gospel reading: there are no special troparia, kontakia, and so on. Even the Lenten Triodion, the book we use during the Lenten season for Matins and Vespers, do not even have an entry for the Sunday of Zacchaeus. We are simply “put on notice” that things are beginning to change.

We shift gears the very next Sunday, though, with the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee. Other than the Gospel reading, the only other thing we notice during the Divine Liturgy is that we sing the Kontakion for the Publican and Pharisee rather than the Resurrectional Kontakion. More important, the weekdays following this Sunday are all fast-free (one of the four Fridays that are fast-free during the liturgical year). This is to remind us that our fasting is not a matter of pride, as it was for the Pharisee, but of humbling ourselves and disciplining the body.

The Sunday of the Prodigal Son gets a little more intense, as the Epistle reading now also relates to the coming season of the Fast. Together with the Kontakion for this day, we feel the time drawing closer.

With Meat-fare Sunday, things start really getting serious. We traditionally abstain from eating meat or meat products from now until Pascha. Although many do not follow this discipline, we cannot escape the fact that we are called for stricter control over our bodies, especially in disciplining the stomach.

Finally, we come to Cheese-fare Sunday, the

day before we begin the Great Fast in earnest. Not only is there a special kontakion for the day, but the prokeimenon is one of the most solemn that we can sing, and is a reminder that the Fast and our promises to God are not to be taken lightly: “Make vows to the Lord your God and fulfill them!” (Isaiah 19: 21b). From the Saturday night Vespers, through Matins and Vespers for this day, we are reminded both of our fallenness (this Sunday is the Commemoration of the Expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden) and of God’s great forgiveness. And so, on this evening, we enter into the season of the Great Fast by gathering together to pray what we referred to as “Cheese-fare Vespers,” singing the Stichera of Repentance. In many parishes, there is normally a ritual of mutual forgiveness between all the members of the parish, both clergy and laity, to cleanse ourselves of any lingering resentment or unforgiveness in our lives before we enter this holy season. For if we do not forgive one another fully and totally, how can we expect forgiveness from God? The text for this ritual is taken from the Office of Compline.

Thus prepared, we now enter into Clean Week, with strict fast and abstinence on Monday. Traditions of services during this week may vary from parish to parish, but usually include Great Compline, and Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts. In the Typicon for our Metropolitan Province it is prescribed that the Presanctified Liturgy is celebrated on Wednesdays and Fridays of the Fast. Since the Divine Liturgy is a celebration of the Resurrection, we do not celebrate it during the weekdays, but our bishops may prescribe other services where Holy Communion can be distributed.

Last, but certainly not least, we enter fully into the season of fasting. Depending on medical conditions or other mitigating circumstances, the Typicon prescribes fasting from meat on all Wednesdays and Fridays. Some people are in a position to fast completely from all meat and

dairy, eating only vegetables; some have no meat until Pascha. It may be that they cannot fast from food at all, and have been assigned an alternative discipline to fasting from food. The main point is that it is a time of subjecting the body to the mastery of the spirit, thus reminding us that we must subject ourselves to God. Whatever the case, we must keep in mind the admonition that the holy



Apostle Paul gives in his letter to the Romans: “One person believes that one may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. The one who eats must not despise the one who abstains, and the one who abstains must not pass judgment on the one who eats; for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on someone else’s servant? Before his own master he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand. ... whoever eats, eats for the Lord, since he gives thanks to God; while whoever abstains, abstains for the Lord and gives thanks to God. ... Why then do you judge your brother? Or you, why do you look down on your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God” (Romans 14: 2-10). May our time of the Great Fast be profitable, and may we attain our salvation through our humility to our Lord. **ECL**



# SEMINARIAN REFLECTIONS

Seminarian Timothy Farris

## A CHURCH OF THE SACRAMENTS

In the fall semester, a fellow seminarian and I were requested by our high school ECF class to cover the sacraments, which was convenient because at the end of our first year we took a sacramental theology course of our own. However, in the past month, I got to experience the life cycle of our Church's sacramental theology.

When I returned home for Thanksgiving break I witnessed the Baptism and Chrismation of a new Christian, a new saint of our church, one who is recognized and called by God to enter into a life long journey to grow in God's love. I also witnessed a marriage between a loving couple. I also got to experience the blessing of the Theophany waters when I returned for this spring semester, before going on retreat with my fellow seminarians. On retreat, I was offered time to go to confession and renew my baptismal vow to return to the childlike state of the baby I saw cleansed by the waters at my home parish. Daily Eucharist was also offered after our morning prayers. The summit of the Catholic faith was offered daily while on our



retreat from the chaos of the outside world. We got to reflect on the Sacrifice that was offered once and for all, not represented by the Eucharist, but re-presented for all throughout time.

Last week I witnessed the ordination of Deacon Vitali Stashkevych to the priesthood. (*God grant him many years in his ministry!*) I witnessed this man offering himself for the continued

ministry of God's people and offering to God, His Divine Liturgy where we are joined with the angels and saints to give glory to God through our unified prayer. Sadly, I also participated in a Parastas for the repose of Father Edward Lucas, a priest whom I had not met, but who was surrounded by his fellow priests and the faithful who had followed him through his many

years of service.

All these moments, through the Sacraments that God has offered us through His Son Jesus Christ, were awe-inspiring. We are now entering the period of the Great Fast. At the seminary, we practice various forms of fasting as we prayerfully discern how far into the desert we are to encounter God. If you have your goals set, go and offer them to God, but also take into account all that God has done for us. He cleansed us through our Baptism, sealed us with the Holy Spirit at Chrismation, continuously offered Himself to be crucified so that we ourselves would not have to bear a burdensome yoke. He assigned to us priests and bishops to minister the sacraments, and in some cases a spouse who vows to help lead us to God. As we approach Holy Week, all of our Church's Sacraments lead us to the moment when our Baptism and Communion in the life of Jesus Christ allow us to partake of His Death and Resurrection, so that we can stand on the "Right" side of Jesus, led through the front gate to his kingdom. **ECL**

### WHEN TRAVELING TO THE SOUTH THIS WINTER PLEASE VISIT OUR CHURCHES

**All Saints**  
10291 Bayshore Road  
North Fort Meyers, FL 33917  
1-239-543-6363

**Saint Anne**  
7120 Massachusetts Ave.  
New Port Richey, FL 34653  
1-727-849-1190

**Epiphany of Our Lord**  
2030 Old Alabama Road  
Roswell, GA 30076  
1-770-993-0973

**Saint Basil the Great**  
1475 N.E. 199th Street  
Miami, FL 33179-5162  
1-305-651-0991

**Holy Dormition**  
17 Buckskin Lane  
Ormond Beach FL 32174  
1-386-677-8704

**Saints Cyril and Methodius**  
1002 Bahama Avenue  
Fort Pierce, FL 34982  
1-772-595-1021

**Our Lady of the Sign**  
7311 Lyons Road

Coconut Creek, FL 33073  
1-954-429-0056

**Saint Nicholas of Myra**  
5135 Sand Lake Road  
Orlando, FL 32819  
1-407-351-0133

**Saint Therese**  
4265 13th Avenue North  
Saint Petersburg, FL 33713  
1-727-323-4022

## UPCOMING EPARCHIAL AND PARISH EVENTS

### Eastern Catholic Life

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### FEBRUARY

- 2 Encounter of Our Lord with Simeon and Anna  
*Solemn Holy Day \* Chancery closed*
- 3 First All Souls Saturday
- 4 Meatfare Sunday
- 11 Cheesefare Sunday
- 12 First Day of the Great Fast
- 18 First Sunday of the Great Fast  
*Sunday of Orthodoxy*
- 19 President's Day  
*Civic holiday \* Chancery closed*

25 Second Sunday of the Great Fast

### JULY

5-8 Byzantine Youth Rally  
*Saint Vincent College, Latrobe, PA*

### AUGUST

4-8 Altar Server Camp  
*Carpathian Village, Canadensis, PA*