



EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

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PRESBYTERAL DAYS 2018

By Father Tyler Strand

The week following Thomas Sunday was a special time for the clergy of our eparchy as they gathered once again at The Breakers on the Ocean in Spring Lake, NJ, for this year's Presbyteral Days. The April 9-12 event is one of two annual gatherings of priests, the other being the fall retreat. The spring event, soon after a busy Lent and Holy Week, is always welcome as a time for old friends and new to be together, sharing news and important issues, and generally supporting each other. The distance between many parishes in our far-flung eparchy makes such times vital to a sense of shared mission and ministry.

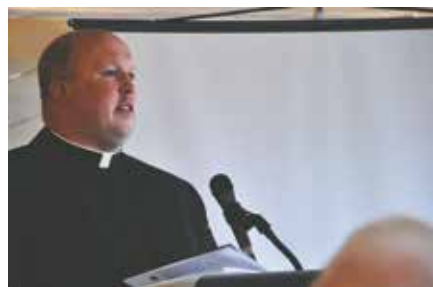
While socializing was a welcome part of the three-day event, there were also several important presen-

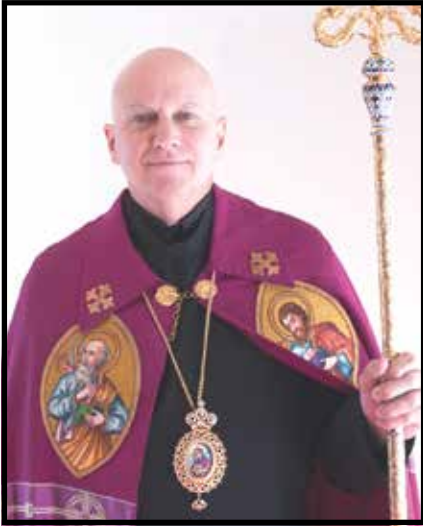
tations of interest to all of those involved in parish ministry. On Tuesday, the group was bussed to Saint Nicholas Church in Perth Amboy, NJ, for a Divine Liturgy, celebrated by Bishop Kurt, and also serving as the "Blue Mass," an annual tribute to members of the local police force. The mayor of Perth Amboy was also in attendance. After a wonderful lunch in the parish hall, a member of the New Jersey State Police spoke about "Active Shooter Protocols," a tragic, but necessary, awareness that parishes must address, and suggestions for parish strategies were presented. After returning to the hotel, the Akathist to "The Most Holy Theotokos of the Unburnt Bush" was sung—an old devotion originally intended for protection against fires in the home but suitable for any time of need.

Wednesday had a very full schedule of presentations. The first, on "New Media and the New Evangelization," built on sentiments expressed by the last two Supreme Pontiffs about using social media in a creative, evangelical way. Diane Carr of Seton Hall University shared new resources that can be adapted to local parish situations. This was followed by an electric (pun intended) group presentation about "Theosis in Action," the exciting new young adult social media outreach introduced in a previous edition of this paper. Adriana Shubeck, her father, Deacon Thomas Shubeck, Father Vasyl Chepelsky, Christopher Russo and his father, Deacon Steve Russo, showed how social media can be used to keep young people connected to their Byzantine Catholic roots. The possibilities of media were dramatically shown by one of the participants Skyping his contribution from Hong Kong and another from Boston!

The final presentation was an ironic shift as Father Allan Hoffa of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Allentown, PA, in his presentation about program, "Integrity Restored," shared sobering insight into the growing tragedy of addiction to online pornography and the personal, family and societal devastation that results from this dehumanizing compulsion. The clergy were given contact information on agencies to help in counseling and spiritual support for those who are suffering, often in silence, but praying for deliverance.

Thursday was the bishop's turn for his remarks to his priests. He reminded them of the importance of basing preaching on Holy Scripture. The priests were then dismissed to return to their parochial work, thankful for this opportunity to be with each other, support one another, and reaffirm the priesthood they share.





I LIFT UP MY EYES...

Pastoral Reflections of Bishop Kurt



SEVEN GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD

It seems like there are a lot of sevens in our religion. The first seven in the scriptures are the seven days of the week. The chosen people were ordered to rest on one day out of seven, and their ancient rule has spread throughout the world where weeks are seven days in every land. There is an Eastern icon called the “six days” in which each day is assigned a spiritual significance. Friday, of course, is the Crucifixion, and Thursday is the Last Supper. Saturday is the day between the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, so it is depicted as the Descent into Hell, as we say in the Apostle’s Creed, or the Harrowing of Hades, as we often say in our iconography. Monday is the day of the angels, Tuesday is the beheading of Saint John the Baptist, and Wednesday is the Annunciation. The reason that the icon is called the “six days” is because Sunday, the Lord’s Day, the first day of the week, is considered to be outside of time. The Resurrection of Jesus breaks out of time and unites us to the Wedding Feast of the Lamb, the Heavenly Banquet. For this reason, the earliest Church Fathers called Sunday the “eighth day” to signify that it is outside of time, just as we sometimes joke that the clock struck thirteen. At the Divine Liturgy, we are outside of time, and are present in a mysterious but real way at the Last Supper, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, and even the Last Judgment. As a result, we are united with all our loved ones who have gone before us in death, and I suppose with the ones yet to come that we know nothing about.

You might think that the commandment to rest one day each week would be the most pleasant one to keep and the most popular, but in my lifetime our country has steadily marched toward abolishing it along with the rest of God’s law. The most frightening part of this march is that the day of rest protects the poor. As businessmen working with the lawyers, politicians, and judges have abolished all periods of rest, the poor must work longer and longer weeks to survive. And God has warned us severely what He will do to a country that does not protect the poor.

After the seven days of the week, there are seven pairs of clean animals that enter the ark, and then the number seven next appears in the scriptures as the golden lampstand with seven lamps. The Book of Exodus gives very explicit instructions for the manufacture of this lampstand, which traveled through the desert with the Chosen People, and burned in the tent with the Ark of the Covenant. The lampstand was to be made of solid gold, with three branches on each side and one in the middle. The lamp holders were to be shaped like almond blossoms, and more almond buds were to be hanging beneath the flowers. The lampstand was to be hammered from a single piece of gold. The lamp trays themselves together with their trimmers were also made of gold. The total amount of gold used was to be

one talent. A talent of gold was more or less one hundred pounds in our units. It must have been a very beautiful lampstand and lovingly constructed! The original lampstand from the time of Moses must have disappeared during one of the many times that the temple was looted, but new ones were made over the centuries. We know that there was one at the time of Christ, because one was taken as loot by Titus the Roman Emperor at his definitive destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem in 70 AD. How do we know there was one? Well you can see with your own eyes a seven-branched lampstand carved into the stone triumphal arch of Titus when you visit Rome. That arch commemorates the military accomplishments of Titus, including the destruction of Jerusalem.

In our tradition, the golden lampstand is identified with the Mother of God, as she is always at the side of the Ark of the Covenant which contains the symbols of the Incarnation: the heavenly bread, the Word of God on stone tablets, and the rod of Aaron. Often, we also identify her with the Ark, but poetry only has to be beautiful; it doesn’t have to be consistent. In the great Akathist hymn, we tell the seven-branched lampstand to “rejoice,” and also the golden jar that contained the manna, so both are titles of the Mother of God.

There are many more groups of seven things in the scriptures, even if they aren’t numbered. Jesus works seven great signs in the first half of the Gospel of Saint John: changing water to wine at the wedding feast at Cana; healing the son of the royal official; the healing of the paralyzed man by the pool; feeding of the 5,000 in the same chapter where He says we must eat His flesh and drink His blood; walking on water; the cure of the man born blind; and the raising of Lazarus from the dead. In the thirteenth chapter of Saint Matthew, Jesus tells us seven parables in a row: the sower, the weeds in the good crop, the mustard seed, the leaven, the buried treasure in a field, the pearl of great price, and the net cast into the sea.

One of the most profound sevens in the scriptures is that Jesus says seven times “I am” in the Gospel of Saint John. After feeding the 5,000, Jesus said, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me will never go hungry, and he who believes in Me will never be thirsty.” In the Temple, Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” Then after healing the man born blind He says, “I am the gate. Whoever enters through Me will be saved. He will come in and go out and find pasture.” After that He says, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.” At the raising of Lazarus, Jesus says, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies. And whoever lives and believes in Me will never die.” At the Last Supper, preparing His friends for what was about to happen, He says, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” Then at the same dinner, Jesus says, “I am the vine. You are the branches. If a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit. Apart from Me, you

can do nothing.” These seven statements in which Jesus says that He is different things, do not even include the most profound one—standing in the Temple Jesus says starkly, “Before Abraham was, I am.” In that statement, Jesus clearly identified Himself with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who spoke to Moses from the burning bush that was not consumed and said that His name is “I am.”

The book of the Bible that is richest in sevens is the last book, the Book of the Apocalypse, also called the Book of Revelation. Apocalypse literally means “unveiling.” (It has nothing to do with zombies.) In the Book of the Apocalypse we find seven letters to seven churches; seven spirits before the throne of God; seven golden lampstands; seven stars in the right hand of the Christ; seven seals; seven angels with seven trumpets; and so on. In fact, the number seven appears more than fifty times in the Book of the Apocalypse, and more than seven hundred times in the Bible.

On the first Pentecost at the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Peter stood up and quoted from the Prophet Joel, “I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh, your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams and your young men will have visions. Even on your manservants and your maidservants I will pour out My Spirit. There will be signs in the heavens and on the earth: blood, fire, and columns of smoke. The sun will be darkened and the moon will turn to blood on the great and awesome day of the Lord. And all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved.” We often associate the number seven with the Holy Spirit because of a prophecy from Isaiah about the Messiah, “A shoot will sprout from the stump of Jesse. From his roots a branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest upon him: the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of strength, the Spirit of knowledge and of piety, and his delight will be the fear of the Lord.” We call these things the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. (Keep in mind that Jesse was the father of King David, and Jesus is the “Son of David.”) In another prophecy, Isaiah says about the Messiah, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord God has anointed me.” When you were chrismated, you were anointed with the oil of royalty. As a Christian, you also can say, the Spirit of the Lord is upon me because the Lord God has anointed me. And when you received the Holy Spirit, you also received the seven gifts that Isaiah spoke of.

You were given wisdom that allows you to discern the right truth and the right way of conduct, even when the rest of the world says otherwise. You were given understanding so that you could fathom the ways of God, and understanding His ways you can walk with Him as friends not as servants—for Jesus said “I no longer call you slaves, because a master does not confide in his slaves. No. You are my friends since I have told you everything the Father told Me.” You received the gift of counsel, not only to counsel others, but to turn to God for counsel at times of bewilderment. You received the gift of strength or fortitude that sustains us in daily life, and according to Saint John Cassian, even enables the glory of

martyrdom. You received the gift of knowledge so you can love God. Knowledge of the unfathomable mysteries and beauty of God, and knowledge of His generosity and mercies, inexorably moves us to love Him. Piety is the gift of respect for those who deserve respect, first for our parents, and then for those in authority, with the end of respect for God. Finally, these gifts are completed with the fear of God. Fear is sometimes replaced with the word "awe." Even in the created world, the world of unthinking matter, when we are in the presence of a starry night, or a thunderstorm on the horizon, or molten rock coming

from a volcano, we are filled with awe and even primitive fear. How much more awe-making is the one who fashioned these things and moves them? The great spiritual writers also talk about the awe or fear that we experience when we are full of respect or in love with someone. At first, it is the fear of punishment, but then as love grows, it becomes the fear that we might offend in some little way. People who are in love are obsessed with the happiness and desires of the beloved, always looking for little gifts or words or actions that might please the object of desire. And people who are in love are exquisitely sensitive to the

feelings of the other, eager to please and afraid to injure. The Awe or Fear of God is a fitting description for the obsessive love of God that is our end in this life and the crown of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Pray to the Holy Spirit at the time of Pentecost to live in your heart and to re-ignite in you the seven gifts that he gave you at your Baptism and Chrismation. Pray to become obsessed with your Beloved, your God.

+Kurt Burnette



FROM THE OFFICE OF THE BISHOP CLERGY APPOINTMENTS

EFFECTIVE MARCH 21, 2018:

Rev. Edward Cimbala, while remaining in his assignment as Pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Byzantine Catholic Church in Levittown, PA, has been relieved as Administrator of Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church in Trenton, NJ, and Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church in Roebling, NJ.

Rev. Yuri Oros has been appointed Administrator of Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church in Trenton, NJ, and Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church in Roebling, NJ.

EFFECTIVE MARCH 26, 2018

Very Rev. Francis Rella has been appointed Protopresbyter of the Central New Jersey Protopresbyterate. This office was vacated upon the passing away of Very Rev. Charles Yastishock.

EFFECTIVE APRIL 12, 2018

Rev. Gregory Lozinskyy has been appointed Parochial Vicar of Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church in Jersey City, NJ.

EFFECTIVE APRIL 25, 2018

Very Rev. Gregory Noga has been relieved as Eparchial Director of Eastern Christian Formation and Rev. Vasyl Chepelskyy has been appointed Director of the same office.

IS GOD CALLING YOU TO BE A DEACON?

—new class forming June, 2019—

Deacons represent a great and visible sign of the working of the Holy Spirit through a life of service in the Church.

If you or others perceive that God is calling you to serve the Church as a deacon and you would like to further explore the possibility of this vocation, please contact:

Father Nicholas Daddona
516-457-5617
ndaddona@eparchyofpassaic.com



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+SISTER MARIA PETRUSKA, OSBM, COMPLETES HER EARTHLY JOURNEY

Uniontown, PA

She was always ready to travel new roads

Having fallen asleep in the Lord late in the evening of April 11, 2018, +Sister Maria Petruska (formerly Sister Juvenalia) woke to a new dawn in the heavenly kingdom. In the last years of her life, Sister was a resident at Mt. Saint Macrina Manor, and it was from here that she took her final steps into eternity.

The daughter of the late Andrew and Mary (Ciparik) Petruska, Sister Maria was born in the village of Ruska Nova Ves in what is now Slovakia. She entered the community from Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church in Mahanoy City, PA., on January 15, 1942, and made her final profession of vows on January 8, 1950.

Her life in active ministry was comprised of teaching from the elementary to secondary levels within the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Province. At the college level, she taught at the Fayette Campus of Penn State. Her teaching ministry on the college level then led her to seek broader experiences, taking

her to Bethlehem University in the Holy Land, to Guam, Japan, and Tanzania. These experiences of teaching in foreign countries were among her fondest memories.

Retiring from this active ministry, Sister Maria then became involved as a tutor at the Intermediate Unit I Adult Learning Center in Uniontown. Because of her teaching experience in foreign countries, Sister Maria stated that the choice to tutor for the learning center came naturally. As a native of Slovakia, she had an empathy for those lacking proficiency in English. For her, teaching English as a second language was a joy, not a job. Some of the friends she made through this work kept in contact with her over the years.

Sister Maria had a great love for her Byzantine Catholic heritage in all its aspects, and she took great care in passing on this love to her students. She wanted to be remembered for this, and indeed, she was by a number of those she taught.

Since the weather was cold and snowy, Metropolitan William, in his homily, drew an analogy from the film *Dr. Zhivago*. In the film, there

are flashbacks to moments in Zhivago's life. In Sister Maria's life, these flashbacks can be said to begin with her coming to this country from Slovakia, settling in Mahanoy City, PA, and then entering the community. Her life in community which spanned 76 years revealed her to be an independent thinker, always clear about what she wanted from life, and always faithful to the Greek Catholic faith, the faith of her parents.

As is evidenced by the many places Sister Maria served, new avenues of ministry were sought and welcomed. Metropolitan William noted that, in the same way, we are called to look at our own lives, to go where the wind takes us, always trying to be faithful to the Easter Message. In this week of the Ointment Bearing Women, it is an invitation held out to all of us.

Sister Maria was preceded in death by her parents, her sisters, Helen and Margaret Petruska, and her brothers, Father Gregory Petruska, and Andrew Petruska. In addition to her members in community, she is survived by her brother, Father Christopher Petruska, her



sister Theresa (Bill) Ortmann and several devoted nieces and nephews and their families.

The Parastas Service was celebrated on Wed., Apr. 18 by Fathers Andrew Deskevich and Peter Leigh, Monastery Chaplain. The Funeral Divine Liturgy was celebrated on Thurs., Apr. 19, at 10:30 a.m. in the Monastery Chapel by Metropolitan William. Concelebrants were Bishop John S. Pazak, and Fathers Andrew Deskevich and Peter Leigh. In attendance were Father Ronald P. Larko, Abbot Leo Schlosser, and Fathers James Spontak and Stephen Wahal.

May God grant to his handmaiden, Sister Maria, eternal memory, and peaceful repose!

+VERNA M. KUCHERA, MOTHER OF JESUIT PRIEST, REPOSES IN THE LORD

Old Forge, PA



Verna M. Kuchera of Old Forge, PA, mother of Father Michael Kuchera, SJ, died Monday, February 5, 2018, at Moses Taylor Hospital, in Scranton, PA. Her husband, Joseph, died in 2004. The couple had been married since June 14, 1952.

Born in Taylor, PA, Verna was the daughter of the late Joseph and Veronica Gazdacko Sabol. She was a 1941 graduate of Taylor High School, where she played the trumpet in the band, a member of Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church, Old Forge, and for many years she and her husband owned and operated Shafer's Drug Store in Old Forge.

The family would like to extend special thanks to Dr. John Diakiw, Verna's dedicated physician.

In addition to her priest-son, Father Michael J. Kuchera, S.J., surviving her are a niece, Matilda Morgan, of Scranton, PA; and sister-in-law, Norma Sabol, of Dalton, PA. She was preceded in death by two sisters, Matilda Sabol, and Helen Morris, as well as two brothers, George and John Sabol.

The funeral was celebrated Saturday at 10:15 a.m. from the Jacob Davis Funeral Home, 422 S. Main St., Taylor, with Divine Liturgy at 11 AM, at Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church in Old Forge.

With Metropolitan William presiding, Bishop Kurt was the main celebrant. Concelebrating with Bishop Kurt were her priest-son, Father Michael Kuchera, SJ; Father Gary Mensinger, syncellus; Father Eduard Shestak, pastor of Saint Nicholas Parish; Father Joseph Bertha, pastor of Saint John the Baptist Parish in Trumbull, CT. Father Edward Higgins, pastor of Holy Ghost Parish in Philadelphia, served as liturgical master of ceremonies. Attending in choir were Fathers James McCann, SJ; John Begley, SJ; John Cigan; Robert Lozinski, CSC; and Leonard Martin, SJ. Interment followed at the parish cemetery in Old Forge.

CANTOR +ROBERT MICHAEL SHIHINSKI ENTERS ETERNAL REST

Ormond Beach, FL

Long-time Cantor of Holy Dormition Church, Ormond Beach Florida, Robert Michael Shihinski, 58, of Belleview, Florida, suddenly passed away January 7, 2018, at the Ocala Regional Medical Center, Ocala, FL.

He was born on September 9, 1959, in Scranton, PA. He was employed as a Maintenance Technician in the Medical Industry. An avid woodworker, he constructed the main and side altars as well as

the tetrapod for Holy Dormition Church that are in use today.

Every Sunday and Holy Day, Cantor Bob would drive 65 miles each way to share his prayer in song with the parishioners of Holy Dormition Parish. His dedication, his zeal, and his sacrifice for his church will be greatly missed.

Robert predeceased by his father and mother, Boris and Mary (Galada) Shihinski. He is survived by his wife, Gloria; his sons, Michael and

John, both of Belleview, FL; and daughters, Christine Shihinski of Ocala, FL; and Mary Frost of Jacksonville, FL; and six grandchildren. He is also survived by a brother, Boris Shihinski, of Dickson City, PA.

Funeral Services were celebrated at Holy Dormition Byzantine Catholic Church, in Ormond Beach, on Monday, January 15, 2018, with Father Sal Pignato, administrator, main celebrant and Father Vincent Brady, assistant pastor, as con-



celebrant. Internment was at the Belleview Cemetery, Belleview, FL.

We pray that Cantor Robert has joined the heavenly choirs, that our Lord grant him peaceful repose and eternal memory!

18TH ANNUAL SAINTS CYRIL AND METHODIUS LECTURE Sponsored by the Byzantine Catholic Seminary Presents Archbishop Alexander

A popular speaker and gifted teacher, Archbishop Alexander [Golitzin] will speak at the 18th annual Saints Cyril and Methodius Lecture of the Byzantine Catholic Seminary. Held on Wednesday, May 16, at 7:00 PM at Saint John Cathedral Center in Munhall, Pennsylvania, Archbishop Alexander will address "The Place of the Presence of God: Aphrahat of Persia's Portrait of the Christian Holy Man."

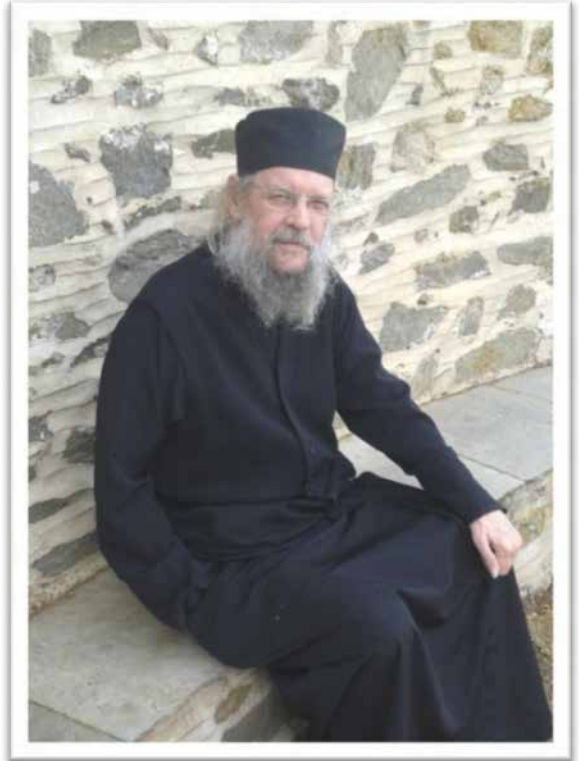
The annual lecture series is sponsored by the Byzantine Catholic Seminary of Saints Cyril and Methodius, a community of mentors, teachers, and students forming leaders for the Church in an environment of Christian unity, integrity, and missionary spirit, with a commitment to ecumenism.

Aphrahat, the Persian sage, is the earliest writer in Christian Syriac of whom we have proof. Writing in the 330s and 340s in the vicinity of modern Iraqi Kurdistan, his works are notable for their relative freedom from the lexicon and thought world of Greek philosophy; neither does he appear to know any prominent, pre-Nicene Church Fathers. Although unacquainted with Greek and Latin patristic literature, Aphrahat clearly possessed considerable authority in the Church of the Persian Empire. Archbishop Alexander will examine the portrait Aphrahat paints of the holy man in his fourteenth Demonstration. The idea of transformation, of becoming divine, is clearly central to Aphrahat. While the language of the Greek Fathers' thesis is absent, he phrases it in an idiom much more akin to that of Second Tem-

ple apocalypses, and of the later Jewish Ezekial chariot-throne mystics of whom he was a likely contemporary.

Archbishop Alexander was born in Burbank, CA, in 1948, and was raised attending Saint Innocent Orthodox Church. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from the University of California at Berkeley and a Master of Divinity degree from Saint Vladimir Seminary. He pursued doctoral studies at Oxford University in England under His Eminence, Metropolitan Kallistos [Ware]. During this time, he also spent two years in Greece, including one year at Simonos Petras Monastery on Mount Athos. After receiving his D.Phil., Archbishop Alexander returned to the U.S. He was ordained to the diaconate in 1982 and to the priesthood two years later. In 1986, he was tonsured to monastic orders. He served O.C.A. missions in northern California and headed the Diocese of the West's mission committee. From 1989 to 2012, Archbishop Alexander taught in the Theology Department at Marquette University in Milwaukee, WI. In May 2012, he was consecrated Bishop of the Bulgarian Diocese of the Orthodox Church in America and in 2016 additionally was named as Bishop of the Diocese of the South. In 2017 he was elevated to the rank of Archbishop.

The seminary expects this year's lecture by Archbishop Alexander to be of great interest and seating is limited. There is no charge but registration is required by April 30, 2018. Please register online at www.bcs.edu, call 412-321-8383 or



email office@bcs.edu. Saint John Cathedral Center is located at 210 Greentree Road in Munhall, PA.

Founded in 1950, the Seminary is a free-standing, English speaking theological seminary, welcoming all those seeking the knowledge possessed by the Eastern ecclesial traditions. The seminary is authorized to grant the Master of Arts in Theology and Master of Divinity degrees by the Commonwealth of PA and is accredited by the Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools.

NEW BYZANTINE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY FORMING IN GREATER CHARLOTTE, NC, AREA Divine Liturgy on Saturdays at 4 PM: May 5, 12, 19, & 26

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, NC. 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.



Danube River Cruise

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Hosted by Fr. Ed Cimbala
October 31 – November 13, 2018

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Additional Cabins Now Available!

SAINT ANN BYZANTINE CATHOLIC CHURCH
Harrisburg, PA

Parish Education Calendar: Spring 2018

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.

ByzanTEEN
Youth Rally 2018
July 5-8, 2018
"Who is My Neighbor?"
St. Vincent College
Latrobe, PA



PEOPLE YOU KNOW

IN PITTSTON & SWOYERSVILLE...

The parishioners of Saint Michael Church, Pittston, and Saint Nicholas Church, Swoyersville, PA, were honored to receive a visit from Bishop Kurt on Good Friday, March 30, 2018. Assisting were Father Nathaniel Block of the Diocese of Gallup, NM, visiting from Washington, DC; Father Michael J. Kuchera, SJ, professor on the Oriental Canon Law Faculty of the Pontifical Oriental Institute; Deacon Larry Worlinsky, assigned at the two parishes; parish cantors; visiting cantors; and altar servers. Father Gary Mensinger, pastor of Saint Michael and Saint Nicholas Churches, was unable to be present due to an urgent medical need. We pray for his ongoing restored health and return to pastoral service. May God grant all the parishioners, clergy, and all who serve God many blessed years!

Additional photos available @ www.stmichaelsbyzantine.com



Above Left: Bishop Kurt preaches

Above Right: Bishop Kurt gives the blessing

Left: Father Nathaniel Block reads the Gospel in Pittston

Right: Father Michael Kuchera venerates the Plashchanitsa in Swoyersville



IN OLD FORGE...

New Baptism of Priest's Son

On Thomas Sunday, April 8, 2018, Bishop Kurt visited Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church in Old Forge, PA, where he celebrated the Divine Liturgy with the baptism of Dominic Nicholas Shestak, son of the pastor of the parish, Father Eduard, and Pan'i Oksana Shestak.

Over 100 people attended the Divine Liturgy. Among those were the parishioners of Saint Nicholas Parish and Saint Mary Parish in Taylor, PA, where Father Eduard is also administrator. The concelebrants were Father Eduard Shestak, Father Vasyl Chepelskyy, pastor of Saint John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church in Lansford, PA, and Father William R. Gore, OSFS, assisting priest at Saint Edmund Roman Catholic Church, Rehoboth Beach, DE.

After the Divine Liturgy, a luncheon was served at the parish hall, where joining the festivities were Father John Cigan, pastor of Saint Michael Byzantine Catholic Church in Mont Clare, PA, and administrator of Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church in Coatesville, PA; Father Michael Kuchera, SJ; and Father Raphael Strontsitskyy, who could not be present at the baptism due to the parish obligations.

Below: Pan'i Maria Chepelskyy, the godmother, Father Vasyl Chepelskyy; Vitaly and Victoria Chepelskyy; Father William R. Gore; Bishop Kurt with the newly-illuminated Dominic Nicholas; Pan'i Oksana Shestak; Father Eduard Shestak; and Andrii Shestak, the godfather



IN BELTSVILLE...

Adult is Enlightened on Lazarus Saturday

Dale Purich who is the husband of long-time parishioner Betty Purich accepts Baptism into the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church on Lazarus Saturday, March 24, 2018. It was a long-awaited event filled with great joy and celebrated by many parishioners. May God grant to His newly enlightened Dale Purich, many blessed years!

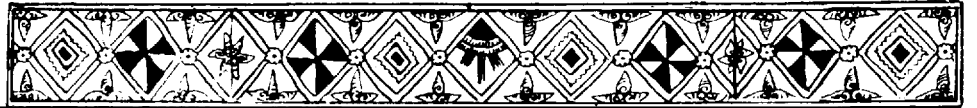


Father Lewis Rabayda Anoints the Newly Enlightened Dale Purich with Holy Chrism while sponsor Steven Harper holds a candle



Wife Betty Purich, Dale Purich, and sponsor Christine Dennis pray during the Divine Liturgy of Lazarus Saturday

AROUND THE EPARCHY



IN MIAMI...

The enduring love of a brother priest...

A few years ago, +Father Peter Lickman, the longtime pastor of Saint Basil the Great Byzantine Catholic Church in Miami, FL, fell asleep in the Lord. Since that time the church has been served by several priests, many of them were close friends of Father Peter. Most recently, a Melkite priest from Connecticut, Father Ed Kakaty, also a dear friend of Father Peter, retired and planned to live in Lake Worth, about one hour from Miami. Father Ed requested permission to serve the church family of Saint Basil during the autumn, winter and spring months from Father Michael Kane, the parish administrator, Bishop Kurt, and Bishop Nicholas (Samra), bishop of the Melkite Greek Catholic Eparchy of Newton, MA. Father Ed and Bishop Nicholas studied together at Saint Basil Seminary in Methuen, MA. Part of Father Ed's mission is to minister to the members of the parish

and keep Father Peter's work alive. Father Ed's friendship with Father Peter began many years ago when both were in the seminary at the same time. Father Ed also has fond memories of calling out, Axios, when he attended Father Peter's ordination at Saint Michael Cathedral in Passaic. For many years, Father Ed visited Father Peter during his short breaks from his cold weather parishes in the North.



Father Ed Kakaty with parish servers and children holding candles

IN TRUMBULL...

Cantor George Kalinics of Saint John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church in Trumbull, CT, celebrates his 100th birthday.



George Kalinics receives a birthday Pascha from two young parishioners at the celebration held on Flowery Sunday

IN WILLIAMSBURG...

The Pride of Ascension

Ascension of Our Lord parish is very proud to share the announcement that their parishioner and lead altar server, Matthew Montgomery, has earned the rank as Eagle Scout. On March 10, 2018, Matthew and his closest friends and fellow Eagles, Jeremy and Joshua Harlow, shared their Court of Honors at Bethany United Methodist Church in Hampton, VA, where Boy Scout, Troop 915 meets. Father Alex Shuter was invited to say the benediction and give his blessing to the three Eagle Scouts.

Eleven years ago, when Matthew was in first grade, he started as a Tiger Scout. During his time in the Boy Scouts, he made many close friends, learned leadership skills, and has truly learned to live by the Scout oath. Matthew earned over twenty-one merit badges while a Boy Scout and completed a very rigorous Eagle Scout Project.

Matthew and his family, Danny, Lisa, and Anna Montgomery, have been parishioners of Ascension of Our Lord for over sixteen years. Matthew sought out a very special Eagle Scout Project that reflects his character as a servant of God. With over 370 man-hours of labor, he re-landscaped the church grounds. He was responsible for organizing this project from manpower to financial planning and executing it to completion.

On Sunday, March 11, 2018, the Divine Liturgy intention was for Matthew. He received a special blessing from Father Alex and given a gift of appreciation from the parish family. A celebratory reception was enjoyed by all after the liturgy.

Matthew is in his second year as an intern with the Newport News Public Works. He will graduate with honors from Phoebus High School and plans to continue advancing in HVAC certifications.



Matthew Montgomery supervises the landscaping at Ascension Parish



Father Alex blesses Matthew and presents him with a gift from the parish



Matthew's father, Danny; Matthew; his mother, Lisa; and sister, Anna



PYSANKY AROUND THE EPARCHY



IN HARRISBURG...

On March 3, Dominic Lombardi, MA, STL, presented a talk entitled "Discipleship and End of Life Issues." His reflection concerned the ethical, spiritual, and practical issues surrounding illness and death, respect and care for the life and dignity of the person, and the Church's proposal for how we can follow Christ in our suffering. Mr. Lombardi heads the Secretariat for Catholic Life and Evangelization for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Harrisburg, PA.



Saint Ann Parish Education Committee welcomed several speakers in recent months. On February 17, Maria Ciccarelli and her daughter Alexa of New Cumberland, PA, with assistance from friend, Nicole, of Manhattan, NY, and Keith Koshute of Palmyra, PA, taught a fabulous pysanky workshop. Following a presentation on different types of pysanky and instructions, the attendees were able to create their own unique masterpieces to take home.

IN LANSFORD...

On March 25, 2018, Saint John the Baptist Church in Lansford, PA, held their annual Easter party for the children of the parish and their families. The highlight of the event was a captivating presentation on the art of pysanky eggs given by parishioner Mr. Joe Galgoci. The children learned the steps of making pysanky eggs and the symbolism of the designs. Mr. Galgoci and his wife Marie also worked with the Greek Catholic Union (GCU) to provide the children with bags full of Easter treats. The event concluded with the selection of winners from an Easter egg lottery. Prizes included chocolate rabbits donated by the GCU and pysanky eggs donated by Mr. Galgoci.



IN BELTSVILLE...

Christine Kelleher, parishioner of Saint Gregory of Nyssa Byzantine Catholic Church in Beltsville, MD organized a Pysanky Workshop on Sunday, March 18, 2018. There were over 20 people in attendance of all ages to learn and practice this Slavic Tradition. Also, on Thomas Sunday, Lillian Baron organized an Easter Egg Hunt and games for the children of Saint Gregory Church.



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.

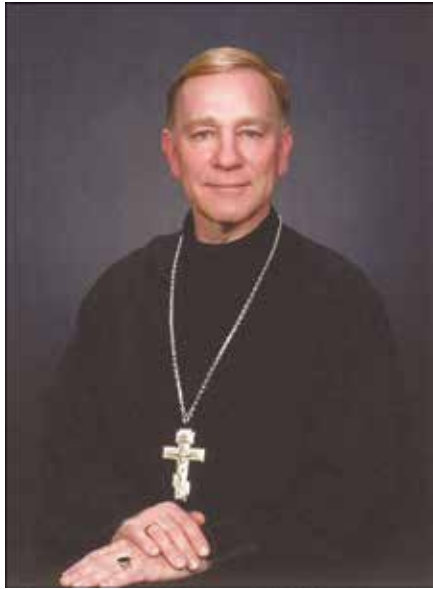
We recommend that ALL cantors consider taking the initial class, Introduction to Church Singing, which starts in July. This class covers the essentials of vocal production, the basics of music theory for cantors, and the fundamentals of reading music, and also provides an essential introduction to rhythm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

Details and registration:

<http://mci.archpitt.org/classes>



+FATHER CHARLES YASTISHOCK ENTERS ETERNAL REPOSE



It is with heavy hearts that the Yastishock Family announces the death of the Father Charles M. Yastishock, 66, of Harrisburg, PA, who died Monday, February 19, at Hershey Medical Center. He was a priest of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic for over 40 years and Pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Byzantine Catholic Church in Toms River, NJ, for 30 years.

Father Charles was the son of the late Theodore and Mary (nee Gogar) Yastishock and was preceded

in death by a brother, Theodore J. Yastishock. He is survived by four sisters: Mary Ann Kitzer of Harrisburg, PA; Julia Ann Dyckman of Harrisburg, PA; Elizabeth Semanchik of Pittsburgh, PA; and, Ann Marie Yastishock of Washington, DC; a brother, Daniel Yastishock of Harrisburg, PA, 15 nieces and nephews and several great nieces and nephews.

Father Charles was born on May 5, 1951, in Harrisburg, PA, and graduated from Bishop McDevitt High School in 1969. He graduated from Duquesne University in 1973 and attended the Byzantine Catholic Seminary of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Pittsburgh, PA. The first priestly vocation of Saint Ann Byzantine Catholic Church, Father Charles was ordained a priest May 15, 1977, and was assigned as an Assistant Pastor to Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church in Trenton, NJ, until June 1978, when he was assigned as Assistant Pastor to Saint Michael Byzantine Catholic Cathedral in Passaic, NJ. In June 1979, he was assigned as Assis-

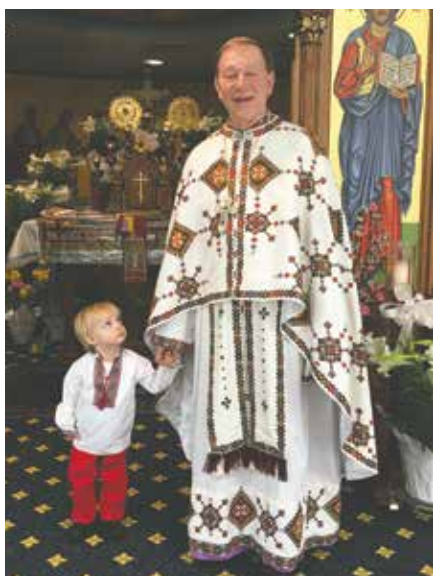
tant Pastor to Saint John Byzantine Catholic Church in Hazelton and in November, 1979, he was assigned as Pastor of Saint John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church in Wilkes Barre Township, PA, and Administrator of the former Saint Mary Parish in Nanticoke, PA. In January 1988, he was appointed the Administrator of Saint Andrew Byzantine Catholic Church (now Our Lady of Perpetual Help) in Toms River, NJ, and in April, 1991, he was appointed as Pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish..

An avid traveler and frequent leader of pilgrimage trips to various overseas destinations such as the Holy Land; Fatima, Portugal; Lourdes, France; Germany; Italy; Poland; Slovakia; Ukraine and Hungary, Father Charles spread laughter, fun, and love to whomever he met and wherever he traveled.

On Sunday, February 25, 2018, priests of the Eparchy of Passaic vested Father Charles at the Silverton Memorial Funeral Home, Toms River, NJ. Father Charles was then

transferred to Our Lady of Perpetual Help Byzantine Catholic Church, where a Panachida was held. A public viewing was held there, followed by Parastas and a social. On Monday, February 26, Father Charles was transferred to Harrisburg, PA, for a public viewing at Saint Ann Byzantine Catholic Church, followed by Parastas and a social. On Tuesday, February 27, The Office of Christian Burial for a Priest was held at Saint Ann Church, followed by interment at Holy Cross Cemetery at 4075 Derry Street, Harrisburg, PA.

Memorial contributions in Father Charles's name may be sent to: Our Lady of Perpetual Help Byzantine Catholic Church, 1937 Church Road, Toms River, NJ, 08753; Saint Ann Byzantine Catholic Church, 5408 Locust Lane, Harrisburg, PA, 17109; Sisters of Saint Basil the Great, Mt. Saint Macrina, 500 West Main Street, Uniontown, PA 15401; or Discalced Byzantine Carmelite Nuns, Holy Annunciation Monastery, RD 1 Box 1336, Sugarloaf, PA 18249.



ASK A PRIEST A QUESTION

Father Vasyl Chepelskyy



INTIMACY IN MARRIAGE

Dear Father,

Thank You for the opportunity to ask a question. I think it's a great idea and will ask a question myself. My husband and I are married almost 50 years and are both Byzantine Catholics. We are in our mid 60's and early 70's. At this stage of our lives what are the Church's teachings on intimacy in our marriage.

“God created man in His own image and likeness, calling him to existence through love, He called him at the same time for love. Love is therefore the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being,” – says Holy Father John Paul II in His Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*. In His Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* he states again: “Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it.”

Why do men and women get married? Such a simple question deserves a profoundly simple answer – because they want to share their lives with a spouse in a very intimate way. As humans we yearn to be close to another, to be fully known, yet despite this, to be unconditionally loved and to express our intimacy to our spouse.

In the document called *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality* Alfonso Card. Lopez Trujillo states: “When love is lived out in marriage, it includes and surpasses friendship. Love between a man and woman is achieved when they give themselves totally, each in turn according to their own masculinity and femininity, founding on the marriage covenant that communion of persons where God has willed that human life be conceived, grow, and develop. To this married love, and to this love alone, belongs sexual giving,

“realized in a truly human way only if it is an integral part of the love by which a man and a woman commit themselves totally to one another until death.”

The Catechism of the Catholic Church recalls: “In marriage the physical intimacy of the spouses becomes a sign and pledge of spiritual communion.”

So, what is intimacy? Is physical intimacy the only intimacy possible? Are there any other ways to be intimate besides the physical intimacy?

Intimacy comes from the Latin *intimus*, superlative of *intus* (inside), which means *most inside, innermost*.

Intimacy includes physical closeness and to many this quickly gets translated to meaning a sexual relationship. Of course, married love includes sex, as it should, but long married couples will often relate that the sexual part of their relationship is only one of many ways they are intimate with each other.

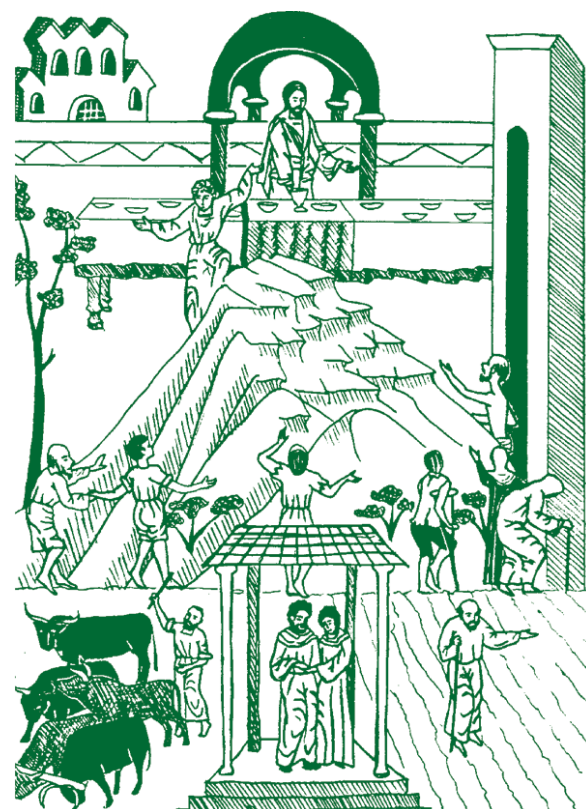
Other forms of intimacy are emotional, intellectual, heart-to-heart conversations, working together at common goals, and spiritual intimacy. True marital intimacy usually involves being honest with your spouse and allowing yourself to be vulnerable. Because you know your spouse well and trust him/her not to hurt you, you are willing to give yourself completely and risk the unknown.

In emotional intimacy a couple shares their joys, fears, frustrations, sorrows and, yes, anger with each other. This doesn't mean that spouses yell and scream at each other, but it does mean that hard feelings can be shared, too. The challenge is to find ways to do this respectfully. It can be scary at times to let down one's emotional guard, but when trust is developed over time, it

feels safe. Emotional intimacy is one of the strongest bonders in a marriage. It is violated when a spouse shares intimate thoughts and feelings with a friend, co-worker, or online. This can feel like betrayal even though it doesn't involve sexual infidelity.

Intellectual intimacy comes when spouses share a vibrant life of the mind with each other. It may be discussing a book, movie, or play, dissecting all the nuances of the plot and symbolism. It might be the high of attending a concert together that stirred your souls. It might be knowing that you share similar opinions on social, political, or religious issues. It's not a matter of equivalent education, but rather equivalent thirst for knowledge that feeds your common spirit.

(To be continued in the next issue) **ECL**



LIFE, LOVE, AND THE HUMAN PERSON

By Ann M. Koshute, MTS

COME AS YOU ARE...

Rend your hearts, not your garments, and return to the LORD, your God, For he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and relenting in punishment. — Joel 2:13

Running errands one day I passed one of many Protestant churches dotting the landscape throughout the largely Pennsylvania Dutch area where I live. The signs outside most of them sport clever spiritual aphorisms, some funny, many thoughtful. This particular church's sign was electronic, and its message flashed between the announcement of Traditional or Contemporary services: *Come As You Are*. The meaning of these words took shape as I pondered them. *Come As You Are* could mean that wearing your

Sunday best or soiled work clothes doesn't matter. All are welcome. It could mean that social status or political bent are of no consequence; come to worship and be fed. *Come As You Are* might refer to the state of the soul. No one is perfect – we're all sinners – so, come. Perhaps it's about unbelievers, or not being sure whether you believe. Doubters, seekers and skeptics, *Come As You Are*. Clearly I've thought about this sign – a lot – but I think its message is rich with meaning for our relationship with Christ and where that relationship is going.

Throughout His life on earth Jesus encountered people from diverse backgrounds. So many

encountered Him: lowly shepherds and wealthy kings came *just as they were* to see Him. Simeon and Anna; fishermen and tax collectors; the Samaritan Woman; lepers and the boy possessed; the blind man and hemorrhaging woman; the Pharisees, and the Roman soldier at the foot of the Cross; Saul the ruthless persecutor of Christians. Some sought Him out, while others were singled out by Him and embraced Him – or resisted for as long as they could. They saw before them a child, and a threat; a teacher, and a troublemaker; a criminal, and the Christ. These people – with their wounds, their stubbornness and repentance, anger, and longing – came before Jesus as if to say, “I've come as I am. *Now what?*”

For some, the question manifested as a plea for help, while for others it was a challenge to the message of love, mercy, and healing preached by the Man from Nazareth. Some came to Him with hearts full of hope and the innocent faith of a child. Others wore masks of indifference, pride, superiority or shame. Some tried to conceal who they were, how they felt and which sins held them captive. Jesus saw every one of them *as they were*; in the truth of their weakness and the truth that they imaged God.

You and I are no different from the many people whom Jesus healed, sparred with, preached to, and called by name. Just as the sign on the church says, Jesus is calling each of us to *Come as We Are*, with our brokenness, our anger and frustration, physical pain, emotional turmoil, and hopeful longing. This is precisely why He became man; preached and worked miracles; and why He suffered, died, and was raised on the third day. Jesus came to us so that we would not be afraid to come to Him, just as we are. This is

the truth and beauty of our Faith, and it's what flashes between the lines of that church sign. But it's not the whole Truth or all of the Beauty. The church sign isn't complete, but the rest of the message doesn't need to flash on its screen. Instead, it must take root in our hearts. Through the mouth of the prophet Joel (quoted above), the Lord tells us that whatever baggage we carry, whatever sin or doubt or worry we have, we needn't scratch and tear at ourselves, or others. We don't have to wrestle and writhe in whatever bothers us, or in sins we feel powerless to overcome. What He asks is that we *rend our hearts* - break them open, or allow Him to do it for us, and expose whatever hides there. "Come to Me, just as you are" - but be prepared to be exposed, *to change*. The "good news" of the Gospel is that we're not limited by our weakness or sin, or even our skepticism. The "harder news" for us to handle is that God calls us not to wallow in our misery, or settle into our comfort, but to be stretched and transformed. God calls us to constant *conversion* - to have our stubborn opinions challenged, our sinful tenden-

cies reformed, and our spirits made peaceful. Even in the midst of sorrow and suffering there is freedom, peace and joy in all things. But none of that will be available to us if we come to Jesus *as we are*, and stay there. The Christian life - the life of a disciple of Jesus - is not static. To follow Christ is *to move!* To follow Christ is to *be moved* by Him! It doesn't require physical movement, but an emotional and spiritual dynamism. This dynamic isn't only about *turning from* things like sin, bad habits, and selfishness; but *turning toward* Truth, Goodness and Beauty. Following Christ is not just "going to" Liturgy, or keeping routines and traditions for their own sake. To follow Christ is to allow those rituals and traditions to shape us and to make us into *new people* (cf. Revelation 21:5). The sign on the church flashing its message of welcome isn't wrong; it's just not complete. Jesus is inviting each of us to come to Him, or if we don't feel strong enough, to allow Him to come to us. Either way, He'll meet us where we are, as we are. It's our responsibility to come away *changed*. **ECL**

THE BYZANTINE CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF PASSAIC subscribes to the

Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People

adopted by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The Eparchy, within all its parishes, institutions and programs, is committed to assuring a safe environment in ministry for its children and young people that conforms to Charter requirements.

For further information regarding the Eparchial Safe Environment Program please contact:
Father David J. Baratelli, Ed.S., M.Div. • *Safe Environment Program Coordinator* • 973.890.7777
Dr. Maureen Daddona, Ph.D. • *Victim's Assistance Coordinator* • 516.623.6456



SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

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

LEARNING FROM KING JOSIAH

On the Sunday before Christmas, we read Jesus' family tree from the Gospel according to Saint Matthew. One name we hear is Josiah, who reigned in Jerusalem in the 7th century BC. He is unique among King David's successors for his virtue: "He did what was right in the sight of the Lord and walked in all the ways of his father David." 2 Kings (22 and 23) and 2 Chronicles (34-35) tell Josiah's story.

King Josiah's virtue is striking for two reasons. He came from a very corrupt family. His grandfather, Manasseh, promoted the worship of false gods in Jerusalem; "he practiced soothsaying, used witchcraft and consulted spiritists and mediums," and he "shed very much innocent blood." Josiah's father, Amon, continued Manasseh's idolatry and must have outraged people for other reasons because he was assassinated after only two years on the throne. Josiah became king of Judah at the age of eight.

We have to pay attention to the biblical dates in order to notice the second amazing fact about Josiah. Although he reigned for thirty-one years, his greatest accomplishments were achieved as a teenager and a young adult. Raised by idol worshippers, he apparently did not even know the Lord until he was sixteen when "he began to seek the God of his father David." In the Old Testament, "seeking" God often means worshipping in the Temple but, for Josiah, it really did have to begin as a search to learn about the Lord who had made David king and made Israel a nation. By the time he was twenty, Josiah was convinced that the Lord alone is God and deserving of worship.

He began to clean house throughout the land of Israel, systematically destroying all the shrines dedicated to false gods and demonstrating in the process that they were powerless non-entities.

When Josiah was twenty-six, he began to renovate the Temple in Jerusalem. In the process, the high priest Hilkiah discovered a copy of "the book of the law of the Lord by Moses." Most likely, this was Deuteronomy, the fifth book of the Torah. Could it be that Jerusalem had drifted so far from the Lord under Manasseh and Amon that these sacred books were neglected and lost? When the book was read to Josiah, he was so moved that he ripped his clothes in a sign of mourning. Seeking more guidance, he consulted the prophetess Huldah, who predicted the destruction of Jerusalem because of its idolatry, in accordance with "curses" the book contained (see Deuteronomy 27-32). The only consolation Huldah offered Josiah was the promise that the Lord would delay this punishment during his own lifetime.

Young King Josiah took action. First, he assembled the entire nation in the Temple and read the book of the Law to them. He recommitted himself and the people to their covenant relationship with the Lord based on the terms of the Law. Then, he organized a proper Passover celebration such as had not been observed for several hundred years!

After all these triumphs, Josiah's reign ended badly. Pharaoh Neco brought his army through Israelite territory to do battle further north against the Babylonians. Although Pharaoh made clear he meant Josiah no harm, Josiah insisted on

attacking the Egyptian army and was killed in the battle at the age of thirty-nine. Ironically, the Egyptian Pharaoh said clearly that he was acting at God's command. Josiah seems to have acted on his own—perhaps impulsively, proudly, or presumptuously—without having consulted the Lord.

There's a lot we can learn from King Josiah. Presumption is a temptation for those who have made some spiritual progress. We may begin to overestimate what we can do without God. Do we pray about the decisions we make?

Josiah's restoration of Passover challenges us to ask how much our celebrations of Christmas and Pascha focus on Christ's birth, passion and resurrection, and how much they are devoted to material things and focused on ourselves. False gods take many forms.

Josiah's rediscovery of the Law must make us ask whether the Bible risks getting lost in our homes, enshrined on a coffee table, or filed on a shelf, dusty and unread. How does Josiah's reaction to God's word compare with the way we hear God's Word proclaimed Sunday after Sunday?

Finally, the teenage Josiah who sought and found the Lord challenges some myths about how religion inhibits young people's search to understand themselves and find their place in the world. The Lord led Josiah out of an ignorant, violent family and empowered him to grow into a (mostly) wise and good ruler at a very young age. You're never too young to begin to seek Lord. **ECL**



UNDERSTANDING ICONS

Father Joseph Bertha, Ph.D.

THE PASCHAL LAMB ENTERS ALTHOUGH THE DOORS WERE LOCKED Two Unopened Gates



The Icon of Thomas Sunday and Ezechiel's Unopened Gate

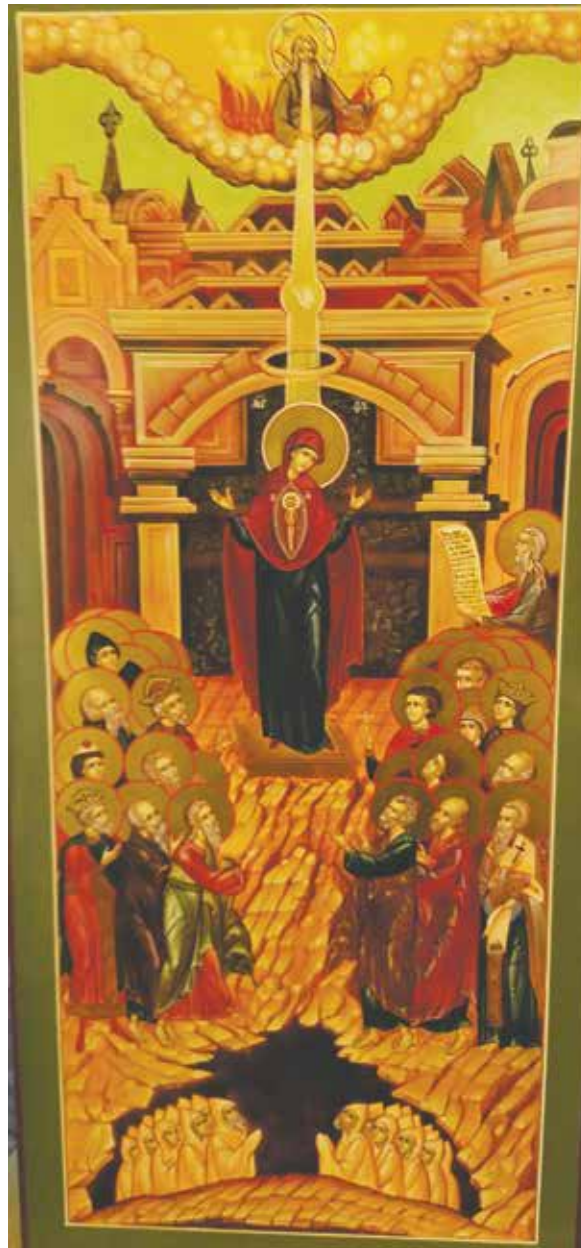
As we celebrate the Resurrection of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the term *Pascha*, Pasch, or Passover is continually used to define the season. We even label our Lord as “the Pasch.” This word stems from the Hebrew word *Pesach*, meaning Passover, and refers to the feast first celebrated by Moses in Egypt. On the evening when the first Passover was celebrated (described in Exodus chapter 12) the lintels and doorposts of the Jewish households were daubed with the blood of the sacrificed lamb in order to protect them from the angel of death, before they escaped through the parted waters of the Red Sea. This ‘passing over’ (Passover, Pascha) is the hallmark of the religious celebration. God protects His chosen people from death by a sign marked on the threshold of their doorways.

In the Paschal verses at the kissing of the cross during Resurrection Matins, Byzantines label Christ both as “the spotless Pasch” and as “the Pasch which is the key to the gates of Paradise.” In this chant, the word “Pasch” (Passover) is proclaimed a staggering ten times:

“Today the sacred Pasch (1) is revealed to us, holy and new Pasch (2), the mystical Passover (3), the venerable Passover (4), the Pasch (5) which is Christ the Redeemer, spotless Pasch (6), great Pasch (7), the Pasch (8) of the faithful, the Pasch (9) which is the key to the gates of Paradise, the Pasch (10) which sanctifies all the faithful.”

Have you ever wondered why our Risen Savior had to enter the Upper Room, the location where the Last Supper, the Passover seder was celebrated on Holy Thursday, even though the doors had

been locked? The ceremonial ritual of the mortally wounded lamb marking the threshold of the doorway is reenacted by our Lord Himself at the New Passover as He rises from the dead. In Isaiah 53:5 describes the Suffering Servant, the lamb of God: “But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that made us whole, and by His wounds we are healed.”



The icon of our Lord passing through the door

The icon which is used for Thomas Sunday shows Our Lord standing at the threshold of the doorway to the upper room. He is radiantly attired with the Light of the Resurrection and displays His five wounds to the disciples. He is the Spotless Passover Lamb who has crossed over the lintel of the doorway to the gathered apostles. This is the only occasion when the wounds of Our Lord are so vividly articulated; except of course in his crucifixion and burial shroud icons. I wonder if the Apostles were pondering at this moment recalling the prophet Isaiah description of the Suffering Servant, the mortally wounded one crosses (by means of his crucifixion, the cross) over the entranceway, opening the portals of paradise.

As both God and mortally wounded man, He passes through (Passover, Pascha) the earthly threshold into the darkness of Hades and opens the gates to Paradise to all the righteous. On Pascha, Our Lord passes through the earthly

threshold of a door and appears to his disciples without Thomas present. On the following Sunday, He also crosses the closed doorway to enter the Upper Room, this time Thomas is present.

These journeys across the thresholds of eternity (into paradise) and temporality (the doorway to the Upper Room) also bring to mind the ancient prophecy of Ezechiel, found in chapter 44: 1-8.

“Then he brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary, which faces east, and it was shut. And he said to me, “this gate shall remain shut, it shall not be opened and no one shall enter by it, for the Lord, the God of Israel, has entered by it, therefore it shall remain shut. Only the prince may sit in it to eat bread before the Lord, he shall enter by way of the vestibule of the gate, and shall go out by the same way.”

Ezechiel’s unopened gate has always been understood to indicate the method in which our Lord enters into this temporal world through the unopened gates of the Virgin!

The icon of the Unopened Gate shows the standing Virgin with the Christ Emmanuel enclosed in a *mandorla*, a body halo, directly before the Eastern doors of the Temple in Jerusalem. At her feet are many saints, bishops, prophets, patriarchs standing in either side, below in the kingdom of darkness are the pious souls waiting to be delivered from their distress of waiting for the Messiah to appear.

The gigantic and sophisticated architecture which appears directly behind the Virgin visualizes the Heavenly Kingdom Jerusalem. The Royal Prince/Lord is none other than Jesus Himself who moves freely between the two realities. He is the only one who can do so! Both physically and spiritually.

Pascha is the journey of passing over death to life, here illustrated in two compelling icons. Pascha also signifies our own personal journey from the death of sin to life eternal in paradise. Through our journey across the threshold of sin/death we journey over our entire life time into the kingdom of splendors. In the Byzantine funeral services, the Hymns for the Deceased succinctly describe this process:

“O Lord I am the image (icon) of Your glory which is beyond description, even though I bear the marks of transgressions. Have mercy on Your creature, O Master, in Your compassion cleanse me. Grant me the home I yearn for, and again make me an inhabitant of paradise.”

The Passover by the King of Glory Jesus Christ Who, by His wounds, opens the gates of paradise. The icons of the Unopened Gate and of Our Lord at the threshold of the Upper Room both visualize the crossing of the threshold into the kingdom of splendors. **ECL**



SCHOOL OF PRAYER

Father G. Scott Boghossian

FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES

The fifth petition of the Our Father is “forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.” A trespass is a sin. The reason that Jesus Christ came into the world was to restore our broken relationship with God by the forgiveness of our sins. Sin is any willful thought, word, deed, or omission contrary to the law of God. We inherit original sin from our first parents, Adam and Eve. This first sin alienated us from God, and left us with a darkened understanding, a weakened will, and a strong inclination to evil. As a result, we are all subject to actual sin and its consequences.

To benefit from the Good News of Jesus Christ, we first need to understand the bad news. The bad news is that we are all guilty of sin and subject to God’s just wrath. “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rm. 3:23). “The wages of sin is death” (Rm. 6:23). “The soul who sins will die” (Ez. 18:4).

Are you aware of your sin? Can you admit that you are a sinner? Many people say that they don’t have any sins. But Sacred Scripture condemns this attitude. “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 Jn. 1:8). Remember the prayer of

the Publican, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!” (Lk. 18:13). “If we acknowledge our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 Jn. 1:9).

An antidote to our spiritual pride is a careful review of the requirements of God’s law. If you don’t think you have any sins, find a good Catholic examination of conscience. Review the Ten Commandments, and re-read the stringent requirements of Christ’s Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel of Matthew, chapters 5 through 7. Only when we are aware of our sinfulness can we pray the fifth petition of the Our Father with heartfelt devotion. Only when we acknowledge our sins can we look to the Cross of Christ and rejoice in the mysteries of His life, death, and resurrection with love and gratitude.

The fifth petition of the Our Father points us to the death and resurrection of Christ as the source of all forgiveness. Jesus is “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn. 1:29). By His cross He offered a perfect reparation for all the sins of mankind. Isaiah the Prophet writes: “He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the

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chastisement that brought us peace, and with His wounds we are healed (Is. 53:5).

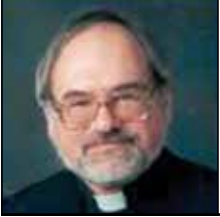
There are conditions for the forgiveness of sin. “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins” (Acts 2:28). “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16). Faith, repentance, and baptism are the initial requirements. Once we are reconciled with God, we must live a life of self-denial and obedience to the commandments of God. “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Mt. 16:24). If we fall into serious sin, repentance and absolution in the Sacrament of Confession are required for forgiveness.

One of the most demanding conditions for the forgiveness of sin is the requirement to forgive all who have harmed or offended us. Forgiving others is so important that Our Lord specifically mentions it in the Our Father. “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.” If we do not forgive others, God will not forgive us. We may not always feel that we have forgiven. We may still feel an-

ger and desire revenge. We cannot always control how we feel. Don’t despair. Forgiveness is not a feeling but an act of the will. Choose to forgive. When feelings of hurt and anger arise toward the one who harmed you, decide to forgive. Stop re-living the offense. Stop talking to other people about how you’ve been offended. Take your pain to God in prayer. Pray again and again, “Lord, I forgive all who have injured me.”

In the fifth petition of the Our Father, Christ reminds us of the reality of sin, promises that God will forgive our sins, and establishes conditions for forgiveness of sin. **ECL**





THE BYZANTINE LITURGY

By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD

HOPE

In his first letter to the Corinthians, the Holy Apostle Paul links together three virtues, which may be called powers of the soul: "faith, hope, love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:13). I think that, in reality, these are one virtue, one power given to the human person, but which become separated in the concrete circumstances of our mortal lives depending on the situations we are faced with. Therefore, faith is more than just thinking that something is true, it is living in God's presence, seeing what our mind tells us but with greater conviction and understanding, so that it changes our lives and enables us to love God and our neighbor. Hope is the same, it is more than just expecting that God's plan for us is good, but it also means living in confidence in God's love, so much so that it enables us to love the other, and even those that hate us, as the mystic Julian of Norwich was to write, "And so when the final judgment comes, we shall clearly see in God all the secrets that are hidden from us now. Then none of us will be moved in any way to say, 'Lord, if only things had been different, all would have been well.' Instead, we shall all proclaim in one voice, 'Beloved One, may you be blessed, because it is so: all is well'" (*The Showings*). While we say that both faith and hope lead us to love, in a certain way, the opposite is true: if we love, then we will have faith and hope.

The Epistle to the Hebrews defines faith: "Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). Hope, then, is the confidence coming from faith, and Hebrews further describes it: "...it was impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge might be strongly encouraged to hold fast to the hope that lies before us. This we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm, which reaches into the interior behind the veil" (Hebrews 6:18-19).


The reality of a Christian life is that even in the certainty of faith, even in the light of knowledge that faith brings us, even in the divine optimism that hope instills in us, while yet in this mortal life that is limited by our senses, we still do not grasp the entirety of God's *economia*, that is, His plan of salvation. Saint Paul is radically clear on this point: "At present we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face. At present I know partially; then I shall know fully, as I am fully known" (1 Corinthians 13:12), and "what eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and what has not entered the human heart, what God has prepared for those who love Him; this God has revealed to us through the Spirit" (1 Corinthians 2:9-10). Perhaps this hope in God's providence is best expressed in the Hymn of the Incarnation of the Divine Liturgy: "(You) deigned for our salvation to become man without change; you were also crucified, O Christ our God, and by death have trampled Death."

Faith and hope support each other. Over the course of time, the Creed became a part of the Divine Liturgy as our preparation for our union with Christ in Holy Communion. Often in Greek the word used for this profession of faith is simply *pistis* - the faith. Hope is also a part of the creed, because at the end we say, "I expect the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come." "Expect" is a word of hope. Hope is especially a virtue that faces the human curse of death, as the Creed indicates. We cannot avoid death, and so we have many concepts of what happens to us after we die. Our Lord speaks at times of our future after death, and uses various images to describe it, such as the parables of Lazarus and the Rich Man (Luke 16:19-31) and the Last Judgment (Matthew 25:31-46). Yet in our earthly lives, which are limited by our bodily senses, we cannot have a full understanding of infinity and eternity, and


so we fear death.

Hope comes from the resurrection of our Lord, when he returns to us in a glorified body that is not bound by earthly limitations. Again, Saint Paul reassures us, "We do not want you to be unaware, brothers, about those who have fallen asleep, so that you may not grieve like the rest, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose, so too will God, through Jesus, bring with Him those who have fallen asleep" (1 Thessalonians 4:13-14). He also tells us that we will be changed, that in our resurrection we will become like Christ in ways we do not yet comprehend: "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown corruptible; it is raised incorruptible. It is sown dishonorable; it is raised glorious. It is sown weak; it is raised powerful. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual one" (1 Corinthians 15:42-44).


Saint Paul is truly the evangelist of hope, the gospel preacher of confidence in God's love and His power of life. He writes to the Romans, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:13). We receive this hope frequently in Holy Communion, for when communicating us, the priest says, "The servant of God partakes of the precious, most holy, and most pure body and blood of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and for life everlasting." This hope of life everlasting begins now in this world because we receive the risen Lord, the life-giving Lord of our hope. Indeed, this has "now...been manifested to His holy ones, to whom God chose to make known the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; it is Christ in you, the hope for glory" (Colossians 1:26-27). **ECL**




Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate
64th HOLY DORMITION PILGRIMAGE
August 11-12, 2018
His Beatitude Sviatoslav presiding
MARY, OUR MODEL OF PRAYER
"Do Whatever He Tells You..."



The Sisters Servants joyfully announce that along with His Beatitude Sviatoslav Shevchuk, Head of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, His Eminence Most Reverend William C. Skurla, Metropolitan Archbishop of Pittsburgh and Most Reverend Kurt Burnette, Bishop of the Eparchy of Passaic, will also preside at this year's pilgrimage. Archbishop William will be the main celebrant and homilist at the 5:00 pm Pontifical Divine Liturgy on Saturday, August 11th, and Bishop Kurt will be the celebrant and homilist for the 8:00 pm. Moleben to the Mother of God on Saturday night.





PARISH BANNERS - We ask that parishes bring their banners and have a representative carry them in the procession to the Pontifical Divine Liturgies on Saturday and Sunday.

PRESENTATION: V. Rev. John Custer, Rector of the Cathedral of St Michael the Archangel, Passaic NJ and Syncellus for New Jersey will speak on the topic "Mary, Mother of the Word of God" on Saturday, August 11th.

HOTEL RESERVATIONS - Sr. Michele has acquired the following great rate, and you must book through her for this rate: srmicheley75@aol.com, 845-753-2555 **HOTEL:** Fairfield Inn & Suites
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Those who have embarked on the spiritual life in Christ will no doubt be preoccupied with discerning God's will for their lives. Because the more we read Scripture, and the more we pray the prayers of the Church, we realize that all through salvation history, things always turn out the best when we align our actions with God's instruction. God is the one who created us, gave us free-will, and then saved us by the passion and resurrection of His Son to free us from our sins. He knows how we work, He knows our needs, and He knows how to best steer us clear from temptation and sin.

But discerning God's will for our lives can be very difficult. We approach this task from our own limited perspective and we bring into this discernment all of our fears and human limitations. When we speak with God in prayer about what we want in our lives, we often impose upon Him what we think is for our spiritual benefit. But Psalm 118 (119) says, "It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes" (71). Many times we ask God for things that are not good for us. We usually ask for things that will

SPIRITUAL REFLECTIONS

Father Lewis Rabayda



DISCERNING GOD'S WILL

bring comfort and ease of living. But often, when we attempt to discern God's will for our lives we find that God is asking us to step out on a limb and into the unknown. We are afraid of this unknown, we are afraid of what lies in this chaos. But what lies in that chaos might just be the encounter that will help us in our spiritual growth, and may supply us with opportunities to show others the love of Christ.

We see very clearly how God's will played-out for the Apostles after His Ascension. When the Apostles received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, they received the fullness of their fortification which equipped them for their task of baptizing all nations. The Apostles knew that in order to carry out the will of God, they would have to risk every earthly danger and every torture of

body until a painful death. Honestly asking; who is so careless with their life that they are casually willing to die for some cause? Indeed not many would accept this discernment for their own lives and would cast it off as not truly God's will for them.

Psalm 118 (119) also says, "teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe in your commandments" (66). When we approach God in humility, holy submission, and with faith, and ask Him what path lies ahead for us, we may find His answer to be quite uncomfortable. It is by this discomfort that we can again focus our energies on serving God, instead of ourselves. We will then find that this refocusing is not only for our spiritual benefit, but can very well be for the spiritual benefit of others. **ECL**



Icon of Pentecost

"We celebrate Pentecost and the coming of the Spirit, and the time appointed for the promise, and the fulfillment of hope. How great is this mystery? It is both exceedingly great and most venerable. Wherefore, we cry out to You: O Creator of all, glory be to You!"

"The Holy Spirit provides all things; He gushes forth prophecy; He perfects the priesthood; He has taught wisdom to the illiterate. He has shown forth the fishermen as theologians. He holds together the whole institution of the Church. Wherefore, O Comforter, one in essence and throne with the Father and the Son, glory be to You!"

These are a couple of hymns for the Vespers of the Feast of the Pentecost, which we celebrate this month. They celebrate the role of the Holy Spirit in the world and in our lives. In our Eastern Church, all who are baptized are also sealed with the Holy Spirit in Chrismation, and thus, have the third Person of the Holy Trinity living within us. This is no small thing to be ignored or neglected. With our Chrismation, we become, once again, the children of God. And as children of God, we can attain to all things that He has prepared for us

SEASONAL REFLECTIONS

Father Ronald Hatton



HEAVENLY KING, COMFORTER

in His Kingdom. There is now a unity between us that was not there before. The Holy Apostle Paul tells the Corinthians: "But he who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him" (I Cor. 6:17). And again, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit" (I Cor. 12: 13).

These verses tell us something very profound. First, by our sealing in the Holy Spirit, we become one spirit with God. In a mystical way, we find union with God. We are, somehow, one with Him. I am sure theologians can tell you how this exists in our lives, but for this reflection, let us suffice with seeing that we are one with Him, and through our abiding in Him, we become His children by grace. John's Gospel is replete with verses about how we must abide in Him. "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him" (6: 56). "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full" (15: 4-11).

The second fact is that, as a result of the first, there is now a unity between each of us who have been sealed in the Holy Spirit. We abide with Christ because He is the vine and we are the branches. Though individuals in the Church we are one in the Body, and as a result, we live and share our life in the Church, in the parish, and we should take heed of what Jesus tells us about having life—being one of the branches—only as long as we abide in Him, and we should heed the words of Saint Paul who says in his first letter to the Corinthians: "As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' On the contrary, the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those parts of the body which we think less honorable we invest with the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior part, that there may be no discord in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it" (I Cor. 12-20-27).

We celebrate the Feast of the Pentecost by dressing the church with greenery, and clothing the priests, servers, and altars in green, symbolizing this new life with the coming of the Holy Spirit into our lives. But even more, we should celebrate this feast with the realization that we now can attain union with God and with one another! We should make it a priority to live our lives as sons and daughters of God, and to make our relationship to one another more than just a coincidence of parish membership but instead a bonding in the Holy Spirit that abides in us. **BCL**



SEMINARIAN REFLECTIONS

Seminarian Paul Varchola West

I JUST HAD TO LET IT GO

More often than not, when it comes up in casual conversation that I am a seminarian, questions and unsolicited advice soon abound. Then, when it is revealed that I happen to be married, the questions and comments become rapid fire. People find it necessary to tell me what I need to do to make the Church “better,” how to get the youth involved, how what I am doing is so “progressive” and “a good thing.” The question I get asked most often, and in a slightly demeaning tone is, “So, you are happy doing this?” I have come to notice a pattern in all this: the vast majority, if not all, of the comments and questions (especially the last one!) come from people who are not part of our Catholic Faith or are from people with little to no religious mindset. These people who are seemingly lacking in a faith tradition find it strange that my family and I found it necessary to walk away from just about everything we know – jobs, friends, family, comfort – to follow a call that so many have throughout history. Of course, these thoughts flying through my head made me think of a song.

In 1975, John Lennon (of Beatles fame) made a conscious decision to walk away from music entirely to spend his time raising his son. He would ultimately spend five years at home, simply living. To many people, this seemed absolutely insane. How could one of the most prolific songwriters of the 20th Century simply walk away from it all? Was he OK? Was he happy doing this? Well, in 1980 these questions, and more, were addressed in a song entitled *Watching the Wheels*. Lennon begins this song in the following manner:

*People say I'm crazy
Doing what I'm doing
Well, they give me all kinds of warnings
To save me from ruin*

*When I say that I'm okay, well they
look at me kinda strange
"Surely, you're not happy now, you no
longer play the game"*

*People say I'm lazy
Dreaming my life away
Well they give me all kinds of advice
Designed to enlighten me*

*When I tell them that I'm doing fine
watching shadows on the wall
"Don't you miss the big time boy,
you're no longer on the ball?"*

Whenever I hear these opening verses I cannot help but think of Christ's disciples and the ridicule they must have faced day in and day out being followers of Jesus.

We are fortunate now to be in the Paschal season as we can see the disciples, week after week, forge their faith and begin to understand exactly what Christ meant when he said, “Follow me.” These were men who gave up everything, simply walked away from their jobs and families to follow Christ. Leading up to Pascha, we see the disciples still struggling to comprehend Christ's message. Although they keep slipping up, they are still by Christ's side. Then, after the crucifixion, everyone having scattered, we see something different. Everyone is now questioning if Christ was indeed the Messiah. These questions came not only from the outside but from within the core of the disciples as well. On Thomas Sunday, it is clear that some in Christ's inner circle are skeptical of the events of the Resurrection. On the Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearers we find more of the same. Despite the

courage and strength of those few women who risked it all to care for Christ's crucified body while the men laid low, some disciples still doubted the Resurrection despite the Myrrh-Bearers' eyewitness account. These were simple people who gave up everything to follow Christ and they are met with very difficult questions from the outside: Where is the body of Jesus? How can Jesus be the Messiah if he has been killed? Are you happy having followed a false prophet?

What is one to do? All this pressure to give answers and they themselves are not even sure what is going on. The best and most simple answer is faith in Jesus Christ. In a similar manner, the next verse of Lennon's song states:

*People ask me questions
Lost in confusion*

*Well, I tell them there's no problem
Only solutions*

*Well, they shake their heads and they
look at me, as if I've lost my mind*

*I tell them there's no hurry, I'm just
sitting here doing time.*

There's no problem, only solutions. This is the key. The solution is Christ Himself. With the affirmation of the events of the Resurrection coming on Pentecost Sunday, the disciples will quickly come to realize that the answer to people's questions are as simple as that. Christ continually proposed solutions throughout His ministry to the ultimate end that He Himself has become the solution. There is no hurry as we are indeed simply “doing time,” awaiting the return of Christ just as His disciples. Through our faith in Christ, we all demonstrate that we may not have

all the answers, but we are certain of one thing: we are indeed living not for the fleeting material world but for the Heavenly Kingdom to come.

Lennon's general response to being questioned is:

*I'm just sitting here watching the
wheels go round and round
I really love to watch them roll*

*No longer riding on the merry-go-
round
I just had to let it go.*

This, in a manner of speaking, must have been going through the minds of Christ's followers during those first weeks after the Resurrection. “Yes, I believe He is Risen. Yes, I believe in the Kingdom to come. I am not living for this world. You know what? Yes, I just had to let it go.” This is faith in action. We do not have all the answers, but we do have faith. We all give up a great deal for our faith and for our Church. Making sacrifices to get your kids to church 20 minutes early so they can serve at the altar, helping out at various functions, singing in the choir, praying – these are all aspects of faith that cause us to give up things in our lives for our Church. Every single person in the pews gives a part of their lives to the Church, and to God, and I am proud to be united in Christ with every single one of you. When I think of it this way, I have no choice but to say, “Yes, I am happy doing this.” When I look at my life prior to seminary now, I often think, “I just had to let it go.” Search your heart and your mind. Pray. Christ is calling all of us to let go of some aspect of our self and give it back to Him. Be comforted to know that you are in the company of the disciples and the saints, who all said, “I just had to let it go.” **ECL**

UPCOMING EPARCHIAL AND PARISH EVENTS

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MAY

- 6 Sunday of the Man Born Blind
- 9 Leave-taking of Pascha
- 10 Holy Ascension of Our Lord
Holyday of Obligation Chancery closed*
- 13 Sunday of the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council
Mother's Day
- 19 Fifth All Souls' Saturday
- 20 PENTECOST
- 21 Pentecost Monday
*Simple Holyday*Chancery closed*
- 27 Sunday of All Saints
- 28 Memorial Day
Civic holiday Chancery closed*

JULY

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

AUGUST

- 4-8 Altar Server Camp
Carpathian Village, Canadensis, PA
- 11-12 Annual Holy Dormition Pilgrimage
Sloatsburg, NY

SEPTEMBER

- 1-2 Annual Pilgrimage in Honor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help
Uniontown, PA