



EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

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2017 Bishop's Annual Appeal



O Most Holy Theotokos

You are the Gardener of the Gardener of Life. You are the Soil whose Fruit shall not perish, You are the Key to Paradise. You are the mother of both Lamb and Shepherd, You are the Protection against unseen enemies, You are more Spacious than the Heavens. You are the trust of mortals before God, You are the Unfading Rose.

October, 2017

My dear friends,
Glory to Jesus Christ!

If we look around in our society now, it seems as though the news gets worse and worse. It seems as though a spiritual darkness is descending on our country, what the scriptures call, "the web that is woven over all nations, the veil that veils all people". If we ignore the news, and focus on our own community and family, we cannot escape it. I asked a local priest the other day how he was doing, and he said he had a rough week, a thirteen year old girl committed suicide in his parish—bullied by schoolmates. In my own family, a young enlisted man has buried too many of his close friends in the military—all suicides. These were not returning warriors with trauma from battle. These were healthy young men who seemed to have everything in life, but found no happiness or purpose in this world.



I thank God that I have our Church for support in these times. I can receive the Body and Blood of Christ, and I can go to confession to a priest. In our Church, we have the light of Jesus Christ to guide us through the darkness. We are guaranteed the truths of the Gospel in times of doubt. The ancient comfort of the Gospel is preserved from Apostolic times fresh and always new. The prophecies about the Messiah are fulfilled today as they were 2000 years ago, "The deaf shall hear the words of a book, and out of the gloom and the darkness, the eyes of the blind shall see. The lowly shall find fresh joy in the Lord, and the poor will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel." The Word of God is spoken to us in the Holy Scriptures and in our sublime Liturgy, filling up the emptiness in our souls and giving us eyes to see beyond the materialism and false friendship of this world. God has blessed our Church on the east coast so abundantly in the past 125 years. And the generous and faithful people of our Church have built a system of parishes from the north to the south so that we can usually find one of our communi-

ties a reasonable distance away. Even now, God has sent us young dedicated priests with families to renew our communities, and two young men in the seminary preparing for the priesthood. I am in awe of the dedication and hard work of so many of our priests, both young and old. God has been so generous to our Eparchy that we in turn have been able to help others.

Every year, I ask you to help with the financial support of the integral Eparchy. Your generosity allows us to support struggling parishes and to establish new missions. Even this summer promising new missions have been established in the South to accommodate our faithful moving there. Your support also aids eparchial activities such as pilgrimages and education, to educate seminarians, to bring new priests from Eastern Europe, to care for priests who are unable to work, and even to be generous to our Church in Eastern Europe. You make it possible to bring the Light of Christ to the east coast.

+Kurt Burnett

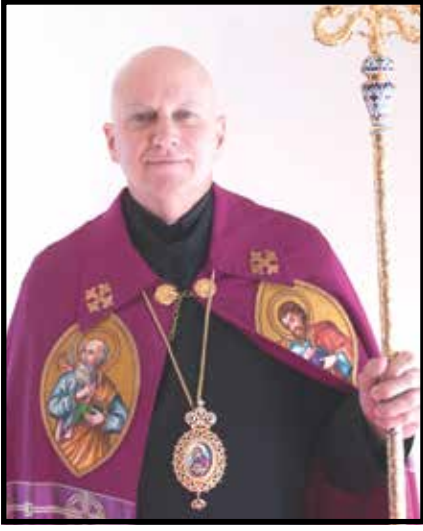
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I LIFT UP MY EYES...

Pastoral Reflections of Bishop Kurt



THE FIRST SYNODS

How much were the first Christians like us? Well, one thing we know for certain is that they didn't always get along. According to the Acts of the Apostles, the Greek-speaking Christians believed that the Aramaic-speaking Christians were getting special treatment in the food distribution. The Apostles responded to this agitation by creating the order of deacons. Then, a more serious fight broke out when some Apostles were telling the Gentile converts that they didn't have to follow all of the Jewish laws, and others were telling them the opposite. In the Acts of the Apostles, we read that the Apostles held a meeting to decide what to do about the problem, and so we see the very first Church Council in the Bible itself. The most breathtaking aspect of this story is that the Apostles believed that they had the authority to decide which part of the Law was mandatory. They obviously believed that Jesus Christ really gave them authority: whatever they would bind on earth would be bound in heaven. Saint Peter said to the others, "Why should we impose on them a burden that neither we nor our ancestors were able to carry?" The moral code that the Apostles proposed was remarkably simple—avoid eating certain foods and avoid unlawful sexual intercourse.

Something else that we know about the early Christians is that they often decided serious controversies by having councils, just as they had seen the Apostles doing. In our churches, we hear a lot about the seven ecumenical councils. People who don't know history often portray these councils as the tool of power hungry Roman emperors. History shows that the early Christians regularly held councils long before the emperors were involved. In fact, Constantine was just trying to keep peace in his realm, and he found that Christians already had a vehicle that he understood, the councils or synods.

For the Christians in the early centuries who faced many hardships, false teachers, confusions, and divisions, the synods were an important means for preserving *communio* or fellowship as the Church grew larger and more complicated. The first Council at Jerusalem, described in the Bible, took place around the year 50 or 52, so perhaps about 20 years after the Ascension. It seems likely that there were other synods in the next hundred years, but the first ones for which we have historical records are around the year 150.

We know from different sources, including Irenaeus, that people sometimes questioned the authority, both the teaching authority and the disciplinary authority, of the bishops. We know from the Bible that people were doing that even in the time of the Apostles, so it is hardly surprising that they were questioning the authority of future church authorities. Saint Irenaeus tries to prove the doctrinal authority of the bishops by show-

ing that they have a public succession back to the Apostles. He says that it can be traced in every church, but it would be tedious to list them all, so he says he will list only the bishops of Rome, "inasmuch as it would be very tedious in a book like this to rehearse the lines of succession in every church, we will put to confusion all those who, either from waywardness or conceit or blindness or obstinacy combine together against the truth, by pointing to the tradition, derived from the Apostles, of that great and illustrious Church founded and organized at Rome by the two glorious Apostles, Peter and Paul, and to the faith declared to mankind and handed down to our own time through its bishops in their succession".

One of the ways that people challenged the church authorities 1900 years ago is also done today. Some people claim to have special revelations from the Holy Spirit which makes them superior to any human authority. About a hundred years or more after the Ascension, a recent convert to Christianity named Montanus in Phrygia began to claim special revelations from God. He claimed to be taken over in ecstasies, and even claimed to be speaking for God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He was joined then in the prophecies by two women, Maximilla and Prisca or Priscilla. At first, their revelations simply encouraged Christians to live a stricter life, for example fasting. Just as today, the overall tone of their revelations was that Christians today are too lax and immoral and need to clean things up. (It's funny how things never change. People nowadays who want to attract attention with fake revelations often adopt the same approach.) The sect spread even after the death of these "prophets", and ensnared the great theologian Tertullian who was attracted to the strictness of the sect. They began to claim that only their followers had "the Spirit" while the rest of us only had a soul. In Greek, they called themselves "pneumatics" and the rest of us "psychics". In Greek that meant that they had the Spirit or "pneuma", while the rest of us only had a soul or "psychos". Oddly enough, "psychic" is the equivalent of the word "animal" because "anima" means soul in Latin. So they were really calling us "animals" while they were "spiritual". At first they promoted fasting and chastity, but then their morality became more bizarre and extreme. For example they believe in a dry diet called xerophagia, and they rejected all second marriages. The cult lived on after the death of the three and spread from its homeland in Phrygia. Their followers placed their authority above the bishops, and then above the Apostles, and then even above the teachings of Jesus! They said that the Apostles received the Holy Spirit, but not the Paraclete whom Jesus promised. It was Montanus who received the Paraclete, so his wisdom even exceeded Jesus'.

The cult of Montanism ensnared none other than Tertullian, one of the greatest of the early Christian theologians. He was the first early Christian theologian to write in Latin and so we use many of his terms to this day. No one questions his brilliance and his sincerity, but he was attracted by the strictness of the cult, and ended his life out of communion with the Catholic Church.

Tertullian was a North African born around 150 or 160. So when he was born, there were people still alive who knew some of the Apostles. A pagan and the son of a centurion, he grew up with the popular prejudices and accusations against the Christians. He converted to the Christian faith then by the year 197, and his first writings are from that year. He was ordained a priest around 200. He was fluent in Latin and Greek, but his only writings that still exist are in Latin. In 197, he published a short work on martyrs and two major works called *Ad nationes* and *Apologeticus* which defended Christians against the many slanders that were spread about them. Christians



Icon of the Hospitality of Abraham

were accused by the pagans of infanticide, incest, causing earthquakes and floods and famines, and of worshipping a god with a donkey head. Tertullian, who was a lawyer, systematically defends the Christians against all these charges. (I find it interesting that the Catholic Encyclopedia implies that these works are no longer valuable in our time. Well that Encyclopedia was written one hundred years ago. If those writers lived today, they might say otherwise.)

A few years later around 200, Tertullian published a great work against all the known heresies of the time called *Liber de praescriptione haereticorum*. He uses numerous arguments to make his points, as if trying a case in court. He presents the same reasoning of Irenaeus that the bishops can all trace their ordinations back to the Apostles. Considering that he wasn't raised Christian, and his searching and hypercritical mind, he must have researched the apostolic succession somewhat extensively to make such a claim. Like Irenaeus, he points to Rome as a special example. The Catholic Encyclopedia calls this great work "a work for all time".

Unfortunately around 206, Tertullian began to follow the teachings of Montanism, attracted by their strictness and rigorism. He broke with the Catholic Church definitively around 211. One of his objections to the Catholic faith as practiced by the Pope of Rome was absolution of sinners. Tertullian maintained that some sins could not be absolved. I suppose we would say nowadays that he considered the Pope to be "too liberal". His writings became increasingly bitter towards

the Catholic Church and he died out of communion with the Church. The remnant of his followers was reconciled by Saint Augustine to the Church.

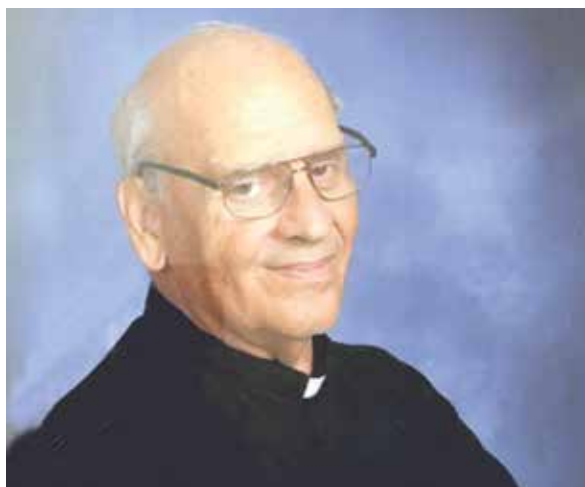
What does this have to do with synods? Montanism caused the first synods in the Church of which we have historical record. It is likely that there were many such councils and synods before then that no one mentions in the early church. After all, the vibrant life of the early church must have contained many disagreements and debates that were never written down. But we do know that soon after the cult of Montanus began, bishops held meetings with other bishops to discuss the situation. Eusebius tells us that there were

many meetings in many towns of the faithful of Asia, and another document says specifically that Apollinaris, the holy bishop of Hierapolis in Asia and twenty-six other bishops held a provincial council in Hierapolis. Also, the "very holy" Bishop Sotas of Anchialus (in Thrace near the Black Sea) assembled twelve bishops in a synod for the same purpose. According to Eusebius, these new doctrines were examined and declared strange and impious. The other source says that Montanus and Maximilla were declared heretics. Scholars argue about the dates, but these synods seem to have taken place between 140 and 180.

We have barely begun to talk about the fascinating subject of these early church synods or

councils. These synods about Montanism are important because they are the first ones after the Apostles for which we have any historical evidence and decisions, but we have almost no details about the synods. They might leave the impression that a lot of early church history is vague, but as we will see, synods soon began to leave detailed records of their procedures, their debates, their membership, and many other fascinating things. In fact, it is astonishing how many records we have of these early attempts by the Church to conserve and understand the teachings of Jesus Christ. It will take more than one column to explore the early synods of the Catholic Church.

+Kurt Burnette



Father Jerry Hamperzonian, a retired priest of the Eparchy of Passaic, fell asleep in the Lord on August 25, 2017, in San Diego, CA. Father Jerry was born in Detroit, MI, on August 22, 1939. He was ordained an Orthodox Priest in

Retired Priest, +Father Jerry Hamperzonian, Reposes in the Lord

1970 in New York, and entered the US Army as a chaplain the same year, and served at several army posts in the US and Germany including a tour in Vietnam, earning the Bronze Star. He attended CPE training in San Francisco at Letterman Army Hospital to become a hospital chaplain. In 1983, Father Jerry left the Army and studied to become a Byzantine Catholic priest for the Eparchy of Passaic. His next career move was to become a VA Chaplain and was assigned to the two VA Hospitals in Little Rock, AR, where he served for five years. An opening at the VA Hospital, San Diego, was next. He served his last twenty years as the Catholic Chaplain for the San Diego VA Medical Center, while residing at Blessed Sacrament Parish, in San Diego, CA. Combining

his army and VA time, he retired on July 31, 2010, with 38 years of federal service. He spent his retirement helping out at Blessed Sacrament Parish and enjoying trips to visit family and friends. He is survived by his sister-in-law, Virginia; 9 nieces and nephews: Dennis, Debbie, Harry, Gary, Bill, Denise, Cheryl, Tina and Sandy; and 3 cousins, Mari, Patricia, and Josiane.

A Funeral Mass was celebrated for him at Blessed Sacrament Church on August 28, 2017. May the Lord God grant to His priestly servant, Father Jerry, blessed repose and may his memory be eternal!



+Sister Clare Marian Holak, SSMI Enters Eternal Rest

Sister Clare Marian Holak, SSMI, fell asleep in the Lord on July 27, 2017, in Sloatsburg, NY. Sister Clare Marian was born on February 18, 1934, entered the Order of The Sister Servants of Mary Immaculate on July 6, 1952, and was in Community for 65 years.

Services were held at Saint Mary Villa, Sloatsburg, NY, on Sunday July 30, 2017, and were celebrated by Bishop Basil Losten, Bishop Emeritus of Stamford and concelebrating clergy.

May God grant eternal rest to His faithful servant, Sister Clare Marian, and may her memory be eternal!



FROM THE OFFICE OF THE BISHOP:

Very Rev. Gregory Noga is relieved of his duties as Pastor, Saint Mary Church in Trenton, NJ, and Administrator, Saint Nicholas Church in Roebling, NJ, and as Syncellus of the New Jersey Syncellate, and is appointed Pastor of Saints Peter and Paul Church in Minersville, PA, and Administrator of Saint Mary Church in St. Clair, PA, and Protopresbyter of the Mid Pennsylvania Protopresbyterate.

Rev. Edward Cimbala, in addition to his current assignment, is appointed Administrator of Saint Mary Church in Trenton, NJ, and Administrator of Saint Nicholas Church in Roebling, NJ.

Rev. Yuri Oros is appointed Parochial Vicar of Saint Mary Church in Trenton, NJ, and Parochial Vicar of Saint Nicholas Church in Roebling, NJ.

Very Rev. Jack Custer, in addition to his current assignments, is appointed Syncellus of the New Jersey Syncellate.

Very Rev. Charles Yastishock, in addition to his current assignment, is appointed Protopresbyter of the Central New Jersey Protopresbyterate.

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Most Reverend Bishop Kurt Burnette
President and Publisher

Father James Badeaux, *Editor*

Father Ronald Hatton, *Associate Editor*

Father Lewis Rabayda, *Layout Editor*

Mrs. Diane Rabiej, *Copy Editor*

Mrs. Maureen French, *Circulation Editor*
(mfrench@eparchyofpassaic.com)

E-Mail us at:

ECL@eparchyofpassaic.com

Eparchial Website:

www.EparchyofPassaic.com



PEOPLE YOU KNOW

IN ORLANDO...

Installation of Father Salvatore Pignato as state chaplain for the State of Florida

Father Salvatore Pignato is a priest of the Eparchy of Passaic and pastor of Saint Nicholas in Orlando, FL. These are his reflections.

As a priest of the Eparchy of Passaic, I am honored to be the state chaplain for the State of Florida. That installation took place in Orlando, FL, with a Divine Liturgy celebrated by Bishop Kurt on July 1, 2017, at Holy Family Roman Catholic Church. In attendance were the state officers who were to be installed and invited guests. There was a luncheon by the Catholic television station for the Diocese of Orlando.

As a priest of the eparchy, it was my goal to make the Byzantine Catholic Church and our eparchy known not only to the Florida State Knights of Columbus, but also to the people of Orlando and to the State of Florida through the vehicle of the Knights of Columbus. This has been a thirty-year task. The culmination of this for me was in being asked to be the State Chaplain for Florida. As I opened the Church of Saint Nicholas in Orlando to the Knights, a council was founded comprised of different Latin parishes, along with Saint Nicholas Parish. A Fourth Degree Assembly was established under the Patronage of Blessed Bishop Theodore G. Romzha. With the grace of God, our Eastern Church in the area began to take hold and be recognized, through contact with the Knights of Columbus. Pope Saint John Paul II said that the Catholic Church breathes with two lungs, the East and the West. With my appointment as state chaplain for the state of Florida, the Knights of Columbus of the state of Florida truly breathes with two lungs, the East and the West.



IN ANNANDALE...

Captain Michael O'Leary and his wife, Laura, and sons, Aidan, Patrick, and Jacob, are active parishioners of Epiphany Byzantine Catholic Church in Annandale, VA. He was recently appointed by the Secretary of the Navy to command Naval Support Activity South Potomac Naval Base-Dahlgren, VA, and the Naval Surface Warfare Center, Indian Head, MD. The following are his reflections.

Command in the U.S. Navy is regulated by law, but is quantified by certain aspects. The balance of the principles of authority, responsibility, and accountability is essential. Further, commanding officers are expected to show themselves a good example of virtue, honor, patriotism, and subordination. The U.S. Navy holds commanding officers to these very high standards. If there is a sense from superiors that subordinate commanding officers are failing to meet these principles and standards, it is generally the case where the offending commanding officer is immediately removed from the position of special trust and confidence. You could read in the papers that the commanding officer is removed with the reason of a loss of confidence in their ability to command.

So, while naval policies do not specifically mention faith, I personally

believe that most failings, which result in the removal of a commanding officer, result from a lapse in faith. There can be tremendous temptations to take short cuts, favors, or liberties from a multitude of sources. When challenged with these temptations, I turn to my faith. While all decisions made, when proceeding through situations fraught with temptation, are not always the best, I find that these decisions made through the lens of my faith make for decisions that are best for all and not for me. I believe that most commanding officers, who are removed from command, make decisions that are less than selfless, so I try to remind myself that humility before God is the best path to avoid falling for these temptations. Always attempting to make selfless decisions that put others before you, generally leads to sound resolutions that are both legal and moral.

As young adults leave their homes and go forth onto the world, I would advise them to always strive to make moral and legal decisions. While these young adults should take time to celebrate their achievements, realize that these achievements come from the blessings of their families, friends, and faith. So, they can be proud but strive to remain humble. As they grow, they will be placed in positions of greater authority with the commensurate temptations. I advise them to rely on their faith to help them through these future challenges and to understand that we should all remain humble before the Lord.



Father John Basarab, pastor of Epiphany Parish, with Captain O'Leary



(L. to R.) Mrs. Laura O'Leary; Sergeant Major, US Army (Ret.), Richard Parrell; Thomas Cooke; and Mrs. Daria Parrell



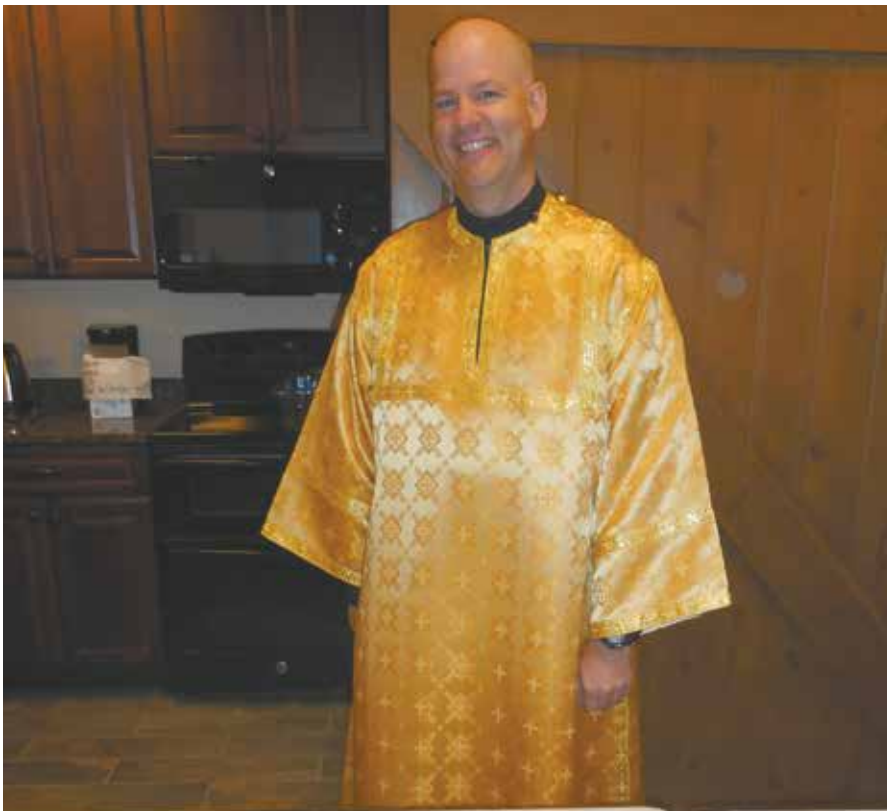
Captain O'Leary

AROUND THE EPARCHY



IN ROSWELL...

The parish family of Epiphany Byzantine Catholic Church recently celebrated the ordination to Minor Orders for John Reed. More than 65 parishioners gathered together after Divine Liturgy and recognized Reader John's accomplishment with a reception.



Lector John Reed



Right Reverend James G. Hayer with Deacon Basil Soroka and Deacon Robert Behrens during the Great Entrance

IN SCRANTON...

A Byzantine Catholic Divine Liturgy has been celebrated since the early 1970's at the Basilica of Saint Ann in Scranton during the annual novena to Saint Ann.

The Basilica and the Passionist community established there are well known for the novena held July 17 to July 25 each year since 1902. The novena ends with the Feast Day honoring the patron saint, the grandmother of Jesus and draws thousands of Catholics to the Shrine and blessed grounds. Pope Saint John Paul II declared Saint Ann Monastery and Church as a National Shrine to be a Minor Basilica on October 27, 1997. Every bishop of our Eparchy of Passaic since Bishop Michael, including our current bishop, Bishop Kurt, has visited the monastery and celebrated the Divine Liturgy during novena week.

Through a cooperative initiative begun many years ago, the Byzantine Liturgy has become an honored tradition. It is a blessing that we are united in our faith as Catholics in worship to God and with reverence to Saint Ann at this historic site and holy shrine. Many prayers have been answered since the inception of the public devotion. The faithful return unceasingly every year.

Serving for Bishop Kurt Burnette this year, was Right Reverend Archpriest James G. Hayer, Protosyncellus. The preachers for 2017 were Father Melvin Shorter, C.P., and Father Paul Ruttler, C.P.; Father Melvin was the featured preacher at the Byzantine Liturgy. Father Richard Burke, C.P., Rector of Saint Ann Parish, opened the Liturgy with the novena prayers to Saint Ann.



The faithful gathered for the Divine Liturgy in the Basilica of Saint Anne



Scranton Cantor Andrew Drozdik leads the singing



"Oh Lord, I believe and profess..."

BASILIAN SISTERS JUBILARIANS FETED DURING COMMUNITY DAYS

Mount Macrina, Uniontown, PA



Jubilarians with Father Michael Huszti, Chaplain, and Sister Ruth Plante, OSBM, Provincial

Jubilee is a time to “return to Galilee,” to the time when one first heard the call and to treasure in one’s heart the living memory of that call. It is for the Jubilarians, and for all the Sisters, “a return to that blazing light with which God’s grace touched us at the start of our journey.” These words of Pope Francis express this even more succinctly when he stated, “To return there means reviving the memory of that moment when his eyes met mine, the moment when he made me realize that he loved me.” These are the memories which sustain us on the journey and which we celebrate at each Jubilee.

Nine Sisters of Saint Basil celebrated a lifetime of dedication during the annual community day gathering at Mount Saint Macrina. From Diamond Jubilarian Sister Maria Petruska, to 40 year Jubilarian Sister Susan Sisko, the Sisters have offered a total of 565 years of loving service throughout our Metropolitan Church. As the Feast of our holy Mother Saint Macrina fell during community week, July 19th was the day chosen to honor all these Sisters. The Gospel during the Divine Liturgy of Thanksgiving was about the Beatitudes. Father Michael, Monastery Chaplain, noted that this gospel asks the most of us. In addressing the Jubilarians, Father spoke of the depth of their love for the Lord, this love exemplified in their fidelity to the holy vows over the years. No less are they honored for their faithful fulfillment of the various apostolates to which they were called and assigned.

Earlier in the week, the Sisters gathered at the Manor to honor Sister Maria Petruska, Sister Rita Keshock, Sister Paula Dzurisin and Sister Mary Grace, the Jubilarians who now reside there. The joyful gathering began with the singing of odes of the Akathist to Our Lady of Perpetual Help. A wonderful time of socializing followed the congratulations offered by Sister Ruth, Provincial, on behalf of all the Sisters.

Briefly, each one’s ministry is included in the following notes.

75th Anniversary

Sister Maria Petruska entered the community from Saint Mary Parish, Mahanoy City, PA. Sister Maria’s teaching ministry included the elementary, high school, and college levels both within the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Province and abroad in the Holy Land, Guam, Japan and Tanzania. Saint Maria’s empathy for those entering the United

States lacking a proficiency in English led her to tutor for the Intermediate Unit I Adult Learning Center in Uniontown. Several of her students still keep in friendly contact with her. Sister now resides at Mount Macrina Manor.

70th Anniversary

Sister Rita Keshock entered the community from Saint Nicholas parish, Youngstown, OH. She spent many years as a teacher and principal before devoting her talents to fine arts and crafts at the monastery. Sister Rita’s specialty is etching icons on eggs, and she has given many workshops teaching the above technique. Sister Rita was an active member of the Uniontown Art Club and the Uniontown Flower Club, and she took great joy in sharing her talents and knowledge among the membership. Presently, Sister Rita resides at Mount Macrina Manor.

Sister Paula Dzurisin came to the monastery from Saint Michael Parish in Pittston, PA. She also spent a good number of years as a teacher and principal in the parish schools as well as at Mount Macrina Academy. During the alumnae reunions, her students make a point of visiting her. Following her years in the teaching ministry, Sister Paula spent a year in pastoral visiting at the Manor. Her background in business education led to her next assignment, that of managing the Card Department at the monastery. When health issues required a lessening of her responsibilities, Sister Paula continued to assist in that same ministry for a number of years. Sister Paula now resides at Mount Macrina Manor.

Sister Bernarda Sevachko entered the community from Saint Nicholas parish in Youngstown, OH. Sister Bernarda’s first 45 years of service were devoted to the teaching apostolate. For the next 25 years, with unflagging energy, she has been active in pastoral and catechetical ministry for the five Byzantine Catholic parishes in the Youngstown area. Her ministry is marked by the enthusiasm which she brings to all she does. At present, there is no indication that Sister Bernarda is thinking of retiring.

60th Anniversary

Sister Regina Adams came to the community from Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Parish, Trenton, NJ, Sister had been both teacher and principal in many of the schools staffed by the Sisters in PA, NJ, and OH. After leaving the

teaching apostolate, Sister served in parish ministry in her home parish of Trenton, NJ, for five years. She is currently serving in parish ministry for the Wilkes-Barre, Kingston, and Swoyersville parishes, as well as cantoring at Saint Mary Parish, Wilkes-Barre.

Sister Melita Marie Penchalk entered the community from Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic parish, Barberton, OH. Sister served mainly in the teaching apostolate on both the elementary and secondary levels in the schools in PA, IN, OH, NJ, and NY, Sister Melita also served in administration as a Provincial Councilor. After this, for the next 12 years, she was an Assistant Superintendent of Catholic Schools in Phoenix, AZ. Presently, Sister Melita serves as community archivist and helps part-time in the Gift Shop.

Sister Mary Grace Skuban entered the community from Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic Church in Taylor, PA. Sister was an LPN on the staff of Mount Macrina Manor, serving both in direct nursing care and in medical records. Other ministries were at the Byzantine Catholic Seminary, at Mount Macrina House of Prayer, and as Activities Director at Saint Basil’s Home. Upon returning to the monastery, she served as monastery sacristan as well as assisting with the health care of the Sisters at the Monastery. Sister Mary Grace now resides at Mount Macrina Manor.

Sister Seraphim Olsafsky served two terms as Provincial of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Province in Uniontown. She entered the community from Saint Edward Roman Catholic Church in Youngstown, OH. Sister Seraphim was active in a variety of ministries, beginning her apostolic work as a teacher and/or principal in CT, PA and OH. Sister Seraphim also served as Directress of Novices, as Assistant Provincial, Personal Formation Directress, Social worker, Curator of the Archdiocesan Museum and Director of the Byzantine Seminary Press. Presently, she is Director of Mount Macrina Cemetery and Mausoleum.

40th Anniversary

Sister Susan Sisko came to the community from Saint John the Baptist Church in Bridgeport, CT. As with most of the community, Sister was active in the education ministry at both the elementary and secondary levels, sometimes concurrently as principal. In addition to being on the Provincial Council for two terms, she also served as Coordinator of the Monastery community during this time. Vocation, Formation, and Young Adult Ministry were also assignments carried out by Sister Susan. Presently, Sister Susan is a resident director at Notre Dame University in Indiana.

Each of the Sisters has brought a diversity of gifts and talents to the Province, and each has enriched it in her own unique way. May God grant each of them many more spiritually fruitful years in His service.





SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH IN LANSFORD CELEBRATES 125 YEARS

Lansford, PA By Jean Paslawsky

June 24-25, 2017 was an historic weekend both for Lansford, PA, and the parishioners of Saint John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Church. Celebrating the 125th Anniversary was duly noted both by the town and the parish. The Lansford Historical Marker was mounted on a pole in front of Church on Saturday and the parish highlight was the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy at 3 PM Sunday celebrated by Bishop Kurt.

Parishioners and guests were bubbling with excitement knowing that many of their grandparents and great grandparents were those who began our parish and saw it through many challenges, including rebuilding after a fire and a glorious restoration many years later. Many arrived early to join the Rosary Society in praying the rosary. Joseph Seaver waited to greet visitors, to assist anyone as they exited vehicles and offer directions for parking. Robert and Mary Ann (Melnick) Holovack greeted everyone and gave each person each a commemorative program for the Liturgy with two laminated holy cards: one depicting our Patron, Saint John the Baptist, and the other portraying the Parish's one of a kind Icon: "Our Lady of Lansford."



Bishop Kurt is greeted with bread and salt by the parish children

The children of Saint John Parish offered official greetings on behalf of the parishioners and presented the bishop with the traditional bread and salt, as symbols of hospitality and welcome. The bread symbolizes life, in particular the parish life of the parish. The bread expresses the parish's ongoing desire to give life to its members through the hand of the bishop who feeds his flock with the life-giving truths of Christ. The salt represents Saint John parish family as the "salt of the earth" to serve as this seasoning to life. The presentation of the salt also expresses acceptance of the admonition of Christ that we become "doers of the Word."

Concelebrating the Liturgy with the Bishop were: Right Reverend James Hayer, Protosyn-cellus, Eparchy of Passaic; Father Peter Hosak,

Vicar for Clergy; Father Francis Twardzik, SDB, Pastor *emeritus* of Saints Peter and Paul Church, Minersville, PA; Father Michael Kerestes, Episcopal Vocation Director and pastor, Saint Mary Church, Wilkes-Barre, PA; Father Scott Boghossian, Pro-Life Director, Eparchy of Passaic, and pastor, Saint Mary Church, Freeland, PA; Father Gregory Hosler, Pastor of Saint Michael the Archangel Church, McAdoo, PA; Father Lewis Rabayda, Parochial Vicar of Saint Gregory of Nyssa Church, Beltsville, MD; and Administrator of Saint John Parish, Father Vasyl Chepelskyy. Fathers Hosak, Kerestes, Hosler, and Rabayda are parish vocations.

Other priests of the Eparchy who attended the Liturgy were: Reverend Peter Donish, Saint Mary Church, Hazleton, PA, Reverend Bill Gore, OSFS, Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, Very Reverend Michael Salnick, Saint Nicholas Church, Mount Pocono, Reverend Jerome Wolbert, OFM, Holy Dormition Monastery, Sybertsville, PA, Reverend Eduard Shestak, St. Nicholas of Myra Church, Old Forge, PA, Father Michael Popson, St. Ann Church, Harrisburg, PA, Reverend Vitaly Pukhayev, St. George Church, Linden, NJ, Reverend Martin Vavrak, St. Michael the Archangel Church, Perth Amboy, NJ, Reverend John Zeyack, retired, Monsignor John Puhak, retired, Reverend John Cigan, St. Mary Church, Coatesville, PA.

Master of Ceremonies for the Liturgy was Father Edward J. Higgins. Altar servers were Seminarian Tim Farris and Michael Keer, grandson of parishioners Charles and Celia Keer.

Also in attendance, from local parishes were Father Francis Baransky, Pastor of Saint Joseph Church, Jim Thorpe, PA, and Father James Burdless, Pastor of Saint Joseph of Panther Valley, Summit Hill, PA. These parishes are in the Diocese of Allentown, PA

Representing the Sisters of Saint Basil the Great were Sister Regina Adams and Sister Theodosia Alishofski, who serve at Saint Mary Parish, Wilkes-Barre, PA.

Bishop Kurt's homily focused on God's interactions with man throughout history and His loving care as evidenced in the Gospel of the day, which told how the lilies of the field and birds of the air do not worry about things as humans do. Instead, they rely on the Heavenly Father who cares for them.

Bishop Kurt also noted that the day before our anniversary celebration was the solemn feast of

the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist, our parish patron, and focused on God's interactions with Saint John's parents, the holy prophet Zechariah and the righteous Elizabeth. He recalled the beautiful story of John's parent's, her faith and his doubting and their both ultimately being inspired to name him John.

After the Liturgy, those attending enjoyed a delicious dinner at Woodstone Country Club and Lodge in Danielsville, PA. The ballroom was very elegant and was highlighted by the beautiful view of the Blue Mountain and the Lehigh Gap. God had blessed the day with lovely weather, which crowned the beautiful view. Parish volunteers provided transportation for those unable to drive to the dinner.

Before the dinner, Bishop Kurt circulated among the guests, meeting everyone and offering his greetings and best wishes. Edward Kusko, a parishioner of Saint Mary Parish in Nesquehoning, PA, and an accomplished and beloved accordionist, provided music before and after dinner, playing many traditional Eastern European songs. Right Reverend James Hayer served as Toastmaster. Father William Gore, OSFS, a dear friend of Saint John Parish, offered the invocation. Father Lewis Rabayda gave the champagne toast.

After dinner, Charles Keer, lay representative of Saint John Parish, welcomed everyone to the celebration. Father Vasyl offered his gratitude to everyone who attended this historical event and made the celebration so wonderful.

Each person who attended the dinner received a commemorative program and a silver icon of




Parishioners enjoying the dinner

the Holy Family, purchased through the generosity of an anonymous parishioner. The parish is now awaiting the delivery of an anniversary book, available to all this fall. What a notable, historic, and religious celebration it was —an anniversary as it should be!

83RD PILGRIMAGE IN HONOR OF OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP

Uniontown, PA – More photos in next issue





GLORY TO JESUS CHRIST! Pilgrimage 2017

Dear Friends,

Over the course of this past week, many of the external pieces of pilgrimage have slowly been packed away – the benches are back in the storage room; the tents which dotted the hillsides have been taken down; the candles have been moved indoors where they will continue to be burned in an ongoing prayer.

What continues to linger are the memories of so many spiritual blessings and memories. The remnants of hurricane Harvey attempted to disrupt us in our celebrations on Saturday, but failed. So many faithful pilgrims refused to be deterred by the chill in the air, the strength of the breeze, or the intermittent showers.

Instead, the wind was a reminder of the breath of the Spirit, and the raindrops were so many blessings flowing from Mary, the Life-giving Spring. This faith and steadfastness brought forth the fruit of a lovely, sun-filled Sunday reminding us of the loving warmth of the Light of the World. Pilgrims of all ages filled the air with hymns and prayers blanketing the Mount with happy hearts and a palpable sense of peace and joy.

Be assured that all who came had an important part in making this pilgrimage a memorable and spiritually uplifting event. We will continue to pray for you each and every day, asking our dear Mother of Perpetual Help to watch over you and protect you. May the road of your life's journey lead you back to this holy Mount for pilgrimage 2018.

With our love, prayers, and sincere gratitude,

Sister Ruth Plante, OSB

Sister Ruth and the Sisters of St. Basil



BISHOP'S ANNUAL APPEAL 2017 BYZANTINE CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF PASSAIC

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

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|--------------------------------------|-----|--|
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| <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 2,500.00 | or: | <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 500.00 per month |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 1,000.00 | or: | <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 250.00 per month |
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63RD ANNUAL HOLY DORMITION PILGRIMAGE

Sloatsburg, NY



The 63rd Holy Dormition Pilgrimage, hosted by the Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate in Sloatsburg, NY, on August 12 and 13, welcomed 4,239 pilgrims who journeyed from near and far, including Canada. Although God's graces and blessings come to us whether it is raining or sunny, God bestowed beautiful weather upon the pilgrims this weekend despite the predictions.

The theme of the pilgrimage was "Glory to God! Honor to Mary! Peace to Us!", which is the motto for the Sisters Servants. The pilgrimage opened on Saturday, August 12, at 1:00 pm with the celebration of the Akathist to the Mother of God in Saint Mary Chapel by Father Jack Custer, rector of Saint Michael Cathedral in Passaic, NJ. The pilgrims flowed out into the gallery, and their resounding voices of praise seemed to echo throughout the Villa.

Throughout the day confessions, blessing of the sick and activities for the children were available. Sr. Janice Soluk, SSMI from Canada and Sr. Tekla Gnatyuk gave presentations about the history of the SSMI's and how we continue to serve God's people. Throughout the day, pilgrims reverently lit candles and prayed for their many intentions.

In the evening Bishop Kurt, along with clergy from the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic, and hierarchy and clergy of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Stamford and the Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Philadelphia, celebrated a panachida outside Saint Mars Chapel and then celebrated the Moleben to the Mother of God in Saint Mary Chapel due to the impending weather. Once again the overflowing crowd sang melodiously praises to the Mother of God.

The Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate extend their heartfelt gratitude to the hierarchy and clergy for their presence and spiritual leadership.

We are grateful to all of the pilgrims who travelled to Sloatsburg to receive the plenary indulgence and other graces. Finally, we acknowledge and extend our sincere gratitude to the many volunteers who helped us months before and during



the pilgrimage. We could not have done it without your support. God bless you and we hope to see you at the 64th Holy Dormition Pilgrimage on August 11 and 12, 2018

ALTAR SERVER CAMP 2017

Cresco, PA by Nathan Mott

On August 5-9, 2017, altar servers from around the Eparchy of Passaic gathered at the Carpathian Village in the Pocono Mountains for the annual Altar Server Congress. During these five days, the servers enjoyed friendship, fun, great food and engaging activities. Additionally, time was taken for daily prayer and spiritual learning. A number of formal lectures were given, and many personal conversations also explored different theological subjects. This year's Altar Server Congress was an extremely fruitful and enlightening experience.



The theme of this year's congress was "Putting on the Whole Armor of God," which comes from a verse taken from Saint Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Saint Paul uses the idea of armor to describe how we, as Christians, should be ready for battle against the devil. Just as a soldier must put on armor to protect himself, so too, as soldiers of Jesus Christ, must we put on the whole armor of God that we "may be able to withstand the wiles of the devil." (Ephesians 6:11)

Several lectures provided campers with an opportunity to learn more about being a better server both on and off the altar. The servers engaged in discussions such as how to be a Christian gentleman, and to how to live, protect and defend their



faith. The camp councilors also reflected on how important it is to respect the people and things around us. Servers were reminded that part of being a good altar server is being a good steward of the things God has entrusted to us.

The altar servers participated in many activities during their time at the congress. On Sunday, they took a bus trip to the Byzantine Franciscan Monastery in Sybertsville, PA, for the annual Pilgrimage for Peace. Upon their arrival, the campers served the Divine Liturgy with Bishop Kurt Burnette and several other priests. On Tuesday, the servers spent the afternoon at Kalahari, a water park near Mt. Pocono. "It was fun and relaxing," explained one of the servers, "and it gave us time to get to know other servers from the camp better." Other activities included team building games, and a few hours of field sports. The servers also gathered around the camp fire for s'mores and singing once sun went down.

One attraction of this annual event is all the fantastic food. Father Michael Salnicko and other camp councilors worked hard, as they do every year, to prepare scrumptious food for the servers. In the words of Father Salnicko, "Only the best for

our guys!" The campers enjoyed three delicious meals a day, and were often treated with dessert.

"It's fun, everyone's enthusiastic to make new friends, and it's big on spiritual growth," said one server describing what he liked about the camp. The Altar Server Congress has always been a great time come together and enjoy a retreat full of camaraderie and fun, and this year was no different. Servers were given a clean, safe environment in which they could enjoy themselves, grow in Christ and learn valuable life lessons along the way..



CATECHETICAL REFLECTIONS

Father Robert F. Slesinski, Ph.D.



MAN BEFORE GOD

Selfhood as Understood in the Slavic East—Installment 1/3

As we have seen, the basic stance of Christian teaching is that all human persons are ends in themselves, which can *never* be viewed as mere *means* that, at the hands of others (“the socially enlightened”), can be instrumentally used, even *if for a good cause*, e.g., the greater good of humanity. Significantly, as we have seen, this ethical insight constitutes a key argument for debunking all socialist systems that would reduce the human individual to a cog in a machine.

N. A. Berdyaev (1874–1948), probably the best known Russian philosopher in the West, fully makes these insights his own, leading to his own lifelong preoccupation with *freedom*. A prophet of freedom, Berdyaev fashioned his philosophy as a quest for freedom and for the ultimate good of the human person endowed with it. After a brief flirtation with Marxism in his youth, he soon abandoned it in favor of “idealism,” being impelled by the value of the human person. With this conversion, as it were, he joined ranks with like-minded intellectuals, who collaborated in the epoch-making collection, *Problems of Idealism* (1902) in which he contributed an essay on the ethical import of philosophical idealism. One quote suffices to state his rock-bottom position: “The central idea that Christianity brought to the development of humanity’s self-consciousness is the idea of the absolute value of the human being, as the image and likeness of God, and of the moral equality of people before God.” This stance cannot but promote the quest for human perfection in the light of Almighty God, the disavowal of this goal only signaling the *depersonalization* (“*obezlichenie*”) of the human person.

Relentless in his pursuit of the promotion of

the inherent dignity of the *individual* human person necessarily endowed with *freedom* in order for him or her to achieve his or her full potential in sanctity, Berdyaev could not but find himself at odds with the prevailing attitude of the Russian intelligentsia of his time, being Marxist and socialist in orientation. He makes his position clear in his essay entitled “Philosophical Verity (“*istina*”) and Intelligentsia Truth (“*pravda*”) that appeared in the equally famous “idealist” collection, *Landmarks* (1909), writing, not mincing words: “the intelligentsia’s basic moral premise is summed up in the formula: let truth perish, if its death will enable the people to live better and will make men happier.”

As the years moved on, the momentum of this position soon showed its cruel head in pervasive revolutionary outcries, culminating, first in the February Revolution of 1917, which topped the Tsar, then in the Bolshevik-October Revolution of the same year (actually starting October 25, o.s. or November 7, n.s.). Having just pronounced his sentence against the Russian intelligentsia, Berdyaev is prepared to expand upon his views on the revolutionary trends of his time. On this score, it should be noted that Berdyaev was no “slouch” in this regard. He too was marked by a “revolutionary spirit;” he even described himself as a “Christian socialist.” But in matters of atheistic socialism, we only find an adamant foe in Berdyaev. Two major works of his are products of the revolutionary years of 1917–1918, one a posthumous collection of articles entitled *The Spiritual Foundations of the Russian Revolution*, the other a book written in the summer of 1918 entitled *The Philosophy of Inequality*, bearing the

telling subtitle *Letters to Foes on Social Philosophy*, published in exile in 1923, both proffering trenchant critiques of Bolshevism.

His comments are many and varied, often equally biting and dismissive. A central thesis is maintained throughout these writings, namely, that Bolshevism purports to govern the whole of man, ever desirous of making people happy, but depriving them of spiritual freedom at the same time, ostensibly trying to free people from oppressive bourgeois structures, yet actually enslaving them to an implacable new order. Expressed otherwise, it is class warfare that comes to the fore. As Berdyaev puts it, “the idea of class killed the idea of man in Russia. Russian people stopped relating to one another, as man to man,” expanding upon this point, noting that “class is quantity, but man is quality,” that “class warfare, elevated to an ‘idea,’ closed off the qualitative image of man.” For this reason, Berdyaev insists that “comrade to comrade respects class, but not man” and that “such comradeship kills the brotherhood of people at its root.” In *The Philosophy of Inequality*, he notably further expands upon this point. “The whole difference between socialism and Christianity,” he writes, “is found in the difference between a ‘comrade’ and a brother,” namely, in the fact that “a brother respects a brother as a man made in the image and likeness of God,” that “a brother is joined to a brother as children of one father,” in sum, asserting that “brotherhood presupposes a common fatherhood.” Such is Christian personalism in contrast to an intractable, impersonal economic determinism esteeming “comrades-in-arms” in a “dictatorship of the proletariat.” **ECL**



LIFE, LOVE, AND THE HUMAN PERSON

By Ann M. Koshute, MTS

THE LOVE COMMAND

October is Respect Life Month, and I’ve written previously about the many assaults on life we see in our world (abortion, euthanasia, pornography, to name a few). Thinking about all of the instances of the abuse of human life and dignity, I kept returning to something my friend Joe told me regarding the “Love Command.” In Matthew 22:37-40, a lawyer asked Jesus to identify the greatest commandment. Jesus answered, “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Joe explained that our “first love” must be God, our Creator and Savior, who loves us more than anyone could. Since God loves each of us, we must follow His example and love each other: friends, strangers, and even enemies. So far, the Love Command is “Sunday School 101,” some-

thing every Christian knows. It’s the third part of the Command that is usually ignored, or misunderstood: to love ourselves. “Jesus is telling us that it’s our responsibility to love ourselves,” Joe said, and emphasized “our responsibility.” This was hard to hear, since I equate “self-love” with narcissism. As we talked, however, Joe led me to understand that there’s a big difference between loving yourself and “being in love with” yourself. The latter turns the focus inward: My desires, My comfort, My satisfaction. Being “in love” with myself makes me the center of the universe, often leading me to make choices that consider only my good, at the expense of others. Loving myself, as Jesus means it, is acknowledging my worth and personal dignity as such; not in competition with anyone, or needing to prove I’m better or more important. To love myself, rightly understood, is to accept that I’m lovable precisely because God created and loves me. Rejecting myself (putting myself down, despairing, not “loving me”) is re-

jecting God’s generous gift of my life, given to me out of love. Being “in love with” myself is believing I’m more important than anyone else. Loving myself is knowing that I’m imperfect, but perfectly loved by God.

How is this relevant to Respect Life Month? It seems to me that respect for human life at all stages, and the ability to love others and respect their personal dignity is rooted in our love for self (which in turn must be bound to our love for God, or it becomes narcissism.) Remember that old poster of the child praying? The caption says, “I know I’m somebody ‘cause God don’t make junk.” It’s pretty cheesy and simplistic, but it gets to the meaning of the Love Command. We’re each made in God’s image and likeness: willed by Him, loved by Him, and desired by Him. At our Baptism we were reborn in Him and incorporated into the life of the Trinity as His sons and daughters. To truly love our neighbor and

respect and cherish all human persons (the pre-born, elderly, sick and suffering, and all people) is to see God's image and likeness in them. If we don't recognize and cherish ourselves as icons of the Trinity, we'll be less likely to see others that way, and treat them accordingly. Or we'll fool ourselves into seeing God in others, but never truly appreciate their value. Without sincere love of self jealousy, resentment and despair can infect our spirits, leading to either false humility, or to self-loathing. Neither is fruitful, and both miss Jesus' point. Authentic love for self nurtures respect for one's body, mind and spirit. Believing we're "junk" buys Satan's lies about our intrinsic goodness (that we are worthless); our status as sons and daughters of God (that we have to rely on ourselves and take what we want. Cf Genesis

3:4-5), and his false promises of happiness if we rely on our own image, rather than the Image of the One who created us (to be "in love" with self, rather than to accept the gift of ourselves as God-given).

The great Church Father and martyr Saint Irenaeus famously proclaimed, "The glory of God is man, fully alive." This enigmatic statement actually captures Jesus' Commandment to love God, neighbor and ourselves. Of course we give glory to God when we worship Him in the Liturgy, when we encounter Him in the Holy Mysteries, and when we pray and make personal sacrifices. All of these things are rightly due to Him. God's glory is not, however, dependent on us. He doesn't need our praise and worship so that He

can be "more God," since He's perfect in Himself. Rather, God is most rightly and perfectly honored and praised (glorified) when man—that's you and I—live as He created us (when we're "fully alive"). To be "fully alive" is to love. Love both "sees" the good in the other and "seeks" the good for the other. When we see God's image in others and desire their good, God is glorified. When we acknowledge that we are icons of God and seek what is good for us, God is glorified.

We were made for love: to love God and others, and to be loved. This Respect Life Month, let's share the love of God with all whom we encounter—and offer a generous share of that love to ourselves. **ECL**



SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

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

MARRIAGE AND HOLINESS

On a recent monthly communion call, one of our oldest parishioners reminisced with me about his marriage. As a young man, he prayed every day, "Lord, help me find a girl who believes in You and practices her faith." His prayer was answered, his marriage was blessed in every way and, at the other end of a long life, he stood by his wife faithfully through ten years of debilitating illness. A beautiful story in every way.

It shouldn't surprise us to discover that God can be a matchmaker. God was clearly behind the scenes as Isaac, Jacob and Moses found their wives and realized His covenant promises to Abraham in their own family lives (Genesis 24; Genesis 29; Exodus 2). Less well known, but even more beautiful in the telling, is the courtship and marriage of Tobias and Sarah, as recounted in the Old Testament Book of Tobit.

Tobit is one of the seven books rejected from the Old Testament by the protestant reformers in the 1500's. Protestant Bibles do not include Tobit; Catholic and Orthodox Bibles do. Consider reading all fourteen chapters. There's adventure, travel, an evil spirit, money to be reclaimed, a guardian angel and, of course, a love story with a happy ending. Tobit, his wife Anna, and their son Tobias give us all kinds of good example for faithful living in a hostile environment (exile in Nineveh), under trial (Tobit goes blind), and especially in matters of family life. Things you won't necessarily find on *Game of Thrones*.

I won't tell you everything Tobias has to go through to win Sarah as his wife (no spoilers

here!); you'll just have to read it for yourself. But I will point out that it begins with prayer, desperate prayer. The elderly Tobit and the young Sarah are both distressed to the point of praying for death. Young Tobias becomes the answer to both prayers by sinlessly carrying out his father's orders and letting himself be led by the Lord through Raphael, the guardian angel, along the way.

What began with prayer ends with prayer. Here, in its entirety, is Tobias' prayer just before consummating his marriage with Sarah: "Blessed are You, O God of our Fathers, and blessed is Your holy and glorious name unto the ages. The heavens and all Your creatures bless You. You made Adam and gave him Eve as a helper, his wife as a support. From them the seed of mankind has come forth. You said, 'It is not good for man to be alone. Let Us make a helper for him like himself.' O Lord, I now take this my sister as my wife, not on account of fornication, but in truth. Command that she and I may have mercy, and in this grow old together." Along with Tobias, Sarah said "amen" (Tobit 8:5-7).

This prayer may sound familiar. It is strikingly similar to several of the prayers in the Byzantine Rite of Matrimony. But the most amazing feature of all is that these two young people pray before sharing their marriage bed. Their union is about more than animal heat and passion (what Tobias calls "fornication"). It's not some "unsafe" or "risky" act requiring the intrusion of the artificial barriers that so often disdain God's gift of procreation these days. It is a sacred act, an act



Icon of the Marriage at Cana

that approaches Who and What God is by uniting persons in a sharing of love and life and by overflowing with the creation of new life.

When our thoughts about sexuality are formed by media out to entertain us, it's easy to forget that the marriage act is sacred, God's gift to man and woman. How sacred is it? Contagiously so! Speaking about the marriage of a pagan to a Christian, St Paul points out: "The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise, your children would be unclean, but now they are holy" (1 Corinthians 7:14).

There is a tendency to separate our "religious" life from our "ordinary" (i.e., real!) life. The error in such thinking is exposed by this fact: marriage is a sacrament and the sacrament is realized when husband and wife give themselves to each other. My elderly parishioner and the inspired story of Tobias both testify to what blessings God has in store for us if only we invite Him into all of our undertakings and relationships with prayer and, through prayer, remain willing to follow where He will lead us. **ECL**

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UNDERSTANDING ICONS

Father Joseph Bertha, Ph.D.

THE ART HISTORY OF THE PANTOCRATOR

The Norman Sicilian use of the Pantocrator icon in the 12th century

Continuing the examination of the Pantocrator icon we examine in this article the three twelfth century Norman Roman Catholic churches of Sicily built and adorned with intricate Byzantine mosaic programs: Cefalu, Palatina, and Monreale. These three Sicilian churches are longitudinal basilica type churches used by the Normans intended for Roman Catholic usage. The three Pantocrators are located in the conch shaped apse above the sanctuary. This is a significant shift in location from the Byzantine architecture, a change which conveys another aspect of the Pantocrator Christ iconography.

Otto Demus in *The Mosaics of Norman Sicily*, Hacker Art Books, 1988; notes this on page 395:



Pantocrator of Cefalu Cathedral

“The most frequent variety of the Pantocrator image in Byzantium was the medallion in the zenith of the main cupolas. In the extant mosaics of Sicily it occurs only once, in the cupola of the Palatine chapel.”

He continues on page 396: “The most impressive Pantocrator images of the Sicilian cycles are the half figures of Christ in the main apses of Cefalu, the Palatina and Monreale. All three images show Christ with the open book in His left hand, the right emerges from the enveloping mantle in the well-established blessing gesture with two bent figures. This image appeared in the apses of Byzantine longitudinal churches in the twelfth century. It was evolved from the normal cupola medallions, with some iconographic and formal adaptations due to the placement in the architecture change.”

Interestingly, it is in the Roman Catholic churches of Norman Sicily that a new development in correspondence between architecture and icon unfolds. These three churches do not have a central dome Pantocrator; they are located in the sanctuary apse conch above the altar. This change in location of the Pantocrator image from the apse of the central dome in the church to the apex of the sanctuary above the altar displays a deeper connotation.

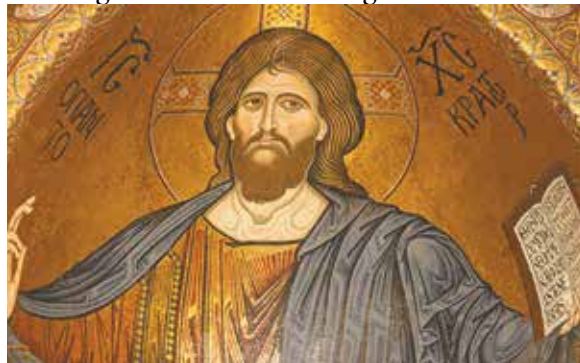
This compression, because of architectural constraints, actually underlines and emphasizes another dimension of the Pantocrator (All Mighty) nature of the Christ icon. The Norman style of architecture replicates the imperial Roman court buildings, the basilica, where the central focus of the building was the eastern end, where a throne was placed for the judge, or emperor, or as in this case, Jesus Christ, the final arbiter of justice at the Last Judgment.

In this capacity and in this new location, the Christ Pantocrator appears enthroned in the

sanctuary, even though he is still portrayed in bust, and not full figured. The sanctuary altar itself serves as his footstool. The Normans highlight the definition of the Greek word Pantocrator as *Almighty Ruler*, as it is found in the Book of Revelation. In nine pericopes in the final book of the Scriptures, the word Pantocrator is attributed to Christ as the Judge at the end of the world:

1. Revelation 1:8: “I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the ALMIGHTY.”

2. Revelation 4:8: “Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was



Pantocrator of Monreale Cathedral

covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God ALMIGHTY, who was, and is, and is to come.”

3. Revelation 11:17: “We give thanks to you Lord God, ALMIGHTY.”

4. Revelation 15:3: “and sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb: Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God ALMIGHTY.”

5. Revelation 16:7: “And I heard the altar respond: Yes, Lord God ALMIGHTY, true and just are your judgments.”

6. Revelation 16:14: “and they go out to the kings of the whole world to gather them for the battle on the great day of God ALMIGHTY.”

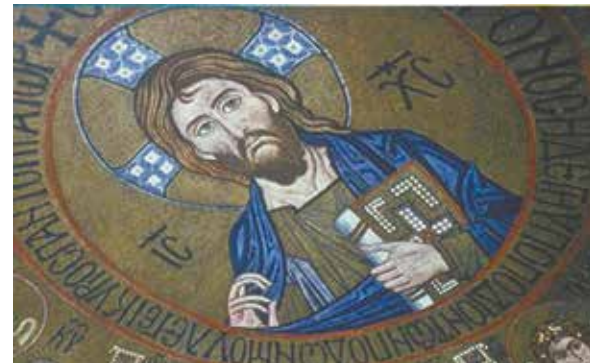
7. Revelation 19:6: “Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: Hallelujah! For the Lord God ALMIGHTY reigns.”

8. Revelation 19:15: “Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron scepter. He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God ALMIGHTY.”

9. Revelation 21:22: “I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God ALMIGHTY and the Lamb are its temple.”

I have included all of these Scripture quotations of the word Pantocrator (Almighty) from the Book of Revelation because they further

define how iconographers understood the term and translated it not only into icons but into particular locations inside of the church architecture. Western churches, even though they utilized Byzantine mosaics as their iconographic programs, favored these definitions of the Greek title Pantocrator: “All Powerful,” “Ruler of All,” “Omnipotent,” “Christ in Majesty.” The Normans show quite a propensity of viewing themselves as Byzantine magnates and conquerors; they translated this into their portrayals of Lord particularly in these Sicilian churches. There is somewhat of an authoritarian dimension to the Christ icon in the Sicilian churches. However, we must remember that the characteristic being emphasized here is



Pantocrator of the Palatine Chapel

that of the Apocalyptic Pantocrator Christ, the Alpha and the Omega, rather than the Sustainer of all.

The significance of the nave apse Christ Pantocrator in Sicily

Even though the Norman Sicilian location of the Pantocrator icons reflect an Apocalyptic aspect of the Lord as at the Last Judgment, there is another level of iconographic sophistication that needs to be noted. The depiction of the enthroned Virgin with Christ child directly below Our Lord is a direct reference, quotation and copy of the mosaic found in the apse of the tenth century Constantinople Hagia Sophia. Here, the Theotokos is enthroned and presents the Christ Child to the world. The apse image relates as a metaphor for the Liturgical action which takes place on the earthly throne below; the altar or holy table where the Eucharist is celebrated. This architectural metaphor is accentuated by the enthroned figure of the Theotokos, whose physical womb, indirectly referenced by the concave apse shape, serves as the throne for Christ's entrance into the world.

Even more captivating, the Christian Church, has become the New Temple of Jerusalem. Christ, depicted as El Shaddai (Pantocrator) is iconographic shown in the nave apse, where sin is expiated by the priest. Believers in the nave would prostrate and worship the All Mighty El Shaddai in the same manner as Abraham as he received the First Covenant described in Genesis 17. Imitating the Patriarch Abraham in the Christian temple, believers confess their sins to the priest before the Mercy Seat, the altar, the place of expiation. Once atoned by the New Covenant of Christ (El Shaddai) they then approach to receive the Holy Mysteries which sustain them through this earthly sojourn. **ECL**

ASK A PRIEST A QUESTION

Father Vasyl Chepelskyy



WHAT IS PAPAL INFALLIBILITY? IS THE POPE ALWAYS INFALLIBLE?

The Pope has a unique authority to teach infallibly. His infallibility is based on, and is only an expression of, the wider infallibility given to the Church: “Christ endowed the Church’s shepherds with the charisma of infallibility in matters of faith and morals” (cf. CCC, n. 890). The Pope is the successor to Peter, who had a unique authority as the head of the Apostles. It was to Peter alone that the keys of the kingdom of heaven were given. As Peter’s successor the Pope continues to exercise that unique authority. Not every public statement the Pope makes is considered infallible. On the contrary, the occasions under which the Pope can make an officially recognized infallible statement are tightly limited. Theologian Avery Dulles summarizes the following conditions:

1. The Pope must be speaking in his office as “supreme pastor and teacher of all Christians,” not as a private person.
2. He must appeal to his authority as successor of Peter, the head of the Church.
3. He must be defining or clarifying a doctrine of faith or morality.

4. He must intend that the whole Church accept the doctrine.

So this doctrine of Pope’s infallibility does not claim that Pope is perfect and never makes mistakes, nor does it imply that the Pope is without sin. The Pope does not have the authority to contradict the Bible or essential Church teachings.

Every teaching of the Pope must be “in accordance with the Revelation itself, which all are obliged to abide by and be in conformity with” (LG, n. 25). The Pope has no authority to announce a new teaching, revealed to him personally; he only has the authority to define more clearly what has already been revealed. As *Dei Verbum* declares, “no further new public revelation is expected before the “glorious manifestation of our Lord” (n. 4).

The “ordinary” faithful of the Church also play a role in the Church’s infallibility, as it is expressed in the documents of the Vatican Council II: “The entire body of the faithful, anointed as they are by the Holy One, cannot err in matters of belief. They manifest this special property by means of the whole peoples’ supernatural discernment in matters of faith when “from the Bishops down to the last of the lay faithful” they show universal

agreement in matters of faith and morals.” (LG, n. 12). **ECL**

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.

We will respond to your questions on subjects such as theology, spirituality, the sacraments, morality, church history, and the lives of the saints. The answers will be based on the teaching of the Magisterium of the Church, and Catholic resources and writers. You may submit your questions to the email: sjpastor@ptd.net or on the wall or by private message at the Facebook page: [SaintJohntheBaptistByzantineCatholicChurch](https://www.facebook.com/SaintJohntheBaptistByzantineCatholicChurch)

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!

Father Vasyl Chepelskyy



SCHOOL OF PRAYER

Father G. Scott Boghossian

THE FATHER OF GOD

The *Our Father* is the prayer the Jesus Christ Himself taught us to pray. Therefore, every phrase, every word, is worthy of close examination. A careful consideration of the *Our Father* will greatly enrich our prayer life.

In this perfect prayer, we refer to the omnipotent God as a Father. God is the common Father of the human race. “So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Gen. 1:27). Not only did God create the universe and humanity, but shows Himself to be a Father by how He continually provides for, watches over, and protects His creation, for His glory and the highest good of all. He employs His holy angels to guard and protect. This good Father never forgets or abandons any of us. As a loving Father, He is concerned with us and all of our problems and cares.

Beginners in the spiritual life sometimes say that they do not pray, or do not want to ask our heavenly Father for anything, because He is busy with other more important things and they do not wish to burden or bother Him. This mindset is a big mistake. The one whom we call “Father” is the all powerful, all knowing, and all good God of infinite compassion and love for His creatures. He is by nature goodness and generosity and therefore wants us to see Him as a loving Father who will help, protect, and provide. Because of this, He wants us to come to Him with our

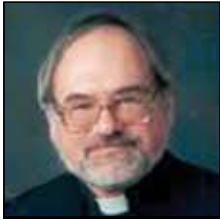
prayers and requests. He is never too busy to attend to even the most insignificant detail in the entire universe and can give His full attention to every person at the same time, without ever being distracted or forgetting anyone. Listen to how He speaks to His children in the Old Testament book of Isaiah: “But Zion said, ‘the Lord has forsaken me, my Lord has forgotten me.’ ‘Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb?’ Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands” (Is. 49:14-16).

While God is called Father in a general and metaphorical sense by way of His creation and providence, it is only through Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and His passion, death, and resurrection, that we have become God’s children in a very literal and real way. Jesus tells us that every person must be born again, born anew, born from above (John 3:3). Through faith, repentance, and baptism we have been made members of Christ and adopted into the family of God. In Christ, we are all sons and daughters of God, because we participate in His sonship. “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” So you are no longer a slave,

but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God” (Gal. 4:4-7). Through baptism, we are truly sons and daughters of the heavenly Father, thanks to what Jesus has done for us at the cross.

By reflecting on the first words of the *Our Father*, we begin to look at God in a new way. He is not distant or unconcerned, and He wants us to deal with Him in prayer as a loving Father with our best interest in mind. He will answer our prayer of petition, but if He knows that something we are asking for is not good for us, and will not be conducive to our salvation, He will give us something better instead. If we have offended Him by sinning, He, like the father in the parable of the Prodigal Son, is waiting patiently for us to return with sorrow and repentance, and when we do, He will embrace us. If we are getting out of line, He will discipline us so that we get back on the straight and narrow path to eternal life. Because He wants the best for us, He gives us his moral law, the Ten Commandments, to show us how to live a blessed life.

The first thing that the Lord’s prayer, the *Our Father*, teaches us, is that we are the children of God, members of the family of God, and that our loving Father calls us into a close personal relationship with Him. The language of this personal relationship is prayer in its many forms. In light of God’s fatherhood, let us renew our commitment to living a life of prayer. **ECL**



THE BYZANTINE LITURGY

By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD

THE NEED FOR DIALOGUE (3)

Dialogue is necessary. There is no chance of a war between Protestants, Catholics and Orthodox on theological differences. However, there is the continued spiritual scandal of mutual division and hatred. Moreover, in the West there are nationalistic movements, with some religious elements, that could lead to hostilities. There is more chance of a war between Moslem countries in the Middle East and the West, though probably on more than simply religious issues. Given the modern human capacity for self-destruction, we should probably tread very carefully today, though this requires the acknowledgment of complexity in cultural differences, which today we seem to want to simplify in extreme partisanship. As science-fiction author Paul Anderson noted, "I have yet to see any problem, however complicated, which, when you looked at it in the right way, did not become still more complicated."

Dialogue is necessary, but is it possible? We have learned from the ecumenical movement of the last fifty years that there is one danger to be avoided. That is to conceive of dialogue as "compromise." Dialogue becomes toxic when it weakens our own love for truth. I state strongly that I am not a relativist. There is truth, it is not an illusion — there is absolute truth. As a Christian, I believe that Jesus Christ is truth. He is also love, life, wisdom and the power of God. Dialogue is not "compromise" but a mutual and respectful "search for the fullness of truth." However, it is not "dialogue" unless we confess the possibility of learning from one another. What we know may be the truth and, indeed, even the absolute truth, but as human beings with limitations, it may not be "all that we can know." It is hubris to think

that we cannot learn from the Other. This does not compromise our faith, but helps to deepen it. The very definition of "schism" might be to grasp only a part of the total reality. Archbishop Elias Zoghby explained, "We are all schismatics." In accepting inter-religious dialogue as a desirable possibility, the Vatican II Council said: "whatever good or truth is found" in other religions is "given by him who enlightens all men that they may at length have life." (Lumen Gentium 16). The children of God number in the billions, and only a minority have come to know of Christ in authentic way. We need the humility in faith to know that God does not abandon the people he has made in his image and likeness, that he finds ways of salvation for them all in his infinite loving providence, and therefore, we can learn from the other, all the while establishing ourselves on the right foundation of truth.

How is dialogue possible? Does dialogue mean that we cannot proclaim the Gospel? I think not, for the very mission statement for the Church uttered by the risen Jesus himself is: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you (Matthew 28:19-20)" We have mentioned many times the commitment of the Catholic Church to ecumenism. The Orthodox Church is similarly committed, and in the Holy and Great Council of Crete (2016) noted: The Orthodox Church has a common awareness of the necessity for conducting inter-Christian theological dialogue. It therefore believes that this dialogue should always be accompanied by witness to the world through acts expressing mutual understanding and love, which express

that the movement to restore Christian unity is taking on new forms in order to respond to new circumstances and to address the new challenges of today's world." (Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Rest of the Christian World 23-24) It seems the Greek Church interprets dialogue as proclaiming the Gospel: "The basic task of the Church is Mission, namely her struggle to constantly bear witness to the faith and preach the Gospel, whether to the faithful who live in modern secular societies, or those who have not yet known Christ. ... Dialogue, mainly with heterodox Christians (other Christian confessions - sects), is based on the duty of the Church to witness the truth and apostolic faith in each and every direction". (Message of the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece, January 27, 2017). Is this "dialogue"? Is this listening to the other. I do not deny the right of the Church to her mission, but not every dialogue is going to lead to conversion.

The Orthodox Church's recent statements relate to inter-Christian dialogue. At this point, a consideration of dialogue with other religions besides Christianity can lead to an understanding of dialogue in general. I will tell a personal story. Some years ago, I was in Rome for a visit, I don't remember the occasion. On the flight home, which landed in Philadelphia, I found myself seated next to a Moslem doctor. When he discovered I was a Catholic priest, he wanted to talk about religion, and so we had a very friendly discussion about our differences in faith. In the end, he told me he appreciated what I had to say, but that he simply could not accept a God who would allow himself to be crucified on a cross. However, who knows what seeds were planted? This is one of the difficulties of witnessing to the Christian faith - it is a faith of paradox - in weakness we find strength, in death we find life, in foolishness we find wisdom. However, blocks to understanding often come from pre-conceptions we have even before we begin talking. Our faith may be established on these pre-conceptions, and not on the absolute truth of the faith we have, which goes beyond rationalization and intellectualism to the very heart of our relationship with God. **ECL**

St. Thomas the Apostle
Byzantine Catholic Church Altar-Rosary Society
1407 St. Georges Ave.
Rahway, NJ (732) 382- 5300

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Wed .October 4, 2017
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- 35+ Raffle Prizes valued @ \$ 25+
- Theme Baskets valued @ \$ 50+
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THE BYZANTINE CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF PASSAIC
subscribes to the

———— Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People ————

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Father David J. Baratelli, Ed.S., M.Div.
Safe Environment Program Coordinator • 973.890.7777

Dr. Maureen Daddona, Ph.D.
Eparchial Victim Advocate • 516.457.5684

Parish Education Calendar 2017-2018

Saturday October 7, 2017 from 10 AM- 3 PM: Parish Education Day with Fr. John Zeyak, "Living As Missionary Disciples"

Sunday October 15, 2017 at 9:30 AM: Presentation by Leslie Moyer "Because You're worth it" for 7-8th & High School & Parents between liturgies in the AV room in the ECF hall

Wednesday November 29, 2017 at 5:30 PM: Meager Meal (Soup, bread, PB & J) in the Parish Hall and Reflection by Kathy Szarko "On the Nativity Icon," followed by Emmanuel Moleben @ 7 PM

Saturday December 2, 2017 from 10 AM- 3 PM: Parish Education Day with Basilian Sisters Sr. Joann & Sr. Ann and Ann Koshute & Marie Nester "Living As Missionary Disciples"

Sunday December 10, 2017 at 9 AM: Maternity of Anna & St. Nicholas Celebration with Parish Brunch

Wednesday December 13, 2017 at 5:30 PM: Meager Meal (Soup, bread, PB & J) and Reflection by Fr. John Szada followed by Emmanuel Moleben @ 7 PM

Wednesday December 20, 2017 at 5:30 PM: Meager Meal (Soup, bread, PB & J) followed by Christmas Hymn Sing-a-long and Emmanuel Moleben @ 7 PM

Sunday December 24, 2017 at 8:30 PM: Christmas Pageant and Vigil Liturgy

Parish Education Calendar 2017-2018 (continued)

Saturday February 7, 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.



With all the attention in the Catholic Church surrounding the Marian Apparition of Fatima, we may forget the Eastern Christian feast of the Protection or Patronage of the Theotokos, which we celebrate on the first of October. The day celebrates the appearance of the Mother of God at the Church of Panagia (All-holy One) of Blachernae, in modern-day Istanbul, and was a place of pilgrimage in Constantinople during the time of the Roman Empire. The apparition of the Theotokos, which is commemorated this month, took place in the tenth century. Tradition says that, during a time of siege of Constantinople, Saint Andrew of Constantinople) with his disciple Saint Epiphanius, and a group of people, saw the Mother of God, Saint John the Baptist, and several other saints and angels during a vigil in the Church of Blachernae, nearby the city gates. The Blachernae Palace church was where several of her relics were kept. The relics were her robe, veil, and part

SEASONAL REFLECTIONS

Father Ronald Hatton



SEEKING THE PROTECTION OF THE THEOTOKOS

of her belt that had been transferred from Palestine during the fifth century.

In her apparition, the Theotokos approached the center of the church, knelt down and remained in prayer for a long time. Her face was drowned in tears. Then she took her veil off and spread it over the people as a sign of protection. During the time, the people in the city were threatened by a barbarian invasion. After the appearance of the Mother of God, the danger was averted and the city was spared from bloodshed and suffering. Because Saint Andrew was a Slav, the celebration of this appearance is more fervently celebrated in the Slavic Churches than in the Greek Churches with a 12th century Russian chronicle describing the establishment of this day as a feast day in the Russian Church.

Many of our parishes are dedicated to the feast of the Protection of the Theotokos. Our Festal Menaiion (the book containing the texts used for Vespers and Matins of our feast days) provides for a Great Vespers with Litija as well as a Matins for the feast, though, unfortunately, we seldom see these celebrated in our parishes. Associated with these services are very beautiful hymns to our blessed Mother, which we should not allow to fall out of use in our worship.

"Heaven and earth are sanctified. The Church is radiant and all the people are rejoicing. Behold, the Mother of God, together with the angelic hosts, the Forerunner, and the Theologian [the Holy Apostle and Evangelist John], with the prophets and the apostles has invisibly entered. She prays to Christ in behalf of all Christians that He may have mercy on our city and all people who glorify the feast of her Protection."

"All the leaders of the heavenly armies form a

spiritual choir of and rejoice with all of us when they see the Lady and Queen of All praised by the faithful. The spirits of the just also rejoice as they witness the vision of the Queen praying with outstretched arms. She asks for peace in the world, power and strength for our Church, and salvation of our souls." –At Psalm 140 for the Vespers of the Feast.

During this month, whether in the Roman or Byzantine Catholic Church, we should especially devote our prayer to asking our Blessed Mother for her protection, as we face the uncertainties of life, the attacks of demons, illness, or external crisis in our daily lives. She intercedes always for us, as a good mother should, but we should never take that intercession for granted, but offer praises to her and venerate her as the Mother of God and the Saint of Perfect Submission to the will of God. I will offer here a couple more hymns which we can use as special prayer during this month:

"Let us assemble today, O faithful, and praise the immaculate Queen of all, the most-pure Virgin, the Mother of Christ our God; for she always mercifully extends her hands to her Son. In amazement, Andrew saw her in a cloud, protecting the faithful with her mantle. Let us fervently sing to her: Rejoice, O protection, defense, and salvation of our souls." –Litija for the Vespers

"O most holy Lady, Virgin Mother of God, extend you holy mantle over us; guide and protect our rulers and all your people from every evil. As the holy Andrew saw you in a vision while praying, so today, O holy Lady, show us your loving protection." –Hymn of Light at the Matins of the Feast

As we sing in our Divine Liturgy, "Through the prayers of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us!" **ECL**



SEMINARIAN REFLECTIONS

Seminarian Timothy Farris

HOME AGAIN

It's hard to believe a year has passed since I made my first six hour drive as a seminarian for Pas-saic. I had knots in my stomach and was totally unfamiliar with what I would be doing and going back to school after three years of working. It was a new beginning.

This year, we have five new first year seminarians and I got a fresh reminder of what it was like to be new. Confiding in them that they will be able to learn how to chant in due time, how not to get on each other's nerves living 24/7 in community, and the tricks on how to start the school year well. It also gave me a chance to reflect on the advice I was given one night a long time ago after my first week of classes. It can be easy to forget that once we were new, we were the stranger, and receiving an invite and advice went a long way to making us feel at home.

During my time at Pocono Summit, Father Michael Salnicko and I reflected on the different talents of the apostles. Paul had a unique way

of staying in touch with those he embraced in his mission. In a day without twitter and the permanency of the internet somehow, by God's grace, we are left with many of his works in writing. Peter, in his ministry, does not leave us with a Gospel account, but leaves Christians with two small epistles of encouragement during persecution, particularly with Roman frustration with Israeli zealots, and what can be expected in our endurance of faith. Meanwhile Mark, Matthew, and John, apostles of Jesus wrote a Gospel from their viewpoint for their audience. Each took it upon themselves to evangelize and minister in a particular way to those around them. We have letter writers traveling thousands of miles, motivational speakers, and storytellers.

In last month's article Paul expressed the need to dig deep in our discernment to discover how the Holy Spirit guides you. I'm not telling you to write a new Gospel according to _____, but how do

these treasures left behind effect you and me? These people that ate at table with the living God, Emmanuel, left us this treasure, AND the Holy Spirit is alive in each of us offering us great gifts of faith to offer them to others.

"After time of inward reflection, we may find that we can no longer keep our gifts to ourselves." This reflection or mini-retreat from the world offers us the ability commune with God, like how our church domes block out the world, for us to commune the Eucharist as we look upward to heaven. With our return to the world, we come back refreshed and more prepared to live a life with God.

With our different talents, just like the apostle, Paul the seminarian advises us not to keep our talents to ourselves. Only *you* have that particular talent to be offered, only *you* have this moment to apply your talent. As a young college graduate my first talent I could offer was a youthful witness in a high school ministry.

Where there was not someone to minister I was put there to minister. It's a great story for another day but God had me in the right place at the right time but I had to say "Yes, I will be here to serve your people Lord." With no experience or talent for teaching, I walked into a position depending on the Holy Spirit for guidance. What if I said no or more likely ignored the opportunity all together. Three years' worth of working with those teens would not have happened, all those great moments no longer joyful memories. They would have missed out but so would have I. God will repay all of our treasured talents with more talents. When we give of ourselves more will be given.

May God bless us with opportunities and still hearts to listen to His will and busy hands carrying out His work. **ECL**

WHEN TRAVELING TO THE SOUTH THIS WINTER PLEASE VISIT OUR CHURCHES

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North Fort Meyers, FL 33917
1-239-543-6363

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7120 Massachusetts Ave.
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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
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Saint Petersburg, FL 33713
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UPCOMING EPARCHIAL AND PARISH EVENTS

Eastern Catholic Life

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OCTOBER

- 1 Holy Protection of the Virgin Theotokos and Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost
Solemn Holy Day Kickoff of Bishop's Appeal 2018*
- 9 Columbus Day
*Chancery closed * Civic Holiday*

The Father Walter Ciszek Prayer League

invites you to join us

Sunday, October 15, 2017

for

FATHER CISZEK DAY

celebrating the life, works and message of Rev. Walter J. Ciszek, S.J.

Father Walter Ciszek Prayer League Center
218 West Cherry Street
Shenandoah, PA 17976

will be opened 12 noon until 1:30 PM

DIVINE LITURGY

St. Casimir Catholic Church
229 North Jardin Street
Shenandoah, PA 17976

- 2:00 PM -

Main Celebrant: Rev. Msgr. Ronald C. Bocian
Homilist: Rev. Brian Van Hove, S.J.