



EASTERN CATHOLIC LIFE

Official Publication of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic

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LET YOUR SOUL BREATHE

BISHOP KURT'S GREAT FAST PASTORAL MESSAGE

I heard a great pastor once say, "Prayer is the breath of the soul. If you don't breathe, your body will die. If you don't pray, your soul will die." I heard that statement in the summer of 1988, and I still remember it because it was so simple and so powerful. What is prayer? One of the greatest teachers of prayer, Saint Teresa of Avila, said that prayer is simply "an intimate friendship, a frequent heart-to-heart conversation." We all have the same goal in life, the same purpose: to be a friend of God. You cannot be someone's friend if you never communicate. How do you pray? There are countless ways to pray. A search on Amazon for the word "prayer" turns up over 95,000 books. You might think that they are duplicates, or many aren't really about prayer, but scrolling through the first sixty titles, there are no duplicates and each one has a profound title that makes me want to read the book. It seems from the titles that many people associate prayer with power. I hope Eastern Christians do not make that mistake. It is true that Saint James said, "The prayers of a righteous man are powerful." However, if the main purpose of prayer is friendship with God, then power cannot be its main purpose.

People often confess that they "missed" their daily prayers. I always tell them to change their prayers so that they don't miss. Your prayers should bring you closer to God. Your prayers should not create a new barrier between you and God. It should never be a burden to spend time with a friend.

We often hear that Lent is a time of fasting and increased prayer. I think that most people have a filled schedule, and can't increase their prayers very much, so let's talk about fasting instead. We all eat every day, and changing how we eat is something anyone can do.

Fasting is the prayer of the body. We are more than just our mind. Your soul is intimately united with your whole body. Our word "prayer" comes from a word that means "to ask." When we start to limit our food, every cell in the body starts "asking."

Christians, Eastern and Western, used to fast intensely several times each year and especially during the Great Lent. Even recently, Western Christians ate no meat at all during the entire Lent. From the very first century we know Christians fasted on every Wednesday and Friday. Yet now, the practice of fasting has almost disappeared. The Roman Catholic bishops of the United States have spent years talking about how to get their people to abstain from meat on Fridays. Christmas Eve was a traditional fast day throughout the church, but in recent years I ate Christmas Eve dinner at a very conservative Roman Catholic house of studies, and the banquet included TWO main courses of meat, and also meat in every course. Ironically, now that fasting is no longer required by the Church, people are leaving our religion by the thousands to join pagan religions that require them to be vegetarian for the rest of their lives.

Jesus told us in the Gospel that His followers would fast after he left, and indeed they did! A man in the early church taught that the most perfect Christians did not need to fast, and he was condemned as a heretic by a council for teaching such a thing. To deny fasting was once a heresy, but now to teach fasting is considered unrealistic or even superstitious. How did we reach the point that any mention of fasting is looked at as medieval superstition? Why will our people fast for medical reasons, or health reasons, or for vanity, but they will not fast for Christ? Part of the answer is the heresy that separates the flesh from the spirit. In modern times, this comes from false teachers who separate faith from works. In their obsession to separate faith from works, they separate the body from the soul, the flesh from the spirit, and the mind from the heart.

Once that separation permeates the culture, people are easy prey to related falsehoods such as materialism or spiritualism. The separation of body and soul is why people believe they can invent their own rules for sex, and live a happy life while unchaste. How indescribably wealthy are we who live in our Byzantine Catholic Church, that teaches in every prayer the unity of the person, the unity of flesh and spirit, the unity of body and soul, the unity of the person of Jesus Christ—true God and true Man! The unfathomable depths of our liturgy protect us from this evil age.

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I am so happy that in our Church, fasting is a tradition rather than a law. In the West, where Lent was regulated by laws, when they changed the law, everyone stopped fasting. In our church, Lent is a tradition, and each of us tries to live up to the traditions of our parents and grandparents. With each passing year we find ourselves closer to our goal. We don't look for loopholes or dispensations. If the Son of God Himself fasted, why would I try to get out of it?

I first learned about our fasting tradition when I went to our seminary in Pittsburgh. I learned that Meatfare Sunday is traditionally that last day to eat meat before Easter, and Cheesefare Sunday is the last day to eat dairy products until Easter. I learned that in olden days, the people brought Easter baskets with meat, eggs, butter, and cheese because they had gone without all those foods throughout Lent. I was astonished! It didn't seem humanly possible. But my first Lent, some of the other guys asked me if I would keep the fast for a week, because they were going to try to do it. So I tried too. No meat, no dairy products for a week! Wow. For an athletic young man, that seemed like the longest week of my life. By my third year, I was trying to make it through the whole of Lent. I ate a lot of canned sardines that year. I hated them at the beginning of Lent, but by the end of Lent I liked them.

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Let Your Soul Breathe

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After I was ordained, I began to teach my parishioners about of our traditional Fast. When I explained that it is a tradition, and not a law, many of them became fascinated. It was like a challenge instead of an order. I decided that if I encouraged other people to fast, I better do it myself, so I have continued every year. I have only skipped a couple of years recently because of health problems.

I am so grateful to those other young men at our seminary who encouraged me to give traditional fasting a try. I found in my parishes that it is the young people who are attracted to a challenge. I suppose older people have enough hardship already. I think one reason that we don't have young people in some of our parishes is because we don't challenge them. Young people flock to tough coaches

and tough teachers. Young people join the military. The world tells us that we must water down our religion to keep our young people, but the opposite is true. Young people love truth, not compromise. Young people love virtue, not vice. Young people seek encouragement, not discouragement. Young people love discipline, not excuses.

In recent years, I have found it helpful to offer my Lent for some particular person who seems to me like a lost soul. It is usually someone who was raised in the faith, but is now leading others into evil. When I am inclined to relax my discipline during Lent, I am brought back into line by remembering that I might be helping someone else. You may choose to offer your Lent to God for a family member. This year, give the tradition



of fasting a try. This year, pray with your body, not just your mind. Prayer is the breath of the soul, and fasting is the prayer of the body.

One of my classmates in Rome was a young Russian Orthodox monk from Moscow. As Lent approached, he asked me, "Father, are you keeping the fast this year for Lent?" I replied that I would try. He gave me a warm smile and wished me, "Good Lent Father. Good Lent."



**APOSTOLIC NUNCIATURE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

Most Reverend Kurt Burnette
Bishop of the Eparchy of Passaic for the Ruthenians
445 Lackawanna Ave.,
Woodland Park, NJ 07424

Your Excellency:

As the personal representative of the Holy Father in the United States, I write with gratitude for the check in the amount of \$13,000.00, which you sent to the Apostolic Nunciature as the Peter's Pence contribution from the Eparchy of Passaic of the Ruthenians for 2013.

"The Pope... must open his arms to protect all of God's people and embrace with tender affection the whole of humanity, especially the poorest, the weakest, the least important, those whom Matthew lists in the final judgment on love: the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and those in prison (cf. Mt 25:31-46)."

Peter's Pence Collection Acknowledgement

January 3, 2014

- Mass, Imposition of the Pallium and Bestowal of the Fisherman's Ring for the Beginning of the Petrine Ministry of the Bishop of Rome, Homily of Pope Francis, March 19, 2013

I assure you that this sum will be transmitted to the Secretariat of State on your behalf.

May God, who is infinitely generous, reward you and continue to bless you and the faithful under your pastoral care.

Sincerely yours in Christ

+Carlo Maria Viganò
Apostolic Nuncio

Saint Michael's Cathedral Holy Name Society to Host Men's Retreat • March 15th

Bishop Kurt to serve as Retreat Master



The Holy Name Society of Saint Michael Cathedral, Passaic, NJ will hold a Men's Retreat at Saint Michael's Chapel located at 445 Lackawanna Ave. in Woodland Park, NJ on Saturday, March 15, 2014. John Paulich, Jr., Holy Name Society President, invites all men to attend this retreat which will commence with registration at 8:30 AM and end when lunch concludes by 2:00 PM.

We are honored to announce that our Retreat Master will be Bishop Kurt Burnette, the newly-installed Bishop of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic.

Following registration, there will be an opening prayer service, retreat session, short break, completion of retreat session, Divine Liturgy celebrated by the Bishop, and then lunch.

There is no charge but advance registration is requested. Please respond to Thomas Duch, Jr., Retreat Chairman, by email to tjdesq@aol.com or by calling 201-794-7234. The retreat is open to all Catholics, Byzantine and Roman, and to all Christians in search of a positive message.



Fasting Regulations & Liturgical Directives

GREAT FAST 2014



FASTING REGULATIONS

ABSTINENCE

The law of abstinence forbids the use of meat, permitting the use of eggs and dairy products.

All the faithful of the Eparchy who receive Holy Communion are obliged to abstain.

Abstinence is to be observed on all Wednesdays and Fridays during the Holy Season of the Great Fast.

STRICT ABSTINENCE

The law of strict abstinence (fast) forbids the use of meat, eggs and dairy products.

All of the adult faithful of the Eparchy who receive Holy Communion are obliged to observe Strict Abstinence.

Strict Abstinence is to be observed on the First Day of the Great Fast, Monday, March 3rd, and on Great and Holy Friday, April 18th.

DISPENSATION

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

LITURGICAL DIRECTIVES

LITURGY OF THE PRESANCTIFIED GIFTS

In compliance with the liturgical prescriptions, we encourage all Pastors and Administrators to celebrate the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts on Wednesdays and Fridays of the Great Fast. We ask you to pray for peace throughout the world, and for the victims of war. Please remember in your prayers all those in the military who are serving our country throughout the world.

We oblige all Pastors and Administrators to celebrate this Liturgy at least once each week during the Great Fast and at least once on one of the first three days of Great and Holy Week.

A liturgical service at which Holy Communion is distributed may be celebrated on the other weekdays of the Great Fast. The same rule applies for funerals during the Great Fast.

VESTMENT COLOR

Color of vestments worn on Sundays during the Great Fast is to be bright or white; red or an appropriate Lenten color is to be worn only on the 3rd Sunday of the Great Fast (the Sunday of the Veneration of the Holy Cross) and on weekdays. This rule applies to Liturgies celebrated in anticipation of Sunday as well.

Blue Vestments are worn for the Feast of the Annunciation of Mary and the Divine Liturgy celebrated for this feast.

Schedule of Lenten Vespers and Confessions

Scranton Area

Sunday, March 9	Holy Ghost – Jessup
Sunday, March 16	Saint Nicholas – Old Forge
Sunday, March 23	Saint Michael – Dunmore
Sunday, March 30	Saint Mary – Scranton
Sunday, April 6	Saint John – Forest City

All Services begin at 3:00 p.m. followed by opportunity for Confession and Social Hour with Lenten food / beverages.

Wyoming Valley

Sunday, March 9	Saint Mary – Wilkes-Barre
Sunday, March 16	Saint John – Wilkes-Barre Twp
Sunday, March 23	Saint Michael – Pittston
Sunday, March 30	Saint Nicholas – Swoyersville
Sunday, April 6	Saint Mary – Kingston

All Services begin at 3:00 p.m. followed by opportunity for Confession and Social Hour with Lenten food / beverages.

Greater Hazleton Area

Sunday, March 9	Saints Peter and Paul – Beaver Meadows
Sunday, March 16	Saint Mary – Shepton (4PM)
Sunday, March 23	Saint John – Hazleton (2PM)
Sunday, March 30	Saint Mary – Hazleton

Sunday, April 6	Saint Mary – Freeland
Sunday, April 13	Saint Michael – McAdoo

Unless otherwise noted, all services begin at 3PM and are followed by Confession and refreshments.

PEOPLE YOU KNOW

AROUND THE EPARCHY



ASCENSION OF OUR LORD CHURCH • WILLIAMSBURG, VA

INSPIRING VISITS AND ACTIVITIES

On December 1st, the children of Ascension of our Lord Byzantine catholic Church in Williamsburg, VA held a clothing drive for Avalon. Avalon is a shelter for battered women and children serving in the greater Williamsburg area.

The following week, on December 8, Saint Nicholas of Myra visited our parish. He spoke to all about our responsibilities to those less fortunate than ourselves. He also presented our children with gold chocolate coins. Ascension Parish is served by Father Alex Shuter.



SAINT MARY CHURCH • KINGSTON, PA

CANTOR HONORED ON 90TH BIRTHDAY



Cantor Joseph Putprush was honored by parishioners of Saint Mary's Protection Byzantine Catholic Church and members of his GCU Lodge 182 on his 90th birthday.

The celebration took place following the children's Christmas program, "The Bethlehem Carolers", on December 21, 2013 in the

parish hall. Father Mykhaylo Prodanets, Pastor, presented an icon to Mr. Putprush in appreciation of his years of dedication and service to Saint Mary's.

Following this presentation, desserts and refreshments were served, Happy Birthday was sung, and a birthday cake was enjoyed by all in attendance.

Preparing for Marriage in 2014?

Pre Cana Classes will be held on Sundays, March 30th and April 6th, from 2 to 5 PM at Saints Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church, Route 93 in Beaver Meadows, PA 18216.

Participants are asked to arrive at least 15 minutes early on March 30th in order to fill out a registration form.

Cost is \$40 per couple for the two weeks. Couples planning to attend should inform their pastor.

Pastors are asked to let Father James Demko know by March 16th how many couples from their parish will be attending.

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Very Rev. James G. Hayer, *Editor*

Mrs. Diane Rabiej, *Associate Editor*

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Eparchial Website: ***www.EparchyofPassaic.com***



BYZANTINE CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF PASSAIC
STEWARDSHIP APPEAL 2013-14

If you have not received a PLEDGE CARD, you may use the one below, and return (before March 15) to your parish or to the Eparchy of Passaic at 445 Lackawanna Ave., Woodland Park, NJ 07424.



BYZANTINE CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF PASSAIC
STEWARDSHIP APPEAL 2013

Name: _____
Address: _____
City/State/Zip: _____
Parish: _____

ADDRESS CORRECTIONS ONLY:

Name: _____
Address: _____
Parish: _____

Please remember the Church in your will and estate plans.

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

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

PLEDGE AMOUNT 6 MONTHLY PAYMENTS

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 60.00 | or: | <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 10.00 per month |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 120.00 | or: | <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 20.00 per month |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 150.00 | or: | <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 25.00 per month |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 200.00 | or: | <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 33.33 per month |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 500.00 | or: | <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 83.33 per month |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | | |

CHECK ONE: ☐ Single payment or ☐ Monthly Statements

Please make check payable to "Eparchy of Passaic" - Thank you!

Pledge Amount: \$ _____
Enclosed Payment: \$ _____
Pledge Balance: \$ _____

PLEASE COMPLETE & RETURN TO YOUR PARISH BY MAR. 15th



Alpine Europe
November 10 - 20, 2014



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INNSBRUCK * SALZBURG * OBERAMMERGAU
NEUSCHWANSTEIN * MUNICH * ROTHENBURG

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& Father Edward Cimbala

Tour Includes: Roundtrip Air from New York, \$680 govt. taxes/ airline fuel surcharges, First Class/ Select Hotels, Most Meals, Professional Tour Director, and Comprehensive Sightseeing
For a brochure & more information contact:
Father Charles Yastishock · Tel: (732) 255-6272
or Email: czarcmy@comcast.net
Or Father Edward Cimbala · Tel: (908) 725-0615 or Email: FrEDStMary@aol.com
Space is limited - book early to avoid disappointment!

Lenten Activities at the Franciscan Friary, Sybertsville, PA

Seeking God in a Busy World

Lenten Day of Recollection and Prayer for Men Saturday, March 15, 2014 9:30 AM - 4PM



Respond! Speak! Do this! With busy lives and sounds bouncing around us 24/7, rarely do we feel the freedom to be quiet. We do not truly listen without planning what is next, what we are going to say in response.

Jesus frequently went up the mountain or to the desert to be alone and to pray. The prophet Elijah, at a time with many responsibilities and many enemies, found God not in the earthquake or the storm but in a quiet whisper, hidden in a cave.

This day is an opportunity to go to the “mountain cave” in the valley and spend a day of prayer away from the busyness and noise of the world.

The day includes three short talks from the friars on quiet prayer in our noisy world. Retreat rooms are available for quiet space, as well as the peaceful grounds and chapel, with an opportunity for Confession.

You are invited to come early for 7:15am Matins, 8am Saturday Divine Liturgy; or stay for the 5pm Divine Liturgy (vigil for Sunday).

Reinvigorate your soul with a day of quiet prayer and reflection.

- Cost for the day program: \$25 includes a simple, lenten lunch.
- Add \$30/night if you wish to stay over Friday or Saturday night.
- Space is limited. Please register by March 12, 2014.
- Contact: Fr Jerome at holydormition@gmail.com; 570-788-1212 ext 402.
- Payment: Holy Dormition Friary, Attn: 2014 Men's Retreat, PO Box 270, Sybertsville, PA 18251



Mary, the Softener of Evil Hearts

Icon Workshop by Marylyn Barone March 6-9, 2014

Iconographer Marylyn Barone returns to Holy Dormition Friary for a workshop in which students will write an 10" x 12" icon of Mary, the Softener of Evil Hearts. All supplies included.

Schedule:

- Thursday 6:30 PM - 9:30 PM
- Friday / Saturday 9:30 AM - 4:30 PM*
- Sunday Noon - 4PM

*Those who work on Friday may request an evening time.

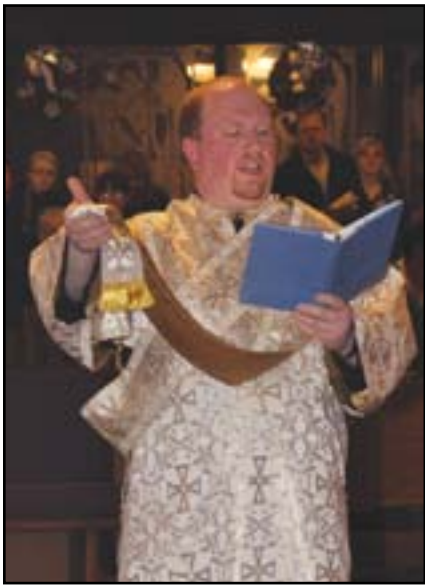
Cost is \$225 and includes supplies and midday meals on Friday and Saturday.

Housing available at an additional \$50 per night.

For more information: holydormition@gmail.com or call 570-788-1212 ext 402.

Holy Dormition Friary, 712 State Highway 93 – PO Box 270 – Sybertsville, PA 18251
570-788-1212 website: <http://hdbfm.com>
email: holydormition@gmail.com





The new deacon chants the litany.

RAHWAY, NJ – On Sunday, January 5, 2014 Subdeacon Steven M. Galuschik was ordained to the Diaconate at Saint Thomas the Apostle Byzantine Catholic Church in Rahway, New Jersey where Father Michael Mondik is Pastor.

It was a joyous and historic moment in the parish and in the Eparchy because Deacon Steven was the first to be ordained to Holy Orders by His Grace, Bishop Kurt Burnette. Deacon Steven has been assigned to Saint Thomas since June 1, 2013 in preparation for ordination to the Diaconate and looks forward to ordination to the priesthood.

Concelebrating the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy were Father Michael Mondik, pastor of Saint Thomas Parish; Father Edward Cimbala, pastor of Saint Mary Parish in Hillsborough, New Jersey; Father John Zey-

ack, a retired priest of the Eparchy of Passaic and former pastor of Saint Thomas Parish; and Deacon Charles Laskowski of Saint Thomas Parish. Father Edward Higgins, pastor of Holy Ghost Parish in Philadelphia was Master of Ceremonies for the Hierarchical Liturgy and Ordination. Two seminarians assisted at the Divine Liturgy, Subdeacon Michael Bezruchka of the Eparchy of Phoenix, and Seminarian Lewis Rabayda of the Eparchy of Passaic.

Father Michael Mondik presented Subdeacon Steven for ordination. His Grace, Bishop Kurt, in

his homily noted that water would be blessed that evening as part of the great feast of Theophany and that water had great power since the baptism of Jesus. It now had the power to forgive sins and that we all had experience that power at our baptism.

The ordination was attended by parishioners of Saint Thomas parish, friends, and parents of Deacon Steven, Theodore and Donna Galuschik. After the ordination, the parishioners of Saint Thomas provided a wonderful brunch celebrating the occasion.



Bishop Kurt ordains by the imposition of hands.



Bishop Kurt, Deacon Steven and other concelebrating clergy and servers following the Divine Liturgy.



Father Ron Hatton, Retreat Master, during the Office of Holy Anointing.

*RETREAT MASTER
FATHER RONALD HATTON*



Ep
Villa of Our Lady



Father Ron Hatton, Retreat Master, with the eparchy.

Although we are now in the embrace of winter weather, a short time ago the Pocono mountains were filled with sunshine and beautiful fall colors as the deacons of the Eparchy of Passaic gathered together at the Villa of Our Lady Retreat House for their annual retreat. Old friendships were renewed on Friday night over a wonderful meal provided by the Bernardine Franciscan Sisters, who do a wonderful job of maintaining the retreat house and making the retreatants welcome in every way.

The deacons began the retreat with an acknowledgement of the 25th anniversary of ordination to the priesthood of Father Ed Cimbala, Eparchial Director of Deacon Formation and presented him with an icon depicting the Ordination of the Deacons. Following dinner, the retreatants gathered in the downstairs meeting room for the first of three retreat conferences. Father Ron Hatton served as the Retreat Master this year. His opening presentation was given to coincide with the Year of Faith declared by Pope Benedict XVI and the opening subject was "Faith in the Trinity." A short discussion followed on the subject of "Why does it matter if we profess the Trinity?"

The first evening finished with an evening Moleben service to Jesus, Lover of Mankind, followed by a roundtable discussion with Father Ed. Wives of the deacons met upstairs for a separate time of fellowship.

A beautiful Saturday morning greeted those who were up and about early for private prayers. At morning prayer in the chapel, a Panachida Service, with blessing of Koliva, was offered for all deceased deacons from the Eparchy. This was followed by breakfast and the second conference of the weekend, at which Father Hatton spoke on the subject "Faith in Jesus." Father Hatton spoke warmly of the Early Church and the challenges faced by the first believers in Christ. Many of the councils of the Early Church were specifically about heresies involving the Person of Christ and Who He is.

After lunch there was time for individual conferences and /or confessions. A third conference finished the series on faith with the subject of "Faith and Daily Life." For all of us, both ordained and non-ordained, this is perhaps the most important question we must face: How do we deal with what we have learned? Father Hatton spoke on several issues of faith and how it



Archial Deacon Retreat 2013

Retreat House · Mount Pocono, PA



Archial deacons and wives at the annual retreat.



Director of Deacon Formation, Father Ed Cimbala (left) receives an icon from Deacon Nicholas Dadonna (right) on behalf of all the deacons, to mark Father Ed's 25th Anniversary of Ordination.

works itself out in our day to day living. Towards the end of the presentation, Father Hatton gave special attention to prayer, for without prayer, we accomplish little that is of use to or glorifying to God. The presentation closed with an emphasis on developing our own prayer life at home, including the use of an icon corner with the appropriate items on it: icons, candles, prayer books, Bible and other liturgical items. Before dinner the assembled deacons celebrated Vigil Liturgy, and following dinner there was a round table discussion in which the men could address their concerns and questions for their parishes.

On Sunday morning, a short brunch followed the Office of Holy Anointing, which took place in the chapel. Some of the men indicated they were going to make the short drive to Hazleton to attend a pilgrimage at the Franciscan monastery. Others, with much longer distances to travel, including deacon candidates attending from Atlanta, GA, headed out to catch planes or make the long drive home. It was a profitable weekend of worship, fellowship, and study. We return home already looking forward to next year's conference.



Byzantine Catholic Student Organizes Seminar on Human Trafficking

Editor's note: *The following article was written by Margaret Loya, a Byzantine Catholic college student, and submitted with her permission by Sister Barbara Jean Mehalshick, OSBM. In the spirit of President Barack Obama's recent establishment of January, 2014 as National Human Trafficking Awareness Month, Miss Loya organized a 2-day seminar at Saint Vincent's College to bring awareness to this important topic.*

Human Trafficking

*By Margaret Loya,
College Student and Byzantine Catholic*

January can often be a letdown—students go back to school, adults go back to work, the winter blues set in, and holiday cheer seems far behind in the past. However, the New Year also offers the chance for change and new beginnings, and we can look forward to twelve more months of opportunities. Our entire country recognizes one of these opportunities: in December of 2012, January was named the National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month.

Before I began learning about this incredibly serious issue, I had no idea that modern slavery even existed. Slavery in the 21st century? In an era where we are all fighting for rights, freedoms, and liberties? It didn't even occur to me that slaves might still live in our world today. And according to the State Department's 2013 *Trafficking In Persons Report*, there are around twenty-seven million of them. Just to put that into perspective, that's more than all of the residents of Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia combined. These twenty-seven million slaves are men, women, and children who are forced into hard labor, domestic work, the sex industry, and many other situations in which

they labor under abusive conditions for little or no pay. Out of this tremendous population, only about 40,000 are identified each year.

There are so many statistics, stories, and eye-opening sources that got me involved in the global movement to end human trafficking. I am currently a sophomore attending Saint Vincent College, a Catholic Benedictine school in Latrobe, PA. This past November, SVC helped me to organize an all-day campus event that raised awareness about modern slavery. We had about 400 people attend the different events—info booths, a Mass to end slavery, a lecture by Dr. Mary Burke, and an art auction to raise money for the Project to End Human Trafficking, an organization that was started in Pittsburgh. Dr. Burke is a human rights activ-

"...I would like to make a call to action and invite my fellow Byzantine Catholics, especially children, teens, and college-age youth like myself, to join the fight against slavery." —Margaret Loya

ist who has worked with the FBI in Pennsylvania and helped many trafficking victims in the U.S. Earlier in 2013, my younger sister Emma helped to organize a trafficking awareness workshop at a local high school. Both of these events were incredible successes, and if they taught me anything, they taught me that people are willing to listen and willing to act if someone makes an initiative.

I would like to make a call to action and invite my fellow Byzantine Catholics, especially children, teens, and college-age youth like myself, to join the fight against slavery. As Catholics, we must fight to preserve human dignity, and slavery as an evil injustice to others' freedom, liberty, well-being, happiness, and life. This fight is for every-

one, no matter how old you are, where you work, or what beliefs you have.

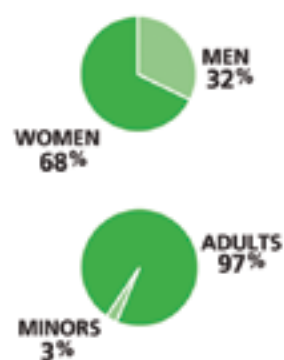
The hardest part for me is raising my own voice. My passion for this cause has driven me to do many things that might have seemed "intimidating." I would never have thought of myself as the type of person who could organize an event, vocally raise awareness with hundreds of other people, or even stay organized for an entire day. This past year has taught me that I don't need to be a legislator or a world leader to make a difference. Awareness and change start in the community, which is also where all trafficking cases occur. For starters, you could get active in the anti-trafficking movement by joining a local coalition (or starting one, for that matter), raising awareness through social media, getting your high school or college campus involved, raising awareness at your workplace, becoming a smarter consumer and supporting companies with ethical labor policies and "slave-free" products, writing letters or petitioning legislators and corporations for better laws against slavery, or organizing a community awareness event. Trafficking is not only an issue in impoverished and third world countries, but it is also a huge, growing problem in the States. I encourage you to find support in your own community, do something outside of your comfort zone, and set no limits for how much impact you can make in this world.

If you're looking for a place to start, try checking out Polaris Project online, calling the National Human Trafficking Resource Center hotline at 1-888-373-7888, or talking to people in your church or another local organization. If there's anything else I could help you with, please feel free to email me at margaret.loya@email.stvincent.edu as well. Most importantly, please keep all trafficking victims, perpetrators, and activists in your prayers. *Glory to Jesus Christ!*

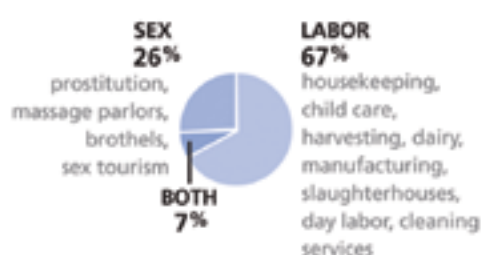
Human Trafficking

The U.S. bishops' Migration and Refugee Services department has aided 1,043 victims of human trafficking since 2006. Here is a statistical look at the victims assisted by MRS.

the victims



reasons for trafficking



most common places of origin



where trafficking is most prevalent



At left, Julie Hlavacik (left), Margaret Loya (center) and Dr. Mary Burke (right).



At right, Margaret Loya, a college student and Byzantine Catholic, was the organizer of the event.



Dr. Mary Burke offers insights during a presentation on the topic of Human Trafficking.

Guest Editorial

Go Forth!

Spreading Pope Francis' Gospel of Joy

By Father Robert F. Slesinski, Ph.D.



With his recent Apostolic Exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel* (*Evangelii Gaudium*) issued at the conclusion of the Year of Faith (2013) as a response to the XIII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops held over October 7-28, 2012 (see n. 14), Pope Francis sets forth his vision of the Church "to encourage the Christian faithful to embark upon a new chapter of evangelization" (n. 1) marked by apostolic joy. This two hundred plus page work clearly is a distillation of the Pontiff's lifetime pastoral work both as a priest and a bishop and, as such, clearly demands an attentive hearing by all to whom it is addressed (viz., to all in the Catholic Communion). Noting along with the Apostle Paul how "the love of Christ urges us on" (2 Corinthians 5:14) (n. 9), Pope Francis can only enjoin us together with the prophet Isaiah: "Shout aloud and sing for joy!" (Isaiah 12:6) (n.4).

Stressing how "missionary outreach is *paradigmatic for all the Church's activity*" (n. 15), Pope Francis universalizes the synodal stance of Latin American and Caribbean Bishops that proposes a move "from a pastoral ministry of mere conservation to a decidedly missionary pastoral ministry" (n. 15). In the process of expounding the import of this charge, the Pontiff takes his clue from Jesus' own missionary mandate to the Apostles and along with them to all the baptized, namely, to "go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19) (n. 19), expressly articulating a

fundamental theme of *all* ministry, to wit, "all of us are asked to obey His [Jesus'] call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the 'peripheries' in need of the light of the Gospel" (n. 20). On a more sober note, the Holy Father is not one to minimize the challenges before the believer, but He is, nonetheless, insistent that we take a "first step," much like Jesus and get involved, boldly remarking that "evangelizers...take on the 'smell of the sheep'" and that "the sheep are willing to hear their voice" (n. 24), further describing the "missionary heart" as emblematic of the person himself as one that "always does what good it can, even if in the process, its shoes get soiled by the mud of the street" (n. 45). In short order, Pope Francis makes a salient reflection upon his repeated advice to the Church of Buenos Aires as its archbishop, bluntly stating: "I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security" (n. 49).

As if the Pontiff has not made his point, he only goes on to bemoan that gray pragmatism of the daily life of the Church from which "a tomb psychology thus develops and slowly transforms Christians into mummies in a museum" (n. 67) that, at the same time, "feeds the vainglory of those who are content to have a modicum of power and would rather be the general of a defeated army than a mere private in a unity which contin-

ues to fight" (n. 96). That the Pope wants action and not talk, he introduces to the world a Spanish neologism "*habriaqueísmo*," the sin of wasting time by merely talking about "what needs to be done" (n. 96).

On an entirely different note, Pope Francis underscores the essential, *communal* dimension of all missionary endeavors, citing the Apostle Peter: "Once you were no people but now you are God's people" (1 Pt 2:10) (n. 268). Thus, he challenges pastors, parishioners, and diocesan administrations to work in concert, a task, indeed, easier said than done. This charge, it would seem, is especially challenging for Eastern Churches, which are largely defined, for better for worse, as "ethnic" Churches, thus seemingly "exclusive" in some real sense. But from our exposition of *The Joy of the Gospel*, it is clear that the Holy Father does address some very pointed words to all of us here locally in addition to all in the Universal Church.

No one better than Pope Francis sums up his own pastoral challenge to all of us—and we should take his words *personally* to heart: "My mission of being in the heart of the people is not just a part of my life or a badge I can take off... *I am a mission* on this earth; that is the reason why I am here in this world. We have to regard ourselves as sealed, even branded, by this mission of bringing light, blessing, enlivening, raising up, healing and freeing" (n. 273). Pointed counsel, indeed!

Oriente Lumen XVIII Conference
"Ecumenical Dimensions of Marriage"
June 23-26, 2014
Washington, DC



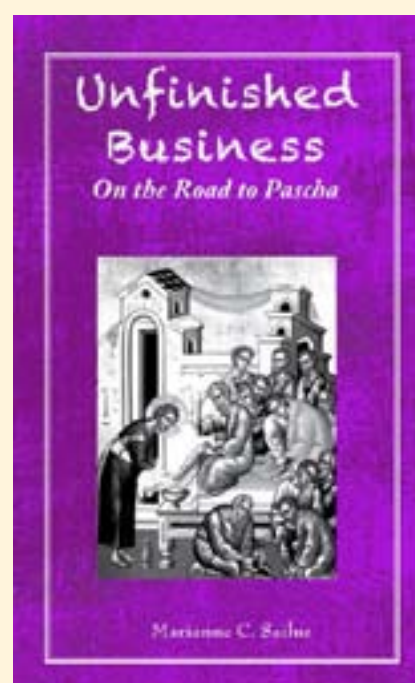
The speakers who will discuss the conference theme, covering canonical and pastoral issues, mixed couples and the married priesthood, will include:

Metropolitan Kallistos of Diokleia	Archimandrite Robert Taft, SJ
Archpriest Peter Galadza	Fr. Patrick Viscuso
Fr. John Beal	Sr. Vassa Larin
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FAITH AND COMMUNITY ISSUES

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

Morality in the Christian Family

THE ROLE OF CONSCIENCE IN FAMILY LIFE

What is Truth? The very question Pontius Pilate asked of Jesus, is asked today. What determines right and wrong? Is there such a thing as a "conscience" or is it rather an anomaly of chemical reactions occurring within the more primitive areas of the brain? Is there really a need for such a thing as a "Mystery of Penance" or is sin just an outmoded, medieval expression of an overly obsessive psyche? Are psychotherapy combined with anxiolytic and psychotropic medications the panacea-answer to guilt feelings? These questions are but the tip of a huge iceberg of issues today's family faces.

John Paul II in *Familiaris consortio* (1981) points to the reality of a conscience and the necessity of it being morally formed and properly trained. In his words: "The education of the moral conscience, which makes every human being capable of judging and of discerning the proper ways to achieve self-realization according to his or her original truth, thus becomes a pressing requirement that cannot be renounced (§8)." The implication is that modern culture has led us away from the source of True Wisdom, the responsible living-out of rightful learning. What is needed is a return, "a more profoundly restored covenant with divine Wisdom (*Familiaris Consortio*, 1981, §8)." Such a union will bring about a radical alignment of human creativity with the creative activity of God so as co-creators with the Divinity humanity's workings may place us "in a position to influence positively the building of a more just and fraternal world (*Familiaris consortio* §8)."

Implications are strongly made of a case for the existence of sin, a radical turning away from the Gracious God and His vision of reality, the very "Kingdom of God" for which we were created. This turning away spawns injustice, which according to *Familiaris consortio* (1981, §9), "has profoundly penetrated the structures of today's world" and succeeds in "hindering the family's full realization of itself and of its fundamental rights."

What is needed in counteracting this attitude is a conversion - a radical setting of oneself against this selfish trend, and turning ourselves in mind and heart to follow Christ on His road to Calvary and resurrection. The reverberations of such a radical shift will be felt even through "the structures of society" (*Familiaris consortio*, 1981, § 9) bringing about a radical healing of the rifts among us as humans and between us as human and the God who created us in His image and likeness.

"...change of heart is not a one-time phenomenon. Rather, it is a constant, continual evolving relationship..."

This change of heart is not a one-time phenomenon. Rather, it is a constant, continual evolving relationship intrapersonal (within the person him/herself) and interpersonal (among humans and humans with God) in origin and scope. The result of this continual turning toward God is dynamic. It continues to grow, bringing about change that is gradual, yet steady. It consistently moves us away from those things which break down our relationship with God and moves us toward an integrated, evolving utilization of the gifts of God. We then accept, with joy, the definitive and demanding transformational absolute love of God into the very fabric of our lives. So much so, that our will, and that of God for all creation, becomes interwoven like a brilliant tapestry - so that one cannot be separated from the other, distinct in character, but inseparable in activity and will.

Such integration does not simply happen, but is the direct result of an educational process. This process encompasses a multi-level approach, beginning with the individual and moving through the entire civilization itself. This brings to perfection what has been received of Christ's revelation in seminal form, which has eventually led to its fullest expression and incorporation into the daily life experience of the human person.



In the perspective of *Familiaris consortio* (1981), the Church accomplishes this teaching by means of the culture in which the Church finds itself. The document states, "Only with the help of all the cultures will it be possible for these riches to be manifested ever more clearly, and for the Church to progress towards a daily more complete and profound awareness of the truth, which has already been given to her in its entirety by the Lord." (*Familiaris consortio*, 1981, §10)

The Church, in accomplishing the goal of evangelization, needs to keep a careful balance between the content of the Gospel message and the context in which the message is presented. Compatibility is the desired outcome of this venture; study then, on all levels is needed "so that this 'inculturation' of the Christian faith may come about ever more extensively, in the context of marriage and the family as well as in other fields" (*Familiaris consortio*, 1981, §10)

By means of the inculturation process the Covenant between God and His people is achieved. In this achievement, the Wisdom of God, Jesus Christ Himself, is made manifest to the peoples of the world. In this sharing, the entire Church will be enriched. "The whole Church will be enriched also by the cultures which, though lacking technology, abound in human wisdom and are enlivened by profound moral values." (*Familiaris Consortio*, 1981, §10)

The root of understanding this process begins with understanding the family, its foundation in marriage and the original plan God had for it. In the next segment, the plan God had for marriage and the family within its context will be studied.



UNDERSTANDING ICONS

Father Joseph Bertha, Ph.D.

Pope Saint Gregory the Great • March 12th



On March 12, the Eastern Church celebrates the Feast of Gregory the Great, Pope and Author of the Dialogues, who lived from 540-604, and who served as pope from 590-604. The Roman church has transferred his feast to September 3, the date of his accession to the papal throne, rather than March 12, the date of his death.

Iconography: In icons, Saint Gregory is portrayed wearing the Byzantine sakkos, the vestment worn over the head and reaching down to the knees. Whatever the color choice for this liturgical vestment, multiple

fold and creases punctuate the rich material, and represent the manifold mercies which the priesthood distributes to the faithful during his lifetime. On top of this he wears the omophor denoting his office of hierarchy. Gregory is shown with long flowing white hair and white beard which does not necessarily portray his actual physical age at his death, but rather, represents the wisdom of God which penetrates even the hair follicles and radiates with divine illumination. His large prominent forehead illustrates his profound understanding of the mysteries of our faith; while the book (or scroll)

which he offers in his hands invites the viewer to examine these texts. Sometimes a white dove, symbolizing the Holy Spirit, is portrayed alighting on his shoulder.

Life details: Gregory spent seven years as the papal ambassador in Constantinople, and he wrote a copy of the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts in Latin which he had witnessed while there. Several writings are available in English, they include: *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, *The Rule for Pastors*, *Dialogues* (which includes a life of Saint Benedict), as well as collections of his sermons, and other Biblical commentaries.

Many of these texts can be located and read on the web.

As Pope, Gregory sent missionaries to the Anglo Saxons in present day England, which helped to establish, with Augustine of Canterbury, the English Church.

Troparion: (Tone 4) *O Father and Hierarch Gregory, the holiness of your life has set you before your flock as a rule of faith, an example of meekness and a teacher of self-restraint. Wherefore, you acquired greatness through humility and spiritual wealth through poverty. Pray to Christ God that He may save our souls.*



Save the Date!



BYZANTINE CATHOLIC
FAMILY DAY - 2014

*Knoebels Amusement Resort
Elysburg, PA
Sunday, May 18, 2014*

O most pure Theotokos, you are a mighty defender for those in sorrow. You are a ready help to those in trouble. You are the salvation and confirmation of the world. You are the depth of mercy, the font of God's wisdom; and the protectress of the world. O faithful, let us sing and praise her glorious protection, saying: Rejoice, O woman full of grace, the Lord is with you! The Lord, who because of you bestows great mercy on our souls.

– Vespers, Feast of the Protection of the Mother of God, October 1

Anniversary Icon Sale

*Transcarpathian Theotokos and Child
Patroness of the Eparchy*

As a special commemoration for the 50th Anniversary of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy a limited edition of the icon of Transcarpathian Theotokos and Child (Hodrigita) has been reproduced and is available for purchase. This large icon (approximately 11" x 17") mounted on wood is available for purchase for \$45.00 including shipping and handling from the Eparchial offices by using the form below:

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Bishop Blesses Icon

"We took the beautiful icon of our homeland that we received from you and mounted it in our icon shrine to the Theotokos. Bishop Kurt blessed it during his visit."

–Father Michael J Sopoliga of Saints Cyril and Methodius Byzantine Catholic Church in Fort Pierce, FL



HOLYDAY REFLECTIONS

Msgr. John T. Sekellick, JCL

PRAYER DURING GREAT LENT

We know from the Gospels that our Lord often would take time to pray communing with His Father in a solitary place usually through the night and alone. The longest such time alone was immediately after His baptism as He spent forty days and nights in the desert and was tempted by the Devil, recorded by Saint Matthew (4:1-11), Saint Luke (4:1-12) and Saint Mark (1:12-13).

We do not know the content of His prayers except for the prayer recorded by Saint John in chapter 17 of his Gospel together with the text of the prayer He taught the disciples which we know as the "Our Father" and His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet, not as I will, but Your will be done." (Luke:22:42; Matthew 26:39; Mark 14:36).

Nonetheless, as a pious Jew, Jesus (and the disciples) would have known the prayers of the Psalms which undoubtedly were used by Him during those solitary hours alone. As He hung on the Cross, He cried out the opening verse of Psalm 21, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?" The Psalms, then, would have been among the chief prayers our Lord knew and used

when He prayed. They would have been very familiar to Him from the worship services in the Temple and synagogues.

The Psalms have been called the "inspired hymnal of the Old Testament." King David, both a poet and a musician, was the author of many of the Psalms, although many were written perhaps over a span of some 500 years before his reign (1012-972 B.C.). There are 186 quotations in the Christian Scriptures (New Testament), and the Psalms are featured liberally in the Divine Liturgy and liturgical Services of the Church.

Understandably, the first Christians the majority of whom were Jewish converts would simply have continued to use prayers already familiar to them. Till today, there is hardly a Church service which is not replete with psalms. We need think only of the *prokimena* which precede our Scripture readings at the Divine Liturgy, the *Alleluia* verses and Communion hymns that are single psalm verses.

Every detail of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of our Lord can be found in our compelling Services of Holy Week and Easter with verses taken from the Psalms. The whole Psalter is actually read during the Vespers and Matin services

each week in twenty sections called *Kathismata*. It can be claimed that in our sacred Services, the Psalter is the most used book of Holy Scripture.

Many monks learn the Psalter by heart. There is even a local custom in some monastic communities when one of their number is chosen and consecrated a bishop, he is required to know the Psalter from memory. Many among the clergy and laity are familiar with and know by heart some of the psalms especially those that are chanted frequently in church. Psalms 90 and 118 used in our funeral services are tender and comforting prayers.

As we begin the Great Fast and intensify our spiritual life, may we find in those ancient yet ever-new prayers those sentiments which will profit and fortify our souls with the grace of repentance in preparation for the great celebration of resurrection and redemption at Pascha.



RESPECT LIFE FORUM

By Richard Doerflinger

The Death of "Pro-Choice"



Ever since Congress first approved the Hyde amendment in 1976, a nation divided on abortion has generally been able to agree on at least one thing: The government should not force Americans to fund or promote abortion against their will. Such coercion would violate both "life" and "choice," the paramount values on both sides of this dispute. So for 37 years, Congress has approved (and, in many cases, annually reaffirmed) numerous provisions to prevent federal funding of abortion and abortion coverage in all but the rarest circumstances.

At a recent subcommittee hearing in Congress, a bill to establish this policy more firmly and consistently in federal law drew hostile reactions that suggest this truce is over.

The legislation is the No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion Act (HR 7, S. 946). It would apply the policy of the Hyde amendment across all government programs, including the new Affordable Care Act (ACA), whose implementation has produced serious

evasions and violations of that policy.

The Hyde policy has long enjoyed broad support among Americans, including American women. In one poll taken during Congress's consideration of the ACA, most respondents opposed measures to make Americans pay for abortion coverage with their taxes or health premiums, and over two-thirds opposed abortion in their own health coverage – and on each question, women were more opposed than men. So one might think a law reflecting that consensus should sail through Congress.

Instead, HR 7 was the subject of loud protests and gross misrepresentations. Supporters of tax-funded abortion in the District of Columbia held a press conference to condemn the hearing, and protested outside the hearing room when the bill was approved – because it simply continues the current ban on publicly funded abortions in DC. Protesters shouted "Where are the women?" to protest the subcommittee's all-male

membership – although one of two pro-life witnesses, Helen Alvare, is a female law professor, and all subcommittee members opposing the bill were male. A witness against HR 7, Susan Wood of George Washington University, called it a "mean-spirited" attempt to "interfere" and "meddle" in women's lives. She and other opponents were simply not interested in the difference between prohibiting something and declining to pay for it.

An abortion movement that once trumpeted privacy – the "right to be let alone" to make one's own choices – now wants to inject abortion into all our lives as a public good demanding our support. But it is the height of hypocrisy to cry "Let me alone!" as you pick your neighbor's pocket.

Abraham Lincoln faced a similar problem, as he tried without success to avoid civil war by compromising with those supporting slavery. The slave states rejected his offer to prevent slavery's expansion, while leav-

ing it alone where it was legal. He asked: What would satisfy his opponents? "This, and this only: cease to call slavery wrong, and join them in calling it right. And this must be done thoroughly – done in acts as well as in words. Silence will not be tolerated – we must place ourselves avowedly with them.... Holding, as they do, that slavery is morally right, and socially elevating, they cannot cease to demand a full national recognition of it, as a legal right, and a social blessing."

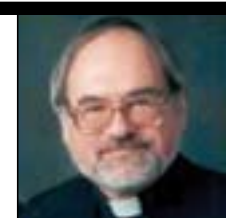
Substitute "abortion" for "slavery" and you have a sketch of today's "abortion rights" agenda. Countering that agenda won't take a civil war – just pro-life citizens who inform themselves on the issue, and make their voices heard in Congress.

[Mr. Doerflinger is Associate Director of the Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. To learn how to write to Congress on this issue visit www.nchla.org. More on the bishops' pro-life activities can be found at www.usccb.org/prolife.]



THE BYZANTINE LITURGY

By Archpriest David Petras, SEOD



Communion in the Presanctified Liturgy

development, since from the early centuries, when monasticism became a thriving way of life, the monks, usually not ordained priests in antiquity, would take the holy consecrated Body of Christ from the church to their monasteries on Sunday.

The Divine Liturgy was not always celebrated daily in the parish churches, but throughout the week the monks would receive the Holy Communion that had been consecrated by the priest. As time went on, prayers were written for the distribution of Holy Communion that were to follow the same format as the Divine Liturgy, except for the anaphora, so much so that the Presanctified was also given the title of "Divine Liturgy." The Presanctified Liturgy is a true Divine Liturgy in that it has Communion in the holy and life-giving Body of our Lord. The formulation of this service was seen as the inspiration of the Holy Spirit,

The Presanctified Liturgy was probably created in the sixth century to emphasize the importance of Holy Communion

for in the Prayer before the Our Father, the priest says, "O God of mysteries beyond human thought and vision, in You are hidden the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. You have revealed to us the service of this liturgy, and, in your great love, have appointed us sinners to offer gifts and sacrifices for our sins, and for the people's failings." As a Divine Liturgy, the Presanctified must be celebrated by a priest.

The Great Fast was an image of the journey of the Israelites through the desert for forty years to reach the promised land (for Christians, the resurrection). The food that sustained them was manna, a miraculous gift from God. Jesus taught that eating His body replaced and fulfilled the manna in the desert: "Amen, amen, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven." (John 6:32) This theme is seen clearly in the Ambon Prayer, "Through Your inexpressible providence and great goodness You have brought

us to these solemn days for the purification of soul and body, the control of passions and the hope of resurrection. During the forty days, You gave your servant, Moses, the tablets of the Law inscribed by your divine hand. In Your goodness, grant that we also may ... arrive without reproach to worship Your holy resurrection." The Great Fast, then, represents our life in this world in which we hope for resurrection. The resurrection is hardly absent from the Great Fast, it is the goal of all our ascetical effort, which can only be accomplished and attained by the grace of God.

Since it is celebrated together with Vespers, the Presanctified Liturgy celebrates the mystery of Christ as the light of the world. Vespers was celebrated as the sun was setting and darkness began to spread over the face of the earth. We may have the gift of electrical lighting now, but the darkness of night is still an important part of our lives. The Christians, however, knew that they were never truly in darkness, for Christ was present to us, especially in the gift of Holy Communion. Jesus said, in fact, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (John 8:12) This gospel passage is read on the feast of Pentecost, when the risen Lord sent us the Holy Spirit to guide us to all truth. (John 16:13)

It is through the Holy Spirit that Christ is present to us and it is through the power of the Holy Spirit that bread and wine are consecrated to become the Body and Blood of our Lord. This is celebrated in the Presanctified Divine Liturgy with the evening blessing of the candle which represents the light of Christ. The faulty translation of the older Presanctified books was corrected, because in blessing the people, the priest does not quote the Gospel of John, but says, "The Light of Christ shines upon everyone." The Presanctified Divine Liturgy indeed celebrates the presence of Christ, and while it is done in a spirit of fasting and repentance, it is still a foretaste of the resurrection, for Holy Communion is the reception of the risen Lord. We remember in this way what Saint John Chrysostom often said, "It is always Pascha!"

The characteristic service of the Great Fast is the Presanctified Divine Liturgy. The theological reason for it is that during the days of fast before Pascha, we must also fast from the commemoration of the Resurrection. Therefore, the purpose of the Presanctified Liturgy is to abstain from the commemoration of the Resurrection. This was formalized in Canon 52 of the Synod of Trullo (692): "On all the days of the Lent ... except for Saturday and Sunday and the Holy day of the Annunciation, let the liturgy of the Presanctified gifts take place." The background for the Presanctified is the fasting rules of the Church. During the Great Fast, one had to fast from food until after Vespers in the evening. Communion was then given after Vespers. In the Vespers service itself, when it is celebrated without the Presanctified Liturgy, we can still see an order for the distribution of Communion. The Presanctified Liturgy was probably created in the sixth century to emphasize the importance of Holy Communion, that it is truly union with Christ and food for our souls and bodies.

We see then, in the Great Fast, that the Church truly values the mystery of Holy Communion. The West and the East took a different approach, but they both agree that our life in faith needs to be constantly nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ. The Western Church did this by formulating a Divine Liturgy for each of the days of the Fast. The East, however, saw the Divine Liturgy as the joyful celebration of the Resurrection. Yet, while we had to abstain from the Liturgy, it was very important to continue to receive Holy Communion. This was probably done first by distributing Communion at the end of the service of Vespers. This would have been a natural



LETTERS FROM THE EDITOR

Compiled by Father James Hayer, Editor

The Winter Boots



A kindergarten teacher was helping her student put on his winter boots. She pulled and he pushed, but the boots just wouldn't go on. Finally, they got the first boot on, and then the second. After which, the little boy noted, "Teacher, my boots are on the wrong feet!"

So, they worked and worked and finally got the boots on the right feet. The teacher breathed a sigh of triumphant relief. However, the little boy confessed, "Teacher, these are not my boots."

The heroically patient teacher helped her young student locate his correct boots. Off came the ill-fitting boots belonging to someone else, and on went his own boots, with no less of a struggle.

Finally, when the task was completed, the teacher sat down, exhausted but satisfied, and asked the little boy, "Now, where are your mittens?"

He said, "I stuffed them inside my boots." ☺

Each day, people and circumstances can try our patience. However, the wonderful thing about patience is that the more we use it, the more we have.

As we read in Scriptures, "...your faith produces patience. Therefore, let your patience be perfect, so that you may be perfect and lacking in nothing." (James 1:4)

Hang in there and be patient.

Many thanks to A. Nonymous for sharing this story!

If you have an inspiring story or article you wish to share you may send it to Father James at: "Letters from the Editor" c/o: Saint Mary Church, 695 N. Main St., Wilkes-Barre, PA 18705. or E-Mail him at EasternCatholicLife@verizon.net.



SEMINARIAN REFLECTIONS

Seminarian Lewis Rabayda

The Great Fast: An Opportunity to be Transformed

The Great Fast is the epicenter of the Christian year, it is the marrow of the Christian life. In the early Church, the Great Fast was the period of preparation for the soon-to-be inducted members of the Church (the Catechuminate). The already initiated Christians would join the Catechumens of their church communities in this fasting period as a sign of solidarity and as a reminder of their own Baptismal commitment. The crux of this commitment is to renounce Satan and to unite oneself to Christ.

The 40-day fast references many Biblical scenes, but the closest inspiration is when Jesus went to the desert to fast before His Baptism at the start of His ministry. In a similar way, we too benefit from this 40-day fast in that it will transform us and ready us for the ministry we share in spreading the word of Jesus. This is what those early Christians did before their baptism, before the start of their ministry serving God through the Church. They would immerse themselves in intense prayer and intense fasting, so they were properly prepared to receive the waters of Baptism, to be made clean of all of their sins and to be transferred into the Body of Christ.

Ok. So, if we've decided to take this year's Great Fast seriously, if we've decided to try something new and take our faith to the next step, if we've decided that we are ready to let go of our attachments and give in to the Holy Spirit of this Great Fast, then what exactly should we do? As Eastern Christians, we have been given the greatest gift of guidance through the Church. By attending as many scheduled Lenten services as we can, we will hear and pray the Psalms and beautiful Stichera that make-up the Presanctified Divine Liturgy.

If we have the opportunity to attend Forgiveness Vespers, we will learn about the spirit of repentance. If we take seriously a fast from foods that comfort us, and make our stomachs grumble in dissatisfaction, then we will learn how to master our bodies. If we add spiritual reading and more intense personal prayer, we will fend off the demons that tempt us. If we look to God for forgiveness in humility and ask Him to accept us as His servants, then we will find ourselves on a path towards holiness.

Fasting from food and spiritual reading go hand-in-hand. When Jesus was fasting for 40 days in the desert the devil came to tempt Him with some food.

Jesus answered, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." (Matt. 4:4) Jesus' food for those 40 days was the word of God, the instruction of God, and the commandments of God. These superseded the physical need for nourishment; they fed His Spirit, His soul. There are some basic Eastern Christian books that have made the most impact on my spirituality that I would like to share with you:

The Sayings of the Desert Fathers
The Way of A Pilgrim
The Ladder of Divine Ascent by John Climacus
The Philokalia Vol. I-IV

I placed these books in descending order of accessibility with The Sayings being the easiest to read and gain spiritual wisdom from, and The Philokalia containing the most complex theological language. However, the one book that I should not have to suggest as the most important source of our spiritual wisdom is The Holy Bible. If you are going to take-up reading the Bible for the first time, or to revisit the Bible from a long hiatus, then I suggest to start with the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

The Great Fast is serious work. And if we take to heart this spiritual journey and give it every effort we can muster, then we will not be the same person at the other end of it. We will have allowed God to refashion the clay of our lives, we will have allowed Him to smooth out the imperfections created by a world of sin. We will have been transformed into a better version of ourselves, a version that is closer to the image of Christ and further from the image of the ruler of this world, the devil.

If we can traverse the Great Fast with progress in our spiritual lives, we will receive the reward that Jesus had after He resisted the devil's temptations in the desert, "And the devil left him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him." (Matt. 4:11) When we deny ourselves and put on the image of Christ, the Holy Spirit and angels will come to minister to us in our discomfort. We will then be ready to renew our baptismal commitment, and to unite ourselves to Christ.

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Upcoming Events for March

Eparchial and Parish Events

Glory to Jesus Christ!
Glory Forever!

MARCH

2 Sunday of Cheese-Fare

Eastern Catholic Life

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- First Day of the Great Fast
Day of Strict Fast (no meat, egg, or dairy)
- 9
- First Sunday of the Great Fast
- 15
- 2nd All Souls Saturday
Holy Name Retreat (Cathedral Chapel)
- 16
- Second Sunday of the Great Fast
- 22
- 3rd All Souls Saturday
- 23
- Sunday of the Holy Cross
Red vestments worn today
- 25
- Annunciation of the Theotokos
Solemn Holyday (Blue vestments)
CHANCERY CLOSED
- 29
- 4th All Souls Saturday
- 30
- Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast