



Eparchial Clergy Attend Clergy Conference in April—*Twice*

Clergy meetings have been a regular feature for more years than anyone alive can remember. Traditionally St Nicholas eparchial clergy have met twice-a-year—once for a spiritual retreat, once for a “business meeting”.

These events were noted in the *New Star* since the inception of the newspaper more than fifty years ago. Reference has often been made to the fact that the priests and deacons have had to drive, fly, take a train or bus—whether to Chicago or some other location, usually within the eparchy, giving Illinois residents a way to become acquainted with other areas in which our parishes are located.

We’ve been to California, Colorado, Arizona, Michigan, Texas—or by joining priests of the Metropolitan See—to Pennsylvania and Washington, DC. An agenda is always provided, and often a chance to sight-see or emulate a tourist.

Late in March a message from the Chancery announced a Clergy Meeting on April 2: an agenda was sent, and everyone was expected to be present. One slight detail was changed: due to prevailing conditions of recently-imposed travel restrictions and directives to limit the size of groups allowed in any confined space, and limits on physical proximity—a new approach had to be implemented.

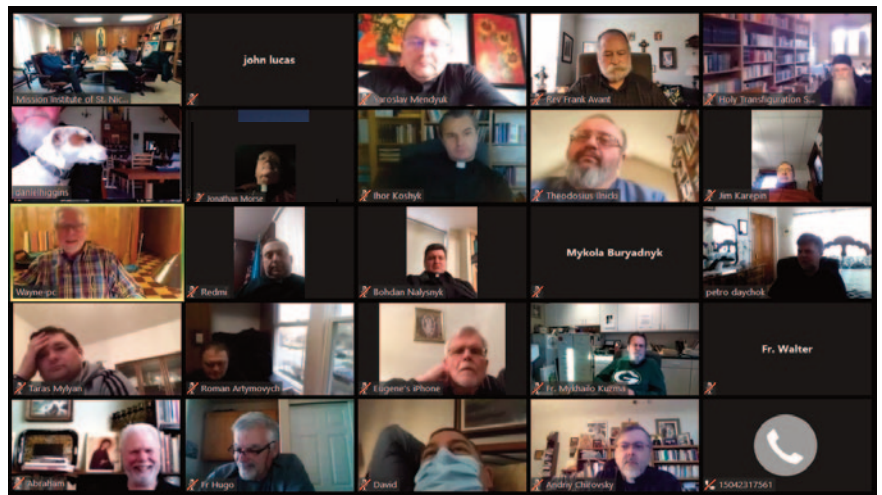
With electronic communications being readily available, all were given instructions on how to participate in the gathering. Rather than by car, bus, train or plane, priests, monks, and deacons were to attend using a computer, smart phone, or landline, at a time convenient to the four time zones in which parishes are located. Bishop Benedict conducted the meeting to focus on some of the emerging developments (at a rapidly-changing pace) precipitated by the new coronavirus.

And so it was—the agenda was simple—a discussion of three documents that had been sent out in answer to the question “how do we deal with this phenomenon?” Guidelines were given, and some time for individuals to ask for clarification and discuss the feasibility of practical solutions. Especially important was concern about soothing

the parishioners’ anxiety over inability to attend services.

It was a most inopportune time to have this crisis arise: Holy Week was approaching. How to handle blessing willows—to conduct the services of Holy Week—processions, the *plashchanytsya*? More processions—Resurrection Matins—blessing Paschal Foods!


Directives from His Beatitude were announced, and we were put at ease with the instruction to follow the restraints deemed necessary by civil authority, and—as in the use of communication tools for the



As the meeting progressed, the screen rotated pictures of the 43 attendees . . . When someone was speaking—his box had a yellow-green frame.

meeting—parishes were to stream their services so parishioners would not be left without spiritual contact. All were advised to “stay home to stay safe, and keep others safe” and as time allows, return to a normal schedule. This varies state by state.

And, at the end of April, another gathering of clergy was announced. By the same arrangement, all clergy were called to meet again—on April 29, the second-last day of the month—for a tour of the South-West Deanery. Ten parishes were visited with a brief presentation. Each visiting cleric was able to be at his own office, den, front porch or living room. All that was missing was the expense and perils of travel, and the pleasure of in-person greetings and the chance to sit together, talk, eat, and renew friendships.

 **I**mposed isolation inspired ingenious innovation involving inviting interested individuals in initiating impressive international, inter-jurisdictional interaction intricately including ideal innermost intensity invoking Internet input. See page four to see how the Twelve Passion Gospels were shared by otherwise sequestered faithful.

Metropolitan-Archbishop Emeritus Stephen Sulyk

Born into life—October 2, 1924; Born into Eternal Life—April 6, 2020

On Monday, April 6, Metropolitan-Archbishop Emeritus Stephen Sulyk while a patient at Virtua Voorhees Hospital, Voorhees New Jersey was called home to the Lord. Archbishop Sulyk, 95, served as Archbishop of the Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Philadelphia and Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in the United States.

He was appointed Metropolitan-Archbishop of Philadelphia by St. John Paul II on December 29, 1980 and was consecrated bishop in Rome on March 1, 1981. The principal Consecrator was His Beatitude, and the Principal Co-Consecrators were Bishop Basil H. Losten, of Stamford and Bishop Nilus Nicholas Savaryn, O.S.B.M. of Edmonton.

Upon reaching the canonical age for retirement, St. John Paul II accepted his resignation on November 29, 2000.

Stephen Sulyk was born to Michael and Mary Denys Sulyk on October 2, 1924 in Balnycia, a village in the Lemko District of the Carpathian mountains in Western Ukraine. In 1944, he graduated from high school in Sambir. After graduation, the events of World War II forced him to leave his native land and share the experience of a refugee.

He entered the Ukrainian Catholic Seminary of the Holy Spirit in Hirschberg, Germany. In 1948, he migrated to the United States and continued his priestly studies at Saint Josaphat's Seminary and The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

In 1952, he received his S.T.L. degree from the Catholic University of America and was ordained to the priesthood on June 14, 1952 at the Immaculate Conception Cathedral in Philadelphia.

After ordination, he served as assistant pastor in Omaha, Nebraska; Brooklyn, New York; St. Nicholas parish in Minersville, Pennsylvania, and St. Anne parish in Youngstown, Ohio. He received his first pastoral assignment in 1955 in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, with the additional responsibilities as Chancery Secretary.

From July 1, 1957 until October 5, 1961 he was pastor of St. Michael's Church in Frackville, Pennsylvania. During his short tenure of four years, he built, furnished and paid for a new church and parish social hall. Annual gross income rose from \$10,000 in 1957 to \$60,000 in what was considered a financially-depressed area.

After a short stay at St. Nicholas parish in Philadelphia, on March 22, 1962, he was appointed pastor of Assumption Church, Perth Amboy, New Jersey. Within a year, he completed a new elementary school. During his pastorate, he converted the rectory into a convent for nuns, built a new

rectory, purchased and landscaped additional parish grounds and renovated the parish church. He also compiled and printed a series of bi-lingual texts for use in liturgical services. On May 31, 1968, His Holiness Pope St Paul VI granted him the dignity of Papal Chaplain with the title of Monsignor.

After he was appointed Metropolitan-Archbishop of Philadelphia, he supervised the construction of a new chancery center and bishop's residence and cathedral rectory. He renovated the sanctuary of the cathedral and landscaped the adjoining grounds. He established the Seminary Endowment Fund to finance the education of seminarians and to provide income for St. Josaphat's Seminary.

At the request of the Vatican, he was involved in sensitive diplomatic talks with members of the Orthodox Church in Ukraine at the time the Soviet Union was collapsing, Ukraine was becoming an independent nation and the Church was emerging from persecution under atheistic communism of the Soviets.

He had served on various committees of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Synod of Bishops of the Ukrainian Catholic Church.

June 14, 2002 was the fiftieth anniversary of his ordination to the Holy Priesthood and his Golden Jubilee was observed with the celebration of a hierarchical Divine Liturgy and a testimonial banquet on June 23, 2002.

October 1, 2019, he was honored by the Archeparchy on the occasion of his 95th birthday. At the time of his death he was the oldest bishop of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in the world.

During his retirement years, he lived in Cherry Hill, New Jersey.

He was predeceased by his parents and the following siblings: Ivan, Vasyl, Dmytro, Anna Nicholas and Ivan, Jr. In addition to several nieces and nephews, he is survived by the following cousins: Frank

Stec (Christine), Steve Boyduy, Lidia Devonshire, Theresa Nord (Tim), Donna Sauchak (Greg), Stephen Stec (Tonya), Kristin Magar (Steve), Lauren Stec and Jordan Stec.

A public Divine Liturgy for the repose of his soul will be celebrated at a future date to be determined.

May his memory be eternal!



On his 90th birthday, October 1, 2014 Metropolitan Stephen (center) concelebrated Liturgy, with Archbishop Stefan Soroka (L) and Bishop Basil Losten (R), along with a number of priests and deacons of the Archeparchy of Philadelphia.



Due to the coronavirus pandemic, private funeral services were conducted Bright Monday, April 13, 2020 by Metropolitan-Archbishop Borys Gudziak with interment in the crypt of the cathedral, alongside +Bishop Soter Ortynsky, +Bishop Constantine Bohachevsky and +Metropolitan Ambrose Senyshyn

Patriarch Prays for Health of COVID-19 Patients

Emphasizing the serious contagion factor of the new corona virus, unprecedented actions have been taken to safeguard the health of all who normally flee to the Church for solace.

Not denying the importance of public prayer, extreme measures have been implemented to try to lessen the chances of carrying and passing viral infection to others. Our churches have been closed to vast throngs to be able to follow directives of public authorities, for whose wise governance we pray, to keep the pandemic from affecting more people.

The reality of the seriousness of the attention paid to precautionary closure of “normal, everyday” life venues can be observed in this photo, a screen-shot taken from a YouTube video broadcast shortly after Pascha.

The Patriarch Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ, though resounding with the sung voices storming heaven with petitions of relief of pain and suffering endured by those ill, there are few people in attendance. It is not that many people do not wish to be present, but who comply with pleas from even the ecclesiastic advice to offer their prayers in their own homes—at least until the danger of cross-contamination lessens.

There is no set time of reestablishing the

regular attendance at these parish churches, as there are so many variables determined by local conditions.

Even in the Eparchy of St Nicholas, no specific directive can be issued. Bishop Benedict has entrusted the decisions of the local pastors to follow local regulations on a state-by-state, or region-by-region lifting of the ban on communal gatherings.

Bishop Benedict has endorsed use of technology in live-streaming or Facebook messaging of local parishes as a means of serving the needs of the faithful. Those without computers of compatible telephones can still be kept in mind by the clergy.

As conditions improve in your local area—which might differ from another parish in another state—parish life will resume. There might be even some residual precautions to follow before a “normal” time resumes.

Pray daily—more than once—for help in



Maintaining “social distance”, a Moleben to the Mother of God for health was celebrated April 24, 2020.

enduring the (often inconvenient) regulations, as well as for the recovery of the sick. You might also remember to pray in thanksgiving if you have escaped this scourge. As well, your prayers can encompass those who have succumbed to the disease.

During this time of the year, our prayers include beginning and ending with the tropar: Christ is risen from the dead, trampling death by death, and to those in the tombs, granting life!”

And, having given us eternal life, we venerate His resurrection on the third day.

Happy Mother’s Day!

Flowers seem to be an ever-present symbol in Mother’s Day greetings. Flowers are beautiful, usually having a pleasing fragrance, and a display of attractive colors. They come in all shapes and sizes. They are a gift of God to brighten our days. Lest you think you need a name like Rose, Daisy, Pansy, Lily, Violet, Blossom, Jasmine, Petunia or any other floral name to be part of the sentiment of the day, consider the rationale of presenting flowers this day. Flowers are signs of hope, of beauty, an expression of sharing respect and gratitude with this simple gesture. Flowers, like prayer, are offered to mothers living, to mothers deceased, as a sign of love and affection. Mothers may not be treated to a restaurant meal today—but flowers are available! Prayers and blessing to all mothers, today—and every day.





WHO KNEW? MANY OF THE FOODS WE EAT—OR HAVE EATEN—MAY HELP US TO AVOID OR OVERCOME THE COVID-19 VIRUS:

Combat COVID-19 with: *Açai berries*: loaded with anthocyanins, a type of flavanoid rich in antioxidants will boost immunity and lower inflammation. *Wheat Germ*: the wheat kernel holds all of the nutrients with B vitamins, zinc, and vitamin E; *Ginger*: this anti-inflammatory root has antioxidants that help defend against arthritis, cancer, neurodegenerative disorders, and other ailments; *Watermelon*: 92% water full of vitamins A, C, B6. Contains potassium, and glutathione is a gift to the immune system; *Oysters* are loaded with various vitamins and minerals, such as selenium, iron, vitamin A, vitamin C, and zinc; all vital for proper immune function—and super low in calories!; *Miso soup*: is made with a paste created by fermenting soybeans with salt and *kōji* and is loaded with probiotics that benefit gastrointestinal health and the immune system; *Spinach*: due to its high amount of folate, vitamin A, vitamin C, fiber, magnesium, and iron, boosts immune function and supplies the body with nutrients for cell division and DNA repair; *Broccoli*: one cup of broccoli contains as much vitamin C as an orange, and is brimming with beta-carotene, potassium, magnesium, zinc, and iron; *Garlic*: a bulb full of antibacterial, antiviral, and anti-fungal characteristics, is also abundant in antioxidants that neutralize free radicals associated with Alzheimer's disease, heart disease, cancers, and other ailments. *Mushrooms*: Fungi offer high levels of selenium and certain B vitamins, such as riboflavin and niacin, are loaded with polysaccharides, to enhance immune function; *Sunflower seeds*: are jam-packed with phosphorous, magnesium, vitamin B-6, as well as incredibly high levels of vitamin E (just like *almonds*!). Maybe some of the “spare time” provided by “sheltering at home” could provide an opportunity to rediscover the art of preparing food “from scratch”—or at least with some of the ingredients that might not be found in processed foods. There are many others—most of which are readily available in a supermarket. Some are old stand-bys, others may be new to you. To your health! It might be worth the time and effort to live longer, healthier, to praise God in thanksgiving for life. This list is not complete. Other options include Elderberries, Blueberries, Mangoes and other fresh fruits and vegetables.

DESPITE INCONVENIENCE OF “SHELTERING-IN-PLACE”, OBSTACLES TO COMMUNAL CELEBRATION OF PRAYER WERE OVERCOME: 3 Continents. 5 Countries. 20 Readers. And Sharing the 12 Passion Gospels. We live in unusual

times. Few of us in the English-speaking world have lived through something like the COVID-19 pandemic, and we've all had to change the way we live our lives. The way we pray has changed too. Our bishops have prudently instructed us to stay home.

Praying at home, like a lot of things about this pandemic, can be very challenging. But our bishops have also reminded us of our Church's unique history of persevering and praying through difficult times. The Euromaidan Revolution and the underground Church were difficult, tragic, and painful. But their lessons, perhaps, provided “better” ways of getting the self-sacrificial Christian message out to people than what we're used to.

During the Euromaidan, people from all over the world Skyped in with words of encouragement, and to read excerpts from the Gospels. During the (years of the) underground Church, most people heard and shared the Gospel at home.

In crisis, we saw positive innovation, a regard for what's important, and an understanding for what's not. This pandemic is one of those times—a time to do better, reach more people, and a time to innovate despite this virus' mortal evil and humanity's social injustice.

Most people were home during Holy Week 2020. More than ever, it was a time to fully appreciate Christ's sacrificial love. That is, to hear *every word* of the Passion narratives, and what



it meant for Christ to save us at great pain, suffering, and personal cost to Him.

So on the evening of Holy Thursday and morning of Good Friday on the Gregorian Calendar, 20 people spanning many time zones, 5 countries, and 3 continents sheltering at home, joined the St. Mary of Egypt Social Justice fellowship to read the Twelve Passion Gospels.

To view their live-streamed service, you may use this link: <https://www.maryofegypt.com/post/join-us-for-a-virtual-gospel-reading>

PS: HERE IS SOME GOOD ADVICE TO HEED, IN BLACK AND WHITE: Wash your hands often.



For Such a Time As This

“**F**or everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace” (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, RSVCE). I reflect on these words from the Old Testament often during this time of the Corona virus pandemic. How am I making the best use of the time that the Lord has given us? I must confess—not very well. I thought that I would have time to do a number of things that I could not accomplish during normal times. I was able to go through many of my papers that I had collected from the courses I took when working toward my catechetical certifications for the Roman Catholic diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana and the Byzantine Catholic Seminary of Sts. Cyril and Methodius in the Pittsburgh Metropolia. I had documents that I copied from Internet searches that went back over 20 years. I also shredded a large number of financial papers that I no longer needed, and was able to winnow 12 boxes of papers down to two. This has made my wife very happy. I made use of the phrase from Ecclesiastes “a time to keep, and a time to cast away.” However, I also found myself wasting a good amount of effort and could have done more “housecleaning”.

I wish that I would make better use of prayer during this unusual season. God has established the seasons connected with life and time, and it is up to us to discern the proper use of our time in the different seasons (CCC 2828). The unavailability of in-person church services has given us the opportunity to watch many of these on television, YouTube, or Facebook. For the first time that I could remember, I was able to observe most of the beautiful liturgies of Great and Holy Week and Bright Week as broadcast by different jurisdictions of the Eastern Catholic and Orthodox Churches. It was interesting to me that the daily services of Bright Week were virtually the same as the services of the Feast of Pascha itself. No readings from the Psalter were done. The emphasis during that week was on the New Covenant. I tried to observe the services of Matins, the Hours, and Vespers. One of the Cantors from St. Athanasius the Great Byzantine Catholic Church in Indianapolis was kind enough to do Readers Services on Facebook for all of these daily prayers.

One thing that I miss is daily one-on-one contact with my brothers and sisters in Christ. I belong to a prayer community that meets every Sunday afternoon for praise and prayer for one another. I also belong to a small men’s group that meets on Monday evenings. These events could not take place. However, through technology of Google Duo and Zoom on the Internet,

we could at least see each other’s faces while we shared our lives. However, we did not have the opportunity to “embrace” one another. It is not that time (Eccl 3:5).

The disciples and apostles of Christ found themselves in somewhat analogous situations after the Resurrection of Christ. They isolated themselves for “fear of the Jews” (John 20:19), and we are isolating ourselves for fear of the Corona virus. However, Jesus appeared to them in the upper room and encouraged them. When an angel met the Myrrh-bearing women outside His tomb, He said to them “do not be afraid” (Matt 28:5). At His ascension, Jesus said to His disciples “behold, I am with you always, to the close of this age” (Matt 28:20). God will not abandon us.

I do not know why we are in this situation that has disrupted our daily routines and caused us to wonder when we will be free of the effects of this virus. It seems that our civil and religious liberties are under attack. Many times, in the Old Testament, the Jews found themselves in similar situations and wise people were called by God to give them encouragement. Often, they were called to trust in God’s providence and protection, and to remember that God often works in subtle ways during these times. The Book of Esther tells us about one of these events. The Persian King was about to destroy the Jews because of the fake news about them that he heard from his servant Haman. However, Esther was convinced by Mordecai to intercede for the Jews, as she was chosen as queen. She was reluctant, but Mordecai told her: “For if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter, but you and your father’s house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this” (Esther 4:14). It was her time to not be silent, but to speak up for her people.

We need to be faithful to our Ukrainian Greek Catholic faith, and not give up. As examples to others we can show them how to live in these uncertain times. Perhaps God has prepared us “for such a time as this.” Pray for wisdom for our political and religious leaders so they can give us proper direction as we fight against this virus.

Henry Peresie, Ph. D., CECS



Prayerful Priest

Unfortunately, this is a true story. Once I heard a parishioner complaining about her pastor to another parishioner. Obviously, something like this *never* happens in one of our parishes. (LOL). The parishioner was complaining that her pastor did not spend enough time visiting the sick even though all the sick people of the parish were visited. He should have spent more time with them. While going through her list about her pastor, the other parishioner asked: "what do you think the reason for this is?" The first parishioner responded her priest spends too much time praying. He has Hours during the day, he has Vespers at night, and he has Liturgies every day. He should spend more time in ministry than he spends in prayer. This complaint is based upon a western Protestant philosophy of what the role of a minister is. They are called ministers because they are "to 'minister'".

Our clergy are called "priests" coming from the Greek word *presbyter*. This meant an Elder who had the responsibility of guiding, protecting, and inspiring his flock. A priest is also one who offers sacrifice, like the Jewish priests of the Old Testament. The offering of the Divine liturgy is like the sacrifice of the Jewish priest. While the Jewish priest offered a sacrificial animal, our priest offers the Body and Blood of Christ. The sacrificial element is seen as the priest raises the holy gifts and says, "Holy things for the holy." The "holy" things are the offering of Christ Himself for the other "holy", which refers to the people. Thus the "holy things" are the people in Christ who are being offered to the Holy, which is God. So the Divine Liturgy is the priest's most important prayer of the day. This prayer is offered for all the people of the parish.

Evagrius reminded the faithful of his time that the priests are a valuable source for the people of divine grace and love. As he wrote, "one is to love the priests after the Lord, inasmuch as they purify us through the holy mysteries and pray for us." It is the prayer of our priests that brings us closer to the divine. Through the ministry of the priest, we've become present to Christ as we pray in Church. While it is true that Christ is present "where two or more are gathered" in His name, it is also true that through the ministry of the priest that Christ becomes physically present; our sins are forgiven; we are joined in the mystery of marriage; we receive the graces of the holy anointing, and in baptism God dwells within us. These are ministries that come from the prayers of a priest. In our Church, no holy mystery, which is called in the West a "sacrament", takes place without a priest. It is in the context of the priest's prayer that these mysteries become a reality. As Evagrius says, we should love our priests because they are the source of God's love and grace for us.

While accepting that the priest must pray, some may comment that our prayers are too elaborate; our gathering together is too complicated. If the Queen of England were coming, you would have the location exceptionally clean. If our patriarch was going to visit our parish and we were to speak to him, a formal presentation would be prepared. One greater than the queen or a patriarch is in

our midst. How many couples get married with no elaborate ceremony? Why do people dress up for a funeral? The deceased person does it need the viewers to see us in suits and dresses. It is just a human way of showing respect for someone greater than we are.

On special occasions in Judaism, Jesus and His apostles gathered either at the temple or in a special place like the upper room. They met for the celebration of Passover at the Last Supper. For the observance of American Thanksgiving, we have a special place like grandma's house, a special time like lunchtime, and special attire. The word *Eucharist* means "thanksgiving". We should have a special place, a special meal at a particular time to be thankful to God for the many gifts He has given us. We should then desire our priest to be clothed in dignity, our church to be beautiful, and the ceremony fitting for the King of Kings.

There is a special connection between the Eucharist and prayer. Whenever communion is distributed, the "Our Father" is said. The Lord's Prayer was given to us in response to the apostles' request: "Lord, teach us how to pray." This is the only thing the apostles asked to be taught. Wow! They could have asked how to feed 5,000 people or how to change water into wine. They wanted to know how to pray.

It is a simple prayer, yet many books have been written just to explain the wealth that is in each and every phrase. You have to go beyond the surface to its deeper meanings. The same is true for the Divine Liturgy. There is layer upon layer of meaning to bring us to deeper levels of prayer. Each time you think of the words as you pray, new understandings can come to mind.

Most people have a difficult time with their prayer life. Bills to pay, children to be taken to sporting events, and elderly parents to be taken care of all fill the hours of our day. So, we don't have time to pray. It is fortunate for the priest, that his work schedule demands time for prayer. Yet our Lord, who had the whole universe to take care of, took time out to pray. Notice all the times in Scripture that Jesus went off to pray. If He could make time, then we can make time.

There's a particular time to pray that comes from the Jewish tradition. At the time of Jesus, every Jew was expected to raise up a prayer even if it was just was a short couple of words. The time praise was at 3 PM according to our reckoning of time. Our Lord was the sacrifice of praise on Golgotha on Good Friday. It was His prayer for the salvation of us on the cross. As the Passover lamb was sacrificed, so was our Lord.

This time was made exclusive in Judaism and by Jesus the Christ. It would be good if we prayed each day at that time. It would be so simple to set one of those hundreds of alarms we have on our watches and phones to 3 PM and remember when it goes off to say a prayer of thanksgiving and praise to God. One example is the opening of the Tropar of feasts of the Holy Cross: "O Lord, save Your people and bless Your inheritance. Grant victory to true-believing Christians over their adversaries." There are many phrases that you can lift from the Divine Liturgy to use as that short prayer every day at 3 o'clock.



As we go through our day, it should be comforting that our priest is praying for us and for our salvation. Paying bills is beneficial, but when we are on our death bed, we are not going to wonder if we should have

spent more time at work, but rather when we open our eyes, will we see those we love. We want to be with them. They have been praying for us at the awesome judgment seat of Christ, and we will join them

in their joyful prayers.

As you know, praying is difficult, so say one for your priest as he says one for you.

Fr Jonathan Morse

Webinar Series Continues

April 1

May 6, 13, 20



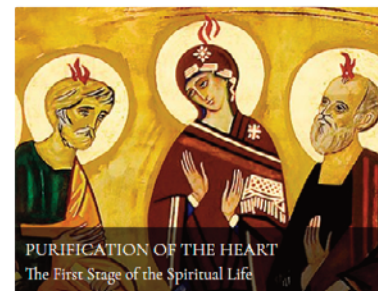
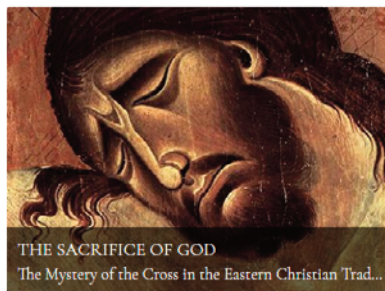
With April in the throes of Great Lent and the normally scheduled services of Great and Holy Week and then the Glorious Resurrection occupying the timely celebration, there was only one webinar presented by God With Us Online.

Fittingly the presentation by Fr Stephen Freeman addressed the Sacrifice of Christ on the Cross. This pivotal point of Salvation History was studied in several aspects designed to enhance the deep meaning of this august event as much as possible in the short time allotted.

Fr brought to the fore some of the misunderstanding about who Christ is on the part of many—Christians and non-Christians alike. The central event of Christ's lifetime on Earth has to be understood in relationship to our belief in the Trinity. With authentic understanding of Eastern Christianity (expressed in the anaphoras of St John Chrysostom and St Basil) the union and communion are integral to understanding the rationale even for the Incarnation—and all that follows.

An important theme of the presentation included the concept of sin as a deviation from the nature of being made good to missing the mark or losing the concept of seeking true Being.

Rather than moving toward God, sinfulness attacks the unity and in-



tegrity of who we are. This is a symptom of our loss of balance that needs to be reinstated. We are prone to die the death due to us as mortals. When we appreciate the innocence of children and the path taken as aging happens, “atonement” needs to be appreciated as a rescue from death. Pascha is a real passover in many of the aspects recounted in both the testaments with which we are familiar.

Viewing the icon with Jesus pulling Adam and Eve from the depths into the heights of rebirth emphasizes that what we are is coming into being what He is.

God is in control.

For this month of May three sessions are devoted to the topic of “purification of the heart” as a way of understanding a process to appreciate our real relationship with God and others. Recall the two commandments of Christ: Love God;

love others.

Subscribe to the May, June webinars: EasternCatholic.org; see archived webinars there, as well.



Sisters of St. Basil Make Masks for Healthcare Workers during Pandemic

The Sisters of the Order of Saint Basil the Great might be handling the COVID-19 quarantine better than most—they are monastics after all. Yet even their timeless regime of prayer and ministry was altered by the pandemic. Most of the Motherhouse at Fox Chase is quieter than usual save for one room full of activity. There the Sisters engage in what has quickly become an essential craft: producing masks for healthcare workers.

Sr. Teodora sits at a sewing machine where she turns rolls of fabric and lace into today's hottest commodity. Beautiful abstract and floral prints take shape and in turn are neatly ironed and stacked by Sr. Olha. Now they are ready to ship, but rather than Amazon Prime customers these masks will be received by nearby Holy Redeemer Hospital. The project was a spontaneous initiative conceived during Holy Week but involves two much older elements of the Sisters'



identity.

First, for the task of making masks the Sisters draw from the rich tradition of sewing and embroidery handed down for generations in Ukraine and later throughout the world. Second, their involvement in healthcare dates back to Basil of Caesarea himself, whose monastic foundation in fourth century Asia Minor helped address medical needs of the poor. Thus, it is fitting that today Sisters of Saint Basil combined textile handwork of Ukrainian culture with their Order's dedication to the sick.

The mission of the Sisters of Saint Basil is to bring about the praying, healing, and life-giving presence of Christ. Once social distancing made this difficult to do in person, they found another way, one responding directly to the needs of our time.

Sean McLaughlin, Director Basilian Spirituality Center
Photos: Sr Ann Lasczok

Longing for the Truth Is what Makes Us Free

First part of a serialized feature on *New Star*

Introduction

The signatories to this document are Christians, faithful of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, the Roman Catholic Church in Ukraine, the Association of Missionary Churches of Evangelical Christians of Ukraine, and the Council of Independent Evangelical Churches of Ukraine. We love our Churches and remain true to their traditions. At the same time, we love our Kyivan land of our fathers, and we hear the approach of the Great Serpent as he seeks to deceive and dominate. This has prompted us to express our concerns and seek consensus across Ukraine.

The Church of Christ has long believed that the Truth is not what, but Who, because Christ declared to the world: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me.” (Jn. 14:6). The Church also predicted that a world that breaks with Christ would also reject truth and fall into a fundamental ontological crisis. And in fact, the world is engulfed by spiritual crises and is losing the ability to distinguish between good and evil, truth and error.

But if Jesus is “the way, and the truth, and the life,” what are the effects of this relentless onslaught of deception? Christians desperately need a clear picture of what is happening, and actionable guidance to avoid the pernicious effects of fallacies and lies.

It was from our Churches that we have received the gift of baptism and the treasure of the Gospel. Our Churches exhort us to listen to God’s Word. This document is the fruit of our acceptance of God’s Word. The fullness of Truth is only with God, and our search inevitably bears the seal of human imperfection and limitations. Nevertheless, our search for truth comes from the bottom of our hearts.

Chapter I. The Truth as We See It Today

Ontological foundations of truth

Our world was created by God’s Word: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.” (Jn. 1:1-4). This is the world we love and where we want to live.

The devil invariably imitates God. “And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.” (2 Cor. 11:14). Satan’s word is false, and with his words of falsehood Satan creates his anti-world – the kingdom of error: “He [the devil] was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” (Jn. 8:44). This is a world that hates Christ, because Christ testifies against this world of wickedness (cf. Jn 7:7).

The Holy Fathers of the Church discovered the mystery of

God’s nature as the Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit [1]. Some other names of God are Love, Truth, and Mercy: “But thou, O Lord, art a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” (Ps. 86:15).

Since evil imitates good, it also adapts itself to divine nature, and therefore exists in a threefold fashion as well: Deception, Hatred and Violence. Evidence of evil can be seen in each of these manifestations. All three are interwoven in a single fabric.

Therefore, in our world, we perceive a kind of inescapable magnetic field in which people separate into those who choose good, and those who give in to evil.

For Christians, we repeat, truth is not in postulates or affirmations [2], but in the person of Christ Jesus: “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (Jn. 14:6). For Christians, truth is a living relationship, treating others as themselves, not merely an “idea” – because an “idea” all too quickly becomes an ideology. In fact, we find that even the truth that people suffered for (such as freedom or human rights) several decades ago has become ideologies, transformed into tools of persecution and discrimination.

Christianity teaches humility in the search for truth. Believers are called to live their lives in the light of the Second Coming of Christ. “We need the gift of discernment, in order somehow to anticipate, to become attuned to the judgment of God on human history” [3]. We might be wrong, and the tragic history of humanity teaches us that naive faith in one’s own “right” can lead to great evil and sorrow. The question is: Can we judge history before God’s final judgment? The answer is yes... and no. We can separate the truth from the error only by looking at reality through the “eyes of God”, remembering that wheat will be separated from chaff only on the day of the harvest (Mt. 13:24-44), and never forgetting that we are not the owners of God’s view. Truth is truly relative – but only in the sense that truth relates to God.

This understanding is shared even by non-believers. Scientists and activists fighting against violence and injustice understand that when someone responds with a reference to “relativity”, this is merely an attempt to escape responsibility or engage in manipulation.

The state of the world we live in

For the entire time the world has existed after the Fall, sinful deception has been present in the shadow of God’s Truth. Over time, propaganda machines have become more sophisticated, and the victory of lies has become more widespread. However, as time passed, Deception’s designs crumbled to dust. Humanity’s primary instrument in restoring the Truth was the ability of man to distinguish between good and evil, truth and error. And this implied the presence of the Light – the Divine Truth, since it is possible to recognize darkness only where there is light.

Today, in front of our eyes, the devil has tapped into this very ability, sowing confusion in the minds and souls of people. “In-

formation warfare is not about creating an alternate truth, but about eroding our basic ability to distinguish truth at all.” [4] The modern notion of good and evil is evolving, and the novelty of our current situation is that evil “hides itself from our eyes and avoids recognition of its very existence, of ‘what evil truly is” [5].

Today, factories of lies incorporate partially truthful information, with subtle distortions, thereby making the information plausible, but no less untrue. “Thus, the content, albeit groundless, acquires such a semblance of truth that even reputable denials are unlikely to cause it harm” [6]. This sort of information plays on an individual’s deep instincts and stereotypes, leading him to believe what he wants to believe.

Belief in distorted information becomes an act of faith, not a logical conclusion. Furthermore, logical and objective arguments regarding the falsehood of such information are perceived by the “zombie recipient” as an attempt to deceive and mislead. For instance, Eve believed that God wanted to conceal the ability to know good and evil (cf. Gen. 3:1-7), and we all know how that story ended.

Of course, it would be an exaggeration to claim that today lies are more concentrated than at any other time in history. The Holy Martyr Cyprian of Carthage wrote in the middle of the third century, comparing his era with apostolic times, where everyone lived with one heart and one soul: “And our unanimity has decreased, and active generosity has shrunk. [...] The Lord must have been referring to our time when he said in his Gospel, ‘when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?’ (Luke 18:8). We see this coming true. The belief in the fear of God, in the law of justice, in love and work has disappeared” [7].

We must, nonetheless, avoid exaggerations, because longing for truth is not a longing for the past and condemnation of the present. Indeed, some Christian communities often present themselves as defenders of tradition, preachers of the ontological superiority of what came before. This often translates into a rejection of change, innovation, and modernity. However, Christ was crucified not by relativistic postmodernists, but by defenders of tradition. The devil became the prince of this world (cf. Jn. 12:31; 14:30–31; 16:7–11) long before the French or Russian revolutions, twentieth-century totalitarianism, or aggressive contemporary godlessness.

Propaganda is as old as our world, and Soviet ideological tales were no “truer” than their modern Russian versions. Gregory of Nyssa wrote about the evil that is attracted to the image of good (“nature seems to be mixed: it has a kind of hidden destruction, as if it were some hidden deception, and by its deceptive appearance it pretends to be some kind of good”) [8]. We find the same in Thomas Aquinas (*malum sub ratione boni* – “evil under the guise of good”) [9].

However, each era brings its own peculiarities, and the present time, which is commonly known as the post-truth era, has brought at least one radical change: “Fake news is not quite post-truth. Because when you lie, you still demand a certain level of truth... But post-truth does not make any arguments at all. Its main char-

acteristic is not that it is a lie, not that it is a fake, but that it is a complete indifference to the truth” [10].

“In general, this is even more fraught, because when you have destroyed the distinguishing criteria between truth and error, when you don’t care how they differ, the most important thing is a beautiful story... ‘Truth’ (reaching agreement among the majority) becomes more important than ‘verity’ (correspondence to reality)” [10].

In the Ukrainian context, the situation is amplified by another fundamental fact. There is an important distinction between the Western usage of the concept of “post-truth” and its Slavic counterpart. For us, since the first code of laws of the times of Yaroslav the Wise, “truth” for us means, in addition to *veritas*, also “law” (in Slavic languages, these words originate from the same root, as do “justice” and even “duty”). Western discussion of the rejection of truth/*veritas* does not imply rejection of law/*jus*. But for us, “post-truth” is synonymous with “lawlessness”, “post-law” and “post-justice”. Following this path destroys the essence and institutional foundations of our society. Therefore, the damage extends to the area of the rule of law, which is already weak. Since the time of Shevchenko and Drahomanov, the memory of the biblical connection between truth and justice has been the of our culture. Forgetting this connection would be a dangerous virus for our society [11].

The confusion caused by an inability to distinguish between truth and error is a great temptation for the enemy. Powerful institutions dedicate huge budgets to consciously mixing truth and falsehood. As soon as a promising phenomenon emerges, the forces of evil instantly discredit it with mendacious publicity or by creating a parallel, evil twin to disorient and confuse. Therefore, our times are characterized by an active offensive of evil, the goal of which is simple: to create disorder. After all, when you are surrounded by a hodgepodge of good and evil, which victory should we fight for? And who can people rely on?

These manipulations distort the information space beyond all recognition, leading people to sacrifice their lives for what they believe to be true, although in fact, it is not the truth they die for. Many people have lost both direction and perspective. Consciousness as such is destroyed – and as a result, the personal and socio-political life of people is being destroyed as well.

“Today, many of those at the highest levels of power see the plain truth as a threat. They fear it. They deny it. And they attack it — just as the communists once did. And so here we are, in the midst of an epidemic of dishonesty, and an endless barrage of lies.” [12] Twenty years ago, a political leader, caught in a blunt lie, would immediately resign and be permanently discredited. Today, lies increasingly guarantee political success and electoral profit, and politicians who have practiced it have buried their spirit and feel no guilt. Moreover, even developed democracies are becoming insensitive to outright lies. Jeremiah’s words are truly prophetic: “An appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land: the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule at their

direction; my people love to have it so” (Jer. 5:30-31)!

The situation has advanced far beyond private life. In an environment of omnipotent lies, it becomes impossible to effectively carry out functions of the state. Decisions by governments or voters based on skillfully distorted information are incorrect, because they are not based on a real situation. In the eyes of the elites, the light of truth grows dim, and this light does not accurately distinguish the line between good and evil: it is impossible to distinguish stains in the darkness. As a result, societies accumulate more and more error, increasing internecine and international mistrust, which could eventually lead to a huge mistake, such as a new world war.

This threat is quite real. Lowering the threshold for practicing lies inevitably leads to lowering the threshold for using hate speech. Hence lies are difficult to overcome with logical arguments, because they are reinforced by a hatred against which logic is powerless. Lying and hatred are an impetus to violence, and together, they constantly push humanity into the abyss.

Signatories

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The Year of Three Popes and the Year of Three Metropolitan

There was a time when the papacy was in confusion. **The Avignon papacy:** the Roman Catholic papacy during the period 1309–1376, the popes took up residence at Avignon, France, instead of at Rome, because of political conditions. When, in 1376 Pope Gregory XI moved back to Rome, there was a succession of illegitimate Avignon popes. This is sometimes referred to as the Western Schism. The schism ended in 1417 at the *Council of Constance*, when rival popes finally disappeared.

This cataclysmic situation no longer exists in the papacy. Yet,



we do have two popes—one *emeritus* and one active. These historic rarities have cropped up in recent history because of the post-Vatican II canonical changes in episcopal retirements. These retirements allow those who can no longer fulfill their duties to retire in dignity and allow for new pastors to exercise their evangelical ministry.

A **year of three popes**, is a common reference to a year when the College of Cardinals of the Catholic Church elected two new popes within the same calendar year. Such a year generally occurs when a newly-elected pope dies or resigns very early into his papacy. This results in the Catholic Church being led by three different popes during the same calendar year. In one instance, 1276 was a year of four popes.

There have been 13 instances in which three or more popes have held office in a given calendar year. The most recent instance of a year of three popes occurred in 1978. The three popes involved were:

St. Paul VI, was elected June 21, 1963 and died August 6, 1978. **John Paul I**, was elected August 26, 1978 and died thirty-three days later, September 28, 1978. **St. John Paul II**, was elected October 16, 1978 and held the position until his death 26 years, 5 months, and 18 days late: April 2, 2005.

It is slightly different with regards to the Metropolitan See of Philadelphia. In the Ukrainian Catholic Church in 2019 we had **Three Metropolitan** for the See of Philadelphia. This had never occurred in the history of the Ukrainian Catholic Church. There

was a time when each of the three Eparchies and the Archeparchy of Philadelphia (2006–2013) had at least one active and one bishop emeritus: *Stamford:* +Paul Chomnycky OSBM, (appointed 2006) and +Basil H. Losten (retired 2006); *Chicago:* +Michael Wiwchar, CSSR, (appointed 1993, transferred 2000); +Richard Seminack (appointed 2003, died 2016) and +Innocent Lotocky OSBM, (retired, 1993, died 2013); *Parma:* +John Bura (2009-2014, Administrator) and +Robert Moskal (retired 2009); *Philadelphia:* +Borys Gudziak, (appointed 2019) and +Stephen Sulyk (retired 2000, died 2020) and +Stefan Soroka (retired 2019).

The Year 2019 was different. Bishop Borys Gudziak was nominated as the Metropolitan of Philadelphia on February 19, 2019 and solemnly enthroned on June 4, 2019. When this happened, **2019 and 2020 became the years of three metropolitans.** Metropolitan *emeritus* Stephen Sulyk, Metropolitan *emeritus* Stefan Soroka and Metropolitan-Archbishop Borys Gudziak were the three Metropolitans living in the same Metropolitan See.



This was the first time in the more than one-thousand-year history of the Ukrainian Catholic Church that there were three metropolitans of the same Metropolitan See at the same time. This promises to be a paradigm for the future. We will continue to have not simply active but also retired bishops who could be a source of great creativity and service to the Church. It would be good to make use of this reservoir of experience for the good of the Gospel.

With the passing of Metropolitan *emeritus* Sulyk in 2020 this special configuration of three Metropolitans comes to an end. It is however, an appropriate time to remember and pray for our retired bishops. These are men who continue to give generously of themselves for the good of the Church. May the Lord God grant eternal memory to Metropolitan Emeritus Sulyk. He was one of three but he was also one of a kind in his service to the Church.

By Rev. Dr. Ivan Kaszczak

Coronavirus Sequestration and Church Synods and Common Sense

Due to the various restrictions imposed on travel, and allowable numbers of people gathering together, it is apparent that international air travel, availability of accommodation for lodging and dining have been impacted. It has become necessary to postpone the planned Patriarchal Sobor, as well as the Eparchial Sobor. With uncertain estimates when the circumstances will improve, no specific date has been chosen. As events unfold, ample notification will be made.

Many people find biblical topics interesting—believers and non-believers alike. Many “believers” are somewhat handicapped if they have no baseline to be able to discern correct from incorrect interpretation. The Internet has no qualms about proffering opinions masked as “Gospel truth” yet sometimes misleading. The information below presents a viewpoint that is not without merit, even if some of the terminology might not be as precise as possible. In reading it, keep in mind that the reference to the “Apocolypse of James” is known to us as “The Protoevangelium of James”, an ancient (ca AD 150) text that contains many details our Church has used particularly in details about the feast days celebrating the Nativity, Presentation into the Temple and the Dormition of Mary, Mother of God. Other portions of the Protoevangelium are not accepted as orthodox Catholic teaching, and have not found their way into liturgical texts. That which follows notes some valid points.

When Professors Pored Through Ancient Texts in Oxford, They Made a Huge Discovery about Jesus

Biblical scholars Dr. Dirk Obbink and Professor Geoffrey Smith are hard at work investigating ancient fragments of scripture in a library at the University of Oxford in England. And one particular text stands out during the course of their efforts – a piece of text which they first believe to be a “lost Gospel” of the New Testament. Soon, however, Smith will discover that it’s an original copy of the heretical First Apocalypse of James – an account of Jesus’ lessons to his brother.

The text is written in Greek and believed to date back over 1,500 years. Indeed, it’s undoubtedly a tantalizing find. That’s because it is the first such text to have been discovered in Greek – the language in which the story was originally composed.

Obbink and Smith are from the University of Texas at Austin, and what they discovered is of great importance. Not only does this rare document bear text in the Greek language, but it also appears to detail teachings that Jesus gave to his brother. And the theological implications of this could prove to be significant.

But first let’s consider the notion that Jesus actually had a sibling. After all, this might not be known by everyone. Yet the New Testament does, in fact, refer to “brothers” of Jesus. These are Simon, Judas, Joseph and James. The scripture also alludes to “sisters” – though these are never referred to by name.

However, a number of Christian denominations including Assyrians, Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox church believe in the so-called perpetual virginity of Jesus’ mother Mary. So according to these branches of the faith, the Son of God can’t have had any biological brothers or sisters.

Those described as siblings of Jesus might have actually been something else. For instance, they could have been children of Jesus’ father Joseph from a former marriage. Or they alternatively might have been nephews of Joseph or Mary.

All of this confusion might simply have arisen as a result of poor translation throughout the centuries, however. That’s because the words in the New Testament which have come to be seen as “brother” and “sister” actually mean a variety of things

in the different Semitic tongues. So, it might simply be the case that we’ve misinterpreted things.

But the fact that brothers and sisters were referenced at all suggests that these individuals had a particularly close relationship with Jesus. Whether or not they were actual siblings or not doesn’t change this. In fact, some experts have posited that these people were important figures of early Christianity.

A figure known as James the Just was a so-called “brother” of Jesus – as stated within the New Testament. The former appears to have been an influential person within early Christian circles. And that’s the case whether he was a brother, half-sibling, a cousin or merely a close associate of Jesus.


James’ significant status within Christianity arises from his involvement within the Jerusalem Church. The city was apparently the site of the first ever church dedicated to the Christian faith, according to the *Catholic Encyclopedia* and the Book of Acts. And James was said to be a leader at this fledgling religious institution.

James’ importance is thought to have increased when his namesake and fellow Christian the Apostle St. James, son of Zebedee, was killed. This act of violence apparently occurred at the will of King Herod Agrippa I of Judea. Saint Peter also left Jerusalem – meaning that James now had particularly central status.

The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church states that James was “from an early date, with Peter, a leader of the Church at Jerusalem. And from the time when [he] left Jerusalem after Herod Agrippa’s attempt to kill him, James appears as the principal authority who presided at the Council of Jerusalem.

Details of James also crop up within a variety of biblical sources including the Gospels of Luke, Mark and Matthew. James is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles and the Pauline epistles, too. Furthermore, he is also alluded to in Jerome and Eusebius.





The leader of the Jerusalem Church plays a critical role in the First Apocalypse of James – which is believed to be a section of the New Testament apocrypha. These are a collection of texts related to Jesus and his apostles which are said to have been composed during Christianity’s beginnings.

Certain parts of the New Testament apocrypha were once touted as being true Christian scripture. However, from about the fifth century onward, a more limited range of Biblical stories were largely accepted within the religion. As such, many of the faith’s major branches don’t regard the apocrypha as official Bible texts.

The New Testament apocryphal writings were, in fact, believed to be heretical. This term relates to religious ideas and points of view which exist in contradiction to the agreed consensus. And a person who stands by such nonconformist beliefs could be labeled as a heretic

Interestingly, there is a simple reason why the New Testament apocryphal texts are said to be heretical. A man named Athanasius the Great – who served as the 20th bishop of Alexandria for a period during the fourth century A.D. – didn’t consider them to be official doctrine.

Athanasius is believed to have chosen the 27 books of the New Testament which are still being used in the present day. In fact, he penned a letter in the year 367 which set out this rule, writing, “No one may add to them, and nothing may be taken away from them.”

Before Athanasius’ ruling, debate had raged about what was an official part of the New Testament and what would be omitted. If nothing else, this helps to illustrate the various ways in which Christian teachings can be understood. It’s not quite as simple as reading today’s version of the New Testament

Broadly speaking, the texts related to Jesus which were largely believed to be the earliest ones were included within the New Testament. The others, meanwhile, were designated as being “apocryphal” – and they were often prevented from reaching the masses. Over time, these narratives were suppressed and they now exist only as incomplete documents.

As many of us know, the New Testament is much smaller than the Old Testament. And the four official gospels that were included within the New Testament canon tend to ignore the younger years of Jesus’ life. Yet information on this period can be found in other texts which weren’t officially accepted by Christian officials.

One specific text which doesn’t appear in today’s version of the New Testament is the First Apocalypse of James. This narrative focuses around conversations held between the book’s namesake and Jesus. Furthermore, as we’ll soon discover, the texts focus on ideas around the afterlife and visions of the future.

The First Apocalypse of James was actually uncovered in relatively recent times. In December 1945 a man named Mohammad Ali al-Samman found the text alongside 52 other

documents. Al-Samman made his discovery – which had been worded in Coptic – in a community in Egypt called Nag Hammadi. Another Coptic version of the script was later found, too.

In 2017, however, the text emerged from obscurity once more. This time, though, the work was in Greek – the language it was originally written in. It had been located at the University of Oxford within a collection of other texts known as the Oxyrhynchus Papyri. For reference, parts of this collection were uncovered during the 19th and 20th centuries.

Only around ten percent of Oxyrhynchus Papyri manuscripts are literary documents. Many of the other texts relate to taxes, trading or censuses. Most of the scripts were composed in Greek – though some were written in other languages such as Latin and Arabic.

Experts have been trying to put some order on the documents within the Oxyrhynchus Papyri since 1898. Over the years since, more than 5,000 have been worked through. Yet this number reportedly represents up to only two percent of the total works that need to be translated and sorted through. After all, many of the pieces of text are apparently no bigger than a single cornflake.

The scraps which bore the First Apocalypse of James in Greek were found in 2015 at the University of Oxford’s Sackler Library. And this was thanks to the tireless work of Dr. Dirk Obbink and Professor Geoffrey Smith – who had sifted through the texts


The document has been traced back to the fifth or sixth century A.D. And based on the manner with which it was written, the experts believe that it may have once been used for the purposes of teaching someone how to understand and compose the written word.

Brent Landau is one such specialist who agrees that the text may have been an educational document. The University of Texas at Austin Department of Religious Studies lecturer told UT News, “The scribe has divided most of the text into syllables by using mid-dots. Such divisions are very uncommon in ancient manuscripts, but they do show up frequently in manuscripts that were used in educational contexts.”

Landau went on to characterize the author of this Greek version of the First Apocalypse of James. Apparently, the teacher would likely have “had a particular affinity for the text.” Landau reached this conclusion based on the length of the writings. You see, most teachers would only have utilized a brief passage – whereas this document presented it in full.

Reflecting on the discovery he helped to make, Professor Smith told the University of Oxford’s website, “To say that we were excited once we realized what we’d found is an understatement. We never suspected that Greek fragments of the First Apocalypse of James [had] survived from antiquity. But there they were, right in front of us.”

But what exactly does the First Apocalypse of James actually deal with? Well, it details some of the lessons that Jesus suppos-





edly bestowed upon James. These include mentions of heaven, and there are some prophecies in the text, too. In fact, there's even a reference to James' own demise included in the text.

The account primarily takes the form of a discussion between Jesus and James. Furthermore, added to the bottom of the script is a section which vaguely alludes to James' fate. And though it's a little fragmented, it's believed to suggest that James will be crucified.

The initial section of the text alludes to James' worries about crucifixion. Then in later sections of the script, he receives "passwords." These are apparently given to James to allow him to overcome evil adversaries and get into heaven.

The account also has references to James himself – which tell us a little bit about who he might have been. According to the text, he was the leader of the Christian church in its initial stages. And his relationship to Jesus is made explicit when the latter says, "You are not my brother materially."

As we explored earlier, Professor Geoffrey Smith was one of the experts who had come across the ancient Greek text. And he elaborated on the importance of the narrative in an interview published on the University of Oxford's website. He said, "The text supplements the biblical account of Jesus' life and ministry by allowing us access to conversations that purportedly took place between Jesus and his brother, James – secret teachings that allowed James to be a good teacher after Jesus' death."

Dr Dirk Obbink, who had worked with Smith on the text, was thrilled by the discovery of this Greek version of the First Apocalypse of James. And he was especially interested in what the text teaches us about how readers engaged with these scriptures in the past.

Dr. Obbink told the University of Oxford that the writings "[show] how the early reading public interacted with different versions of the gospel. In the city centre of Oxyrhynchus [in Egypt], Greek-speaking elites read the Gospel of James in the original Greek – alongside our earliest surviving copies of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John."

Dr. Obbink went on to lay out how things were different for people who lived outside of urban centers. As he explained, "... In the rural countryside, at Nag Hammadi, it was the heretical Gospel of James that hermit monks chose to translate into Coptic for native Egyptian-speakers." So, people of the period apparently soaked up information in varying ways.

The discovery of this Greek-language section of the First Apocalypse of James was first announced in November 2017 at the Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting in Boston. But as for what lies down the line, Landau and Smith will be publishing their initial discoveries on the subject in the Greco Roman Memoirs section of the Oxyrhynchus Papyri.

From the Internet

His Beatitude Sviatoslav: *We learn in our spiritual life to distinguish the main from the secondary*

Today, the light of God's word and our faith tell us that even when we lose something, we get something new in return. This was the opinion expressed by Father and Head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, His Beatitude Sviatoslav during a program of Radio Maria.

The Primate recalled the apostles who had experienced the loss of their Lord, and consequently lost hope.

"Remember the Easter story of two disciples traveling to Emmaus. They left Jerusalem with a sense of total collapse. They did not know where to go and what to do. At that moment, Jesus Christ was

walking with them, but they were so busy with themselves and with their loss that they did not recognize him. Only at the moment of the Eucharist, when Christ took the bread, broke it, their eyes were opened," said the Head of the Church.

According to him, we, as disciples of Christ, are now experiencing a very similar situation. We are frightened, as all our ideas or stereotypes of the way of spending Easter holidays have shattered.

We learn in our spiritual life to distinguish the essential from the secondary. We learn to distinguish religious habits and customs from the nature and content of our faith. Christ has not left us today

in the midst of fear and disappointment. During a pandemic, we must find Him again, even in our homes. Christ is present in the temple, but He is also present at home, beside us," assured the Primate of the UGCC.

In his view, it is only in the Risen Christ that we must find the strength to overcome fear and the power to turn fear into joy.

"I want to wish everyone that this Easter we use the opportunity to rediscover the living resurrected Savior next to us," .

The UGCC Department for Information

Christ Is Risen! Indeed He Is Risen!

Ascension Thursday

We extol You, O Christ, the Giver of life, and we glorify Your divine ascension in Your most pure body to heaven.

(Exaltation at Matins)

The Feast of the Ascension of Our Lord in the Byzantine Tradition is one of the Twelve Great Feasts during which we commemorate the completion of Christ's work of our salvation, the glorious entry of our Lord in His human nature into heaven, as well as His pledge of our own glorification with Him.

1. The Feast of the Ascension is celebrated on the fortieth day after Easter Sunday, since in the Scripture we read that Jesus, after His glorious resurrection, continued to appear to His disciples for "forty days," talking to them about the "kingdom of God." On the fortieth day our Lord took His disciples to the summit of the Mount of Olives, wherefrom He ascended to His heavenly glory as predicted by the Prophet Zechariah: "On that day His feet shall rest upon the Mount of Olives, which is opposite Jerusalem to the east." (14 :4).

After reminding His disciples not to leave Jerusalem until the coming of the Holy Spirit, Whom He promised to send, our Lord "raised His hands and blessed them. As He blessed them, He parted from them and was taken up to heaven." (Lk. 24:50-51)

In the Acts of the Apostles we read that the disciples were looking on as Jesus Christ was lifted up but then, "a cloud took Him from their sight." (Acts 1 :9) Thus the promise Jesus gave to the Jews, that they "shall see the Son of Man ascend to where He was before" (In. 6:62), was literally fulfilled. Our Lord indeed was "taken up in glory." (1 Tim. 3:16)

2. The testimony of Christ's glorious ascension into heaven is not only found in the Scriptures but is also supported by historical monuments. According to the testimony of Eusebius of Caesarea (d. 339), St. Helena, the mother of the Emperor Constantine, "raised a stately structure on the Mount of Olives in memory of the Ascension to heaven of Him, Who is the Savior of mankind, by erecting a sacred temple on the very summit of the mountain." (*et. Eusebius, Life of Constantine, b. III, ch. 43*).

Unfortunately this memorial basilica on the Mount of Olives was destroyed by the Persians in 614. It was again rebuilt in the eight century only to be destroyed once again by the infidels. In the twelfth century the Crusaders undertook the task of rebuilding the basilica, but before they were able to finish the construction it was once more destroyed by the Saracenes, never to be rebuilt again. The only thing that remains to the present time is a small oc-



A bright cloud accompanies each Theophany or divine appearance. At the Ascension, Christ disappears in a cloud and the angels tell the apostles that He will return the same way for His Second Coming.

The cloud is a Mandorla. It consists of concentric circles that become darker and darker as they get closer to Christ. This shows the reality that the closer one gets to Mystery, the less one really understands.

From the cloud, Christ blesses the Apostles and Mary. Even though He is Ascending to heaven, His blessing remains with us forever. In His left hand, He holds a scroll which represents His teachings.

Mary is in the center of the Apostles. Her hands are raised in prayer in the ancient form called 'orans'. This gesture indicates Mary's role as intercessor on our behalf before her Son. A straight line from the Ascended Christ to Mary can be drawn to connect heaven with earth.

The group of Apostles with Mary, the Mother of God, represents the Church. St. Paul appears with the Apostles although he would not have been present. This shows that the Church of the future also participates in this event.

The hills in the background, the movement of the Angels, Mary's hands raised in prayer and the Apostles looking up give the icon the upward movement of the feast day.

Eparchy of Saskatoon (Icon and Text)

tagonal chapel, covering the exact spot from which, according to tradition, our Lord actually ascended into heaven.

Then we have testimony of St. Cyril of Jerusalem (d. 386), who in his catechetical instructions quotes Mount of Olives in witness of our Lord's Ascension, saying: "From heaven He descended to the earth in Bethlehem, but to heaven He ascended from the Mount of Olives. Mount of Olives stands to this day, displaying to the eyes of the faithful Him, Who ascended on the cloud. This is the heavenly gate of His ascension." (et. his *Catechetical Lectures* XIV, 23). Then again he refers to the Mount of Olives as to that "holy mountain from which Christ ascended to His Father." (*Ibid.*, X, 19)

3. The observance of the Ascension feast is of great antiquity. St. Augustine (d. 430) does not hesitate to admit that the feast is of apostolic origin. (et. his *Epistle to Januarius*, n. 118). But in truth we do not have any historical evidence of its celebration as a separate feast until the end of the fourth century.

Shortly thereafter the Holy Ascension was observed by the entire Church as a solemn feast in the East as well as in the West.

The Easter season originally lasted fifty days and ended on Pentecost Sunday. Since the Scriptures associate the descent of the Holy Spirit with the glorious Ascension of our Lord into heaven, up to the middle of the fourth century the mystery of the ascension was commemorated on Pentecost. This is the reason why Church historian, Eusebius of Caesarea (d. 339), testifies that the holy and glorious solemnity of Easter ended after "a period of seven weeks and is being sealed with the great festival of Pentecost on which, according to the Holy Scriptures, the Ascension of our Savior into heaven and the descent of the Holy Spirit among men had taken place." (cf. *Life of Constantine IV*. 64).

4. At the end of the fourth century the Ascension began to be celebrated as a distinct festival, separately from Pentecost. It was then that the Easter season was abbreviated to forty days as indicated in the Acts of the Apostles. According to the Acts, Jesus, after His glorious resurrection, continued to appear to His disciples "for forty days, speaking to them about the kingdom of God." (Acts 1 :3)

The remaining ten days before Pentecost were then dedicated to the expectation of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1 :14). Thus in about 380 A.D. the famous Spanish pilgrim to the Holy Land, Egeria, tells us that in Jerusalem the Ascension was still commemorated on Pentecost Sunday afternoon with a solemn procession to the Mount of Olives, "to the place from which our Lord ascended into heaven."

On that occasion some " passages of the Scriptures were read, hymns, interspersed by prayers, were chanted, and the proper antiphons were also intoned." (cf. Egeria, *Diary of a Pilgrimage*, chapter 43).

But in Bethlehem, according to the testimony of the same Egeria, they already celebrated the Holy Ascension on the fortieth day after Easter, that is on the Thursday of the sixth week. (*Ibid.*, ch. 42)

There the feast of the Ascension was celebrated with solemn festivity, being preceded by a vigil (Itia). Thus, at the end of the fourth

century, the Ascension already started to be celebrated separately and, eventually, it became one of the most solemn feasts of the liturgical calendar with its own vigil and post-period of eight days.

The oldest homilies for the feast of the Ascension, celebrated already on the fortieth day after Easter, were delivered by St. Gregory of Nyssa (d. 394) and St. John Chrysostom (d. 407). St. Gregory calls the day "upon which the Lord was taken up from us" – the Salvation, suggesting that, by the ascension into His heavenly glory, Our Lord completed the work of our salvation. (ef. Migne, *Greek Patrology*, vol. 46, coil. 689-690) And St. John Chrysostom talks about the feast as well-established and universal. (*Ibid.*, vol. 50, coil. 441-452) Thus at the end of the fourth or at the beginning of the fifth century the *Apostolic Constitutions* (V, 19) laid down the following rule:

"Count forty days from the first Day of the Lord (meaning Easter) until the fifth day (Thursday) of the sixth week, and celebrate the Feast of the Ascension of the Lord, since on that day He completed all the dispensation and all His work of salvation, and returned to God the Father Who sent Him, and is seated at the right hand of the Father." (Book V, Chapter 19).

The celebration of the Ascension was always connected with a procession. Thus in Jerusalem, as testified by the pilgrim Egeria, the faithful walked in procession to the top of the Mount of Olives. In Antioch, Syria, the people went in procession to the suburban church in Romanesia, where St. John Chrysostom delivered his famous sermon, On the Ascension of Our Lord. In Constantinople the faithful, according to the testimony of the Church historian Socrates Scholasticus (died after 439 A.D.), used to come together and celebrate the feast in the church of Elaea, just across the harbor of the city (ef. Socrates, *The Eccles. History* VII, 26). These processions just enhanced the solemnity of the celebration of the feast.

6. The solemnity of the feast was greatly increased by inspired hymnographers, whose names are mostly unknown to us. The oldest hymn, "You were born, our God"* , originally was chanted at Pentecost. But sometime in the fifth century, when the Ascension started to be celebrated as a distinct feastday, this stichera was transferred to the Ascension.

The author of the troparion for the feast is unknown, but the kontakion is generally ascribed to the renowned hymnwriter of the sixth century, St. Romanus the Melodist. There are two Canons for the celebration of the Matins. The first was composed by St. John Damascene (d. 749), the famous hymnographer of St. Sabbas Monastery near Jerusalem. The other is ascribed to the monk of the renowned Studion Monastery in Constantinople, St. Joseph Studite (d. 832), who was persecuted for the veneration of holy icons.

The liturgical hymns for the feast of the Ascension were inspired by Sacred Scripture and by sermons of the prominent Fathers of the Church. They describe in detail not only the Ascension and glorification of our Lord with His human nature in heaven, but also our own glorification together with Jesus. By His glorious ascension our Lord Jesus Christ completed the work of our redemption and reopened the gates of heaven to the whole human race, as

attested by St. John Chrysostom: “And now we, who before were considered unfit to dwell even upon the earth, are being raised up to heaven, ascending with Christ to the heavenly kingdom” (et. his Homily on the Ascension, 1).

7. Our Lord and Savior, even though He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father, nevertheless did not forget us. He is, as He said He would, preparing “a place in His Father’s house” for us. (In. 14:2-3) And He promised to send to us the Holy Spirit, who will enlighten and guide us into our heavenly abode prepared by Christ. Therefore the Church, through one of the festive sticheras, is inviting us :

“Come you, O faithful, and let us climb the Mount of Olives and with the Apostles let us lift up our minds and our hearts on high.

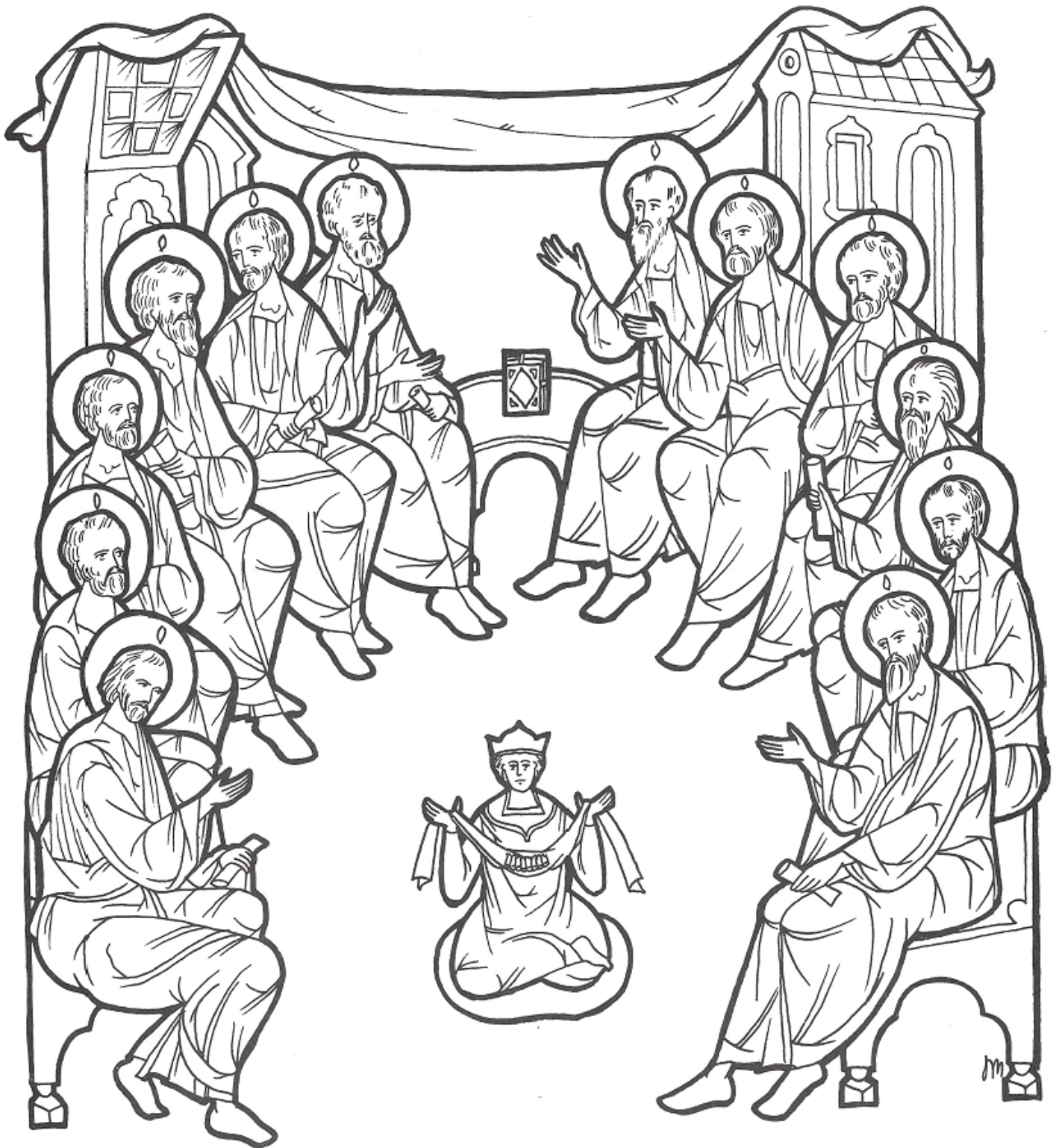
Let us behold our Lord as He is taken up to heaven and let us cry out with joy and gratitude : Glory to Your ascension, O most merciful One.” (*Vespers Hymn*)

*THE OLDEST ASCENSION HYMN

You were born, our God, in a manner of Your own choosing. You appeared and suffered in the flesh as You willed. Through Your resurrection You conquered death and ascended into glory, fulfilling all things; You sent down the divine Spirit upon us, therefore in songs we praise Your divinity.

Byzantine Leaflet Series





Pentecost happened fifty days after Pascha. But in reality it did not happen just once. Every time someone professes to follow Christ—as is promised at Baptism and Chrismation—Pentecost happens again, personally, to an ever-growing band of “apostles” (one who is sent, *like a letter*) to bring the message of God to the world. In a way we are “Pentecostal”. See a teaching/learning activity, on page 20.

BULLETIN BOARD

UNDER CONSTRUCTION COMING SOON

Now that our parish is "Vibrant" ...

THE VIBRANT PARISH
A PLACE TO DISCOVER THE LIVING CHRIST

"Bulletin Board" has offered suggestions on how to have a **Vibrant Parish**, an initiative of His Beatitude as a process to rejuvenate parish life by the year 2020. A new ten-year project is about to be undertaken to project a view of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church worldwide by the year 2030.

Maybe, Maybe not...

This photo has "gone viral"...



But we all know... The "fullness of our Church" in the prayer behind the ambo refers not to full pews, but the totality of its teaching—tenets, morality, spirituality—guiding the people.

Making a Difference

Even now, as the coronavirus (COVID-19) continues to attack humanity, so many human beings continue to fight each other.

Challenging this terrible reality, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres issued a heartfelt appeal for a global ceasefire. Inspiringly he said, "Our world faces a common enemy: COVID-19. The virus does not care about nationality or ethnicity, faction or faith. It attacks all, relentlessly.

"Meanwhile, armed conflict rages on around the world. The most vulnerable – women and children, people with disabilities, the marginalized and the displaced – pay the highest price. They are also at the highest risk of suffering devastating losses from COVID-19. Let's not forget that in war-ravaged countries, health systems have collapsed. ...

"It is time to put armed conflict on lockdown and focus together on the true fight of our lives."

Then in prophetic-like speech, Guterres boldly declared, "To warring parties, I say: Pull back from hostilities. Put aside mistrust and animosity. Silence the guns; stop the artillery; end the airstrikes."

He pleaded, "End the sickness of war and fight the disease that is ravaging our world. It starts by stopping the fighting everywhere. Now. That is what our human family needs, now more than ever"

Can we all say "Amen!" to that?

Fight the Coronavirus, Not Each Other!

Endorsing the Secretary-General's appeal Pope Francis said, "I join all those that have listened to this appeal and I invite all to follow it up, halting all forms of warlike hostility."

The Holy Father added that he hoped that the joint commitment against the coronavirus pandemic, would help all of us to recognize our need to strengthen fraternal bonds as members of one human family. In particular, "may it awaken in nations' leaders and other parties involved a renewed commitment to overcome rivalries.

Then in prophetic boldness Pope Francis declared: "Conflicts aren't resolved through war! It is necessary to overcome antagonisms and oppositions through dialogue and a constructive search for peace."

In addition to praying for peace, we also need to tirelessly urge our political and corporate leaders to end the fighting and stop fueling wars.

Many governments are involved in armed conflicts. In its "war on terrorism" the U.S. is fighting or preparing to fight in 80 countries.

And countries like Russia, China, Italy, France, Germany, U. K., Israel—with the U.S. leading the way—are sinfully fueling the estimated 70 conflicts with death-dealing weapons. Highly lucrative American corporations like Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Raytheon, Northrop Grumman, and General

Dynamics, along with U. K.'s BAE Systems are the six largest arms manufacturers in the world.

Pope Francis teaches us that it is an absurd contradiction to speak of peace while also permitting or promoting the arms trade.

Furthermore, war and the arms trade are robbing money that could be used to fight the coronavirus and other human needs.

In his Easter Vigil homily, Pope Francis reminded us that we are all brothers and sisters, and that we should be singing the song of life! He pleaded: "Let us silence the cries of death, no more wars! May we stop the production and trade of weapons, since we need bread, not guns."

And then connecting the innocent lives lost in war to the innocent lives lost through abortion, the Holy Father pleaded, "Let the abortion and killing of innocent lives end. May the hearts of those who have enough be open to filling the empty hands of those who do not have the bare necessities"

So, please kindly help Catholic Relief Services protect and aid some of our poorest brothers and sisters against the coronavirus.



Tony Magliano

Tony Magliano is an internationally syndicated Catholic social justice and peace columnist. He is available to speak at diocesan or parish gatherings. Tony may be reached at tmag6@comcast.net.

Materials: Red and orange construction paper, tape, scissors, black marker.

- Using construction paper and tape, have your child make a headband about one inch wide.
- With help if needed, have your child cut out a flame-shaped "tongue of fire" from red or orange construction paper using the pattern below. The outer flame is one color and the inner flame another.
- On the flame, write the following words: **THEY WERE ALL FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT** (Acts 2:4.)
- Have children tape their flames the small one on top of the big one, to their headbands so the words show as you look at them.



Have someone read the story of the Descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles from The Acts of the Apostles before (or while) child(ren) prepare their own flame, representing their own reception of the gift of the Holy Spirit at Chrismation.



Use the actual-size template to form the flame to add to the head band. Cut the two colors and paste the smaller flame within the larger one, to look like the sample above. Print and color the icon (on page 18). Sing the tropar "Heavenly King, Advocate, Spirit of truth, Who are present and fill all things. Treasury of blessings, Bestower of Life, come and dwell within us, cleanse us of all that defiles us, and, O Good One, save our souls."

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