

# JOYFUL LIGHT

*Joyful Light is a semi-annual publication of the Byzantine Catholic Seminary of SS. Cyril and Methodius, 3605 Perrysville Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15214 (412) 321-8383 • www.byzcathsem.org • byzcathsem@verizon.net*

## *Seminary Self-Study Begins in Earnest*



*On May 11, 2005 a diverse and energetic group of people from all over the United States met for a full day of activity at the Byzantine Catholic Seminary in Pittsburgh, PA to begin the work of the Self-Study that will lead the seminary to accreditation by The Association of Theological Schools (ATS).*

“People from many disciplines with many talents were appointed by Metropolitan Basil to serve on the Seminary Self-Study committees,” said Dr. Betty Radvak

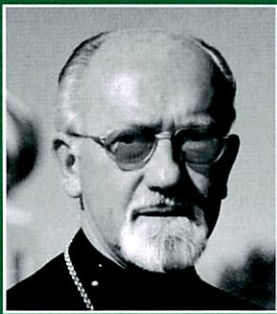
Shovlin, director of the Self-Study. “Their work over several years will involve evaluating every aspect of the programs at the seminary to point out already existing strengths and to identify areas needing improvements.”

The orientation meeting had three objectives, all dealing with “Getting to Know You”:

- 1) meeting each other for the first time;
- 2) becoming familiar with the faculty, programs and ancillary groups at the seminary;
- and 3) learning about the accreditation process and then actually beginning the work necessary to accreditation.

“I was extremely impressed with the energy and commitment of everyone,” Dr. Shovlin said. “Nearly everyone among the forty-six whom we invited was able to attend. I am certain after meeting and watching them begin to work that the seminary will benefit greatly in the Self-Study from their questioning, analysis and recommendations. They are special people willing to give of their time, talent, energy and wisdom so that the seminary will grow in excellence and become nationally recognized for its quality.”

# Rector's Message



The seminary is a gathering place of wonderful and talented people whom I am blessed to associate with through the gift of God. In these pages, you will read about some of them. For example, Sr. Margaret Ann Andrako is a dedicated and skilled individual who has taught us the meaning of organization. Fr. Robert Pipta is a former seminarian who has brought insights and special gifts to the seminary Advisory Council. Fr. Tom Wesdock, also a former student, continues to distinguish himself and to reflect well on the seminary's educational program. And, Dr. Betty Radvak-Shovlin and her Self-Study group amaze us with their talents and focus.

Every day I thank God for bringing us people like those featured here and also for people like you, our donors, who continually help us through your prayers and support to successfully serve God's purpose.

*Father John G. Petro, Rector*

## *Sister Margaret Ann the Seminary's "Go-To" Person*

*She's the "Go-To" person at the seminary. When students, faculty or staff need to find anything or need answers to questions, they go to Sr. Margaret Ann Andrako, administrative assistant at the seminary.*

"Every organization has its most efficient, organized person," Fr. John G. Petro, seminary rector said, "and Sr. Margaret Ann is ours. But, she is not only gifted with many administrative skills, she is a thoughtful and genuinely warm and caring individual. I don't know what we'd do without her."

Sr. Margaret Ann joined the seminary staff in August 1995, having finished five years of service on the provincial administration for her community, the Sisters of St. Basil the Great in Uniontown, PA.

"It was the first time a woman would work in an administrative position at the seminary," Sr. Margaret Ann remembered. "Fr. John also wanted a feminine presence in the formation of the students. We both thought it would be a part time job. We were sure fooled!"

Indeed, Sr. Margaret Ann has more than a full time job. She works long hours with duties such as: paying the seminary's bills, arranging its daily and monthly schedules, keeping seminary records, maintaining the data base for donors and sending letters of gratitude, serving as liaison for food service and doing the many unheralded tasks that must be done.

"We have come to depend on Sr. Margaret Ann for so many things," Fr. John said, "but now, with our push for accreditation, we have depended on her even more. She has been under tremendous pressure with this extra layer of responsibility, but she has handled it with grace."

Dr. Betty Radvak-Shovlin, chair of the seminary Advisory Council and director of the seminary's Self-Study, said, "Sr. Margaret Ann's contributions to any project at the seminary are enormous. Quietly, and always with an expectation for quality, she goes about assisting in countless ways. She has the remarkable ability to work with several major projects simultaneously and know all of the details of each. Nothing is ever too much to ask of her. In fact, she anticipates need and provides for it. She is a creative and competent person who adds to any program or role with which she is associated."

She was born in Grove City, PA, but raised in Bradenville, PA, and Maple Heights, OH, along with her two brothers, Tom and Michael. Sr. Margaret Ann entered the convent in 1963 and made final profession in 1971. Over the years she taught elementary school, worked in religious education in both the Pittsburgh Archeparchy and the Passaic Eparchy, eparchial administration in Van Nuys and directed the Retreat Center of her province in Uniontown for five years.



Sister Margaret Ann Andrako

"I have had a variety of ministries in my life," she said, "and I grew into each one of them. I did what had to be done."

That she has accomplished much, and is the center of seminary activity, cannot be disputed. "It's very quiet in the seminary when she's not here," Fr. John said. "She keeps all the other offices humming."

For Sr. Margaret Ann, it's part of the joy of life. "It is exciting to be part of the seminary which is becoming a Center of Learning for our church. God has blessed us with a talented faculty, enthusiastic students and dedicated staff and volunteers. Who would not want to be part of that?"

## Fr. Robert Pipta Lives a Life of Discipline



Fr. Robert Pipta

When asked who most influenced his life, Fr. Robert Pipta, pastor of Holy Angels Byzantine Catholic Church in San Diego, CA, and member of the seminary Advisory Council, unhesitatingly answered, “My father. He raised me in the faith and he taught me discipline.”

Fr. Robert, who describes himself as “an orderly person,” knows well that the words discipline and disciple share a common Latin root and that those who follow Jesus Christ do so as disciples who have accepted the discipline necessary to transform their lives.

This “orderly” side of Fr. Robert should not, however, suggest a stiff and mechanical individual. Those who know him well also know that he is a proficient pianist and vocalist. Although he has said, “I am *somewhat* artistic,” it must be noted that he sang with *The All-American Boys Chorus of Orange County, CA* for many years, traveling internationally to perform with the group. After he became too old to sing with them, he spent several more years assisting with piano accompaniment, teaching, stage set-up, sales, and various other tasks.

“It was another very strong influence on my life,” Fr. Robert said. “It taught me poise, responsibility and hard work, as well as how to teach and perform.”

As a young man, Fr. Robert attended Orange County public schools and Annunciation Church in Anaheim, a third profound influence on his life, where he was altar server and, occasionally, reader and cantor. He graduated from the University of CA at Irvine with a Bachelor of Arts degree in music and entered the Byzantine Catholic Seminary in 1990 with five other theology students and four college students.

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*“I had a wonderful experience and made life-long friends at the seminary.”*

—Fr. Robert Pipta

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“I had a wonderful experience and made life-long friends at the seminary,” he said. “I still communicate with Fr. Stephen Wahal, Fr. Ronald Hatton, Fr. Andrew Deskevich, and Fr. George Malitz, all who are serving the Byzantine Catholic Church. To this day they are supportive and encouraging.”

Fr. Robert, who began serving at liturgies when he was in first grade, was ordained a priest in 1994 and received his first appointment to St. Stephen Pro-Cathedral in Phoenix, AZ, where he was Parochial Vicar and worked alongside Fr. Wesley Izer.

From Phoenix, Fr. Robert was assigned to St. Gabriel the Archangel Church in Las Vegas, NV, where he served for six and one half years.

“It was a whole new parochial experience for me,” Fr. Robert said. “I had responsibility for everything – liturgy, religious education, sacraments,

## Noted Syriac Scholar – Fifth in Lecture Series

The Byzantine Catholic Seminary welcomed noted Syriac scholar, Professor Sebastian Brock, formerly of the faculty of Oxford University in England, as featured speaker at the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual SS Cyril and Methodius Lecture on Monday evening, May 9, 2005, in the auditorium of St. Paul’s Seminary in Pittsburgh. Professor Brock addressed the topic: “*Two Syriac Saints for Today: St. Ephrem and St. Isaac the Syrian.*”

In his talk, Professor Brock demonstrated great knowledge of the Syriac Tradition for which he is widely known, particularly the Syriac saints, Ephrem and Isaac.

Professor Brock first spoke about St. Ephrem, calling him, “The finest lyric poet of Syriac literature, perhaps the finest poet of early Christianity, and a profound theologian.” Professor Brock discussed St. Ephrem’s theology/poetry, his sacramental/ecological view of the world, and his understanding of how to read the Bible.

According to Professor Brock, St. Ephrem, who lived during the 4<sup>th</sup> century, had two approaches to theology – analytic and symbolic. Professor Brock spoke of St. Ephrem’s belief that divine truths exist in human forms and that all may be illuminated by paradox, using the “luminous eye of faith.” He noted that St. Ephrem’s ideas about the interconnectedness of life mirror the thoughts of modern writers.

In discussing St. Isaac, Professor Brock identified a saint who “stands out as knowing the human psyche.” St. Isaac was a monastic who lived during the 7<sup>th</sup> century, and is remembered through his homilies.

*St. Isaac described himself as being “drunk with divine love,” a state that left him with profound humility and a “heart inflamed with love.”*

Nearly 150 clergy, religious and lay people, attended the lecture from 13 eparchies, according to Fr. John G. Petro, rector of the Byzantine Catholic Seminary. Professor Brock was the fifth noted theologian to lecture in the series which began in 2000. Other speakers have included Rev. Joseph Lienhard, S. J., Very Rev. Thomas Hopko, Bishop Kallistos of Diocletia, and Archimandrite Robert F. Taft, S. J. All lectures have been recorded. Recent lectures are available through the seminary on compact disk. Those interested in ordering may contact the seminary at 412-321-8383. (*Please see insert.*)

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## *Fr. Thomas Wesdock, First to Earn MA in Theology through Affiliation*

In December 2004, after passing his comprehensive exams at Duquesne University the preceding summer, Fr. Thomas Wesdock, pastor at St. John the Baptist Church in Uniontown, PA, became the first graduate of the Byzantine Catholic Seminary to earn the degree of Master of Arts in Theology through a Seminary/Duquesne University affiliation begun in 2001.

“I started the program in the fall of 2001,” Fr. Tom said recently, “and enjoyed the classes. I found that I had been well prepared for them by my seminary studies.”

Fr. Jack Custer, Dean at the seminary, said, “Father Tom distinguished himself as a hard worker with real gifts for theology in his

studies here at the seminary. His success at Duquesne reflects well on our seminary but more on his own hard work and dedication. It cannot have been easy to complete Duquesne’s requirements while pastoring a large and active parish. I am sure Fr. Tom’s professional qualifications in theology will enrich the life of our Church in the years to come.”

In the affiliation, not only do seminary students study at Duquesne University, but Duquesne students may also cross-register for classes at the seminary to study theology in the Byzantine Tradition.

Shortly after the Duquesne affiliation, the seminary was authorized by the Pennsylvania Department of Education in 2003 to grant both Master of Divinity (M. Div.) and Master of Arts in Byzantine Catholic Theology (M.A.T.) degrees. Currently there are six seminarians in the M. Div. program and five other students in the M.A.T. program at the seminary.

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### *Pipta from Page 3*

everything. I really enjoyed the variety. One moment I might be scrubbing floors and the next helping to prepare a young couple for marriage.”

Fr. Robert was next assigned to his current parish in San Diego, CA, from which he also serves on the Metropolitan Liturgical and Music Commissions as well as being Vocation Director for the Van Nuys Eparchy.

His joy is in his parish, however. “I have a wonderful parish,” Fr. Robert said. “The people are fervent and zealous. We have many physical challenges with our property and buildings, but the people pray hard and work hard – and we make great food!”

As an Advisory Council member, Fr. Robert serves on the Student and Academic Affairs Committee. “It is exciting and challenging work,” he said. “I have great hope for ordained service to the church. Young people are becoming very committed and involved. We are forming disciples. We must be disciplined. We must be patient.”

# LECTURE ADDRESSES AVAILABLE FROM BYZANTINE CATHOLIC SEMINARY

## *SS. Cyril & Methodius Lecture Addresses:*



2003 – VERY REVEREND  
THOMAS HOPKO

—Compact Disk  
\$8.00 + \$2.00 (Shipping & Handling)



2004 – REVEREND  
JOSEPH T. LIENHARD, S.J.

—Compact Disk  
\$8.00 + \$2.00 (Shipping & Handling)



2005 – PROFESSOR  
SEBASTIAN BROCK

—Compact Disk  
\$8.00 + \$2.00 (Shipping & Handling)

### ORDERING INFORMATION

ALL ORDERS MUST BE PREPAID

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- Address by Professor Sebastian Brock
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_____	“TWO SYRIAC SAINTS <i>for</i> TODAY: ST. EPHREM <i>and</i> ST. ISAAC <i>the</i> SYRIAN.” —Address by Professor Sebastian Brock – May 9, 2005 – COMPACT DISK	_____
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