

JOYFUL LIGHT

*Joyful Light is a semi-annual publication of the Byzantine Catholic Seminary of Ss. Cyril and Methodius,
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Degrees Conferred at Seminary



Joining Metropolitan Archbishop William in joyous song at the conclusion of the May 8 services for the Class of 2014 graduates of the Seminary of Ss. Cyril and Methodius are (from left) Seminarian Rector Very Reverend Robert M. Pipta; Michael Bezruchka (Eparchy of Phoenix); John Russell (Eparchy of Parma) and Kenneth Malley (Eparchy of Parma).

Following a Moleben in honor of Ss. Cyril and Methodius, patrons of the Byzantine Catholic Seminary, Metropolitan William, Archbishop of Pittsburgh, conferred diplomas upon three graduates of the Seminary's School of Theology on May 8, 2014. Board members, faculty, staff, family and friends were in attendance as diplomas were conferred upon Subdeacon Michael Bezruchka, Subdeacon John Russell and Deacon Kenneth Malley.

Michael Bezruchka's home parish since he was 13 years old is St. John Chrysostom Byzantine Catholic Church in Seattle, Washington. Michael said "My first pastor just retired last August and started a monastery in the Blue Mountains of Oregon while my new pastor graduated from the Seminary last year." As Michael reflected on his time at the Seminary, he said "Education at the Seminary has taught me a wealth of information about our Byzantine heritage: its theology, traditions, and spirituality. It gave me a sense of the scope of the ministerial challenges while also giving a foundation to handle those situations." While at the Seminary, Michael took many courses from many disciplines including biblical, liturgical, spiritual, philosophical, and pastoral. "These courses gave me critical thinking experience and practice which are necessary for pastors. I also prayed with the community, taught Eastern Christian Formation lessons on Sundays, and learned many things from my instructors and fellow students inside and outside of classes." Michael especially liked the philosophy courses because, he said, "They gave

a comprehensive primer from ancient foundational Greek philosophy to Christian philosophers from more than one thousand years later. I also liked dogmatic theology since it gave a sense of how and why doctrines developed which help protect the Church in the orthodoxy of its faith." Michael feels that Seminary formation was extremely important because it seeks to impart academic information while addressing other important pillars of formation including the human, spiritual, and ministerial. "Each of these are essential elements," Michael stated. "At Seminary, we connect with other seminarians who have the same desire to serve God and build up the Church. Many life-long friendships develop here. It would be difficult if not impossible to have these important experiences if the courses were only taught online. So much is gained when we pray, work, and relax together." This was a challenging journey as Michael summarized his Seminary experience. Michael's summer assignments were extremely important. He said, "I do not know how Seminary formation could work without summer assignments which give practical application to many of the things we learn. Every summer assignment provided further insight into parish ministry, including the day-to-day tasks." Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) gave Michael practice ministering in a hospital: usually a delicate and painful time for people in which they often thirst for compassionate listening and prayer. For the summer parish experience, Michael said, "I was assigned to three parishes with three excellent, healthy pastors. These good mentors had different

personalities and working styles which presented helpful models to consider for ministry." During this time and in these parishes, Michael was able to glean information from many areas including witnessing parish planning meetings, working with strong-willed people, working with the parish finances, witnessing marriage preparation sessions, cantoring, and teaching classes and reflections. While he couldn't have imagined how to be a priest when he began his first year, he has a much better sense today. "People have often commented in the last year that Seminary has made me a better man," said Michael.

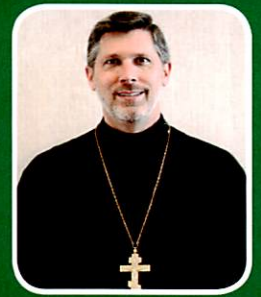
John Russell's home parish is St. Athanasius the Great Byzantine Catholic Church in Indianapolis, Indiana. When asked about what he learned at the Seminary and how will it help him in ministry/your future, John replied, "Without knowing my future, it's hard to say. If I become a deacon or a priest, as I expectantly hope I will, there are a few things we did here that I will find indispensable."

John referred to areas of study like liturgical praxis and chant which, he said, make it possible for clerics to do their work. He continued, "For all the talk that we must not become mere sacramental dispensaries, which is true, it is still also true that there is no more important aspect of our work than liturgy. And I don't mean studying the liturgy, but praying the liturgy beautifully." John stated that a cleric first of all is to be a man of prayer, and the liturgy is to be his first prayer. So, above all, is the work of the chapel, more so than the library or the classroom. "Real theology is prayer, which also cannot be reduced to liturgical prayer, but must be centered in the prayer of the heart," John states. He feels that the experience outside the library and classroom is important, specifically the CPE. "To care for real souls pastorally is what it's all about. The hospital and the chapel are where we learn to be priests more than anywhere else." John sums up his years of studying at the Seminary by saying "It was difficult, enriching, and worth it – like most things consequent to a divine imperative. I came because I had to. The Spirit pushed me here, I think. I stayed for the same reason." When asked if there was a particular area that he especially liked studying while at the Seminary, John said, "Lately, I have been getting a lot out of homiletics. It is in preaching, I think, that most of what we learn in the Seminary comes together." As John continued reflecting on his studying and classroom experiences, "The homily is the endpoint of all this study. Furthermore, it's a chance to use all this knowledge to help and inspire people, which I think is what we're supposed to be all about." During his time at the Seminary, in addition to all of the school work, John has also found it beneficial to read novels and poetry. John recalls his summer assignments with fondness. "My summer parish assignment helped me learn much about the work and rhythms of parish life." These experiences taught him about himself and the service of others. John will miss

(Continued on page 4)

Rector's Message

I am humbled and honored as I begin my service to the Byzantine Catholic Seminary as its new rector. The appointment of the Metropolitan with the blessing of my bishop, the confidence of the Board of Directors, and the incredible support of the entire Seminary community have helped confirm me in my new assignment. As I begin to settle in to my new ministerial life at the Seminary, I am eager to do my part in maintaining the tradition of excellence of this institution as I work alongside a most gifted team of the Seminary's administrative staff, support staff, and faculty. I view myself as a father to the seminarians and the entire community and am looking forward to fulfill this role, according to God's will, with as much devotion and enthusiasm as I am able. Having been ordained a priest now for 20 years, I still recall my four years of formation here at Saints Cyril and Methodius. I have fond memories of liturgical services, personal prayer, classes, friendships with fellow seminarians, and the staff and faculty who guided me through my formation. I now rejoice with our new graduates, wish them well, and pray that God will guide them in whatever form of sacrificial service to the Church He is calling them. As I look forward to the months and years ahead, the fact that the Seminary's accreditation has been renewed for another seven years speaks to a strong foundation that will only get stronger. I am devoted to this strengthening, along with the needed balance in the full integration of the spiritual, human, intellectual, and pastoral aspects of formation. As a former vocation director and former member of the Seminary Advisory Council for the past several years, I understand and appreciate the prayers and generosity of our supporters that have been essential to this institution's development. I now ask for your continuing support – your ongoing contributions and your prayers both for my ministry and the work of our seminarians, faculty, and staff.



Father Robert M. Pipta

First Byzantine Online Certificate of Eastern Christian Studies Conferred



Henry Peresie

Henry Peresie's late pastor suggested that he take courses in Byzantine Catholicism in the event that he may be able to serve his parish in some function, perhaps eventually as a deacon. When Henry found out about the Byzantine Online Courses, he signed up as soon as he could for Certification.

After taking eight online courses, Henry now is the first person to receive a Certificate of Eastern Christian Studies via Byzantine Online. The Certificate in Eastern Christian Studies (CECS) is designed for all professionals who have already earned a bachelor's degree and desire to further their education in the area of Eastern theology and tradition.

Henry's parents were married in the Ukrainian Catholic Church in Ford City, Pa. but they attended the Slovak Roman Catholic Church of his father. Henry said, "We also participated in many of the services and social functions at the Ukrainian Church. I always had an interest in the Eastern Catholic Churches because of my upbringing and decided to start attending St. Athanasius Church in Indianapolis on an occasional basis." When Henry's father died in 2005, he decided to petition to change Churches and was accepted as a member of the Ukrainian Eparchy of Chicago. It was then that Henry decided to pursue online courses.

Henry's overall experience with the Seminary online program has been very positive. "The information that I learned has helped me in personal spiritual growth and in my instructional sessions. With the emphasis on New Evangelization in our Eparchy, I feel that I am very well prepared for additional service," Henry said.

During his time with the online courses, Henry tried to take a variety of courses from the different offerings in Dogmatics, Spirituality, Patristics, Church History and Scripture. He particularly enjoyed the courses that dealt with the history of our Byzantine Church in America, the theology and development of our liturgies, the ecumenical councils, and Patristic reading. These classes "supplemented my lifelong interest in history, theology and spirituality." As Henry realized, the courses prepare those who are looking to build upon their faith and spirituality or gain additional education

to serve the Church in new capacities. Current priests, deacons, cantors, lay ministers and religious education instructors are prime candidates for this program.

One of the most enjoyable aspects of these online courses for Henry was the opportunity to interact with other students from around the world. He said, "I feel that I have established good relationships and hope to be able to keep in contact with them, through social media or other avenues."

Henry highly recommends the Byzantine Online Courses program. Henry said "Anyone who is interested in developing his or her Catholic faith would benefit. Today, especially, as Catholic beliefs are being attacked on all fronts, it is important to know what we believe and why. They also help Byzantine Catholics and Orthodox explain our faith to others." Congratulations to Henry on being the first Byzantine Online Certificate of Eastern Christian Studies recipient.

BCS Christian studies online certificate provides a broad general grounding in the religious, historical and cultural traditions of Eastern Christianity. The coursework emphasizes the unique flavor of Eastern and specifically Byzantine Churches and their place in Western, multicultural and multi-religious contexts. It is possible to complete this program in as little as two-and-one-half years. Anyone not seeking a Certificate may audit any course for personal enrichment. Special rates and arrangements for group study are also available.

If you are interested in more information about the Byzantine Online Courses, please visit our website at <http://online.bcs.edu/>.

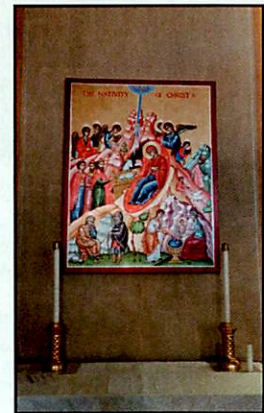
Glory to Jesus Christ!!

We again wanted to thank all of our contributors and active promoters of the Day of Giving fundraising event held on Tuesday, May 6, 2014. This was an opportunity for donations to the Seminary to be partially matched by the Pittsburgh Foundation during an 18 hour period. We are thrilled to report that the total amount we received from The Pittsburgh Foundation (including the match of .18 cents for every dollar donated) was almost \$23,000. Donations from across the country were received during this event!

Thank you to all of the generous participants for your support of our Seminary and for your support of our mission. Stay tuned for the date of the next Pittsburgh Foundation Day of Giving.

New Icons in Chapel

Recalling the words of Saint Paul to Philomen, we praise God for the many ways in which you, members of the Community of Saints Peter & Paul in Warren, Ohio have been so kind. The two new icons of the Holy Nativity and Holy Resurrection of Our Lord, which you recently donated to (and which have been placed in) the Chapel of our Byzantine Catholic Seminary, are a tangible sign of your generosity. May the Lord bless you and your pastor, Fr. Andrew Deskevich for your thoughtfulness!



BE PART OF OUR FUTURE!

If you would like to remember us in your will, our official title is Byzantine Catholic Seminary of Ss. Cyril and Methodius.

Discover Your Passion – BCS Fall 2014 Courses

Take Classes This Fall with Byzantine Online



Called to Serve: Holy Orders in the Byzantine Church – Fr. David M. Petras
Our Lord commanded his followers to teach and baptize all nations. This mission was given to the whole Church, but specifically there was a second calling within the Church to those who would dedicate their whole lives to this mission. We will survey how this mission was accomplished by the apostles and their immediate collaborators, then how in the post-apostolic age this was organized in a consistent Church order, and in a particular “laying on of hands.” Then we will examine the orders of bishop, priest and deacon, and other lesser offices in the development of the Byzantine tradition. Finally, we will inquire about some issues that the church orders face in the contemporary world.

The Desert Monastics in Context – Abouna Justin Rose
The “Fathers and Mothers of the Desert” fascinate us today as they did in their own time. This course will consider the accounts of these important figures, the sayings attributed to them, and the Late Antiquity period in which they lived. In addition to identifying the theological themes present in the Sayings, we will study their historical and social context and the various forms of monastic “experimentation” that were inspired by and identified with these charismatic men and women.

Introduction to Spirituality – Fr. James Hess, O.Carm.
This course will trace the history of Christian spiritual traditions from their precursors in Judaism and ancient Mediterranean spirituality to the present time. Particular emphasis will be laid on different definitions and methods of prayer,

meditation, and contemplation. The rich ethnic and cultural diversity of Christian spiritual theology will be highlighted through study of primary sources from the Jewish, Roman, Greek, Celtic, Anglo-European, Slavic, Middle-Eastern (Syriac), and Egyptian (Coptic) traditions. During each session the development of specific traditions of Christian prayer, meditation, and contemplation will be studied and discussed in light of assigned readings from primary sources.

The Second Ecumenical Council – Fr. Gregory Hogg
It was a mere 56 years since the first Ecumenical Council met in 325. The Christian world (*oikoumene*) had changed greatly. After a brief flare up under Julian the Apostate, paganism was in retreat. But there was conflict within the Church. Most had come to agree with the Nicene council. Many, however, struggled with the deity and personhood of the Holy Spirit. The Cappadocian Fathers showed the way forward. In this class, we will explore the historical context and documents of the Second Ecumenical Council (Constantinople I) in 381. Then we will do an in-depth study of St. Basil the Great’s *On the Holy Spirit*. The message of the Cappadocians continues to be relevant in our day, where the meaning of persons, and the Person of the Holy Spirit, remain at issue.

Our 8-week Fall courses begin Monday, September 22, 2014.
Not sure yet? Sample an online lecture at: online.bcs.edu (click on the link: “Test drive a BCS online course!”) • For more information, contact: Sandra A. Collins, Ph.D., Director of Media and Outreach: scollins@bcs.edu.

Under the Dome

Fr. George D. Gallaro, Director of Human Formation and Professor of Canon Law & Ecumenical Theology, from December 27 to January 8 visited the Community of São Francisco de Paula in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. During Great and Holy Week he celebrated the liturgical services and preached for the Melkite Communities of Temecula and San Diego in California. His articles, *The Descent of the Holy Spirit: Holy Pentecost and Ecological Notes in the Sainly Hermit of Paola* appeared in *Nicolaus* 40 (2013); *Rivisitando i concili del passato*, in *Odigos* 32/4 (2013); *Breathing with Two Lungs: (Re)discovering the Eastern Churches* in *Seminary Journal* 19/1 (2013); *Papa Francesco e l’Oriente Cristiano* in *Bollettino di San Nicola* 63/1 (2014). Shorter articles have also appeared in *Sophia*, the journal of the Eparchy of Newton, MA, in *Byzantine Catholic World*, the newspaper of the Archeparchy of Pittsburgh, PA, and in *New Star*, the newspaper of the Eparchy of Chicago, IL. As one of the recently appointed Consultors of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches (February 6, 2014), he has also rendered a few written canonical opinions on questions at issue.

Fr. James Hess, O. Carm., Director of Spiritual Formation, participated in a seminar in June at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska at the Institute for Priestly Formation. This seminar for seminary spiritual directors was conducted by Fr. Joseph Kelly and assisted by Fr. Vincent Fortunato, O.F.M.Cap. This seminar enhanced participants’ experience and understanding of the art of spiritual direction, as well as helping participants understand how “spiritual direction in a Seminary context differs from spiritual direction more generally experienced in the Church.” (Program for Priestly Formation, 5th edition, no. 132). This program was designed to accommodate the needs of both those who direct seminarians full-time in a Seminary setting as well as those who serve as adjunct and part-time Seminary spiritual directors. The seminar took place during June and included a weekend of directed prayer, morning practicums, afternoon classes and roundtable discussions.

Dr. Sandra A. Collins, Director of Media and Outreach, traveled in January to Orlando, Florida on behalf of Byzantine Online, for the Eastern Catholic Encounter conference. In April, Dr. Collins delivered a paper to the annual conference of the Catholic Library Association/National Catholic Educators Association entitled, “A Wandering Aramean: ATLA (American Theological Library Association) and the Eastern Christian Scholar.” This paper has been solicited for publication in *Catholic Library World*, the official journal of CLA.

Fr. Valerian M. Michlik, Professor of History of Byzantine Church and Liturgical Practicum, made a presentation on Monday, May 5 at Mt. Lebanon Library titled “The Greek Catholic Church in Slovakia.” The presentation was sponsored by the Western Pennsylvania Slovak Cultural Association. Fr Valerian also made a presentation on Thursday, May 15 at St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church, Barberton, OH titled “Is the Legacy of Sts. Cyril and Methodius still ALIVE?”

Fr. Jason DelVitto, Ph.D., Adjunct Professor of Dogmatic Theology at the Seminary, from May 20th through May 28th, 2014, had the distinct honor and pleasure to accompany His Grace Bishop Thomas Joseph, Auxiliary Bishop of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Diocese of Charleston, Oakland and the Mid-Atlantic States, to the Balamand Monastery of the Dormition of Our Lady the Virgin Mary, the Balamand University, and the St. John of Damascus School of Theology. Balamand is located in Al Kourah, approximately 45 miles north of Beirut, Lebanon. His purpose, as an instructor at the Byzantine Seminary, was to avail himself of this opportunity to gain a sense of the work and life of the students of the Theological School, to meet with its administrators and students, and to compare various aspects of the Byzantine Seminary and that of Balamand, including the theological vision and curricula of both schools. As a Seminary instructor, he was greatly edified by the people that he met and the work being done at the University and School of Theology. Fr Jason hopes he can be of further service in offering insight into the life of the Church there and our common Christian witness to the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Lecture and “Coffee” with Sister Vassa

The Fourteenth Annual Saints Cyril & Methodius Lecture sponsored by the Byzantine Catholic Seminary was held on May 5, 2014 at the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in Munhall, PA. Our guest speaker was Dr. Sister Vassa Larin and her topic was “The Saints and the ‘Communion of Saints’ in the Byzantine Tradition.” Dr. Larin, a Russian Orthodox nun and author of numerous scholarship articles on Byzantine liturgy and theology, gave her presentation to a very full room of attendees. Many of the attendees traveled considerable distances to hear this popular speaker. Dr. Larin is host of a weekly YouTube video-podcast titled “Coffee with Sister Vassa.” Thank you to Dr. Larin and all who helped to organize this very successful event. If you would like a CD of Dr. Larin’s May 5th presentation, please contact the Seminary Office at 412-321-8383 or email at office@bcs.edu.




Serra Club and Seminary Host First Ever Easter Egg Hunt

On April 27, 2014, the Byzantine Catholic Serra Club together with the Byzantine Catholic Seminary hosted an Easter Egg Hunt. The afternoon began in the Seminary Chapel with the celebration of the Akathist Hymn to the Resurrection of our Lord. After this, both young and old searched for Easter eggs on the Seminary grounds. Attendees brought their own Easter basket while the candy, fun and happy springtime memories were all provided! From the delicious food, wonderful fellowship and beautiful weather, this was a great event that brought the faithful together in the joy of Paschah – the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Serra Club and the Seminary are looking forward to our next Easter Egg Hunt.



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his time at the Seminary. His years of study and formation are only just beginning, not ending, he said. John states that his education has no completion, but goes on forever, even into heaven, which, as he continues "will be a dynamic eternal ascent in ever-greater unity with God, in the image of whose form I am made and being formed. I will miss my time at the Seminary intensely. The way of life. The community. The liturgical life. I am grateful for the many blessings and friendships."

Deacon Kenneth Malley's home parish is St. John Chrysostom Byzantine Catholic Church in Columbus, Ohio. When asked about how his Seminary experience has helped in his ministry and his future, Kenneth said, "Truthfully there really is almost no end to this answer. My very outlook on life has grown in the four years since I began, and that alone would easily have made my time spent here worth it." Kenneth said that the other students and the staff had a large impact on him as a person. Kenneth has also recognized a link between all that he has learned while at the Seminary. "I don't think there is a single class that has not in some way helped me to break open the word of God into messages that affect all of us to this very day." Kenneth can see images and stories and manifestations that, while seemingly in categories, if not leagues of their own, would result in a diminished picture if they were left out. Ken feels that he appreciates how much he has been given throughout his four years at the Seminary, especially realizing this during the final semester at the Seminary. The integration of everything he has learned has impacted Kenneth. When asked about his time at the Seminary, Kenneth responds with one thought – a journey. This journey, Kenneth feels, will not end even as he passes through the Seminary doors and on to the "real world". While every subject he took while at the Seminary helped to reveal another facet of the immeasurable treasury that is the Christian Church, Kenneth found most drawn to Pastoral Theology. He said, "As this area helps us on the ground level, and most especially when we feel that we might be at our worst, it's hard for me not to be drawn into this area." In addition, Kenneth enjoyed psychology because, among many other reasons, "it helps us to directly address those issues that trouble us the most." And, he stated, this is what pastoral theology helps us to do. "Principles are the bedrock of our faith, but if we are unable

to live by those principles, or unable to relate those principles to our own individual lives, then those very principles themselves become almost meaningless." Kenneth has enjoyed unique summer assignments. Not only did he have the parish assignments from the Eparchy of Parma which took him to parishes around his Eparchy, he is also a Chaplain Candidate for the United States Air Force. Each summer he was stationed at an active duty Air Force base to learn an entirely new set of skills, and to better hone those skills that directly relate to his ministry. These assignments were in Florida, Texas as well as North Dakota. When talking about his summer assignments, Kenneth said, "Between my eparchial and military summer assignments, while it definitely made my summers more exhausting and much less relaxing, the skills I have learned are beyond my ability to quantify. They are most definitely a critical part of helping me to be the person I am today." Kenneth does not think he would trade in a single year of his time at the Seminary. "No matter how much you learn, there will always be more to study, more to discover, and more to reveal. My journey as a seminarian has ended. My journey as a student is still near the beginning." Finally, Kenneth said of his time at the Seminary, "When I pass through these doors for the last time as a seminarian, a part of me will take this very Seminary with me into the world and to everyone I interact with over the years."

Subdeacon John Russell graduated summa cum laude and Subdeacon Michael Bezruchka and Deacon Kenneth Malley both graduated cum laude.

Matching Gifts

If you or your spouse works for or retired from a company with a matching gift program, your gift to the Byzantine Catholic Seminary may be doubled or tripled. Please check with your company's Human Resources Department for this benefit.

Electronic Newsletter

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