

WORLD

THE BYZANTINE CATHOLIC



Special
Christmas
issue!

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66 Riverview Avenue
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Tel: 412.231.4000
Fax: 412.231.1697
E-mail: bcw@archpitt.org
Web site: www.archpitt.org

Archbishop William C. Skurla
President

David Mayernik Jr.
Editor

Sister Elaine Kisinko, OSBM
Copy Editor

Deacon Robert J. Shalhoub
Business Manager

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MISSION

The mission of *The Byzantine Catholic World* is to spread the Gospel message in the rich tradition of the Byzantine Catholic Church; to encourage faithful to reflect the image of Christ in everyday activities of life; to offer spiritual formation through changing times; and to celebrate community among Byzantine Catholics in the Archeparchy of Pittsburgh, throughout the Metropolitan Church in America, and around the world.

Second chances

VATICAN CHRISTMAS STAMPS FEATURE WORK OF HOMELESS ARTIST

by Junno Arocho-Esteves
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Adam Piekarski, a homeless man from Łódź, Poland, never imagined that the sketches he would draw in his free time while waiting for the public showers near Bernini's Colonnade would lead to the opportunity of a lifetime.

In November, the Vatican Philatelic and Numismatic Office announced that its 2021 set of commemorative Christmas stamps would feature images of the Magi and the Holy Family painted by Piekarski.

"Art is my passion even though I never studied it," Piekarski told Catholic News Service Dec. 1 from a quaint studio just across the street from St. Peter's Square.

"He went to a technical school in Poland and studied gardening in Łódź," added Redemptorist Father Leszek Pys, known by many as Father Ruben, a fellow Pole who was among the first to realize Piekarski's talent.

Piekarski left Poland six years ago and, like many migrants, made his way to Rome seeking a better life.

The Eternal City, he explained, is a place that remains in the heart of many Polish people as a source of inspiration for some of Poland's greatest artistic icons, such as Henryk Sienkiewicz, author of "Quo Vadis," and Henryk Siemiradzki, whose paintings often depicted life in ancient Rome.

However, upon his arrival, the harsh reality of finding work, coupled with a fondness for Italian wine, led Piekarski down the dark path of alcoholism that he continues to fight each day.

With Father Ruben serving as translator, Piekarski told CNS that his life began to change after meeting the Polish priest while waiting in line for the public showers for the poor at the Vatican.

Father Ruben told CNS that, at the time, he was trying to figure out a low-cost option for a painting of St. Clement Mary Hofbauer, co-founder of the Redemptorist congregation, to commemorate the 200th anniversary of his death.

Explaining his dilemma to Pallottine Sister Anna, a nun who volunteers helping the poor at the public showers, he was introduced to Piekarski, who would often spend his time sketching while waiting



An image of the Holy Family is featured on one of the Vatican's 2021 Christmas stamps. The images on the stamps were painted by Adam Piekarski, a homeless man from Poland currently living in Rome. (CNS illustration/courtesy Vatican Philatelic and Numismatic Office)

for his turn at the showers.

Father Ruben then provided Piekarski with paints, brushes and found a workspace in the crypt of the Church of Santa Maria in Monterone, where the burgeoning artist honed his artistic abilities.

His work drew the attention of Cardinal Konrad Krajewski, papal almoner, who then introduced Piekarski to Father Francesco Mazzitelli, then-deputy director of the Vatican Philatelic and Numismatic Office.

Father Ruben told CNS that when asked by Father Mazzitelli to design the 2021 Christmas stamps, Piekarski's answer was an emphatic "no." However, the Italian priest's persistence finally moved the Polish artist to finally do it.

For the painting of the three Magi, Piekarski based their likeness on two friends who are also homeless; the third, he explained, was an original image meant to represent all homeless men and women.

Father Mazzitelli, who was appointed Nov. 27 as an official in the Office of the Papal Almoner, told CNS that Piekarski's story was an example of Pope Francis' call to "nurture tomorrow's hope by healing today's pain."

"What has happened to Adam is a sign for everyone, because each one of us knows someone who has hidden gifts and talents," Father Mazzitelli said. "The pope saying that we must nurture hope means he has given us a mission — to the church and to each one of us — that we must build up hope in others."

Father Ruben noted that installing showers for the homeless at the Vatican was more than just an

act of charity for the poor during the 2015 Jubilee Year of Mercy, but a fundamental gesture that gave homeless men and women dignity.

"You can't give back someone's dignity by giving them a sandwich or a euro nor even by asking them their name. That is more of a philanthropic gesture that makes us feel good about ourselves," the Polish priest said.

"But for that person, that sandwich, that euro doesn't change anything," he added. "But allowing them to clean themselves means giving them back their dignity."

Piekarski credits the public showers for not only being the starting point of his journey as an artist, but the place where he decided to confront his battle against alcoholism.

"For someone who is suffering from alcoholism or who is slightly drunk," Father Ruben recalled Piekarski telling him, "it is embarrassing to show up to clean themselves. But going there is the first step in getting out of alcoholism because, once they are at the showers, they want to change their lives."

While he continues to paint from a small studio at Palazzo Migliori, the Vatican's homeless shelter, Piekarski now works as an evening security guard at a property owned by the Knights of Malta, who became acquainted with him after he completed a portrait of the late Fra' Giacomo dalla Torre, the grand knight of the order who died in 2020.

"Life is a mystery and God wanted it this way," Piekarski told CNS. "What has happened is a dream and I still can't believe it. God has a great sense of humor."



CHRISTMAS GREETINGS 2021



The Gift of the Magi

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

Dear People,

The writer William Sydney Porter, who used the name O. Henry, published the short story *The Gift of the Magi* in 1905. The story about the Christmas gifts has been told in many versions in theater, radio, film, television and now on the internet.

The story is about a young couple James and Della, recently married and living in New York City on a tight budget. Despite trying to save money a penny at a time, Della had only \$1.87 to buy a gift for her husband, James. They only had two items of value. James had a pocket watch which has been handed down from generation to generation. And Della had been blessed with beautiful long brown hair.

On Christmas Eve, Della decides to cut off and sell her hair to buy a gold chain for her husband's pocket watch. Her husband James returns home to discover a short hair version of his wife Della. She explains she gave up her lovely hair to purchase for him a Christmas gift of a chain for his watch. She asks him to give her his watch so that she can attach the chain.

James leans back on the couch and shows his gift to her. He shows Della the set of combs that she wanted to brush her long hair. Then, he tells her that he sold his watch so he could buy the combs for her.

Although they were surprised that it did not end the way that they expected, they had both given up their most valued possessions to be able to give to the other. In one way, their efforts seem foolish, but on a deeper level their generosity showed how much they loved one another.

O. Henry's timeless and ironic tale of *The Gift of the Magi* correctly points us back to the source of the tradition of giving gifts during the Christmas Season. Each year we hear the story of the three Kings or Magi from the East bringing precious gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to honor the newborn child Jesus. The Magi traveled far to be part of the birth of the King of Kings. They returned home with the good news of Jesus' birth.

We follow their example by giving the best gifts we can afford to our families and loved ones. Like Della and James, we sometimes question the wisdom of our generosity. We could get something for ourselves or just save the money for a rainy day. Sometimes our gifts are not appreciated or used. However, the reward of our giving is that it opens our hearts and expresses the love we have for others.

The Magi and our gifts reflect the ultimate gift we received on the first Christmas. We were given the gift beyond any price. The world received the greatest gift of God's only begotten Son Jesus Christ. Whenever we give our time, our talents, and treasure, we follow the example of Jesus, who gave everything including His life so that we could know the way to eternal life.

During the past two years of the pandemic, it has been difficult to travel to be with family and friends. It has also been difficult to get to our churches to pray and to be with our faith community of Byzantine Catholics. We pray that we will be able to return to normal soon. It was especially joyful to gather for the Saint Nicholas Celebration to renew friendships and meet new friends.

Like Jesus, the Magi, and even James and Della, we give not only gifts at Christmas, but we also give our time, treasure, and talents all year long. With each gift and sacrifice, we become a little more like Christ.

In the words of O. Henry, "The magi, as you know, were wise men – wonderfully wise men – who brought gifts to the Babe in the manger. They invented the art of giving Christmas presents. Being wise, their gifts were no doubt wise ones, possibly bearing the privilege of exchange in case of duplication. And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house. But in a last word to the wise of these days let it be said that of all who give gifts these two were the wisest. O all who give and receive gifts, such as they are wisest. Everywhere they are wisest. They are the magi." *O. Henry – The Gift of the Magi 1905*

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ William C. Skurla

Most Reverend William C. Skurla, D.D.
Metropolitan Archbishop of Pittsburgh

Welcome back

ST. NICHOLAS CHARITY DINNER AT ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST CATHEDRAL IN MUNHALL, PA. RETURNS FOR 64TH YEAR



by David Mayernik Jr.
Editor

“Welcome back!”

It’s a sentiment we’ve been hearing more often in 2021 as the world recovers from a worldwide pandemic.

Chris Singel, master of ceremonies for the 64th annual St. Nicholas Charity Dinner, was the latest to offer those words to clergy, religious and faithful who were happy to be back together.

The annual dinner, held Dec. 5, returned to St. John the Baptist Cathedral Center in Munhall, Pa. after taking a year off in 2020.

The dinner, which benefits the Byzantine Catholic Seminary of SS. Cyril and Methodius in Pittsburgh, Pa., is co-sponsored by the Greek Catholic Union and the Archeparchy of Pittsburgh.

The Seminary celebrated the 70th year of its founding last year.

“We are going to have some fun tonight while also supporting the Seminary. Thanks to all of you for being here; especially since we couldn’t gather in person last year,” Chris said.

“It is great to see how much the Seminary continues to accomplish.”

Singel pointed out the many “exciting changes” coming to the Seminary:

- Last year was the first in which students graduated who completed their studies all online.

- The Association of Theological Schools reaffirmed the Seminary’s accreditation for 10 years, the longest period of time which it can be affirmed.

- The Seminary was also approved to offer online credited courses in all 50 states, territories and districts of the United States.

- The Seminary began work on a new 10-year strategic plan which includes exploring a doctorate degree in ministry, creating an academic journal and estab-

Story continued on page 5





64TH ANNUAL ST. NICHOLAS CHARITY DINNER



St. Nicholas Charity Dinner

continued from page 4

lishing grants and scholarships for M.A.T. students.

■ Initiatives also include a four-story elevator, a new welcome center, chapel renovation and creating a Heritage Gallery

George Juba, president and chief executive officer, Greek Catholic Union, presented Archbishop William Skurla with the fraternal organization's annual contribution to the Seminary, which this year totaled \$125,000.

The organization has donated \$3.62 million to the Seminary since 1960.

He also presented \$250 checks funded by the GCU Foundation to this year's nine seminarians.

The Foundation was organized in 2007 and makes monetary grants for charitable, educational and religious purposes.

Seminarians receiving grants are: Ryan Black, Thomas Donlin, Luke Iyengar, Joshua Johnson, Sub-deacon Evan LeDoux, Deacon Brian Norrell, Nathaniel Tapsak, Sub-deacon Riley Winstead and Tyler Wisniewski.

Juba said the past 18 months of the pandemic created a greater need for parishes resulting in the GCU's board of directors approving a \$10,000 donation to each eparchy plus a \$1,000 donation to a designated food bank in the area.

A highlight of the evening was a video presentation, created by Mark Collins, the Seminary's Adjunct Professor of Research, which captured its uplifting spirit on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of B.C.S.

"We're thankful we have a great staff to work with and all the great support you provide through gathering here for the St. Nicholas Celebration and throughout the year praying and offering up new men to come into the Seminary and become new leaders within the Church," Archbishop William Skurla, president of the Seminary, said.

The Greek Catholic Union, the Archeparchy of Pittsburgh, the Seminary and the St. Nicholas Celebration Committee thank everyone involved with the 2021 event who helped in any way to ensure its success. ■



Food for thought



CLERGY, FAITHFUL OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH
SHARE THEIR TASTY CHRISTMAS MEMORIES

TEXT MESSAGES

by David Mayernik Jr.
Editor



I'm not a fan of nuts. "Hate" may at times be too strong of a word but "strongly dislike" certainly fits the bill.

I was never one to sprinkle crushed-up peanuts on an ice cream sundae and whatever-kind-of nuts-those-are in a box of Cracker Jack along with the caramelized popcorn were always quickly disposed of into the nearest receptacle.

I guess I can stomach a Snickers bar but I'd rather have a Three Musketeers or Milky Way.

And the presence of nuts in my chocolate chip cookie...?

Do not get me started.

That's why I am constantly amazed by the recurring realization that the nutrolls my mom bakes each year is my favorite Christmas food.

I never thought nuts in dough would rise to that level in my personal taste palette but somehow I have enjoyed them my entire life.

This incongruity has perplexed me many times over and been the subject of sleepless nights.

That's how deep my disdain for nuts goes.

But somehow I get excited when I see the freshly baked nutrolls on the kitchen counter top during the Christmas season.

My mom has her nutroll-making down to a science.

She takes then very, *very* seriously.

She follows the recipe handed down from her mother — my grandmother — to a "T."

For the apricot version my cousin Rob likes, she travels 28 miles south from Pittsburgh to Monessen, Pa. to buy apricot filling from the only vendor that sells a product tasty enough for her to use.

A few years ago, she even entered a Pittsburgh-area nutroll baking contest to finish to my surprise in — *gasp!* — third place.

I didn't need to taste a slice of the other contenders to know she should have demanded a recount.

And I'm not typing that only because I'm her first-born.

It's a fact. From a guy who hates nuts. ■

Nothing smells more like Christmas than fresh nutrolls, pirohi percolating on the stove or bobalky right out of the oven.

Of course, there are dozens of other smells and tastes that are unmistakably a vital part of this time of year.

On the next two pages, readers of *The Byzantine Catholic World* share their food memories of Christmases past.

As we all are preparing for the most beautiful Feast Day — the Nativity of Our Lord — we all have fond memories of the foods we made for both the Christmas Eve dinner and also for Christmas Day.

I was taught how to make the Christmas Eve bread (Kracun) by my mother-in-law Margaret Hanchin, Deacon John's mother. I enjoy and look forward to making the special bread each year for the Christmas Eve Supper.

This same recipe can be used to make the sauerkraut and poppyseed bobalky.

She also taught me how to make her delicious nut, poppyseed and apricot rolls. She made a delicious Russian Torte that was made up of both apricot and nut fillings, which had a meringue topping.

Since we lived next door we were happy to get the samples that she would bring over for us to enjoy.

My dad, John Pogorelec, was raised in Slovakia on a farm and I could remember him telling me as a little girl that on Christmas Eve he and his siblings had chores to do in the barn and they could not go up to the main house for Christmas Eve Supper until they saw the first star of the evening.

Will you watch for the first star this Christmas Eve?

As we await the birth of the Christ Child may our hearts be filled with peace, love and joy this special time of year.

Christ is born!
Glorify Him!

Ruth Hanchin
St. Mary, Monessen, Pa.

Christmas Eve Slovak supper: Babalky, mashed lima beans with garlic and butter, sauerkraut browned in sweet butter, babalky bread, washing our hands in money (change and water) for prosperity in the New Year, and setting a place for the welcomed stranger and the blessing of everyone by the eldest family member with Oplatki and honey with herbs!

Grateful Slovak family! The Matichko (which means garden hoe) our name.

Zaluch Mickelovce
SS. Peter and Paul, Tarentum, Pa

Like most others that share the same ethnic background as I, and the many folks that don't, we enjoy and look forward to the culinary delights of our Carpatho-Rusyn traditional Christmas. Personally, I've always thought that no other ethnic food group, except perhaps, the Italian Feast of Seven Fishes comes close to tempting my palate!

When I was a little girl, there was no special food made for the kids, we ate what the grown-ups ate. Just as the late comedian, Rodney Dangerfield said, he was given two choices for dinner: "Take it or leave it."

I am glad that I acquired and now appreciate the delicious ethnic foods and recipes passed on to me by my mom and my Baba. My parents, three brothers and I lived with Baba until she died when I was 11 years old. Although I was so young when she died, living in the same house as Baba made our relationship so much closer and it certainly helped me to understand the Slovak language when she was conversing with my mom or a visiting relative.

Of course, some of my fondest memories while growing up involved food, and Christmas brought out the best of the best. The pirohi, kolbassi, ham, mushroom soup, bobalky and the nut and poppyseed rolls were always on the menu. Unfortunately, when I was younger, I was more interested in eating these foods than learning how to cook them! At the time I was OK with that because my mom was both a good cook and baker. But, I also remember how humble my mom was. When I would



Lori (Liptak) Downey with brothers Steve and Jerry and Baba, Mary Dzama, in 1957.

praise anything she cooked or baked, she would often say that food always tastes better when someone else makes it!

As biased as this may sound, my mom's favorite nutroll recipe, which was given to her by my Aunt Millie is one of the best I've tasted. Now I have that recipe, as well as my mom and baba's own versions of other ethnic favorites.

However, the first time I made one batch of pirohi on my own, the process took eight hours. The family has never let me live that down. Perhaps I should have done less eating and more paying attention while growing up.

Merry Christmas to all!
Christ is Born!
Glorify Him!

Lori Downey
SS. Peter & Paul, Braddock, Pa.



Over the past 30 years I have learned and grown to love the Christmas tradition of the Kennis Family, just outside of Sykesville, Pa.

I know now that the tradition in this particular family has been going on for 83 years.

When I started dating my wife Cathy, there came the occasion for me to experience this tradition at my first Christmas Eve with her extended family.

I grew up a good Ulster Scotsman and couldn't begin to pronounce the names of any of the food Bubba Sophie prepared for us all.

I know that there was some skepticism toward my presence there, but the hospitality that was extended to

me was overwhelming and unmistakable. It was beautiful, and it made the meal, which seemed strange to me, beautiful, as well.

I think that is what the meaning of the Christmas tradition really is. Christ comes to us, no matter our state, and extends that hospitality. He gives us everything that He is and it is beautiful!

Over the next few years, I think the Kennis family actually looked forward to having me over just to see the joy on my face while I ate dinner and I am blessed to have been included.

Deacon Lucas Crawford
Holy Trinity, Sykesville, Pa.



Food for thought



Baba Tutoki 1883-1959



**Helen Tutoki Homulka
1917-present**



**Helen Soltis Kennedy
1953-present**

My sister-in-law took three pictures and combined them into one — showing how traditions continue.

The pictures (above) include my Baba (Mary Tutoki), my Aunt Helen Tutoki Homulka (just turned 104 last week), and myself (Helen Soltis Kennedy) making traditional bread.

I still remember my Baba making bread at her kitchen table, and then

of course, my Aunt who continued to bake until last year.

I'm the novice of the group, but keep the tradition going forward teaching anyone who would like to learn how to make our traditional food.

**Helen Kennedy
St. Mary, Bradenville, Pa.**

Every year the Vasilchek Family gets together at Baba and Zedo's house to prepare the babalky; three generations and growing! We also enjoy eating and making the soups, garlic oplatki and honey, halushki, pirohy, and kolachi.

**Emily Vasilchek
St. Michael, Campbell, Ohio**



When I was growing up in the 1950s. My Mom and Dad, myself and my sister lived in Somerset County in the Coal Town community of Windber, Pa., located 10 miles east of Johnstown, Pa.

Things that I remember were family gatherings for Christmas. My Dad was on the strict side and a tough underground coal miner. Things weren't always given and we were kind of poor. My Mom stayed at home and took care of us and the home duties.

My father made sure that we attended St. Mary's Byzantine Catholic Church, in Windber, Pa. every time there was a Holy Day and every Sunday. Back then, there was a High Mass and a Low Mass.

We all went as a family! I served as an altar boy, from my First Holy Communion, up to my high school

graduation.

Back then there was no such thing as a Saturday Liturgy. But every Saturday morning, there was a 9 a.m. CCD classes for 1-1/2 hrs. {The local nuns ran them}. Then you went straight to confession

My memories at Christmas were helping my mom roll dough for nut rolls. I was always left the spoon and extra nut filling to eat. My sister, being two years older than me, was given the more intricate duties. Like measuring the ingredients just right!

Up next was the making of the Pigs in The Blanket, Halupki, Cabbage Rolls and Stuffed Cabbages. My sister and I weren't allowed to help with this. But we sure watched. My mom was really good at rolling them the same size and tight. To this day after years of watching and remembering the recipe, I make them the very same way. In fact, I make approximately 5,000 to 6,000 each year for other folks to enjoy.

I get phone calls all year long to make up roasters full for weddings, funerals, graduations, holidays, birthdays, etc. I guess they must be pretty good!

Today I have an awesome daughter who is good at doing the same thing!

**Mike Lashinsky
St. John, Scottdale, Pa.**

My Christmas story comes from my childhood. It was a time in the Soviet Union when believing in God was prohibited. And I am assuming now my parents were putting their lives at risk to lose their jobs or worse if they celebrated Christmas.

When the Bethlehem star would appear in the sky, the lights would turn off. The the head of household (my dad) would light the candle in the middle of the table. He would start a prayer with singing the Troparion of the Christmas, saying "Our Father" over and all family members with him.

There used to be 12 dishes at the table: meatless ones. The list is typical: holubki, halushki, pirogi with potato, cabbage, mushrooms, smashed beans, salads, fish, some bread. The vegan soup with mushrooms would have a spicy kolbasy in the next day on Christmas. But this time it is meatless.

I would like to share a poem/story written by my granddaughter, Bethany Lewis.

Bethany is an alumna of Gannon University in Erie, Pa. and this was published in one of Gannon's publications.

This is Bethany's version of what happens at "Baba's house" — my house — on Christmas Eve.

My late husband and I have been blessed with five grandchildren and all of them have participated in the preparation of our Christmas Eve Supper.

The way that we celebrate is the way my parents and grandparents celebrated. Some of the traditions that we share may have come from my grandparents' villages; they immigrated to the United States in the early 1900s, all as single people who met and married here.

My family help with the prepara-

Recipe for Christmas Eve
by Bethany Lewis

Soften dried mushrooms in water and cook them in sauerkraut juice for soup.
Simmer it on the back burner.

In the biggest pot full of water, Boil bags of pirohi in batches. As you carefully swap them out, carefully cut open the bags and carefully let the pirohi fall into warm crockpots. They're hot. Don't rush.

Slice lots of onions. (Don't forget the onions.) Get a pan, melt lots of butter. Drop in the onions, piling them high, and cook them down to golden softness.

Don't drop onions too near the dog. Don't trip over him, either.

Find another pot. Melt more butter. Grab a wooden spoon. Sauté sauerkraut until it looks right. (Then check with Baba just in case.)

There was a whole uncut circle "craychoon" bread which was never cut or eaten. It symbolized Jesus. Some families kept a coin beneath it and expect the blessing from the God for family. There was one more thing symbolizing Jesus. It was "kootya": mixed whole wheat grains with nuts, raisins, poppy seeds, honey.

The Christmas carols used to be sung during the dinner. And some carolers could be expected to visit and sing some carols later on. At the end of the dinner the head of household used to blow out the candle. All were watching the smoke color and direction. White and up — a family can expect the blessing; gray and down — not too much. Somebody could pass away if the smoke will go to a door. The dishes were kept at the table for a night in respect and honor for family members who passed away.

**Father Vasyl Polyak
SS. Peter and Paul, Tarentum, Pa.**

tions: bobalki, pirohi (I no longer make them but rely on the various "Church Pirohi Ladies"), sauerkraut and mushroom soup and my family's tradition of predicting the coming year by lighting and blowing out a blessed candle. We don't dip garlic in honey as my parents and grandparents did, we dip our nut/poppyseed/apricot rolls.

As you can imagine with 11 people and a dog in the kitchen, it can be hectic — and a lot of fun!

And we remember that one year we forgot the onions for the pirohi until the very last minute and had to scramble to get them ready!!

So here's Bethany's version of Christmas Eve at Baba's House. I hope you enjoy it as much as my family and I do.

**Phyllis Lewis
Holy Trinity, Wall, Pa.**

Change the water in the big pot. Bring it back to a boil. Boil bobiki briefly, then scoop it out. (Imitate Baba's technique.) Dump most in a roaster with the kraut. Put some in a bowl with butter. (Poll the house-- how many eat sauerkraut now? Proportion accordingly.)

Say grace:
"Bless us, O Lord"
and "Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu."

Serve soup, then bobiki and kraut, then pirohi.

Joke about the story where the father takes another drink: read only once and soon lost when Kevin's wife of 30 years was his girlfriend, but referenced every year since.

Dip nut roll, apricot roll, poppyseed roll in honey. Crack walnuts. Oldest to youngest, blow out a candle and use the smoke to forecast the year. Get very specific. Try not to laugh too hard.

Takes all evening. Serves 11, with leftovers and memories.

I remember how many Kolachi my mother, Kathryn Virus, had in her large, basement freezer. She would make nut Kolachi, apricot, poppyseed and prune Kolachi.

Before Christmas she would give her Kolachi to family and friends. It's so nice to remember such a generous heart!

**Karen (Virus) Lindberg
St. Michael, Campbell, Ohio**

I remember helping my mother make the Bobalky with sauerkraut on Christmas Eve, which I carry on to this day.

My mother used my father's mother's bread recipe to make home made bread and the dough balls. I use the same recipe to this day. I never knew either of my grandmothers since they both passed away, but I have their holiday traditions that I carry on.

**Kathryn Smith
St. Gregory, Upper St. Clair, Pa.**

Celebrating the Season

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST CATHEDRAL IN MUNHALL, PA.

St. John the Baptist Cathedral in Munhall, Pa. held its annual Holiday Extravaganza event Nov. 21 under the direction of Very Rev. Andrew Deskevich. The fund raising event was a big success. ■



Photos by Nick Havrilla Sr.

ST. ELIAS IN MUNHALL, PA.

by Mary Caryl Planicki
St. Elias, Munhall, Pa.

Parishioners at St. Elias in Munhall, Pa. decorated the church indoors and out in preparation for Christmas. Many thanks to all

who stayed after Liturgy to add the festive touch to our beautiful church. The beautiful outdoor icon was written many years ago by the mother of Father Ivan Mina. ■



by Mary Caryl Planicki
St. Elias, Munhall, Pa.

St. Elias gathered together as a parish family to give thanks to God for all of His blessings.

We are grateful to have both Father Vitalii Stashkevych and Father Roberta Pipta concelebrate Divine Liturgy. Sister Marion Dobos also joined us.

Our parish family also brought food items for those less fortunate. They will be donated to the Rainbow Food Kitchen in Homestead, Pa. ■





Feast of St. Nicholas

SS. PETER AND PAUL IN BRADDOCK, PA.

*by Arleen Jama
SS. Peter and Paul, Braddock, Pa.*

SS. Peter and Paul in Braddock, Pa. had a heavenly surprise from St. Nicholas Dec. 5.

He stopped by to hand out candy, which was enjoyed by all.

It was a bittersweet occasion in

which St. Nicholas (Rich Trankocy) handed over his staff to a new St. Nick.

Rich Trankocy had served for years as St. Nicholas at the Byzantine Catholic Serra Club Christmas party with the Seminarians. ■



HOLY GHOST IN MCKEES ROCKS, PA.

*by Maria Iyengar
Holy Ghost, McKees Rocks, Pa.*

Holy Ghost in McKees Rocks, Pa. celebrated St. Nicholas Day, as St. Nicholas made his entrance following the 9 a.m. Divine Lit-

urgy Dec. 5 to greet the people and pass out gold coins.

The Youth Group then presented stories of his life and he joined the students for photos, gifts, lunch and socializing. ■



ST. NICHOLAS IN GREENSBURG, PA.

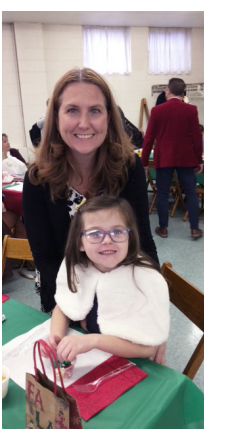
*by John Gomolak
St. Nicholas, Greensburg, Pa.*

Following the Dec. 5 Divine Liturgy at St. Nicholas in Greensburg, Pa., where Father Regis Dusecina is pastor, parishioners

celebrated St. Nicholas Sunday with a breakfast in the church hall.

The children sang carols, and St. Nicholas gave out gifts to the children.

A good time was had by all. ■



SS. PETER AND PAUL IN TARENTUM, PA.

*by Father Vasyly Polyak
SS. Peter and Paul, Tarentum, Pa.*

Such a wonderful event took place Dec. 5 at SS. Peter and Paul in Tarentum, Pa.

St. Nicholas himself visited our young faithful with his blessing and small gifts. Our youth honored him and the rest of the faithful with a brief but very nice

Christmas concert.

Besides that, kids have prepared their own gifts and donations for people in need. It is a great sign that the deeds of mercy of St. Nicholas have been continued by the young faithful. It makes our church alive and will keep growing in the future. ■



ST. GREGORY IN UPPER ST. CLAIR, PA.

Thanksgiving at St. Gregory

by Father Valerian Michlik
St. Gregory, Upper St. Clair, Pa.

Sunday, November 21, was a busy day at St. Gregory in Upper St. Clair, Pa.

Following the Divine Liturgy, our St. Gregory's Bethany Ministry gathered in our parish library for an important meeting during which visitations were planned to our parish homebound.

Our ECF students gathered together to celebrate "Thanksgiving at St. Gregory's."

As part of their class, our students learned about the holy tradition of prospora baking. Prospora (Greek for "offering") is bread prepared for use in the Divine Liturgy.

Since this bread is very special, it cannot be just any bread, made from any combination of ingredients. For centuries, prospora is baked according to ancient recipes that are very simple — wheat flour, water, salt, and yeast — accompanied by prayer.

Prior to having their prospora baked, each student stamped their prospora with the image bearing a cross and the letters "IC XC NIKA," an abbreviation from the Greek, meaning "Jesus Christ Victorious" (or "Conqueror").

This was a wonderful day for all, as we learned the holy tradition of prospora baking, a humbling and also a very prayerful and joyful service in our parish family. ■



Bethany Ministry members plan visits to homebound.



Taste of Heaven

by Father Valerian Michlik
St. Gregory, Upper St. Clair, Pa.

This year, St Gregory's Taste of Heaven Cookie Sale took place on Saturday, Dec. 4, which is recognized as National Cookie Day in our country.

Due to the ongoing pandemic, this holiday event, once again,

took place with modifications.

We express our sincere thanks to our dedicated parishioners who baked 4,000 cookies for our patrons who expressed their gratitude to our parish family for continuing this wonderful tradition in the South Hills of Pittsburgh. ■



ST. MICHAEL IN CAMPBELL, OHIO

Being thankful

by Father Kevin Marks
St. Michael, Campbell, Ohio

During the Nov. 16 ECF class, our parish 5th and 6th students learned the importance of focusing on being thankful for the things they have instead of complaining about what they don't.

At the end of the lesson, each Byzkid created a "Thankful Jar" lantern which was covered with words representing everything they are thankful for.

We are so very thankful for our catechist, Miss Geri and this awesome, meaningful lesson. Gratitude is the right attitude! ■





SS. PETER AND PAUL IN TARENTUM, PA.

Nutrolls project

by Father Vasyl Polyak
SS. Peter and Paul, Tarentum, Pa.

We were finally able to gather together at SS. Peter and Paul in Tarentum, Pa. for our wonderful nut roll sales project, which has been sponsored here for decades.

It was nice to come over and meet new people and enjoy great company and conversation. There were some guys not even from our parish family who enjoyed coming over to help.

Also, it is a good way to help the community, as well. Our rolls are popular and loved here.

Unfortunately this project was canceled last year because of

the pandemic. But local people around and even at a far distance still miss and need it.

Faithful of SS. Peter and Paul and other crew members are glad to make this "sweet" effort for your Thanksgiving and Christmas celebration.

But the much more important thing is that Jesus himself unites hearts in one and inspires them to serve the community through this project. That is why it is so popular and appreciated by the local community. Isn't it wonderful!

A very special thanks to GCU and other sponsors for their help and support. ■



SS. PETER AND PAUL IN BRADDOCK, PA.

Making Christmas

Posted on SS. Peter and Paul's Facebook page Nov. 28:

Thank you to everyone who stayed after liturgy this morning to help decorate our church! Our Christmas decorations are 98 percent complete. Despite two extra trees appearing, our helpers were very creative and imaginative! The results as you can see are beautiful! ■



ST. MARY IN WINDBER, PA.

Honoring veterans

by William Kosbute
St. Mary, Windber, Pa.

Along with a special Liturgical Intention for all of our veterans living and deceased, Father Ivan

Rusyn gave a special prayer and blessing to veterans at St. Mary Church of the Dormition in Windber, Pa. at both the Nov. 13 and 14 Liturgies. ■



Father Ivan Rusyn blesses veterans John Hensal and Ed Kolson on Nov. 13



Father Ivan Rusyn blesses veterans Vincent Kosbute, John Boburchuk and Michael Spinelli on Nov. 14

Happy 50th anniversary

by William Kosbute
St. Mary, Windber, Pa.

This June, John and Gloria Boburchuk of St. Mary Church of the Dormition in Windber, Pa. celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary with special prayers and a blessing offered by Father Ivan Rusyn.

John and Gloria are very active parishioners within the parish, and have passed their love of their Byzantine Catholic faith on to their children and grandchildren who themselves are also very active in the parish. ■



Father Ivan Rusyn blesses Gloria and John Boburchuk as altar servers and grandsons Trey and John Frank look on.





BULLETIN BOARD

Mount St. Macrina online program

Mount Saint Macrina House of Prayer, 510 W. Main St., Uniontown Pa. has announced an upcoming virtual online program.

For more information or to register, call 724-438-7149 or email hpmsm@verizon.net.

■ **Reading Series:** 10-11:30 a.m. Thursday mornings Jan. 13, 20, 27 and Feb. 3. The book is titled "The Grace of Yes: Eight Virtues for Generous Living" by Lisa M. Hendey. Offering: \$20. The series will be conducted on Zoom and led by Sister Barbara Jean Mihalchick, OSBM. ■



The Archeparchy of Pittsburgh Chancery

will be CLOSED

on Dec. 24 for Christmas Eve and Jan. 31 for New Year's Eve

The Chancery's regular hours:

9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

66 Riverview Avenue | Pittsburgh, PA 15214 | 412-231-4000

Reindeer tracks!



PETERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Colo. — The North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) is getting ready to track Santa's yuletide journey! The *NORAD Tracks Santa* website, www.noradsanta.org features a Countdown Calendar, a Kid's Countdown Village complete with games and activities that change daily, and video messages from students and troops from around the world. The web site is available in eight languages: English, French, Spanish, German, Italian, Japanese, Brazilian Portuguese and Chinese. ■

Cathedral of St. John the Baptist

Schedule of Services - Christmas 2021

Very Reverend Andrew Deskevich, Rector



Friday, Dec. 24

Vigil, Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord

9 a.m. Royal Hours
8 p.m. Vigil Liturgy

Saturday, Dec. 25

Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord

Christmas Day

9 a.m. Divine Liturgy

Cathedral of St. John the Baptist
210 Greentree Road | Munhall, Pa. 15120 | 412-461-0944

View services LIVE on the web at
www.stjohnsbyzantinecathedral.com

DATES TO REMEMBER



DEC. 19

"Christmas at the Cathedral"
Pittsburgh Byzantine Catholic Archeparchial Choir
St. John the Baptist Cathedral, Munhall, Pa.

DEC. 25

Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ
Chancery closed Dec. 24

DEC. 26

Feast of the Synaxis of the Holy Theotokos

DEC. 27

Feast of the Holy Protomartyr Stephen

DEC. 31

Vigil of the Feast of the Circumcision of our Lord
Vigil of the Feast of St. Basil the Great
New Year's Eve
Chancery closed Dec. 31

See more upcoming events at www.archpitt.org



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66 Riverview Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15214
Tel: 412.231.4000
Fax: 412.231.1697
E-mail: bcw@archpitt.org
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