

WORLD

THE BYZANTINE CATHOLIC



Special
Christmas
issue!

THE OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH VOL. 69 NO. 13 CHRISTMAS 2024

INSIDE



CHRISTMAS GREETINGS FROM ARCHBISHOP WILLIAM

*Annual Christmas pastoral from
Metropolitan Archbishop William Skurla
Page 3*



CHRISTMAS STORIES

*Faithful of the Archdiocese tell stories of
celebrating past and present
Page 4*



ST. NICHOLAS CELEBRATION

*Scenes from the annual dinner at St. John
the Baptist Cathedral in Munhall, Pa.
Pages 5 to 7*

CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!



UPS 081500
ISSN 07442289

**Official publication of the
Byzantine Catholic
Archeparchy of Pittsburgh**

Serving parish communities in
central and western Pennsylvania,
Louisiana, eastern Ohio, Oklahoma,
Tennessee, Texas and West Virginia

Published monthly (12 issues)
plus two seasonal special issues

Byzantine Catholic Press Associates
66 Riverview Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15214
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

Annual Subscription Rates
US \$14
Canadian \$17
International \$20

Periodicals Postage PAID at Pittsburgh, PA

Postmaster: send address changes to:
The Byzantine Catholic World
66 Riverview Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15214

*Please allow 2 to 3 weeks for address
changes to take effect.*

Submissions deadline:
21st of the month prior to
the month of publication.



*The Byzantine
Catholic World*
is a member of the
Catholic Press
Association.

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.

Pittsburgh Creche blessed for Christmas season

METROPOLITAN ARCHBISHOP WILLIAM C. SKURLA AMONG RELIGIOUS LEADERS PRESENT



The annual blessing of the Pittsburgh Creche by the Christian Leaders Fellowship, an ecumenical bishops and denominational leaders, at US Steel Tower in downtown Pittsburgh, Pa. took place Nov. 21.

The crèche has appeared annually since 1999 and is the only authorized replica of the nativity scene in Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome.

According to the Pittsburgh Foundation, Louis D. Astorino, an architect and member of the Christmas Festival Committee visited the "larger than life-sized" Creche at St. Peter's Square in Rome's Vatican City in 1993 and wanted to do something special for Pittsburgh's Christmas Festival.

Metropolitan Archbishop William C. Skurla was among the religious leaders who attended.

What follows are excerpts of the blessing service:

Most Rev. David Zubik, Bishop, Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh, welcomed everyone to "this beautiful tradition...which stands as a powerful reminder to us about what this Season is all about, namely that Jesus is our Saviour, is our Light."

"It is so good for us to be here; to stand together in the middle of our city around an image of hope, mercy and peace. In the midst of holiday sights and sounds, we want to recall that the heart of this Season is the coming into the world of God's own Son. Our city needs this witness to peace and goodwill."

Rev. Liddy Barlow, Executive Minister, CASWPA

"As early as the 4th century, representations of the Nativity of the Lord were painted as wall decorations depicting not only the infancy narrative accounts of Christ's birth but also the words of the

prophets that the Messiah would be born in the midst of animals in a manger. In its present form, the custom of displaying figures depicting the birth of Jesus Christ owes its origins to Francis of Assisi, who made the Christmas crèche or manger for Christmas Eve of 1223."

The Most Rev. Ketlen Solak, Bishop, Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh

"Therefore we meet here to dedicate this scene that speaks to us that the Eternal Word of God came into a harsh world with all the defenselessness of a newborn child."

Rev. Alyce Weaver Dunn, Western PA Conference of the UMC

"We read in the Gospel of Luke: In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment when Quirinius was governor of Syria. So all went to be enrolled each to his own town and Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea to the city of David that is called Bethlehem because he was of the House of family of David to be enrolled with Mary his betrothed, who was with child, and while they were there the time came for her to have her child and she gave birth to her firstborn Son. She wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger because there no room for them in the inn."

Canon Bill Henry, Anglican Diocese of Pittsburgh

"Brothers and sisters, when we look on these figures, the Christmas gospel comes alive. We realized that there were some, at least, who welcomed Him, honored

Him, and made a home for Him."
Metropolitan Archbishop William C. Skurla, Byzantine Catholic Archeparchy of Pittsburgh

"The participants in that first Christmas came to hear the wondrous message: this child is for all people. His salvation is meant for everyone. The Angels proclaimed "Glory to God in the highest and on Earth, everywhere on Earth, peace."

Rev. David Ackerman, Penn West Conference of the United Church of Christ

"Let us ask for God's blessing on this Christmas manger and upon ourselves that we who reflect on the birth of Jesus may share in the salvation he accomplished. Let our response to the following intercession be "Come Lord, dwell with us."

Rev. Brian Evans, SWPA Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Also present were **Major Joyce Hartshon and Major Gregory Hartshorn of The Salvation Army, Western PA Division** and **The Rev. Ralph Lowe, Pittsburgh Presbytery, PC-USA,** who offered intercessions.

Each religious leader then blessed the crèche with Holy Water.

"Now let us end our worship by asking God's blessing for ourselves, for our loved ones, and for our whole community. May Christ our God enlighten our hearts and minds, keep you in peace, and bring you a share in the Heavenly Glory forever and ever. Amen."

Archbishop William ■



CHRISTMAS GREETINGS 2024



All I Want For Christmas!

*I don't want a lot for Christmas
There is just one thing I need
I don't care about the presents
Underneath the Christmas tree
I just want you for my own
More than you could ever know
Make my wish come true oh
All I want for Christmas is you*

Dear People,

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

This Christmas we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem! We continue to rejoice in the celebration of God's greatest gift of coming down from heaven to be born into our world. By His birth over 2,000 years ago, we celebrate the Christmas liturgies through singing the special sacred melodies of the Divine Liturgy and the Christmas hymns and songs.

The holy music reminds us of the events in Bethlehem. The prayers, music, and foods also bring to life our memories of all our family's celebrations. When we hear the words and music, we recall the faces of grandparents, parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends living and those in heaven are also brought to mind. In similarity to the Christmas hymn *God is with Us*, they are with us.

Here am I with the children God has given me, for God is with us. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light, for God is with us. For a child is born to us; a son is given to us, for God is with us (God is with Us)

The traditional Christmas songs and new popular ones grow each year. Almost every musician produces a Christmas song or album. *Silent Night* or even *I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas* were the most popular songs in the age of records, radio, and television.

The number one Christmas song from this year again is *All I Want For Christmas is You!* It was written and sung by Mariah Carey. It was released as a 45 rpm vinyl record single in 1994. The vinyl record sold more than 10 million copies. Like many Christmas songs, it is more popular now on the radio than when it was released thirty years ago. The song has been downloaded 2 billion times from the internet.

It is a joyful song which calls to mind everything that happens on Christmas. The sight of the Christmas trees, the appearance of Santa Claus or Saint Nicholas, and receiving presents are not as important as people who join us to celebrate Christmas. Without gathering our loved ones or our church family, the celebration is a little less special. Like the Holy family in the manger in the cave outside of Bethlehem, it would have been lonely without the shepherds the three Kings from the East.

The *All I Want for Christmas* song falls a little short in remembering the deepest reason for all the Christmas joy which is even more than the joy of gathering together. The current hit Christmas single does not mention the birth of Jesus, but the record has a surprise twist.

To find Jesus, you have to flip the Mariah Carey's original 45 RPM vinyl single record to side B. On the other side of the vinyl disk, Carey sings *Joy to the World*. *Joy to the World* is the most popular English Christmas Hymn. It's good news of the birth of Christ resounding through the earth has been sung for over three centuries. The inspiration for the Christmas hymn is from the Book of Psalms attributed to King David.

The verses of *Joy to the World* repeat the sounding joy again and again until everyone and even the hills and fields sing out the wonders of his love. We are called to sing and to go out from our celebration to spread the news that Jesus was born and we glorify Him with our words and actions. With each passing year, we do our best to keep the message of Jesus's birth fresh.

From all of us at the Archeparchy of Pittsburgh, we thank you for your prayers and support during the past year. And, we wish you a blessed Christmas season and a Happy and Blessed New Year.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ William C Skurla

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

Joy to the world then we sing
Let the earth receive her King
Joy to the world then we sing
Let the angel voices ring

Joy to World



TEXT MESSAGES

by David Mayernik Jr.
Editor



When I sent out an email requesting stories for this year's Christmas issue, I didn't know what to expect.

But a common theme emerged among the submissions on this page: how Christmas Day celebrations change as the years go by.

These days, I only have to travel a mile or so to my parents' house on Christmas Day.

When I was growing up, we traveled an hour south of Pittsburgh, Pa. to my grandparents' houses in Charleroi and Monessen.

It was always an exciting car trip, sitting in the back seat of the station wagon with my brother and sister.

I haven't traveled that route in a long time, but I can still see every street and turn in my mind.

There were always lots of sights on the way: the majestic rolling hills of Trax Farms, lots of Christmas lights displays, and Al's Cafe (as kids, we pronounced it Al's "Kayf").

One odd thing I think about is a restaurant named Ribs Fo Yo Jibs on Route 88.

Everyone in the car always repeated the restaurant's name out loud every time we saw it.

There was something about how it just rolled off the tongue: "Ribs Fo Yo Jibs."

Unfortunately, we never took the time to stop in.

I'm not much for driving long distances these days but I miss traveling those 28 miles every Christmas.

■ I'll end the year in this space the same way I have every year since 2016, with the closing lines of my favorite Christmas poem.

It was published in The New Yorker on Dec. 20, 1952 and was written by E.B. White, the author of beloved children's books "Stuart Little" and "Charlotte's Web."

Once again, it's worth a Google search to read the entire poem.

And last, we greet all skaters on small natural ponds at the edge of woods toward the end of afternoon. Merry Christmas, skaters! Ring, steel! Grow red, sky! Die down, wind! Merry Christmas to all and to all a good morrow!

Have a blessed Christmas and a healthy 2025! ■



Christmas 1999: mom Agnes Liptak with siblings, nephew, aunts, uncle and cousins celebrating at Don and Lori's home.

"Time marches on": a short, simple, yet profound idiom. Those three words apply to all of us in just about every aspect of our lives.

Our circumstances change, yet life continues to move forward and so do we.

How we celebrate Christmas is no exception. It is inevitable that the Christmases of our youth are very different, or at least a little different than they are today.

While growing up, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day were spent at our home with my mom, dad and my three brothers. My Baba, Mary Dzama, lived with us. I was only 11 when she died, but, living in the same household with her made our relationship even closer. Having her with us was very special and the holidays were even better with all our ethnic traditions. On Christmas Eve day some last minute gift wrapping was done, while the house was filled with the aroma of a ham in the oven and mushroom soup and bobalki on top of the stove. Later in the evening we attended Christmas Eve Liturgy. Back in the day when Baba was here we had Midnight Mass, years later it was changed to 9 or 10 p.m. Most often our immediate family was joined by aunts, uncles and cousins

after church to sit down and enjoy the traditional Slovak foods made hours earlier. Since Christmas Eve was busier and we enjoyed our company into the early morning hours, Christmas day was more quiet, yet filled with the Spirit of the birth of Our Lord.

Fast forward many years, from those happy and very missed days to more recent times. My parents, grandparents and most aunts and uncles are no longer here. My only aunt still with us is my mom's 97-year-old sister, Aunt Dorothy.

Now it is my turn, along with lots of help from my husband, Don, to carry on the traditions we experienced in both of our homes while growing up. More of our family and our relatives live in different states, so the crowd is now smaller. Don and I now host our siblings and relatives on Christmas Day and days following. While most of what we do is the same as what our parents did, we have also started some new traditions. After all, the only constant in life is change..."Time marches on!"

Have a Happy & Blessed Christmas. Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

Lori Downey
SS Peter & Paul, Braddock, Pa.

Over the river and through the woods...

This year's Christmas stories focuses on the "where" of Christmas Day: where do you celebrate and how did you get there? On this page, readers of *The Byzantine Catholic World* share the stories of where they spend Christmas.

When I was growing up, my family would drive from Texas to Minnesota every other year to visit family for Christmas. Along the way, we would normally stop to meet with my grandfather in Illinois and my great grandmother in Iowa. One of my favorite parts was driving through the plains in Iowa and seeing them covered in snow.

I loved getting the opportunity to be in snow, so we would often do things like sledding or skiing. There was a school near my great grandmother's

house we would go to to sled and my great grandmother, despite being in her 90s, would sled with us!

One funny memory with our relatives in Minnesota is that my uncle left a large tip at a restaurant. Upon leaving, our server ran outside, chasing us down and screaming his name. It turns out, she thought that he made a mistake when writing the tip.

Harrison Otto
St. John Chrysostom,
Houston, Texas

Well, here again we celebrate Christ's birth. One of the biggest birthday bashes there is.

For many years I've been a Santa Claus. But I tell my kiddos the real meaning of Christmas is NOT about me. I'm just a side show, bringing in the Great News as to why we celebrate this worthy and awesome event. Christmas Day is reserved for our family to eat and sit and talk and open gifts. There's no politics that's allowed to be discussed. Politics and religion do not mix.

This is the procedure we do and use. My wife's birthday is Oct. 23. Every year, at this birthday party we pull names out of a hat, for that year's Christmas. There are eight names in this hat. You are not allowed to pull your spouse's name. If you do, you put it back and choose again. The rules are: You have to spend at least \$75 on whoever you pick. Everyone is to write a list to whoever they picked of five items that they'd like to maybe have for a gift. The grandkids are excluded from this event.

Then on Christmas Day everyone eats together at our 14-chair table. Then we all go to the living room (where our tree is), and someone will start to distribute the name tagged gifts. We open them up and have laughs and fun and thank everyone for their gifts.

The T.V gets turned off! It's a distraction. Even though this year, the Steelers will be on sometime, on Christmas Day.

There's me, my wife of 47 years, son Mike, daughter Charity, and son Adam.

Now that they are all in their 40s and married, we had to make justifiable adjustments as to the who, what, where, and when of the festivities we hold. This holds for Easter, Christmas, birthdays, etc.

So my wife came up with the plan of Every Other Year {E.O.Y.}. It's been holding strong, for 20 years now.

That way the families got to share every other year at their spouses' events. It works out pretty well.

We are very lucky that our kids don't live that far away. One is in Allegheny County. The other is in Westmoreland County and the other is in Fayette County.

We live in Westmoreland County which is the middle of the three. There's only two grandchildren thus far.

We used to invite a special friend (every year) because he had no-one to be with. But he passed away last year.

Christmas is still very special to our family.

Mike Lashinsky
St. John the Baptist, Scottdale, Pa.

As a child, traveling from Colorado to North Braddock, Pa. to visit my Baba and Zedo (and extended family) for Christmas was magical. Our family's Christmas Eve was rich with tradition — a feast of bobalki, sauerkraut and mushroom soup, and pirohi, followed by midnight Liturgy at SS. Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church in Braddock, Pa.

I worried about St. Nicholas finding me away from home and without a fireplace in my grandparents' house. I helped bake cookies for St. Nicholas and put out food for his reindeer. After drifting off to sleep, I awoke to the

sound of bells on Christmas morning. Presents were there, proving Saint Nicholas had found me!

The recipes, the prayers, our cultural rituals and faith — these aren't just memories, but a living legacy I hope to pass down, keeping our family's Christmas spirit alive through generations.

Sarah Jama Peek,
Holy Protection Byzantine
Catholic Church, Denver, Colo.
and SS. Peter and Paul,
Braddock, Pa.



Three generations of Jama, Peek, Tomic, and Harris families.



by David Mayernik Jr.
Editor

During the Moleben service before the 67th annual Saint Nicholas Charity Dinner, Rev. Ron Barusefski, Rector of the Byzantine Catholic Seminary of SS. Cyril and Methodius, discussed Hall of Fame New York Yankees manager Casey Stengel in his homily.

Before a World Series versus the cross-town rival Brooklyn Dodgers, Stengel showed a young Mickey Mantle around the outfield, showing him what to expect of the eccentricities of Ebbets Field.

“How do you know all this?,” a stunned Mantle asked Stengel.

“You mean you actually played the game?”

“This story tells us great managers are not born on the bench. Much the same way, no one is born a saint. They started out like you and I,” Father Ron said.

“(St. Nicholas) was not born that way. He was made that way. When we have a life like that, we are closer to St. Nicholas.”

The annual dinner, held Dec. 8 at St. John the Baptist Cathedral in Munhall, Pa., benefits the Seminary and is co-sponsored by the Greek Catholic Union, which is celebrating the 132nd anniversary of its founding in 1892, and the Archeparchy of Pittsburgh.

George Juba, GCU president and CEO, presented Metropolitan Archbishop William C. Skurla with the fraternal organization’s annual contribution to the Seminary, which this year totaled \$100,000.

The organization has donated \$3.9 million to the Seminary since 1960.

He also presented \$250 checks funded by the GCU Foundation to this year’s 10 seminarians: Subdeacon Abraham Barahmeh, Alex Broussard, William Coupe, Chad Durante, Deacon Joshua Johnson, Subdeacon Nicholas Krivacs, Subdeacon Mark Le Roy, Adam Marquart, Harrison Otto, and David Varga.

St. Nicholas is patron saint of the GCU.

“St. Nicholas exemplifies the spirit of giving and compas-

Story continued on page 6

“It is truly a collaborative effort”

ST. NICHOLAS CHARITY DINNER AT ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST CATHEDRAL IN MUNHALL, PA. CELEBRATES 67TH YEAR IN SUPPORT OF SS. CYRIL AND METHODIUS SEMINARY



Metropolitan Archbishop William C. Skurla



Bishop Robert M. Pipta of the Eparchy of Parma



Father Ron Barusefski, Rector, The Byzantine Catholic Seminary of SS. Cyril and Methodius



George Juba, GCU President and CEO



Master of ceremonies Chris Singel



Diane and Robert Grip



67TH ANNUAL ST. NICHOLAS CHARITY DINNER



St. Nicholas
Charity Dinner

continued from page 5

sion. St. Nicholas, known for his boundless generosity and miracles he performed, serves as a great inspiration to all of us. His acts of kindness, from providing dowries for impoverished young women to saving sailors in distress, remind us of the profound impact we can have on others with selfless actions," said George.

"We are so grateful for your presence here and your generosity toward our Seminary," Father Ron told those gathered in St. John the Baptist Social Center.

"Indeed, it is truly a collaborative effort. All of you give so much, your time and your talent. I'm always fond of saying if you want to continue vocations to the Seminary and religious life, it begins with our parish life."

"It always a joy to continue to look to the future and to say that we do have a Seminary, we do have many young men preparing for the priesthood and 13 students preparing for the Diaconate. We'll be back on an ordination rampage again soon," Metropolitan Archbishop William C. Skurla said.

"We thank you for all of your support which makes it possible for us to be one of the few Churches in the United States who has their own Seminary program of formation."

Those gathered also viewed the 30-minute program, "Treasury of Blessings," which aired on EWTN to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Byzantine Ruthenian Church Exarchate.

It was produced by Robert and Diane Grip, who had access to Archeparchy archives, which included photos and 16 mm film "which probably has never seen the light of day."

The film was projected onto a white board and captured on a smart phone.

"We're delighted to share these home movies with you. Maybe you'll see yourself, maybe you'll see your mother or your father," Robert, who is a former award-winning television anchor at WALA in Mobile, Ala.

"We may live in Alabama, but our heart lies right here," Diane said. ■

The Greek Catholic Union, the Archeparchy of Pittsburgh, the Seminary and the St. Nicholas Celebration Committee thank everyone involved with the 2024 event who helped in any way to ensure its success.

67TH ANNUAL ST. NICHOLAS CHARITY DINNER



Photos by Mitchell Valvano



“It’s been a true blessing”

TYLER KISS OF ST. GREGORY IN UPPER ST. CLAIR, PA. IS A HERO FOR THE HOMELESS

by David Mayernik Jr.
Editor

Tyler Kiss is an advocate for the homeless population of Pittsburgh, Pa. through the local charity Heroes for the Homeless.

In fact, he’s on a first name basis with some men and women and even communicates with them on a cellphone.

“Another thing that’s been really nice with about half a dozen other homeless people in my greater community is a lot of homeless people actually have cellphones. By having a cellphone, I’m able to have their (phone) number. I’m in contact with them,” he said.

“On Monday night this week, actually, I met someone to drop off a sleeping bag.

“It really has become a crazy experience but it’s one I actually love.”

Now in his senior year at Duquesne University, Tyler, who attends St. Gregory in Upper St. Clair, Pa., is involved in the parish’s Advent Project this year to benefit Heroes for the Homeless.

He spearheaded a project to make bags out of t-shirts, which will distributed to the homeless.

The parish also collected items including winter coats, gloves, tarps, baby wipes, disposable razors, and toothpaste.

Tyler plans make a career out of helping people. His major at Duquesne University is Biochemistry with an eye toward medical school next year.

He also works as an EMT for amateur sports teams and Duquesne’s ice hockey team.

Tell me about St. Gregory’s Advent Project.

It’s one I was really excited about because this is an extension of something I’ve already done a number of times with other groups through the Heroes for the Homeless initiative.

Originally our charity was focused on providing items so necessary to the homeless of Pittsburgh yet so overlooked by other charitable foundations meant to benefit these people.

I gave the example in Church a couple weeks ago about the canned food; they have no way of opening the cans.

As our charity kind of grew and attending Duquesne, I was able to see the homelessness firsthand. We were able to really target what we were collecting. The goal of our mission is to serve the people and meet them where they are at any



Tyler Kiss



given point throughout the year.

How did you get the idea to make these bags?

In my freshman year, I came across this idea with my parents on Pinterest — people making these bags. At first, it seemed like a good way to give a homeless person something to carry their belongings in, as these t-shirts are so stretchy, you can use a really small shirt and when you make a bag out of it you can pack a lot in it.

After we made shirts with some clubs and organizations on (Duquesne’s) campus and distributed them on Forbes Avenue and the South Side, we realized they really enjoy how personable the bags were because they have logos on them. Some people would donate t-shirts of Pittsburgh sports teams and homeless Pittsburgh

sports fans receiving the bags would love that. I knew that hosting a similar type of service event as part of the Advent Project for the Church this year would be a lot of fun and a lot of people here, as well, are goal-oriented and have that mission of service. It’s always enjoyable when you can get a group of people with a common interest working towards a common goal.

What has been your experience with meeting the homeless one-on-one?

It’s been a true blessing. It’s really shaped who I’ve become the past couple of years and never in a million years did I see it this way. I lived in the dorms my first two years on campus and just walking around the city to different buildings, to go shopping, wherever it may be, I would encounter them

and have a conversation with them and get more used to interacting with them. However, whenever I started to realize that I had tangible items for these people that they needed, that opened up room for more conversation.

Being on campus longer and longer and eventually moving to the South Side where the homeless scene is even more prevalent, I started to develop relationships. These have really evolved and I can’t say this enough: it really shows how you can target a mission just by having a conversation with someone.

I’ve figured out some things people need they don’t have access to, I’ve learned some stories from homeless people that are truly heart-breaking and definitely have been eye-opening to me;

continued on page 9



“It’s been a true blessing”

continued from page 8

you can’t judge a book by its cover. Some people are homeless for some really unfortunate reasons.

What have they told you?

There are lots of issues with people not being able to see their families, becoming estranged from their families. There’s people who lose support of their children and develop substance use disorders, which is really sad.

There’s a woman I met about a year-and-a-half ago who always collects money from people; she stands on the corner in the South Side and she’s there every day like clockwork. She’s an absolute angel. I love talking to her...we’ve been on a first-name basis for awhile. I’m really happy to know her actual name because another thing people don’t realize is when you’re a homeless person, society does this thing where you’re out-cast. You oftentimes aren’t even called by your real name amongst homeless people. You have a “street name” and you have your actual name. A lot of times people become distrusted and objectified by civilians just walking past them who will spit on the ground or not even grant them a gaze, a hello, let alone a dollar. A lot of times the homeless community has a mistrust for these people so the fact that I now know this woman’s name — her true name, not her “street name” — is truly incredible.

Where does your inner strength come from to do this?

It’s hard to answer that question. It’s always been about seeing a need and doing something to meet the need; has been my biggest driving force behind wanting to grow this, wanting to expand it in new capacities; now we empower young leaders to do something similar.

Yeah, it started off super, super simple and lot of times it’s still that way. I walk to school and I walk past a dozen homeless people every day. Especially with any type of project and this Advent project where we develop a collection of goods that can easily be distributed on a walk to school, it’s something that’s really exciting for me and I really can’t stress it enough how easy to is just to have a conversation with someone and pick them up a little bit just by giving them something like those bags. ■

Final synod document is magisterial, must be accepted, Pope Francis says



Pope Francis and members of the Synod of Bishops on synodality attend the synod’s final working session Oct. 26 in the Paul VI Audience Hall at the Vatican. (Catholic News Service photo/Vatican Media)

*by Justin McLellan
OSV News*

VATICAN CITY (Catholic News Service) — Doubling down on the centrality of synodality in the Catholic Church, Pope Francis said that it is now up to local churches to accept and implement proposals from the final document approved the Synod of Bishops on synodality.

Approved by the pope, the synod’s final document “participates in the ordinary magisterium of the successor of Peter, and as such, I ask that it be accepted,” the pope wrote in a note published by the Vatican Nov. 25.

“Local churches and groupings of churches are now called upon to implement, in different contexts, the authoritative indications contained in the document, through the processes of discernment and decision-making provided by law and by the document itself,” he wrote nearly a month after the synod’s close.

The final document outlined key priorities for the church, including increased participation of laity through new ministries and adjusted governing structures, greater transparency and accountability among church leadership and creating space for previously marginalized groups.

After synod members voted to approve the final document, Pope Francis announced that he would not write the customary apostolic exhortation after the synod but would instead offer the document to the entire church for implementation.

With the exceptions of the first

synods convoked by St. Paul VI in 1967 and 1971, all ordinary assemblies of the Synod of Bishops have been followed by an exhortation on the synod’s themes and discussions by the pope.

In his note, Pope Francis clarified that while the document is “not strictly normative” and must be adapted to contexts where it is applied, it still obligates “local churches to make choices consistent with what was indicated” in the document.

He also underscored the need for time to address broader church-wide issues, such as those assigned to the 10 study groups he set up in the spring to explore issues raised during the synod, including women’s ministry, seminary education, relationships between bishops and religious communities, and the role of nuncios. More groups may be created, the pope said.

The conclusion of the general assembly of the Synod of Bishops “does not end the synodal process,” he wrote.

Quoting his 2016 exhortation, “Amoris Laetitia” on marriage and family life, the pope wrote that “not all doctrinal, moral or pastoral discussions must be resolved by interventions of the magisterium,” rather the bishops of each country or region can seek “more encultured solutions” to issues involving local traditions and challenges.

He added that the final synod document contains recommendations which “can already now be implemented in the local churches and groupings of churches, taking into account different con-

texts, what has already been done and what remains to be done in order to learn and develop ever better the style proper to the missionary synodal church.”

“In many cases it is a matter of effectively implementing what is already provided for in existing law, Latin and Eastern,” while in other contexts local churches can proceed with the creation of “new forms of ministry and missionary action” through a process of synodal discernment and experimentation.

Pope Francis also specified that during bishops’ “ad limina” visits to Rome, each bishop will be asked to discuss what choices have been made in his local church regarding what has been indicated in the final synod document, reflecting on the challenges and the fruits.

Meanwhile, he said, the General Secretariat of the Synod and the various dicasteries of the Roman Curia will be tasked with overseeing the synodal journey’s “implementation phase.” ■

 **BYZANTINE
DIVINE
LITURGY**

Sundays at 9 a.m.
WEDO Radio 810 AM
McKeesport, Pa.

*Broadcast live from
Holy Ghost Church McKees
Rocks, Pa.*

OR via Internet: click
“Listen Live” link at

[www.holyghost-
byzantinecatholic.org](http://www.holyghost-byzantinecatholic.org)

2024 Year in Review

Taking a look back...

This year will be remembered for Metropolitan Archbishop William C. Skurla ordaining five men to the priesthood: Father Timothy Fariss and Father John Welch (April 7 at St. Michael in Hermitage, Pa.), Father Kyprian Wojciechowski (April 28 at St. Mary in Bradenville, Pa.), Father Nathaniel Tapsak (June 2 at Holy Ghost in McKees Rocks, Pa.), and Father Tyler Wisniewski (June 23 at St. John the Baptist Cathedral in Munhall, Pa.).

Archbishop William spent the year globetrotting, as he attended

the ordination of Metropolitan Jonas Joseph Maxim, the new Archbishop of Prešov, Slovakia, Jan. 27 at the Cathedral of Saint John the Baptist in Prešov, and the month-long Synod on Synodality in Rome during October.

Also in 2024, the Centennial of the Byzantine Ruthenian Church Exarchate was celebrated in Washington, D.C. and Annandale, Va.

The staff of *The Byzantine Catholic World* wishes you a Joyous Christmas and a Blessed New Year! ■

Jan. 7



Christ is baptized! In the Jordan!

Father James Fraser, pastor of St. Mary's Holy Protection in Morgantown, W. Va., and St. John the Baptist in Uniontown, Pa., led the blessing over Cheat Lake near Morgantown, W. Va. Following the blessing, more than 20 people braved the cold waters to retrieve the Blessing Cross.

Jan. 27



Axios, Metropolitan Jonas Jozef Maxim!

Metropolitan Archbishop William C. Skurla (left) with Metropolitan Jonas Joseph Maxim, the new Archbishop of Prešov, Slovakia, who was ordained Jan. 27 at the Cathedral of Saint John the Baptist in Prešov. Photo by Jozef Kmec.

March 31



The Radiant Resurrection

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Metropolitan Archbishop William C. Skurla blessed Easter baskets at St. John the Baptist Cathedral in Munhall, Pa.; Father Ivan Mina blessed baskets at Ascension of Our Lord in Clairton, Pa.; and Father Michael Farynets blessed baskets at Infant Jesus of Prague in Boardman, Ohio.

May 8



Celebrating the Class of 2024

The Byzantine Catholic Seminary of SS. Cyril and Methodius in Pittsburgh, Pa. conferred diplomas May 8 to 10 graduates. Pictured are: Deacon Nathaniel James Tapsak; Nicholas Krivacs; Deacon Fred Abboud; Deacon Thomas Patrick Donlin; Bishop Kurt Burnette, Eparchy of Passaic; Deacon Tyler Edward Wisniewski; Metropolitan Archbishop William C. Skurla; Rev. Ron Barusefski, Seminary Rector; Bishop Robert Pipta, Eparchy of Parma; Ryan Patrick Mulvey; Sherie Michelle Fuchko; Zachary James Hunter; Deacon Timothy Andrew Kennedy; and Subdeacon Joshua Johnson.



June 27 to 30



ByzanTeen Youth Rally 2024

Teens of the Byzantine Catholic Archeparchy of Pittsburgh attended the ByzanTEEN Youth Rally in San Diego, Calif. The rally included three keynote speakers, activities, and partnering with Rise Against Hunger to prepare about 16,000 meals for the needy.

July 16



Axios, Bishop Teodor of Mukachevo!

Metropolitan Bishop William C. Skurla (sixth from left) was among the many bishops from around the world who attended the episcopal ordination of Bishop Teodor Matsapula of the Eparchy of Mukachevo, Ukraine, the Mother Church of the Byzantine Ruthenian Catholic Church.

July 8



Faith and Fun Day

Altar servers of the Byzantine Catholic Archeparchy of Pittsburgh enjoyed seeing penguins and other fine feathered friends at the National Aviary on Pittsburgh's North Side during this year's Faith and Fun Day. They also saw the Pittsburgh Pirates beat the New York Mets, 8-2, at PNC Park.

Aug. 30 to Sept. 2



Pilgrims flock to Mount St. Macrina

Children walked in procession to receive blessings from Metropolitan Archbishop William C. Skurla, Bishop Kurt Burnette and Bishop Robert Pipta during the 90th annual Pilgrimage in Honor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help at Mount St. Macrina in Uniontown, Pa. The Sisters of St. Basil the Great also broke ground on a new monastery building.

Oct. 4



Audience with Pope Francis

Pope Francis greets Metropolitan Archbishop William C. Skurla at the Synod on Synodality in Rome. The Synod was initiated by Pope Francis in October 2021 and is a multiyear process in which Catholics around the world supplied feedback to help guide the future of the Church. Photo © Vatican Media.

Oct. 12 to 13



Centennial Celebration

The Centennial of the Byzantine Ruthenian Church Exarchate and Golden Jubilee of the dedication of the Byzantine Ruthenian Chapel Celebration were held in Washington, D.C. and Annandale, Va.



The Archeparchy of Pittsburgh Chancery will be closed Wednesday, Dec. 25 in observance of Christmas.

The Chancery will also be closed Wednesday, Jan. 1 in observance of New Year's Day.

66 Riverview Ave.
Pittsburgh, Pa. 15214
412-231-4000

Here come Santa Claus!

FOLLOWING OL' SAINT NICK



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 at 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 2024

Very Reverend Andrew Deskevich, Rector



Tuesday, December 24 *Vigil, Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord* *Christmas Eve*

9 a.m. Royal Hours
7:30 p.m. Compline with Carols
8 p.m. Divine Liturgy

Wednesday, December 25 *Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord* *Christmas Day*

9 a.m. Divine Liturgy

Thursday, December 26 *Synaxis of the Theotokos*

6:30 p.m. Divine Liturgy

Friday, December 27 *Feast of the Protomartyr Stephen*

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. 25

Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ
Chancery closed

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

JAN. 28, 2025

Enthronement of Bishop Artur Bubnevych as 6th Bishop of the Holy Protection of Mary Eparchy of Phoenix, Arizona

See more upcoming events at www.archpitt.org



Official publication of the
Byzantine Catholic
Archeparchy of Pittsburgh

Byzantine Catholic Press Associates

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

NEXT ISSUE:
JANUARY 2025