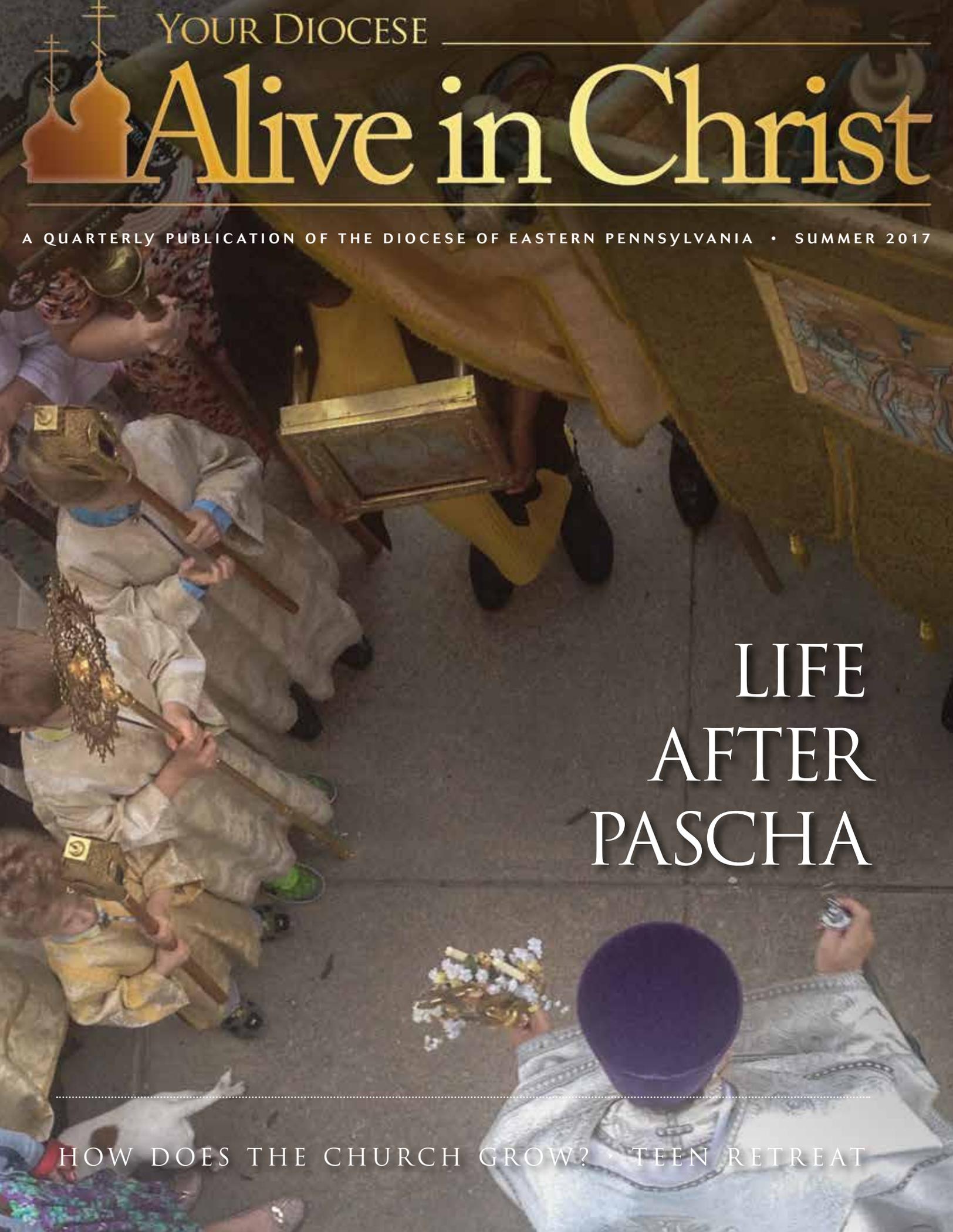


YOUR DIOCESE

Alive in Christ

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE DIOCESE OF EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA • SUMMER 2017



LIFE AFTER PASCHA

HOW DOES THE CHURCH GROW? • TEEN RETREAT

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COMMUNICATIONS BRIEF

Glory to Jesus Christ!

It is that time of the year again - graduation!

Please share your good news with the faithful of the Diocese by sending the following information:

A SEPARATE Photo (JPG works best - do NOT include in a word document)

A Write up including:

Graduate's Name

Parish

Parents

Where they Graduated From

Future plans

EMAIL: doepa.communications@gmail.com

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that have occurred prior to the most
recent issue date will not be included.

Please submit articles and photographs
(with captions) to Aric Gingo at
doepa.communications@gmail.com

Concerning Self-Deception

21 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?’ 23 Then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers.’

Hearers and Doers

24 “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. 25 The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. 26 And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27 The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!” 28 Now when Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astounded at his teaching, 29 for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes. (Matt. 7: 21ff)

The Scriptural passage above is from the concluding verses of the Sermon on the Mount. The full Sermon on the Mount includes all of Matthew 5-7. In Lord’s sermon He tells His followers what is expected of them, *i.e.*, what is expected of a ‘*true disciple*.’ He addresses: Anger, Lust, Adultery, Divorce, Oaths, Being Truthful and keeping One’s Word, Not Retaliating, Love of enemies, Almsgiving, (helping the poor, widow and orphan), Prayer, Fasting, Greed, Not Being Judgmental, The Golden Rule, and Finally a Tree is Known by its Fruit, Self-Deception in relation to being not being hearers only, but doers.

Sadly we live in a time of widespread Biblical illiteracy. We generally will only live up to the level of our knowledge. Yet, knowledge alone will not save us. *Do we know what the Lord taught in the Sermon on the Mount?* Even if we can affirm we do, it will not save us. Read verses 24-27 again. The Lord’s Sermon is salvific for those who hear His words and do them. The one who hears and does the Lord’s will is the one who has the firm foundation. The one who hears and does not do his will shall hear the word of verse 23 above: “*I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers.*” Let us also add, the one who knew the Lord’s will and did not do it is worse off than the one who has never heard, because He knew what the Lord required of him and did nothing, nothing at all. Did not the Lord say, “To whom much is given, more will be required?”



St. John Chrysostom in his homily on this passage said, if we merely attempt to teach about discipleship and the words of our Lord, and we are ourselves are not true keepers of his word, people will laugh us to scorn. Why would someone accept teaching, that by our own behavior we reject? As our Lord said above ‘you will know a tree by its fruit.’

Years ago, I knew a young woman living an immoral life and using all kinds of foul language. One of her coworkers asked her about her faith. She said, I am _____ Orthodox. She knew I was a priest, so I spoke with her and said, “Please do not tell anyone you are an

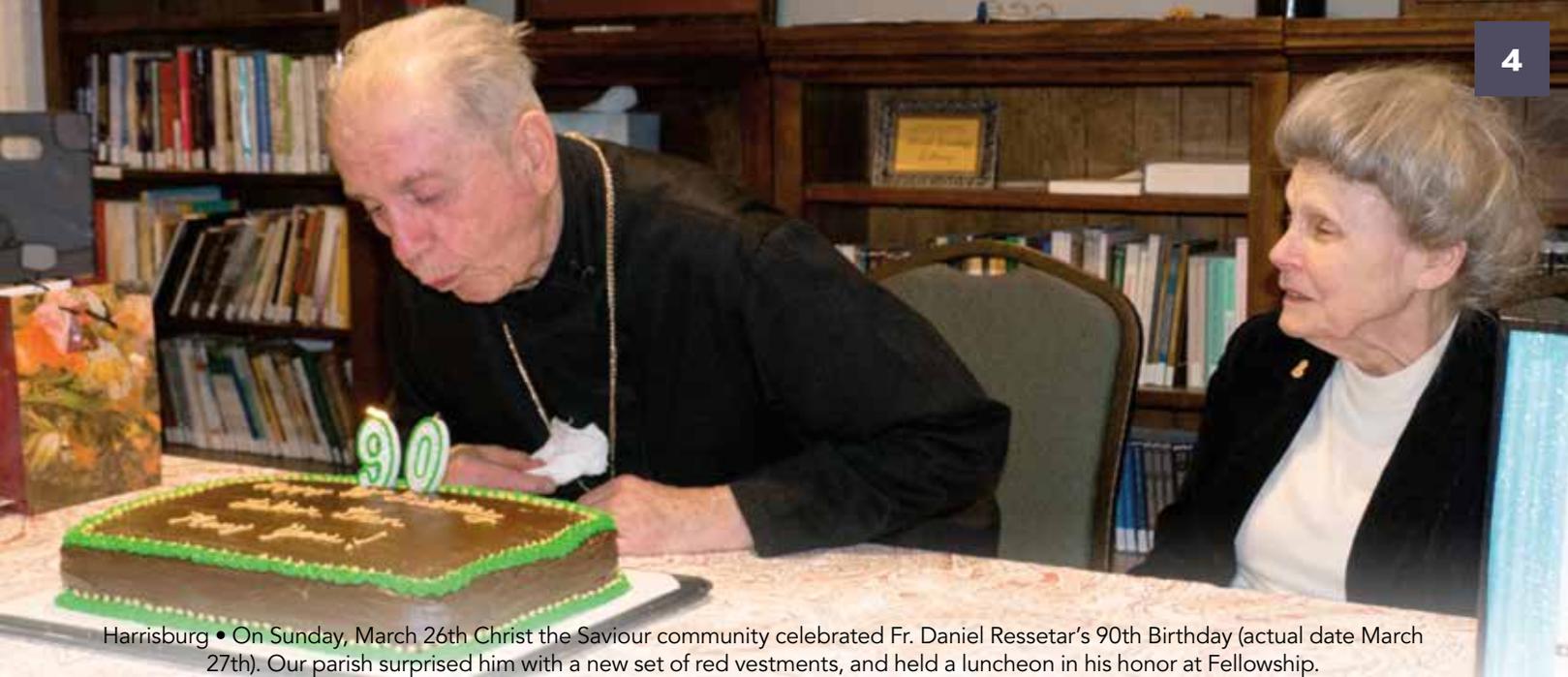
Orthodox Christian. You may tell them your ethnic heritage, but your lifestyle is not that of an Orthodox Christian. A cat may have kittens in an oven, but that does not make them biscuits.”

We cannot be authentically a Christian unless we are His Disciples. In the early Church the word Christian originated in Antioch and was intended as a slur against the early believers, because they refused to call the emperor of Rome, Lord. “The Greek word Χριστιανός (Christianos), meaning “follower of Christ”, comes from Χριστός (Christos), meaning “anointed one”, with an *adjectival ending* borrowed from Latin to denote adhering to, or even belonging to, as in slave ownership. In the Greek Septuagint, christos was used to translate the Hebrew מָשִׁיחַ (Mašiah, messiah), meaning “[one who is] anointed.” (Wikipedia). An extremely important point is *the term was used as an adjective, not a noun, and was descriptive of someone’s behavior, i.e., way of life.* They were called “Christians” because their behavior, activity, and speech were like Christ Jesus. The word Christian means, “follower of Christ” or “belonging to the party of Christ.”

If our government suddenly made Christianity a crime and decided to round up all Christians, would they have enough evidence to convict us?

+ Archbishop Mark

+MARK
Archbishop of Philadelphia
and Eastern Pennsylvania



Harrisburg • On Sunday, March 26th Christ the Saviour community celebrated Fr. Daniel Ressetar's 90th Birthday (actual date March 27th). Our parish surprised him with a new set of red vestments, and held a luncheon in his honor at Fellowship.



Stroudsburg • Following the Divine Liturgy of the Meeting of Our Lord in the Temple on February 2, 2017, Parishioners of Holy Trinity Orthodox Church in Stroudsburg, PA also celebrated the 15th anniversary (2/2/02) of Father Nicholas Solak's ordination to the Priesthood with his daughter, Emma, and his son Nikos.



Pottstown • On April 13, 2017, Holy Thursday, His Eminence Archbishop Mark celebrated the Vespertine Liturgy with the faithful of Holy Trinity in Pottstown. Following the service his Eminence awarded Father Jason the Gold Cross.



Wilkes-Barre • On St Thomas Sunday at Holy Resurrection Cathedral, the V. Rev. Fr. Timothy Cremeens and Protodeacon Sergei Kapral celebrated their 25th year of Ordination. Fr Timothy's son Gabriel and daughter Magdalena along with their friends sang the Liturgy in Byzantine music. During the celebration we also discovered April 23 was the 30th anniversary of Protodeacon Keith Russin.

Fellowship and Winter Fun at the 2017 Winter Teen Retreat

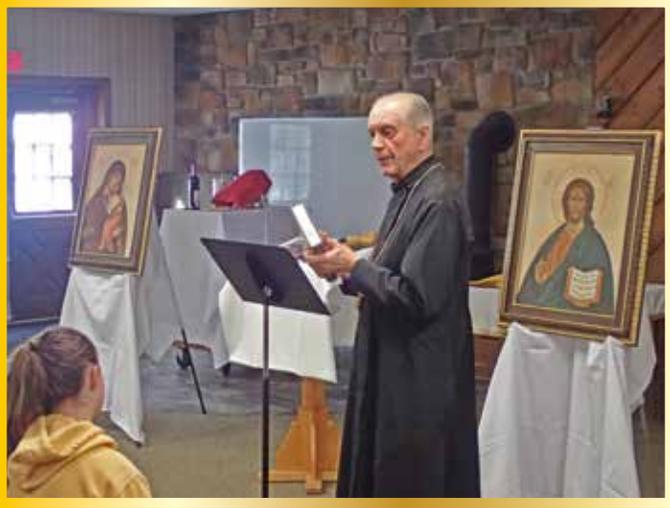


The Office of Young Adult Activities welcomed 23 students for the annual Diocesan Winter Teen Retreat, held at Spruce Lake Retreat Center over the weekend of February 10-12, 2017.

Our teens enjoyed an educational pre-Lenten experience with Fr. Stephen Vernak (Christ the Savior, Harrisburg), who led a meaningful question-and-answer session with the group on Saturday afternoon. Fr. Vernak also gave a very insightful hands-on Prospora baking demonstration. The teens each had a part in preparing the Prospora for Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning. Fr. Daniel Ressetar (Christ the Savior, Harrisburg) also joined us on Saturday afternoon to share a dramatic monologue about the Thief on the Cross – a truly moving presentation in preparation for Great Lent.

The teens went snow tubing and winter hiking in a beautiful forest of fresh-fallen snow. They experienced nature up-close and personal by visiting with some of the reptiles who live at Spruce Lake's Nature Center. Everyone enjoyed a lively bonfire (complete with s'mores) and movie night on Saturday evening. And most importantly, the teens got to make a lot of new friends throughout our weekend event.

We would like to offer special thanks to Reader John Black (Holy Trinity, Pottstown) for serving as our Choir Director. We would also like to thank Christopher Metz (St. Nicholas, Bethlehem) for participating and representing St. Tikhon's Summer Camp Teen Program at the Retreat.



"LENT AFTER LENT" AND "LIFE AFTER PASCHA"

Reflections in Christ • Fr. Steven Kostoff | Originally Published at OCA.org on April 23, 2014

Recently, I posed a question to the faithful of our parish: Is there life after Pascha? Another question has formed in my mind this morning: Is there Lent after Lent? Before proceeding any further, I need to offer two points of clarification: 1.) I apologize if I just happened to unsettle anyone with the frightening prospect of another immediate lenten period, and 2.) I am not a "lent freak!" My purpose in asking "Is there Lent after Lent?" is meant to pose a challenge. Is there anything spiritually fruitful that we began to do – or anything spiritually unfruitful that we ceased to do – during Great Lent that we can carry over with us into the paschal season and beyond? Are we able to establish some genuine consistency in our ecclesial lives? Surely this is one of the most important elements in nurturing a holistic approach to our Faith. If I am not mistaken, a real temptation that exists once Great Lent is over is to return to "life as usual," as if Great Lent is at best a pious interlude during which we act more "religiously" and at worst a period of specific rules that are meant to be more-or-less mechanically observed out of a sense of obligation. This undermines the whole reality of repentance at its core, and drives us back into the dubious practice of the religious compartmentalization of our lives. Great Lent is over – now what?

I am not even sure just how healthy it is to assess and analyze our Lenten efforts. Great Lent is a "school of repentance," but this does not mean that we are to grade ourselves upon its completion. However, there are a number of things we can ask ourselves.

Did I practice prayer, charity and fasting in a more responsible, regular, and consistent manner?

Did I make a point of reading the Scriptures with the same care and consistency?

Did I participate in the liturgical services with greater regularity?

Did I watch over my language and gestures, or my words and actions, on an over-all basis with greater vigilance?

Did I make a breakthrough in overcoming any specific "passions" or other manifestations of sinful living?

Did I work on establishing any broken relationships?

Did I simply give more of myself to Christ?

Did I come to love Christ even more as I prostrated myself in faith before His life-giving Cross and tomb?

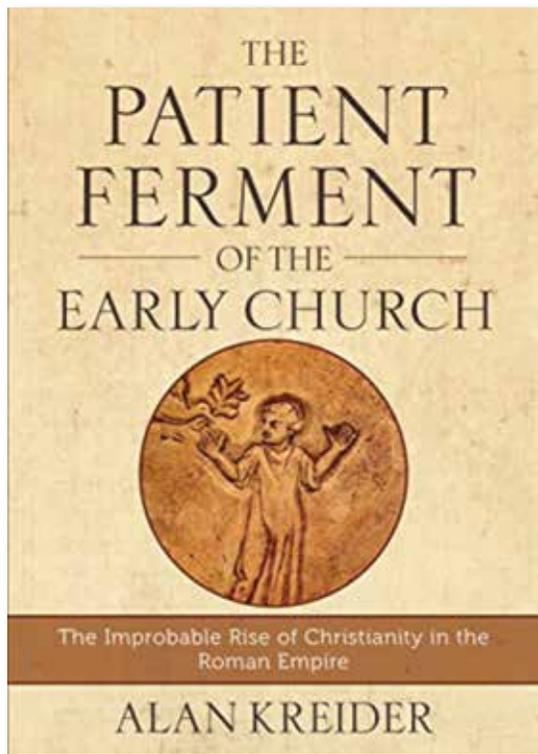
Then why not continue? Not to continue is to somehow fail to actualize in our lives the renewal and restoration of our human nature that definitively occurred through the Cross and Resurrection. Appropriating the fruits of Christ's redemptive Death and life-giving Resurrection is essential for our self-designation as Christians.

In other words, can we carry the “spirit” of Lent (and some of its practices) with us outside of Lent? In this way, we are no longer “keeping Lent” but simply practicing our Faith with the vigilance it requires. We still must fast (on the appropriate days), pray and give alms. We still need to nourish ourselves with the Holy Scriptures. We must continue to wage “warfare against the passions” that are always threatening to engulf us. We need to deepen our love for Christ so that it surpasses any other commitment based on love in our lives. Or, have we doomed ourselves to being intense in the practice of our Faith for a short, predetermined length of time, and then pay “lip service” to, or offer token observance of, the Christian life until next year? In a rather unfortunate twist, Great Lent can work against us when we reduce it to such a limited purpose. Great Lent is the designated time of year meant to get us “back on track” so as to live more consciously Christian lives because certain circumstances and our weaknesses often work against us. It is the “example” rather than the “exception” if properly understood. In other areas of life, do we simply abandon good practices – in matters of health, let us say – because a designated period of testing or observing these good practices has come to an end?

Today may be a good day to reawaken to the glorious gift of life offered to us in the Church. One week from today—on Wednesday, April 30—we will return to our usual pattern of fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays, as the initial glow of Pascha slowly recedes. I would suggest that this may be one of the most difficult days of fasting in the entire year. It is very hard to reestablish a discipline temporarily suspended with the paschal celebration. Yet, in many ways, we are returning to “life as usual,” even in the Church, but that is a “way of life” directed by the wisdom of the Church toward our salvation and as a witness to the world. Let us take the “best of Lent” and continue with it throughout the days of our lives.

“Lent after Lent” means that there is “Life after Pascha.”





ABOUT THE BOOK

During the three centuries before the conversion of the emperor Constantine, the Christian church grew in the Roman Empire. It grew despite disincentives, harassment, and occasional persecution. What enabled Christianity to be so successful that, by the fifth century, it was the established religion of the empire?

In this unique historical study, Alan Kreider delivers the fruit of a lifetime of study as he tells the amazing story of the spread of Christianity over its first four hundred years. Challenging traditional understandings, Kreider contends the early church grew because patience was of central importance in the life and witness of the early Christians. Patience was the virtue about which the patristic writers wrote most--Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine all wrote treatises on it. Patience entailed trusting God, who was inexorably at work; obeying Jesus, who embodied patience and called his followers to live in unusual, patient ways; and responding to people who were attracted to their life and message in such a way that they would be formed to become patient believers. Instead of writing about evangelistic method, the early Christians reflected on prayer, catechesis, and worship, all of which formed believers to have patient reflexes and to participate in a church that grew not by plan but by ferment. This book will benefit professors, students, and scholars of ancient Christianity, mission, liturgy, and Christian formation as well as pastors and church leaders.

How does the Church grow?

This article is the second of a multi-part look at the book “The Patient Ferment of the Early Church” By Chancellor of the Diocese of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania, the Very Reverend Martin Browne

The thesis of Alan Kreider’s recent work on “The Improbable Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire,” *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church* challenges much current thinking on mission and evangelism. And that is good. If the current thinking is so perfect why are the results so mediocre? Perhaps there is something we can learn from our early Christian family members?

Of course there is. This is what the communion of saints means. A communion of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, living, witnessing and dying in every time and circumstance is an essential element of the life of the Church here and now. Those of recent vintage, but also those more seasoned in their interaction with the Church militant from the perspective of the Church Triumphant, as well as those from the West, who are an integral part of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church in which we profess our faith at every Divine Liturgy, can and should be our teachers as well as intercessors.

This latter point is important in Kreider’s work, which focuses on figures of the early Latin tradition, while also including the Alexandrians Clement and Origen. It is important for us to take into serious

consideration the growth of the Church in the West as well as in the East for many reasons, the most obvious of which is that geographically and culturally we live in the West. We are the inheritors of the Latin culture of antiquity as it has mutated (inevitably) down the twenty centuries of the Christian Church's life.

Indeed Krieder's thesis, the centrality of patience, is a profound countercultural assertion to contemporary life, where purpose-driven and other driven strategies and habits are stressed, leading to religious and non-religious lives of endless striving and activity, much of it, ironically, in the pursuit of peace and tranquility. He points out that in the Greco-Roman world in which the church took root, patience was not a virtue universally admired, but one reserved for victims and the powerless, especially slaves. But Christians elevated it, in Krieder's telling, to the central virtue of Christian life, the reflection of God's own activity in all of creation, but particularly in the plan of salvation. Moreover, this was no mere idea declared in public professions, written or oral, but the frame within which the icon of Christian life was lived and witnessed.

Be still and know that I am God

So this study invites all of us to pause from the pressure to "do something," "this thing" or "that thing" or "some other thing," but to consider the lilies of the fields how they grow; they neither toil or spin. (Mt 6:28). Indeed, this is an opportunity for us to accept the invitation of Christ in the Psalms, "Be still and know that I am God." In this context that can be done by looking and listening at how the lilies of field in the form of the Churches of Asia Minor and North Africa grew without toiling or spinning plans or programs but rather developed habits of living patiently in a diversity of practices that powerfully witnessed to the Way, the Truth and the Life. As St. Justin the Philosopher put it in his First Apology, "by our patience and meekness will draw all men from shame and evil desires." (16.3). Or as St. Cyprian of Carthage put it in the first Christian treatise on any specific virtue, *On the Good of Patience*, "We do not speak great things, but we live them." (3)

The key to living these great things was proper formation, in patience. Kreider notes, They believed that impatient habits (unlike those of Jesus Christ) were deeply engrained in people who were raised in Greco-Roman societies. . . . if people were to develop patient reflexes, they needed time, the friendship of mentors, and the opportunity to grow in patient ways of living that were normal for Christians. This points out the crucial role of catechetical formation in the early church, a privileged role not seen in any other religious body of Antiquity. Seemingly, the thought was spent not on "How do we bring them here?" but on "What do we do when they get here?" The answer to that question was provided by viewing the surrounding culture through the lens of the patience of God as revealed in Christ. Our society is no less impatient than ancient Rome. Our Church should not be, for those within, as much as for those without, its boundaries.



Allowing God to work in the lives of those we encounter

Father Deacon Seraphim • Holy Ascension Orthodox Church • Lykens

In 2015 while serving as Deacon at Holy Apostles in Mechanicsburg, PA, Fr. Timothy Hojnicky approached me and asked if I would help the folks here at Holy Ascension in Lykens, PA. He told me they were a struggling Parish, and needed me to serve an Obednitsa one Sunday a month, while a priest would come another Sunday to serve the Divine Liturgy. Although, I started coming here in February 2015, the Parish was winding down, and expecting to close her doors later in August that year. The congregation was dwindling as Sunday attendance was down to 6-9, and most of them in the choir.

The Parish had some robust years since its beginning over a hundred years ago, but as the surrounding community began to shrink due to economic and other reasons, so did Holy Ascension. Over the years, clergy from other parishes were traveling to provide services and there has been no living clergy presence in the rectory for many years. Things were looking very bleak.

In the Spring of 2015 while I was here on Sunday, I was standing outside the Church, talking to Council President, Mr. John Coles. We were discussing the future of the Parish, and he mentioned how they had always hoped a clergy family would be there, and live in the rectory. Unbeknownst to him, I mentioned how Mat. Mary and myself had chatted among ourselves how it would be nice to live right next to the Parish and help them. This struck John with great interest, and the discussions ensued. Talk about Divine Providence!

He began to discuss this possibility with the Parish members, they came up with a plan, and presented it to His Eminence, Archbishop Mark and Fr. Timothy. The plan was for the Parish to ask Matushka and I to move into the rectory, and to be here year-round and help with Services. Archbishop Mark gave his blessing, the people of the Parish invited us to come up, and we gladly accepted. We moved here in November 2015, and His Eminence soon appointed me as Administrator of the Parish. At this point, Sunday attendance was around 12-15.

Since moving here to Lykens, I have made it a point to be visible in the community while walking the streets of Lykens, running my daily errands in my cassock. If you know me, you know that I am pretty hard to miss! The local folks did not know what to make of me, and some are still very hesitant. All of this has given me many opportunities to tell others about Orthodoxy and the Parish here. The community has become like a family. Whether it's the local market, the Post Office, or folks on the street, we now know each other and we chat. Building relationships is vital to me, and although I might look "scary" to some, as soon as I open my mouth, that all fades away . . . usually. OH, I could really tell you some stories of my encounters.

One day while out shoveling snow, an older gentleman stops and gets out of his car. We introduced ourselves, and he began to tell me that he used to attend the Parish as a young fella, and like so many others, he drifted away. Weeks went by, and every so often, Walter Tiazkun (affectionately known as Bunya) would stop and we would chat on the front porch about life in general. He would always express an interest in returning to the Church, and how much he needed to come back, but I never pushed. I just told him that we would be here whenever he was ready.

Then it happened, one Sunday Walter entered the doors of the Church, and there was overwhelming joy from myself, and some were in tears. Some of his family attend the Parish, and he had not attended a Service here in over fifty years!!! Glory Be to God!!! He is now in his 80's and has hardly missed a Sunday since that day. We pray we can reach many more like him who have left, and are once again thirsting after God.

This is what it is all about!! Allowing God to work in the lives of those we encounter . . . Being available, being visible and letting others know that the Church is alive and cares about them.

Since coming to Holy Ascension, Sunday attendance averages between 18-25 and we have seen some days as high as 54! We still only have Services on the second and fourth Sundays (and Saturday), as well as Daily Vespers every Wednesday, but eventually every weekend. We also have a weekly Discussion Group where we gather to talk about our Orthodox Faith. Our goal is to be a beacon of Christ's love to this community, and with the help of Our God, we can do this. There are many unchurched folks in the area to be reached.

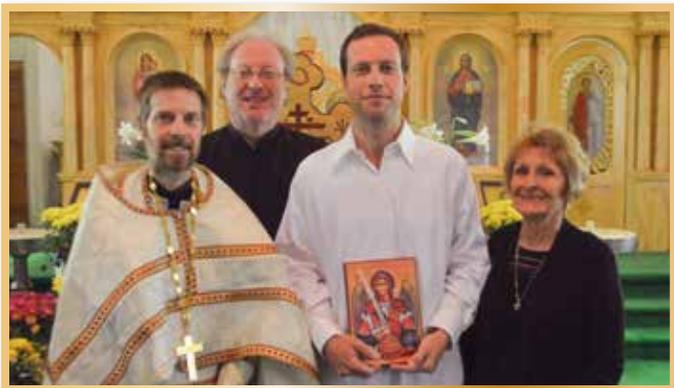
We have been so blessed by being here, and we continue to grow with not only the people of Holy Ascension, but with the folks of the surrounding communities. May God be glorified for ALL the things happening here in Lykens, and I ask for your prayers that we would be faithful in doing God's Will.

With Love in Christ, Fr. Deacon

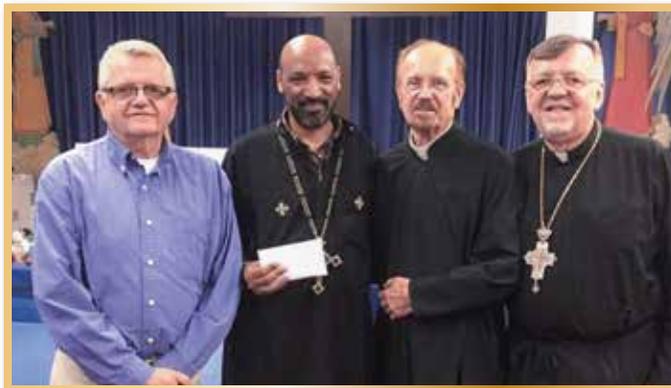


This is the second parish to be featured in the new editorial format, and we thank Fr.Dn. Seraphim for taking some time to write the article. A different parish from around the diocese will be featured in every issue. What can your parish contribute? Share your good works with your fellow Orthodox Christians.

Please note that the article about St. Michael's Church in Mount Carmel appearing in the last issue of *Alive in Christ* was a collaborative effort with Father John Edward and Council Chair, Sandra Tosca. We are sorry for this omission.



Berwick • Fr. Michael Demko performed the Sacrament of Chrismation for Michael Crake. Michael's Godparents are Reader David Kessler and Jean Husak.



Jermyn • Fr. Tesfalem Mezenghy, a student at St. Tikhon's, was a guest at St. Michael's. He was presented with a donation of \$614, collected from the parishioners.



Bethlehem • Steve Doncevic received the Sacrament of Chrismation, performed by Fr. Weremedic at St. Nicholas. His sponsors were Sandi Keysock and Fr. Timothy Hasenez.



Coaldale • The parishioners of St. Mary's Orthodox Church celebrated the 90th birthdays of Catherine Hedes and Olga Macalush.

Olyphant • Stephanie Coleman was received into the Orthodox Church by the anointing of chrim by the Very Rev. Vladimir Fetcho at St. Nicholas.



Harrisburg • His Eminence, Archbishop Mark, who was accompanied by Deacon Andrew Nelko, tonsured John Shingara to the order of Reader.



Wilkes-Barre • Palm Sunday



Olyphant • Good Friday



Stroudsburg • Bright Monday



Lopez • Blessing Baskets



Pottstown • Easter Matins



Mechanicsburg • Good Friday



Edwardsville • Easter Matins



Dundaff • Pascha

DIOCESAN CALENDAR

JUNE

June 3 Parish Council Workshop
June 4 Pentecost. Holy Trinity
June 11 St. John the Baptist
June 18 Father's Day, All Saints
June 20-23 Holy Synod of Bishops Retreat
June 24-25 Nativity of St. John the Baptist, St. Mark
June 28-29 Holy Trinity

Harrisburg
Stroudsburg
Nanticoke
Olyphant

Wrightstown
Stroudsburg

JULY

July 2 Available for a Parish Visit
July 2-8 St. Tikhon's Summer Camp
July 9 Holy Trinity
July 15 St. Vladimir's
July 16 St. Michael
July 22-23 Holy Apostles

McAdoo
Lopez
Mt. Carmel
Mechanicsburg

July 30 Available for a Parish Visit

AUGUST

August 6 Transfiguration
August 12-15 Holy Trinity
August 15 Dormition of the Theotokos
August 19-20 Holy Trinity
August 26 Women's Retreat
August 26-27 Holy Trinity

Stroudsburg

Stroudsburg
St. Tikhon's
Stroudsburg

SEPTEMBER

September 3 Labor Day Weekend
September 8 Nativity of the Theotokos
September 10 St. Mary Church
September 14 Exaltation of the Holy Cross
September 17 Available for a Parish Visit

Coaldale



ATTENTION ALL GRADUATES!

It is time to submit your graduation photo and information for inclusion in this year's Alive in Christ Graduate issue! You can submit electronically or by mailing your information. See inside cover for SPECIFIC instructions!

**DEADLINE
JUNE 30 2017!**