

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST



Icon of the Prophet Samuel -- August 20th

WEEKLY SCHEDULE OF SERVICES AND EVENTS

The Dormition Fast/Spasivka/Cnaciaka

- Sat, Aug 19th: The Martyr Andrew And His Soldiers Martyred With Him**
6:30 pm: Vigil Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom ; Intention for God's Blessings on Our Living and Deceased Parishioners.
- Sun, Aug 20th: The 12th Sunday After Pentecost—The Prophet Samuel**
9:00 am: Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom (Eng.); Intention for +Natalia Strycky, by Irene and Adrian Strycky.
12:30 pm: *Theology on Tap—Weyerbacher's Brewery, Easton, PA.*
- Mon, Aug 21st: The Apostle Thaddeus**
NO DIVINE SERVICES
- Tue, Aug 22nd: The Martyr Andronicus and Those Martyred With Him**
NO DIVINE SERVICES
6:30 pm: *Moleben for Ukraine; Pokrova/St. Mary's Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Allentown, PA.*
- Wed, Aug 23rd: The Martyr Lupus**
NO DIVINE SERVICES
- Thu, Aug 24th: The Hieromartyr Eutyches**
NO DIVINE SERVICES
10:00 am: *Ukrainian Independence Day Commemoration, Payrow Plaza City Hall, Bethlehem, PA.*
- Fri, Aug 25th: The Commemoration of the Return of the Relics of the Apostle Bartholomew to Lipari**
NO DIVINE SERVICES
- Sat, Aug 26th: The Martyrs Adrian and Natalie**
6:30 pm: Vigil Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom ; Intention for God's Blessings on Maria and Tyler on the Occasion of Their Wedding, by Rev. Paul J. Makar.
- Sun, Aug 27th: The 13th Sunday After Pentecost—The Venerable Father Poemen**
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom (Ukr.); Intention for Kyr +Michael (Kuchmiak), Prot. #332/2022 O.
11:30 am: St. Josaphat Ukrainian Catholic Church Family and Friends Picnic (Behind the Rectory).
5:00 pm: Panachyda and Blessing of Cemetery Monument for our former pastor, Very Rev. Archpriest +Daniel Gurovich, St. Josaphat Cemetery, Bethlehem, PA.

PARISH ANNOUNCEMENTS:

1. REMINDER: We have coffee and cake after each Sunday Divine Liturgy; come join us for fellowship and sweets after our common prayer and offering to God!
2. Next week, August 29th, is the Commemoration of the Beheading of John the Baptist. By tradition of the Church, this simple feast day is a day of strict fasting from meat and dairy products.

3. St. Josaphat Tryzub Association is looking for new members to not only help with the stewardship and upkeep of our parish, but also to enjoy fellowship together as we plan to help out with sponsored activities for the parish. To join, ask any Tryzub Member or see David Kadingo.
4. Father Paul will be away from Monday, August 21st, through Friday, August 25th. Holy Ghost Rectory will be open for normal business; if you have a pastoral emergency and require assistance (Anointing of the Sick, etc.), please contact Father Ed Higgins at Sts. Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church, Bethlehem, at 610-867-2322, or Father Yaroslav at Holy Ghost Ukrainian Catholic Church, West Easton, at 610-252-4266.
5. IMPORTANT: Next Sunday, August 27th, 2023, Divine Liturgy will be celebrated at 10:00 am, not at our usual 9:00 am. The St. Josaphat Tryzub Association will be hosting its parish picnic for family and friends of our parish after the 10:00 am Liturgy behind St. Josaphat's Rectory. Please be sure to tell your family and friends!
6. IMPORTANT: Also next Sunday, August 27th, at 5:00 pm, we will remember our former pastor, Very Rev. Archpriest +Daniel Gurovich with a Panachyda at his grave, along with a blessing of his monument at St. Josaphat Cemetery on Easton Road, Bethlehem, PA. All are welcome to attend.
7. Ukrainian Independence Day will be celebrated at Bethlehem City Hall, Payrow Plaza, on Thursday, August 24th, starting at 10:00 am. The program is being sponsored by the Ukrainian National Women's League of America (Союз Українок), Branch 91 of the Lehigh Valley. All are welcome to attend.
8. The Ukrainian Catholic/Orthodox Clergy Brotherhood of the Lehigh Valley will have their next weekly Moleben for Peace in Ukraine on Tuesday, August 15th, 2023, at Pokrova/St. Mary's Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Allentown, PA. All are encouraged to come and pray with us.
9. This Sunday, August 20th, Father Paul will begin the first of a series of Theology on Tap Adult Catechesis talks at Weyerbacher's Brewery at 905 Line Street, Easton, PA. It will start at 12:30 pm with the topic "*What Exactly Is An Eastern Catholic (Or Ukrainian Greek Catholic!) Church?*" All are welcome to attend; for more information, please contact Father Paul.
10. On Sun., Aug. 27, at 12:00 PM, the Ukrainian American Sport Center Tryzub (County Line and Lower State Rds., Horsham, PA) invites you to the Ukrainian Independence Folk Festival 2023, starting at 1:30 pm. Ukrainian ethnic foods and baked goods, a BBQ and cool refreshments for all ages are available. Visit vendors' mall and the Ukrainian Arts and Crafts market. Admission: \$15; Free for kids to age 14. Info: 267-664-3857; info@tryzub.org; www.tryzub.org. \$2 of each paid admission goes to Humanitarian Relief in Ukraine.
11. Don't forget to bring your receipts from Redner's when you use your membership shopping there; this helps raise funds for our parish.

Please remember to pray for the sick, for those who are shut-in, and for all those who have requested, or are in need of, our prayers:

Anna Kapustiak	Amelia Balandovich	Ethel Bednarchek	Bob Silvert
Slava Harasymovych	Oleh Balaziuk	Mike Wetherill	Rev. John Ciurpita
Rev. Paul Wolensky	Rev. Paul J. Makar	Very Rev. Mitred Archpriest Roman Mirchuk	
Very Rev. Mitred Archpriest Roman Galadza		All Our Archeparchial Seminarians	
The Missionary Sisters of the Mother of God			

If anyone knows of someone in need of our prayers, or who is sick or shut in and cannot make it to church, please contact Father Paul via email or telephone as listed on the cover of this bulletin if you wish to have their name added to our prayer list. Thank you and God bless you!

Sunday Propers:

The 12th Sunday After Pentecost; The Post Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God, of the Prophet Samuel

Troparion (3): Let the heavens be glad, let the earth rejoice, for the Lord has done a mighty deed with His arm. He trampled death by death; He became the firstborn of the dead; He saved us from the abyss of Hades and granted great mercy to the world.

Troparion (1): O Mother of God, in giving birth You still preserved virginity; and in your falling-asleep you did not forsake the world. You are the Mother of Life and have been transferred to life and through your prayers have delivered our souls from death.

Kontakion (2): *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Now and for ever and ever: Amen.* The grave and death did not detain the Mother of God. She prays perpetually and is our unfailing hope of intercession; for He Who dwelt in the womb of the ever-Virgin, transferred to life the Mother of Life.

Prokimenon (3): Sing to our God, sing; sing to our King, sing.

Verse: Clap your hands, all you nations; shout unto God with the voice of joy.

Epistle (1 Cor 15:1-11): Brethren: I am reminding you of the gospel I preached to you, which you indeed received and in which you also stand. Through it you are also being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures; that he was buried; that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures; that he appeared to Kephias, then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at once, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. After that he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one born abnormally, he appeared to me. For I am the least of the apostles, not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me has not been ineffective. Indeed, I have toiled harder than all of them; not I, however, but the grace of

Тропарі і Кондаки:

12-а Неділя По Зісланні Святого Духа; Попрарденство Успіння Пресвятої Богородиці, Св. прор. Самуїла

Тропар (3): Нехай веселяться небесні, нехай радуються земляни, бо показав владу рукою Своєю Господь. Він смертю смерть подолав, первістком з поміж мертвих став, визволив нас із глибин аду, і подав світові велику милість.

Тропар (1): У народженні дівство зберегла Ти, в успінні ж світу не залишила, бо Ти, Богородице, перейшла до життя, будши Матір'ю Життя, і молитвами Своїми визволяєш від смерти душі наші.

Кондак (2): *Слава Отцю, і Суну, і Святому Духові, і нині, і повсякчас, і на віки вічні. Амінь.* У молитвах невсипущу Богородицю і в заступництві несхитне уповання не втримали в собі гріб і смерть; бо як Матір Життя покликав її до життя Той, хто в лоно вселився повсякчас дівственне.

Прокімен (3): Співайте Богові нашому, співайте; співайте цареві нашому, співайте.

Стих: Всі народи, заплещіть руками, кликніть до Бога голосом радості.

Апостоль (1 Кор 15,1-11): Браття, пригадую вам Євангелію, яку я вам проповідував, яку ви і прийняли, в якій і стоїте. Нею ви також спасаєтеся, коли держите її такою, як я вам проповідував; інакше ви увірували надармо. Я бо вам передав найперше те, що й сам прийняв був: що Христос умер за наші гріхи згідно з Писанням; що був похований, що воскрес третього дня за писанням; що з'явився в Кифі, потім дванадцятьом; опісля ж з'явився він більш, як п'ятистам братів разом, більшість яких живе й досі, деякі ж померли. Опісля з'явився Якову, згодом усім апостолам. А наостанку всіх, немов якомусь недоносові, з'явивсь і мені; бо я найменший з апостолів, я недостойний зватись апостолом, бо гонив Церкву Божу. Благодаттю Божою я є те, що є, а благодать його в мені не була марна; бо ж працював більше всіх їх, та не я, але благодать Божа, що зо мною. Чи то я, отже, чи то вони, - так ми проповідуємо, і так ви увірували.

God [that is] with me. Therefore, whether it be I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

Alleluia Verse (3): In You, O Lord, have I hoped that I may not be put to shame for ever.

Verse (3): Be a protector unto me, O God, and a house of refuge to save me.

Gospel (Mt 19:16-26): At that time, someone approached Jesus and said, "Teacher, what good must I do to gain eternal life?" He answered him, "Why do you ask me about the good? There is only One who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments." He asked him, "Which ones?" And Jesus replied, "'You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; honor your father and your mother'; and 'you shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" The young man said to him, "All these I have observed. What do I still lack?" Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to [the] poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." When the young man heard this statement, he went away sad, for he had many possessions. Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Amen, I say to you, it will be hard for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and said, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "For human beings this is impossible, but for God all things are possible."

Instead of *It is truly right...*, the Imros: Seeing the dormition of the most Pure One, the angels were filled with awe at how the Virgin went from earth to heaven. In you, O Pure Virgin, the laws of nature were overcome: in giving birth you remained a virgin and in your death heralded life. You remained a virgin after giving birth and remained alive after death, always saving your descendants, O Mother of God.

Communion Verse: Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise Him in the highest. (3x).

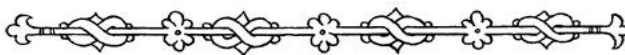
Апостольські Стих (3): На Тебе, Господи, уповаю, щоб не осоромитись навіки.

Стих (3): Будь мені Богом захисником і домом пристановища, щоб спасти мене.

Євангелія (Мт 19,16-26): Того часу, один приступив до нього й каже: "Учителю! Що доброго маю чинити, щоб мати життя вічне?" Ісус сказав до нього: "Чому мене питаєш про те, що добре? Добрий є один тільки (Бог). Як хочеш увійти в життя, додержуй заповідей." "Яких?" - питає його. А Ісус до нього: "Не вбивай, не чини перелюбу, не кради, не свідкуй криво, поважай батька-матір і люби ближнього твого, як себе самого." Каже юнак до нього: "Все це я зберіг із малку. Чого мені ще бракує?" "Якщо хочеш бути досконалим," - сказав Ісус до нього, - "піді, продай, що маєш, дай бідним, і будеш мати скарб на небі; потім приходи і йди за мною." Почувши це слово, юнак відійшов сумний, мав бо велике майно. Тоді Ісус сказав до своїх учнів: "Істинно кажу вам: Трудно багатому увійти в Небесне Царство. Інше кажу вам: Легше верблюдові пройти через вушко в голці, ніж багатому увійти в Боже Царство." Почувши це, учні здивувалися вельми і сказали: "Хто ж тоді може бути спасений?" Ісус глянув на них пильно й мовив: "У людей це неможливо, Богові - все можливо."

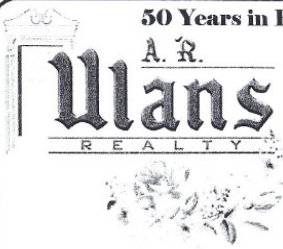
Замість *Достойно . . .*, Ірмос: Ангели успішннн Пречистої бачивши, здивувалися, як то Діва висходить із землі в небо. Переможено закони природи в Тобі, Діво чиста; бо в народженні дівство, а в смерті життя перемогло; по народженні Діва і по смерті жива, Ти завжди спасаєш, Богородице, спадкоємство Своє.

Причасний Стих: Хваліте Господа з небес, хваліте Його на висотах. Алілуя (3р).



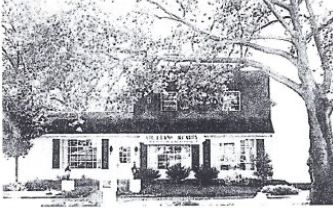
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Ukrainian Catholic Trivia Hey! Don't You Know?

The icon that is on the tetrapod (that little table up in front of the nave/katholikon of the Church) will be either an icon of the patron saint of the Church OR it will be of a given feast day (in our tradition, one of the Holy Days of Obligation). Usually, when an icon of the feast is on the tetrapod, it is put there after Vespers (by rule, it is usually put out at Matins), and remains there until the appointed leave-taking as indicated in the Typikon of the Church (rule that prescribes how services are conducted).

St. Josaphat Calendar of Events – Mark Your Planners!

August 20th:	<i>Theology on Tap (12:30 pm), Weyerbacher Brewery, Easton, PA</i>
August 27th:	St. Josaphat Family Picnic (10:00 am Divine Liturgy)
August 28th:	St. Josaphat Catechist Meeting (Teachers Only; Rectory Classroom)
August 29th:	Commemoration of the Beheading of John the Baptist
September 3rd:	Labor Day
September 5th-6th:	Holy Ghost West Easton Pyrohy Preparation and Sale
September 8th:	Feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos
September 14th:	Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross

GUIDELINES FOR OUR FAITHFUL, GUESTS, AND FRIENDS

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP: To join St. Josaphat's Church as a registered member, email or telephone Father Paul at St Josaphat's Rectory (contact information is listed on the cover of the bulletin).

THE MYSTERIES OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION (BAPTISM, CONFIRMATION, HOLY EUCHARIST): Those who wish their children to receive the Mysteries of Christian Initiation must contact St. Josaphat Rectory at least 6 weeks in advance of the desired Baptismal date and obtain instructions for this Sacrament. Non-baptized adults who wish to be received into the faith should contact St. Josaphat Rectory.

THE MYSTERY OF CONFESSION: Confessions are offered to all the faithful 1/2 hour before each scheduled Divine Service, or you may make an appointment with Father Paul at any time.

THE MYSTERY OF THE MOST HOLY EUCHARIST: The reception of the Most Holy Eucharist is reserved only for Baptized Catholic Christians whose consciences are free from mortal sin.

THE MYSTERY OF ANOINTING OF THE SICK can be administered anytime there is a case of serious illness, injury, or disease. Please do not wait until your loved one is in danger of death!

THE MYSTERY OF MATRIMONY: Couples who wish to marry at St. Josaphat Church should contact the Rectory Office at least 6 months in advance of the desired wedding date (or as soon as they are engaged).

FUNERALS: Active parish membership and participation is mandatory if one desires an ecclesiastical funeral within the Church. Viewings in the Church are discouraged, if an in-church viewing is desired, a separate facility use fee will be assessed by St. Josaphat Church equivalent to the prevailing funeral home facility rates in the Lehigh Valley. Also, the Church teaches us to avoid cremation (except only for dire circumstances) due to the sanctity and holiness of the human body; If a cremation is insisted on, the family of the decedent must schedule the funeral service before cremation takes place. For inquires regarding burial in St. Josaphat's Cemetery, contact St. Josaphat Rectory.

Please don't leave this bulletin in the pew or in the trash when you are finished. We kindly ask you share this bulletin with your loved ones. Let your family & friends know of the spiritual treasure that God has for all people here at St. Josaphat's, Bethlehem, PA!

The Lives of the Saints: The Post Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos and of The Prophet Samuel
Commemorated on Sunday, August 20th, 2023

Compiled from Various Sources; Edited for the Bulletin. For Local Use Only.

The Post Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos (Mother of God): The Church continues to honor the passage of the Most Holy Theotokos from death to life. Just as Christ once dwelt in the virginal womb of His Mother, now He takes Her “to dwell in His courts.”

Pastor's Note: As mentioned last week at Vespers for the Dormition, note how as the Blessed Virgin reposes, surrounded by 11 of the 12 disciples, note carefully the image of the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes in Jesus's Hands. (If you can't make it out in this picture, look at the icon on the Tetrapod before you leave church.) This is a very important symbol in this icon. Just as the Blessed Virgin Mary held the uncontainable God in her hands at the Incarnation [Christmas], now her Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, takes Mary “to dwell in His courts,” where she is “more honorable than the Cherubim, and more glorious than the Seraphim,” and continues to intercede with Her Son for our sake.



The Prophet Samuel was the fifteenth and last of the Judges of Israel, living more than 1146 years before the Birth of Christ. He was descended from the Tribe of Levi, and was the son of Elkanah from Ramathaim-Zophim of Mount Ephraim. He was born, having been besought from the Lord through the prayers of his mother Hannah (therefore he received the name Samuel, which means “besought from God”). Even before birth, he was dedicated to God. Her song, “My heart exults in the Lord,” is the third Old Testament ode of the Canon (1 Sam/1 Kings 2:1-10).

When the boy reached the age of three, his mother went with him to Shiloh and in accord with her vow dedicated him to the worship of God. She gave him into the care of the High Priest Eli, who at this time was a judge over Israel. The prophet grew in the fear of God, and at twelve years of age he had a revelation that God would punish the house of the High Priest Eli, because he did not restrain the impiety of his sons. Eli's whole family was wiped out in a single day.

The prophecy was fulfilled when the Philistines, having slain in battle 30,000 Israelites (among them Hophni and Phinees, the sons of Eli the High Priest), gained victory and captured the Ark of the Covenant. Hearing this, the High Priest Eli fell backwards from his seat at the gate, and breaking his back, he died. The wife of Phinees, upon hearing what had happened in this very hour, gave birth to a son (Ichabod) and died with the words: “The glory has departed from Israel,

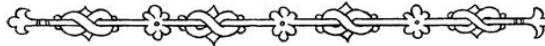
for the Ark of God is taken away” (1 Sam/1 Kgs 4: 22).

Upon the death of Eli, Samuel became the judge of the nation of Israel. The Ark of God was returned by the Philistines on their own initiative. After returning to God, the Israelites returned to all the cities that the Philistines had taken. In his old age, the Prophet Samuel made his sons Joel and Abiah judges over Israel, but they did not follow the integrity and righteous judgment of their father, since they were motivated by greed.

Then the elders of Israel, wanting the nation of God to be “like other nations” (1 Sam/1 Kgs 8: 20), demanded of the Prophet Samuel that they have a king. The Prophet Samuel anointed Saul as king, but saw in this a downfall of the people, whom God Himself had governed until this time, announcing His will through “judges,” His chosen saints. Resigning the position of judge, the Prophet Samuel asked the people if they consented to his continued governance, but no one stepped forward for him.

After denouncing the first king, Saul, for his disobedience to God, the Prophet Samuel anointed David as king. He had offered David asylum, saving him from the pursuit of King Saul. The Prophet Samuel died in extreme old age. His life is recorded in the Bible (1 Sam/1 Kgs; Sirach 46:13-20).

In the year 406 A.D. the relics of the Prophet Samuel were transferred from Judea to Constantino-ple.



THE 12th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—THE EYE OF A NEEDLE

Author Unknown; Edited for the Bulletin.

“It is easier for a camel to pass through [the] eye of [a] needle than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” – Mark 10:25

This verse had always worried me when growing up since in my head I applied it not only to being rich, but also to other sins. I mean seriously! A camel can NEVER fit through the eye of a needle. And no matter how hard I try, I am still a sinner. I recently learned of something new about its meaning, though.

The theory is that there were 12 gates to Jerusalem and one of which was called the Eye of the Needle. This Eye of the Needle would not allow camels in unless they were stripped of their saddle and all their other gear (kind of like the rich man with his possessions). Now I have heard and studied that the Eye of the Needle may have never existed and is just a tall tale. My parents, though, took a pilgrimage overseas to the Holy Land, and the natives showed them the Eye of the Needle and explained to them the same story. To me this explanation makes that verse make so much more sense.

The other theory is that the Aramaic word for camel can also mean rope and was thus just mis-translated. It has the same basic meaning as with the camel theory, though. The rope must strip away all the excess threads to be able to fit through the eye of a needle. Either way, though, the point is that we have to remember that our material treasures in this lifetime will not carry on with us to our eternal life. Drop the extra baggage or peel back some of those extra strands so that you may fit through the “eye of the needle”.

Although it may not be easy, it is not impossible to get to heaven! Our God is a merciful God and only He can see into our hearts. “‘Then who can be saved?’ Jesus looked at them and said, ‘For human beings it is impossible, but not for God. All things are possible for God.’” (Mk. 10:26)



“Traditional Values” Are Russia’s Geopolitical Weapons (Part II)

By Serhiy Hovorun. Reprinted from <https://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2023/07/90088/>
Edited for the Bulletin; For Local Use Only

Pastor’s Note: An excellent article was recently sent over the transom to my desk for consideration. Again, normally, I keep the articles on here theological as this bulletin is a vehicle for catechesis and education of the faith, this article covers a number of items that are highly critical not only to understanding the war in Ukraine, but also how values, especially those dealing with morality and religion, can be coopted as a weapon. Due to the length of this article, this is the second half of the article that was printed last week; if you need a copy, please refer to the link above or contact St. Josaphat Rectory. Respectfully, Father Paul.

[Continuing from Last Week]

Instrumental Religion

For Putin and his confederates, Russian civilization is unique and superior to all others. One of the reasons it is better is that its religion is truer than either Western secularism or unorthodox religions confessed by those, who, in his mind, want to get rid of Russia as a global player. Russian Orthodox Church leaders have managed to convince Putin that Russian civilization, based on Orthodox Christianity, will secure special blessings from God as its reward for fighting for the true faith. This idea is intrinsically Byzantine, and Putin likes to be seen as a *basileus*. This secures for him either passive or active support among many in the global community of Orthodox churches.

Many Christians of various denominations in the West also either passively or actively appreciate what Putin promotes—namely, “traditional values.” These Christians see Vladimir Putin and the Russian Orthodox Church as their allies. However, for Russia, they are nothing more than disposable “sputniks” who are useful just for a short while. In fact, in the eyes of most Russians, they are heretics. Therefore, in the longer run, it is not impossible that, once Putin’s militarism succeeds in fighting for general “traditional” values against liberalism, it will switch to fighting for particularly Orthodox values. At that stage, American Evangelicals or conservative Catholics would be treated not as allies, but enemies, just as Protestants and Catholics are treated in Putin’s Russia nowadays.

The militant Russian religious conservatism of the twenty-first century, paradoxically, mirrors the Soviet anti-religious socialism of the twentieth century. Their common feature is a shameless instrumentalization of religion, with the consent of the latter. The officialdom of the Russian Orthodox Church helped the Kremlin to promote the ideas of the proletarian revolution then, as it facilitates the promotion of “traditional” values among the frustrated Western postliberals and right-wing populists now. These values are used to consolidate the fragmented post-Soviet society inside Russia and to propagate the Kremlin’s agenda outside it.

I had a chance to observe a similar use of the category of “values” when I attended the “International Philosophical Forum on Values” held in Beijing in 2015. It strikingly resembled the congresses of the Soviet Union’s Communist Party that I remembered from my school years, even though it was supposed to be an academic forum. There were some academic papers with critical assessments, but the forum mostly promoted “values” as a sort of quasi-ideology. Indeed, my impression was that this ideology was designed to bridge the Marxist-Maoist theories with the crude capitalist reality of contemporary Chinese society. Values were discussed as a way to frame China’s presence in the international arena. Russia went much farther than China in using values in its international politics. It turned them into a weapon and started a war. Russian propaganda cannot offer a consistent explanation of why it wages the war in Ukraine. Arguments fluctuate, but one argument based on values comes up more than others. According to the Kremlin’s narratives, Russia fights against the corrosion of traditional values caused by Western liberal decadence. Ukraine is a battlefield for that fight.

Vacant Values

However, the problem with these narratives is that Ukrainian society, while pro-Western and pro-democracy, is more religious and traditional than Russian society is (see the Pew 2017 report “Religious Belief and National Belonging in Central and Eastern Europe”). Ukraine demonstrates that “traditional values” can be compatible with democracy and pro-Western policies—something that Russian propaganda cannot admit whatsoever.

Moreover, what the Russian soldiers do in the occupied territories is contrary to the narratives of the Russian propaganda. Russians have bombed cathedrals. They kill, rape, and dehumanize their victims. In the words of the representative of the Prosecutor General’s office of Ukraine, Iryna Didenko, among the victims of sexual abuse are children: at least twelve girls from 4 to 12 years, and one boy. He was nine years old and lived for four months under abusive circumstances. His mother was also routinely raped by the Russian soldiers stationed at their home.

When I visited the northern suburb of Kyiv, Borodyanka, after its liberation, I walked through the ruins of the houses there. Through a smashed window in one of them, I spotted a room. From its decorations, I gathered it was a children’s room. An inscription survived on its wall: “Family is the warmest place on Earth.”

I don’t know what happened to the child or children who lived in that room. They might have been separated from their parents and deported to Russia, or left to the West with their mom. In the latter case, they are most probably separated from their dad, because men are not allowed to leave the country. This is one of millions families that have been affected by the war. Most families have been damaged and some destroyed. All this happened in the name of the “family values” that Putin spearheads as a *raison d’être* for the war.

Whatever Putin instrumentalizes, he damages or destroys, be it culture, religion, or ideas. In unleashing violence in the name of traditional values, he has seriously jeopardized the very idea of values. It is not that the values that he pretends to stand for should be abandoned because Putin has weaponized them. However, everyone who cherishes these values should disassociate him or herself from Putinism. Putin’s values are the mutilation of values, just as his religion is a mutilation of religion.

St. Josaphat Ukrainian Catholic Church "Where Faith and Tradition Meet"

1826 Kenmore Avenue
Bethlehem, PA 18018

Main (normal business): (610) 865-2521
For emergencies, call: (215) 300-9147
E-Mail: pastor@stjosaphatbethlehem.org
Website: www.stjosaphatbethlehem.org

Rev. Paul J. Makar, Pastor
Mrs. Carol Hanych, Cantor
Ms. Kimberly McGowan, Parish Secretary



Glory to Jesus Christ! Слава Ісусу Христу!

We welcome you to our parish family and invite you to worship with us in a most ancient Church of the Christian East. We are happy to have you with us, and we are honored to share our Ukrainian Catholic tradition of prayer and spirituality with you, your family, and your friends. If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to bring them to Father Paul or one of our parishioners. Our doors and our hearts are open to you. May God's blessings be with you always!

Christ and the Law

When Christ says to him, "If you would enter life, keep the commandments," the man expects Him to add immediately, "my commandments." "Which ones?" he asks. He was quite deceived in his expectation. For Christ did not answer him as he expected but simply pointed him to the law.

This is not because the law is perfection, for "no one is justified by the law," as it is written, but because the life lived according to law is a kind of introduction to the eternal life, briefly acquainting trainees to the things above. "For the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ."

The law is the starting point for social justice.

Christ is the perfection. For the beginning of good is to act justly, He says. Just action then is shown by the law, but goodness is shown by Christ. The law taught us to repay those who wish to harm us, as in "eye for eye, tooth for tooth."

But Christ taught us to let go such balanced vengeance with a view to the greater good, teaching that "if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; and if anyone would sue you and take your coat, let him have your cloak as well."

St. Cyril of Alexandria

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