

The Lion

December 2018

A Parish Newsletter for Members Only of St. Mark's Parish,
Denver, Colorado

It will be recognized, of course, that this Church Newsletter is not an authorized publication of any authority. It is submitted for voluntary consideration and use, in whole or in part, and only where it may seem to possess any degree of value.

BISHOP BASIL ordained Father Jason Zacharias Falcone at St. Luke's Church in Erie, Colorado during a Parish visitation in August. Axios! Fr. John Connely, Fr. David Mustian, and Fr. John Falcone were the presenting Priests. Father Jason holds two degrees from the Holy Cross College and Seminary in Brookline, Massachusetts as well as the M.A. from Balamand in Lebanon.

Fr. Jason first appeared at St. Mark's shortly after his 17th birthday. He read both Lessons at Evensong and began Catechesis with his folks, Fr. John Falcone and Presbytera Diana, a few weeks later. He completed studies at Colorado Christian University, enrolled in Officer training, was deployed with the Army to the Middle East, and also completed his M.Div. and an M. Theology degrees from Holy Cross. The plan is for Major Fr. Jason to complete some further training while he serves in the Army Reserve. He will transfer to the Chaplain Corp in the next few months. Axios!

On the Blessing of Loaves

Fr. Jason Zacharias Falcone

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, one God. Amen.

IN THE GOSPEL reading today, the Apostle Matthew relates to us the time when Jesus was in a deserted place, accompanied by a crowd of people who had followed Him there. In our Lord's constant manner, He healed the sick among them, and (as we know from St. Mark's account of the event), the Lord taught them also.

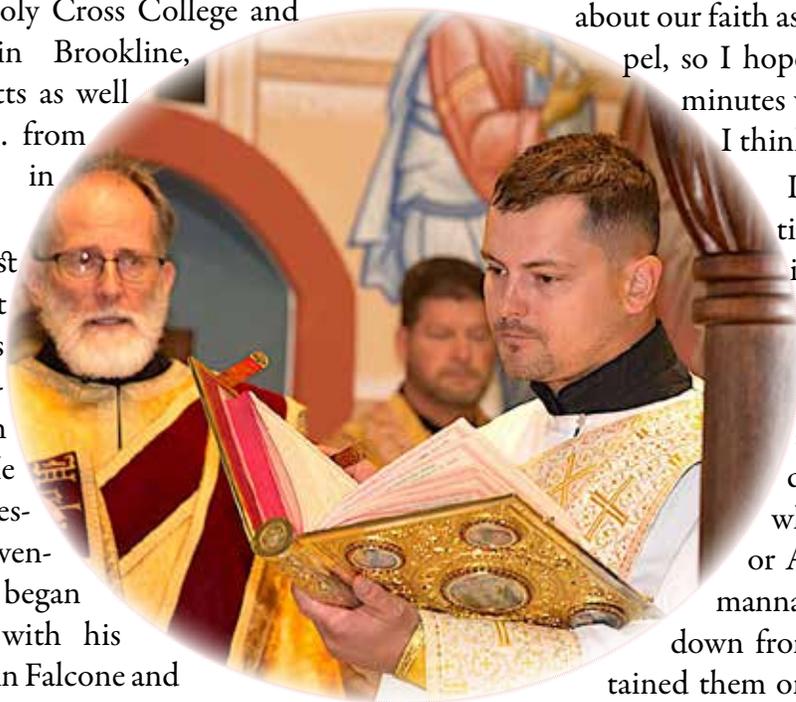
Rather than sending the people away at the disciples' recommendation, the Lord miraculously feeds them by multiplying the five loaves and the two fish that were given to Him.

This account shows us much about the Lord and about our faith as Christians. There is a lot in this Gospel, so I hope you will follow with me for a few minutes while I share some thoughts on what I think are a few key aspects of this.

In the Old Testament, in the ancient times of the prophets before the coming of our Lord Jesus, God fed His people in the wilderness with bread from heaven. They were led by God out of slavery in the Egyptian land, and while they were traveling in the desert in what today would be somewhere in the general region of Sinai or Arabia, the Lord fed the people with manna, a bread that miraculously came down from heaven. In this way the Lord sustained them on their journey from slavery into life in the good land that He promised to them.

When our Lord miraculously gives bread to the people in today's Gospel, He is showing that He Himself is the same God who fed the people in the Old Testament.

Rather than the bread coming from heaven by the invisible hand of God, it comes from the visible hand of Christ, who is Himself God in the flesh. He who was



caring for them invisibly from heaven was now feeding them in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ by the self-same divine power as the Son of God.

It is important to note that the Lord did not just make bread appear miraculously. Certainly as God He could have supplied bread in any manner. But He asked for, and accepted, the offering of the few loaves of bread that were present at the time. St. John records that these were actually given by a child to the Apostles, who then offered them to Christ. This child gave the last food he had – and the last food anywhere among this great crowd – to Christ.

The Lord then looks to heaven, blesses, and returns the bread to the Apostles so that it is miraculously multiplied as it is distributed to the people.

The offering of the boy – while small by worldly standards – is everything he has. The Lord does not despise the external size of the offering, but He looks at the heart of the boy who gave everything he had. The Lord received his offering and transformed it into a life-preserving blessing for so many thousands of people.

This is the pattern of the entire Christian mystery. The Lord receives our insufficient offering of ourselves and He transforms it. While the Lord in no way despised the size of the boy's offering, He nevertheless asked for all of it. The Lord does not ask him to share one or two of his loaves with Him. Rather, He accepts everything the child has, and He returns it many times over as a blessing for thousands.

The Lord's words later in this same chapter of the Gospel teach us to understand this miracle in multiplying the loaves in a Eucharistic sense, in reference to the Last Supper and the Divine Liturgy. Christ says, "*I am the bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I shall give is my Flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.*"

The account of the multiplication of the loaves and fish is the pattern followed in the Divine Liturgy. We offer to Christ the results of human activity – bread and wine. I think those of us who live in a more urban context may not fully appreciate the symbolism of bread and wine as the end results of all the work of farming and caring for a vineyard. But the bread and the wine symbolize the results of human labor and activity, our

sustenance, what we have to offer of our lives. We offer these things to God in the Divine Liturgy, acknowledging that they come from God firstly and always, and He returns them to us transformed into His own Flesh by which we receive His Life-giving divinity. The great father of our Church Cyril of Alexandria referred to the Eucharist as a Life-giving Blessing, a blessing in the greatest sense, a blessing of eternal life with our Lord.

Even the manner in which our Lord distributed the bread in the Gospel reading is meaningful. The Lord does not distribute it at random, but rather commissions the apostles to give it to the people, as a sort of figure or initiation into their ministry as ministers of the Eucharist, which is carried on today by the clergy through the apostolic succession, the priests and the deacons. The Lord showed us in this Gospel the good order to be observed in the Divine Liturgy.

Also, we may see that it is the Apostles who come to the Lord and ask Him regarding food for the people, and bring the loaves and the fish to the Lord. The Lord answers their prayers in of course a most beautiful and divine manner, showing His love for the people, and returns the bread and fish multiplied through the hands of His Apostles. In like manner those who have succeeded to the ministry of the apostles bring the offerings of the people, the bread and wine after the pattern of our Lord's command at the Last Supper before His betrayal and crucifixion, and the Lord blesses and transforms the offerings and returns them through the hands of His ministers.

Again in the same chapter of the Gospel, the Lord says, "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

St. Ignatius of Antioch, (one of the earliest bishops of the apostolic see of the city of Antioch from which our church takes its name and its leadership), referred to the Eucharist so beautifully as the Medicine of Immortality. I've always thought it was such a beautiful way to express it, the medicine to heal and give life to our souls.

In the Eucharist, we believe that we receive God himself and we are transformed by His Energies so we can be prepared to enter into the eternal vision of

God. We may not see the unapproachable and dazzling light of the divinity of our Lord emanating from the Eucharist, since it is veiled from us under the forms of bread and wine. It is in much the same manner as the eternal glory of God was veiled under the human flesh of our Lord as He walked this earth, although it was ever present, and revealed to His closest disciples in the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor in which they saw the dazzling Light and brilliance of His divinity.

Friends, this is the very Light and Divinity and undying love of God that is present in these Holy Mysteries. All the dispensation of our Lord's 'doing all things' to save us – His condescension to be born as a human child, to walk among us and with us, to teach us His eternal truth, to endure rejection by the world and to suffer and die for us, all the while forgiving those who tortured Him, taking upon Himself all the sins and failings of all people out of His love for each and every one of us whom He foreknew, to descend into the Hades and free those who awaited His coming and accepted Him, to rise on the third day, to walk with His apostles and teach them for forty days and then ascend into heaven bringing His humanity to the right hand of the Father – all this dispensation to 'bring us up to heaven' is made present in the Chalice, whereby we partake of the Living Christ shining forever in the Light of His Divinity.

I might point out, while the Lord prefigured the Eucharist in the miracle in today's Gospel, He actually instituted it at the Last Supper just prior to His betrayal when He said "this is My Body" and "this is My Blood" broken and shed for them. It is a very momentous thing that He gave it to them prior to His crucifixion. In receiving Communion we join ourselves with the Lord, the Truth, even as He is despised and rejected by the world. We take the Cup of the broken Body and shed Blood of the Truth Himself and join with Him both in his sufferings and in His glory. The Lord said, "Where I am, there will my servant also be." If we find ourselves and our Orthodox beliefs rejected by the en-

emies of the Faith and the order of the world, we are only finding ourselves by the side of our Lord. And if we find ourselves by the side of our Lord in sufferings, we will most certainly find ourselves also by his side in His Kingdom with His holy saints.

The Epistle reading for today at first glance might appear a little bit disconnected from the Gospel reading. St. Paul tells the believers at Corinth not to have divisions among them rather than being united in the one Lord Jesus. This is very relevant to our discussion of the Eucharist, because as the Eucharist unites us to the Lord, it also thereby unites us to each other in His one Body.

One important aspect of receiving the Eucharist is forgiveness and unity. The Lord taught his Apostles not to offer their offering without first being reconciled to others. The highest Christian unity is found in the Eucharist. So, we should ensure that if anyone has anything against us, we are first reconciled to them, as far as is within our power, prior to receiving the Lord's Body and Blood.

Certainly this includes if there is anything standing between us and the Lord as well. We have to offer our whole lives to the Lord in order to receive Him, just as the child did who brought the five loaves and the two fish, all that he had, despite how little it was. We cannot partake of the Eucharist with half of our hearts. We must offer our entire selves to Christ, even with our failings, and He will transform us.

So I pray the Lord help all of us in this to forgive each other, not to have any kind of divisions of rivalries or any such evil, and to come with a clean conscience to receive the Lord's Holy Body and Blood. This is what I wanted to say to you today.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



His Eminence
The Most Reverend
Metropolitan JOSEPH

The Right Reverend
Bishop BASIL



Archbishop of New York and
Metropolitan of
All North America

Diocese of Wichita and
Mid-America

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA

The Nativity of Christ – 2018



SHRINE MARKING THE SPOT OF THE MANGER IN BETHLEHEM

To the Christ-loving Priests, Deacons, Monastics and Lay Folk of this God-protected Diocese:

I embrace and greet you with a holy kiss and the joyous festal proclamation:

CHRIST IS BORN – المسيح ولد

Χριστός Γεννᾶται – Христос рождается

Hristos se rodi – Hristos se našte

May God the All-holy Trinity grant you and your households the happiest of Feasts and a New Year filled with His abundant and richest blessings. With assurance of my continued love, prayers and blessings, I remain

In Christ the Incarnate Word of God,

+Bishop Basil

“The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” (Acts 11: 26)

1559 North Woodlawn Street, Wichita, KS 67208-2429
(316) 687-3169 Phone BpBasil@aol.com (316) 636-5628 Fax

CHRIST THE KING

The Rev'd Fr. James E. Tochiara

SAINT MARK'S PARISH, DENVER, COLORADO

From the First Chapter of the Epistle of Blessed Paul the Apostle to the Colossians: he is the head of the body, the Church; [he] is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead. †

THE FEAST OF CHRIST THE KING seems a little superfluous, so close to Christmas. In St. Luke's account of Jesus' birth, and in the Christmas liturgy, it's obvious that Christmas is the true celebration of Christ as King. So if that's the case, then what are we doing this Sunday? Why do we celebrate the rule of King Jesus at a time when snow is beginning to fall, leaves are beginning to die, and life seems to be leaving the world.

If everything is dying, it means that our earth is approaching the world beyond—the world of spirits and those who have passed on. Jesus is the Lord of the dead, as well as the living. Is there any other King or President with greater authority than this? He determines the fate of every man, woman and child ever conceived—so pray for your dead, and pray for yourself.

The power that reaches beyond death is the power that rules in truth under all the mere appearances, lies, and delusions in this world. Draw just near enough to death that you might see and understand, cleansing your mind of the delusions of vanity. The power that dwells in the truth is the power that can save your soul, and death is a truth that we cannot avoid.

Death is a curse, but we shouldn't misunderstand this. In movies, the dead are trivialized as zombies or angry ghosts, but we should know that the dead are all around us waiting for the sunrise of the Messiah to shine upon them. Death is certainly a curse. It is like the bitter water that the Israelites found, but could not drink, when they were wandering in the desert. The Prophet Moses threw the wood of a tree into it, and the Lord made the water sweet. The curse of the bitter water became a blessing by the power of God.

Every winter, we must drink a little of that bitter water, but we have the wood of our Lord's cross to carry with us. His cross is the tree of eternal life, and with it, we can transform the bitterness of winter. Someday, as the scientists tell us, and the Scriptures agree, the life of earth will die. Hopefully, this is billions of years into the future (provided we don't poison ourselves or murder all living species with a nuclear war or some other event). So, the coming of winter isn't the true death of our ecosystem—it's a spiritual death, and spiritual rebirth occurs in the springtime. Winter is a spiritual death for us as well. We are drawing near to our Lord's throne in the other world.

We can enter this spiritual death knowing that we are drawing closer to our Lord and King. His cross can bear all the bitterness of the world and transform it. If we can enter his kingdom, we shall be beacons of light, like the stars and like the angels. In his kingdom, the holy saints are the jewels that adorn his holy city, the heavenly Jerusalem—more radiant than any Christmas decoration. We enter the season of death and darkness, to look beyond the darkness into the brilliance of the divine light. Let that be the only light that shines in us—the divine light of Jesus' power—and Christmas shall be the glory of the whole human race illuminated by God.

We have seen so many attempts to find humanity's glory without God, and so many times we have found only the depths of despair, the darkness of demons, and the lies of murderers. How can we see where we're going? We are so busy in our lives, thinking of our short-term future. We will invent the next wave of technology—the cure for cancer, a new source of energy, the next generation of spaceships—and we shall be capturing ever more glory for humanity, but these will all be curses if we do not shine forth the royal power of Jesus. In the Body of Christ, our bitterness turns sweet, and our curses become blessings, and his blessings multiply thirty, sixty, and an hundred fold.

When we die and go to the next world, we will be clinging to all of our bitterness, opposition, rancor and aggression. How can we be transformed to leave this world and live in God's glorious light? In heaven, King Jesus will solemnly offer the bread of angels and the wine of the spirit to his Father, and then he will

Sunday after Ascension

Archdeacon Vladimir Christopher McDonald
Saint Mark's Church, Denver, Colorado

“that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them”

In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.
Amen.

give this offering of his Body and Blood to his elect, for them to consume. If we can be in that number, chosen to partake thereof from Jesus' own hands, his Body and Blood will cleanse and renew us absolutely, and transform us completely. All sadness and pain will forever fall away. All bitterness will be forgotten. All resentment and rancor will evaporate in the wind.

We must celebrate and partake in that future glory. We must call it down from heaven into our hearts, and into our Temple here. If you are here, then you are the elect, not because you are worthy, but because the Lord has chosen for the sake of his Name, chosen you for your weakness to shine forth his glory to the world. That is our sacrifice here, right now.

The Hebrew word for sacrifice, *korban*, comes from the root meaning “closeness.” Our sacrifice is not to give God a gift that he didn't desire, nor is it to give him food that he doesn't need. Our sacrifice is something to share, so that we, as those who live in flesh and blood, have a means to be close to him. And we need to be close to him so that he can change our bitterness into sweetness, and make our water clear, and fresh, and true.

You need to be healed, and he needs to heal you. His heart is burning for his children, to fill up the number, and to complete his fiery Temple. He suffered on the cross just to take away your suffering. He wept just to take away your tears. He died just to wash away your sins. Let him wash your feet, your head, and your soul, or you will be guilty of holding back his glory and blaspheming the Holy Ghost. Come and share this bread and this cup with your loving King, and receive the power and the glory that will save your soul.

From the First Chapter of the Epistle of Blessed Paul the Apostle to the Colossians: he is the head of the body, the Church; [he] is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead. †

Support the Monastery of Our Lady and Saint Lawrence by ordering books and icons from Lancelot Andrewes Press,

www.andrewespress.com

or by letter and check to: L.A. Press, PO BOX 460186, Glendale, CO 80246

LAST SUNDAY we could have been talking of Rogation and Ascension being connected, but as we saw, the outer manifestation of God's love, the earth and the bounties of same; and the inner contemplation of the meaning of the Ascension, and again, the overarching wonder and peace that can be the Holy Ghost, are to be taken to heart and treasured.

Whilst Jesus has spoken throughout his ministry in parables, and sometimes what appears to be double-speak, here he lays it out plainly for all to see and hear. He will go to the Father, and the Holy Ghost will come to them, and fill that void that we all feel at times, that open space in our heart where you know something of great significance and wonder should be welling up to enrich our whole life, but so often, does not!

One has to ask, is that our fault, our shortcoming, or is it Gods? Well I am here to tell you that it is all us. Depressing I know, but truthful nonetheless. We have always to remind ourselves that we have our Salvation grasped firmly in our hot little hands; it is our ego that will determine whether we, like the Disciples, will see and feel the Light of Salvation, the Light of Love of God for us, it is not up to God to give us anything, we have to ask! Then we have to ask again. Not because God needs to be reminded of our desire to be in the outer corona, at least, of His Love; but to constantly remind the Devil that he is not welcome in our lives. Oh, yes him, the distractor, the tempter, the guy with the horns and tail, he is still the Lord of this World, this is still his to rule as he wishes. And to see and hear us ask and petition God to come into our Lives, have the power of the Holy Spirit wash over us, and to Worship the Savior; well that really gets him, how shall I word this politely, ticked off!

Often, we are very scared at this point in the confrontation, because we have always been told of the evil power of the Devil. Well that is partly true, he can devastate your life, but the most important point to remember is that, like Jesus, you have to invite the Devil into your life, by your living, he, as Jesus, cannot impose himself upon you. That is a wonderful and great revelation; again, you hold the key to your salvation, you determine how your quest for, and life with, Christ will develop.

We come to Church and sit, pray; either quietly ourselves, or corporately with a congregation of like-minded travelers; we come to find that sunlit glade, where our Lord sits with His disciples and teaches the Love of His Father for His children; or in more mundane terms, we come to be drawn closer to Him who loves us unconditionally, who fulfilled His promise to us. How many times in our life can we say that we had an interaction with another, where they fulfilled the promise that was made?

I am not a cynic I assure you, but in my life, I try to be a realist, so that if and/or when things do not go the way the truth would say they should, I do not start blaming God for not "being there". God is always "there", always at our side, to comfort and nurture, guide and advise, be a well of Love and Understanding. Go ahead, yell and swear, He doesn't like it, because you are probably going to take overt liberties with His name, but he understands, he understands! We are human, we are vulnerable, and therefore we are subject to falling over our own feet. As always, we need to get up and take stock of our souls and move forward in the life-long pursuit of our Salvation, knowing that He is there, and while understanding of our struggles with the truth of His being, He is not going to allow any attempt to undermine the truth.

He has ascended, returned to His Father, and now Sits at the Right-Hand of God. The Holy Ghost has

come upon us, and watches over us, throughout all our doings with the trappings of this world, and will surround us with His Love, if we wish Him to.

"that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them." †



The Remembrance Sunday is observed closest to 11 November for all those who served in the Great War of 1914 - 1918 and are now at Rest. The common practice is to include veterans of other wars.

This is the 100th anniversary of the Armistice ending the hostilities between the Axis of Germany against France, Russia, U.K. and the U.S.. Many of our families were involved. My Grandfather, William Ballard Burkett, was wounded at the *Battle of the Meuse-Argonne* which concluded with the silencing of the guns at 11 o'clock on the 11th Day of the Eleventh Month, 1918. The American Expeditionary Force, in this one battle, gave 26,277 killed and 95,786 wounded. William Burkett spent eight months in recovery in New York City after surgery for a nearly ruined right shoulder. He was shot by German machine gun fire. His life and arm had been salvaged at a French Field Hospital. When sufficiently recovered to go out and see the sights, William wired the Bank of Stark, Kansas and asked for \$10⁰⁰ so he could go to all the Broadway shows. When he walked up to the farm house, a sister shouted: "Don't come in now, Willey, We've all got the flu." -Fr. John

Here is the report from November Church Women's meeting:

The St. Mark's Church Women will host their Annual Christmas Bake Sale on Sunday, December 9th this year. The proceeds of this year's Bake Sale will go to support Sts. Helen & Constantine Orphanage in Kenya. This Christmas, let us share the love of Jesus with orphans and widows in the care of Presvytera Alice. Please bring your Baked Goods and Home-made candies already priced on either December 8th or the 9th. You can even add a special ornament instead of a bow to add to the festive look Many thanks to Shirley Riemensnider for organizing the Bake sale.

The Church Women will also host another St. Mark's Advent tradition with their Fleece Navidad service project. Last year, our parish was so generous that a few people were not able to get a name! This year Carol is working on getting a few more names. Please look for name tags on the Christmas tree in the parish hall soon and bring fleece outfits by December 16th. Please contact Carol McCabe or Dana Huft for any questions you may have.

In addition, Church Women will make a donation to SafeHouse Denver again this year. The facility provides food and shelter to women and children who have been abused. Please ask Jane about all the wonderful new works SafeHouse has been doing in recent months.

Save the date: The Church Women will gather for the Christmas flower arrangement party and brunch on Saturday, December 15th. Please join Debbie St. Clair and others for a morning of fellowship and delicious quiches. The ladies will take home a festive arrangement for your home. The arrangement could be a perfect hostess's gift as well. Please find a RSVP sheet and a Potluck sign up in the parish hall.

If you are interested in making a Altar flower donation for a loved one, then please look for the special Altar Guild Flower envelopes on the back table of the church or use the "Flower Chart" that is hanging up in the parish hall to sign up for an upcoming Sunday.

The Lectionary for the English Office and Mass for every day of the Year 2019 is available for \$25.00 from www.andrewespress.com or : LA Press, PO BOX 460186, Glendale, CO 80246

The Calendar 2019 is available for \$11.00 each including shipping from www.andrewespress.com or : LA Press, PO BOX 460186, Glendale, CO 80246

The Advent Sundays

reflect the character of this Season with the most beautiful Hymns of the Year. Each Sunday Mass begins with the Litany as restored in the 2009 *Book of Common Prayer*.

Our Observance of the

Lord's Nativity, Christmas

begins with the Vigil Mass, offered as a Solemn Mass with choir and sacred ministers on Christmas Eve, Monday, **24 December at 5:00 PM.** Lessons and Carols begins at 9:30 PM and the **Mass in the Night at 10:00 PM.** Christmas Day, Tuesday, the **Mass is offered at 11:00 AM.**

Over the years the 5:00 PM Christmas Eve Vigil has grown from a few souls to a few with some music, and now with Choir and incense and a Solemn Mass. Thanks to Charlotte Stephenson for Advent candles and to the Altar Guild and many Pilgrims who donated to the Christmas flowers and candles to adorn the sanctuary.

The LION

V. Rev'd John C. Connely, Editor

St. Mark's Parish

1405 S. Vine Street

Denver, CO 80210

Address correction requested

For the LION and other essays regarding the Orthodox Western Rite see : www.westernorthodox.com

For books / icons supporting the Benedictine Fellowship of Saint Laurence & the Monastery of Our Lady and Saint Laurence see : www.andrewespress.com