First, I would like to give thanks to God, our creator, for giving His blessings and shelter for a life giving and life changing, Pilgrimage to the Holy Land and Constantinople. For our brothers and sisters in Christ, that were unable to attend, my hope is that you were following this extraordinary journey on Facebook, or on the UOC of USA website. I would like to extend thanks to all the faithful who made this trip possible, and for those who prayed for us.

This Pilgrimage was more than learning about the ancient ruins, history of our faith, fellowship and fun. It was about knowing God through scripture. It was about the Bible (His word becoming flesh), coming to life. It was about the manifestation of the New Testament, from the Old Testament, and how one does not exist without the other.

There were so many “Ah, ha” moments on this journey, and so many times God’s hand guided the path, I was in unbeliev. One such instance was at Divine Liturgy at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. This massive place of worship covers the Tomb of Christ, and Golgotha (the site of Crucifixion). Our Bishop Daniel and our clergy participated in the service at the Tomb. There had to be close to a thousand souls praying. When it came time for Holy Communion, a monastic Orthodox nun instructed me to take communion at Golgotha. I resisted. My internal rebellious response was “no, I want to take communion at the Tomb or at the Church.” A few minutes later, a Greek Orthodox clergy instructed me to take communion at Golgotha. Again my response was the same. Finally after the third instruction, I complied. After walking about a block and climbing up the stairs, I arrived at Golgotha. Much to my surprise, Father Volodymyr was holding the Chalice. It wasn’t but a few days later that I realized my own rebellion, and how God through His persistence reveals His mysteries to those who are receptive to His word. His word to me, as a witness was this: As Christ died for me, (and for you), He took the sins of the world (sin meaning a separation from God), upon himself, so that through Him we are united once again with our creator God. By partaking in the Holy Eucharist, I (you) took the bread and blood of life (as was done on the Thursday of Passover meal), so that my (your) spirit will live. How ironic...or is it? The place where Christ died, I took the bread of life.

May your personal journey with Christ be as fulfilling and exciting as mine was.

Holy Land Nativity of Our Lord
Submitted by Natalie Bilynsky

As we prepare for the Nativity of our Lord, Nina’s article about the pilgrimage to the Holy Land reminded me of the many inspiring sites we saw. Ohel and I have traveled to many places but none have been as inspiring as our pilgrimage. Each year when we celebrate a feast day we recall the sites that we had the blessing to see. As we are approaching the Nativity, I wanted to share some of the photographs from our pilgrimage and explain them to you. May you have a very blessed Nativity!

Beautiful temples were built to commemorate and honor the sites where our Lord was born and performed miracles. In fact, we were informed that the only temple that was never destroyed by persecutors was the Church of the Nativity, which was built in 565 A.D. The huge Orthodox Cathedral has a tiny door that was built to keep out individuals who wanted to destroy the site. There is a huge beautiful temple with a shining silver iconastasis. To get to the site where our Lord was born, individuals walk down twelve uneven steps. The location where our Lord was born is honored with a beautiful silver, marble and jeweled star. The exact site is venerated and pilgrims come to the site kneeling. The manger on the other side has an icon that depicts that manger.

There is also a temple built to commemorate the site where the
My son wants to get a tattoo. What is the Orthodox teaching about tattoos?

Tattoos are all the rage now and often cover whole swaths of the body. No longer are people satisfied with a small heart and words declaring that Bob loves Sue. Tattoos have been around for ages, but the church has never been comfortable with them, especially as such have importance among pagan religions. Often our own past goes back to what we find in the Old Testament. Again, the Jews strictly avoided the practices of non-Jews. Even to this day, I have heard that those with tattoos are refused burial in a Jewish cemetery. In Orthodoxy, due to the connections with paganism as well as the reluctance to alter the body in any way, tattoos are certainly discouraged. It has been a very long-standing tradition among Orthodox to have a small cross tattooed on their hand to commemorate a pilgrimage to the Holy places of Jerusalem and the Holy Land. This is the one exception to a tradition of heartfelt discouragement of the use of tattoos.

It is among the islands of the Pacific that tattooing reaches a high artistic level, but all with pagan ritual significance. In modern American practice, demons and all sorts of odd things are depicted. Certainly, crosses also figure in the tattooists’ art but there still is the general tendency of our church to discourage tattoos, period. God has given us a body with a natural beauty. Embellishing it with gold and jewels is certainly biblical, but tattoos can be seen as a disfigurement of this God-given beauty. Having seen the elderly where old tattoos seem to turn into an ugly smear with age, one wonders why people get themselves tattooed in the first place. Certainly the practice of all-body tattooing will someday render an ugly aged population.

Please discourage your son from taking this almost irreversible step. Although, through a painful process, tattoos can be erased, this is impractical if big areas are covered. I once met a young man who had the heart and words tattooed on his arm and he rued the day he ever considered getting a tattoo.

When someone is gravely ill, but with possibility of death on the horizon, is there a point when the priest should be called?

Whenever a person is checked into the hospital it is a good habit to call the priest, for almost all hospitals no longer contact pastors whenever a parishioner has been admitted. There are some hospitals, due to their restrictive privacy policies, which no longer even acknowledge that such a person is in their facility unless specific permission has been given. As you can see, without your call, the pastor would never have an inkling that a parishioner was hospitalized and could benefit from a visit. Those who have chronic conditions and are housebound should have periodic visitation, so it is good that the priest be reminded that such persons would welcome a visit and administration of the sacraments. Whenever there is a profound change in a chronic patient, whether the coming of death is expected or not, the priest should be called and he should be told whether the patient can take anything by mouth.

In the case that health is definitely failing, please call the priest before a coma sets in. When things are in a critical state, the priest not only can give the sacraments but words of definite comfort. Having presided at funerals where the deceased never received the consolation of the church, one wonders whether had the priest been called if the process of dying might have been more calm and free of worries assuaged. It is a fact, that many will not call on the services of a priest under such conditions because they are afraid that the patient will...
Holy Ascension UOL Holds Christmas Bazaar
Submitted by Michael J. Komichak

On Saturday December 6, 2014 the Holy Ascension Senior UOL Chapter of Maplewood, NJ hosted a Christmas Bazaar at the St. Andrew Church Hall in South Bound Brook, NJ. In the busy three months leading up to the event, chapter members prepared food, baked cookies, posted signs, distributed flyers, purchased supplies, and contacted craft vendors. Most food items were stored in Dan and Lynne Gulak’s home freezer awaiting the big day.

UOL members delivered carloads of supplies and set up tables on Friday evening, followed by a frenzy of last minute activity early Saturday morning. All was ready when the doors opened to the public at 10 AM. Over the next six hours, the Bazaar attracted a steady stream of visitors who enjoyed hot food from our Ukrainian Kitchen, filled takeaway boxes with Christmas cookies, and browsed holiday decorations and other crafts from local vendors.

The Ukrainian Kitchen served holubtsi, three kinds of varenyky, and Richie Jendras’ “Baba’s Borscht.” Iryna Borovetz, PM Lidia Hucal, Daria Pishko Komichak, and Halyna Shevchuk ran the kitchen, while John and Nick Holowko took food orders. Khrystyna Chorniy, Erica Holowko, Aleksandra Hucal, and Jack Roditski staffed the Cookie Walk, which offered Christmas cookies for sale by the pound and “Kitya Kits” comprised of pre-measured organic einkorn wheatberries, poppyseed, and a recipe card. One patron purchased two pounds of Marlene Piascek “Spider Cookies” because they reminded him of the ones his grandmother used to make. Andriy, Artem, and Bohdan Borovetz, Christopher Holowko, Fr. Oleh Hucal, Mickey Komichak, George Shevchuk, and Senior Chapter President Alex Shevchuk pitched in wherever needed.

The Bazaar raised much needed funds to support the Holy Ascension UOL Chapter in the coming year. But more important than that, it strengthened the bonds of trust and fellowship among chapter members in a way that only shared hard work can. Mnoshuya Lita and thanks to all!

NEWS FROM THE JUNIOR UOL
PRESIDENT
Kateryna Kocelko

Christ is Born!

I hope and pray that everyone had a blessed Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year. The holiday season is a time for us to step back and be thankful for everything we have. We must always remember how fortunate we are and to share the blessings that God has bestowed upon us and our families.

It is with this mindset that the Junior UOL members embark upon all of the upcoming events of this New Year.

On January 25th, 2015 everyone should participate in the annual “Bring a Friend to Church Day.” It gives you the chance to expose your religion and traditions to your friends. You never know how much one event could impact their lives. You might want to consider scheduling an outing event such as a movie day or bowling event so everyone can get to know each other. Just as Christ told the Apostles, we should “Go forth and make Disciples of all nations” and help expose your friends to the traditions of our Holy Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

On February 1st, 2015, we ask that all of the chapters around the country participate in the annual “Souper” Bowl Sunday fundraiser. All of the proceeds that the chapters make go to Saint Andrew’s Ukrainian Orthodox Society which supports soup kitchens for needy elderly and orphans in Ukraine.

It’s never too early to start preparing for Lent. With Lent coming up, that means the 2015 “Great Lent Giveaway” is coming up also. Each year we ask our Junior UOL members to concentrate their efforts to support a very worthy cause. This year we will be focusing on The Ukraine Relief Fund. We ask you to take the time this Lent to give back by supporting this great cause, while growing in our Orthodox faith. If you have any questions about the 2015 GLG please do not hesitate to contact either Katherine Anderson at kitty2882@gmail.com or Mrs. Natalie Kapeluck-Nixon at ucocyouth@aol.com.

Last but not least, there is the annual Jr. UOL Raffle, which is the Jr. UOL’s largest fundraiser throughout the year. We ask that everyone participate by buying and selling tickets. The tickets will be sent out a little earlier than usual, so that gives everyone a little extra time to sell all your tickets.

Please don’t forget to turn in your chapter dues and membership forms. They were due back in September so please make sure you get them to our Financial Secretary, Sarah Hershey, as soon as possible. Also I expect that all of the Election Report forms are in and if they aren’t please also get those in as soon as possible to our Corresponding Secretary, Juliana Leis. Having updated information from all of the chapters is very crucial so we can keep all of the chapters involved and up to date on all of the information and upcoming events.

The National Executive Board sends their best wishes on the coming year and we pray that this year be fruitful for your chapter and your family. We also ask that you continue to pray for us that God continues to give us the strength to lead the UOL.

Yours in Christ,
Kateryna Kocelko
President
shepherds were called to our Lord. The icons within the church showed the shepherds and their calling. The grounds at this location were absolutely beautiful and one could imagine that the shepherds saw the star from the field.

Grotto of the Nativity - Birthplace of our Lord

Iconostasis of the Church of the Nativity

Manger

(Nativity - continued from page 1)

Fall at St. Vladimir Philadelphia PA

Submitted by Natalie Bilynsky

St. Vladimir’s Senior UOL Chapter has had a busy fall season. We started our 2014-15 year with a chapter meeting and pot-luck dinner. We invited all parishioners to join us for dinner and to come to our chapter meeting. During our fall meeting we typically report on the UOL Convention and make our schedule for the coming year. The meeting was well attended and we started our membership drive with several members joining the UOL.

This year for the first time we planned a Country Zabava and invited everyone to come in their best country western gear. We had lots of cowboys and cowgirls for the evening and ready to learn country line dancing. Debbie Shinn was our instructor and she was fabulous. She explained the dances and coached everyone. The event was so much fun that several of our youngest cowgirls were already asking when we were planning our next event. The evening included dancing as well as a delicious barbecue dinner prepared by Chris and Tanya Peltikis.

Our chapter also planned a visit to the Holy Protection Greek Orthodox Monastery in the Poconos. Our visit started with lunch and then a tour of the Monastery. Sister Marina showed us all of the chapels and the beautiful new iconography within the chapel. There is one icon of the last judgment within the Church that reminded several members of the icon seen in the Church of the Apostles in the Holy Land. We are planning a spring trip to the Monastery and hope that we can coordinate the day so that our Juniors can join us.

This year we also continued a tradition that started last year. Pani Laura Naumenko served as Chairperson for our second annual Thanksgiving dinner. Similar to last year all proceeds from the dinner were donated to worthy causes. This year our chapter decided to donate proceeds to help those injured in Ukraine. After we had our meeting, sadly a family of our chapter had a fire that destroyed much of their home. We donated half of our proceeds to help.
3rd Annual ‘First Ever Chili Cook Off’
Submitted by Stephanie Woloschak Rimedio

As the weather in Northeast Ohio chills, Sts. Peter & Paul Youngstown looks forward to our annual chili cook off. Our local chapter of the Senior UOL sponsors this tasty fellowship event the first weekend in November. This year’s cooks were Betty Ewanish, Zienia Goodge, Joe Rimedio, Kathy Vuksanovich, Crystal Walkowiec, Mike Woloschak, and Kathy Zebel.

Chairpersons, Fr. Gregory Becker and Stephanie Rimedio, distributed to all participants certificates of participation and a commemorative apron. Walt Kishton, owner of Shirt Wizard Boardman, Ohio, again generously donated aprons.

Everyone in attendance is given 3 categories to cast their vote. The award-winning cooks were as follows: Best Traditional-Zenia Goodge for her family’s secret recipe, Best Non-Traditional-Crystal Walkowiec for her “Black Bean Chili” and Best Use of Spice-Joe Rimedio for his “I hate beans.”


Sts. Peter and Paul Carnegie
Submitted by Alice Sivulich

The Sts. Peter and Paul Junior UOL Chapter held its annual Masquerade Party on October 18 in the Parish Hall. Positive themed costumes were called for and they abounded. Twenty or so youthful superheroes, princesses, and animals paraded around the area before having a feast of tacos, pizza, desserts and plenty of candy. The organizing committee of Kristi Rozum, Mikaela Kapeluck and Juliana Leis were happy to see so many youngsters enjoying themselves, but were puzzled by one slightly larger gorilla romping around and joining in the fun. To their surprise, that gorilla turned out to be Dr. Steve Sivulich!! It was a fun afternoon for all and the chapter advisors made sure that everyone had plenty of food and treats.

Photos, left to right — Mikaela Kapeluck, Kristi Rozum, Juliana Leis with Steve Sivulich behind.

(Philadelphia - Continued from page 4)

coupled with all of the proceeds from our Country Zabava. We are happy to report that everyone is fine.

Membership has been a major focus with our initial potluck dinner. At our anniversary dinner we had invitations in both English and Ukrainian inviting everyone in our parish to all of our UOL events. We also encouraged membership at our Annual parish meeting. At our Thanksgiving dinner we also decided to do a small presentation about the UOL. We premiered the UOL video and parishioners were thrilled to see the work of our own member Adam Kennedy and hear the narration with our own Al Shinn. We are ecstatic that our chapter continues to grow. For the last two years we have increased our membership by around 10 members each year. We are on pace this year with 7 new members and are thrilled that our membership is now at 73.

The winter is typically our busy season so we are excited about all our upcoming projects. We would like to invite everyone to come to our Malanka that is scheduled for Saturday, January 31st.

We wish you and your family a very blessed Nativity!
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness: for they shall be filled. While food and water are necessities for human life, Jesus tells us that righteousness is a spiritual need. It is vital to our spiritual life, without righteousness you cannot live spiritually. Just as food cannot just be put on a plate one must eat it to help the body, so righteousness must be absorbed and internalized so that it takes up every part of your life, every part of your being.

We read in Genesis that God made man of flesh of Him. God knew that man’s time on Earth would be limited and he granted man free will. In Genesis, chapter 6 God is disgusted with man and his wickedness and vows to destroy man. Noah lived in a time when the people of Earth were drenched in sin and were rebellious against God. Noah may have been the only follower of God left on Earth. “Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord”. (Genesis 6:8) God saw Noah for what he was and decided he was the man to save humanity and all that was good in the world from that horror that God was about to bestow upon the Earth. It is hard to imagine a man not being tempted by all the evilness and corruption that was surrounding him. Noah may not have been free from sin, as he did like wine and drank to excess; but I believe he was a truly righteous man. We know from scripture that God felt Noah was the only follower of God at the time. The temptation to be like all others was strong, but for the most part Noah had an unwavering faithfulness to God. Noah listened to God’s commands. Build an ark of gopher wood, it is to be 3 stories, have a door and have rooms. It was to be 300 cubits long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high. Noah never questioned God’s commands. He just asked what should he do next and he did just as God asked. God instructed Noah to build the ark and take his wife and sons and their wives onto the ark. Then to collect “two of every living thing of all flesh … they shall be male and female.” (Genesis 6:19) They should have knowledge of the various services and liturgies plus be able to function during the intricacies of the hierarchal liturgy. As with all ranks, reader, deacon and priest, they are ordained for a certain place. A subdeacon should be at the call of his pastor and not be wandering about serving wherever he wills. His pastor may approve him to go on occasion to different parishes for events, but this should be done at the pastor’s behest. Unlike an altar boy, he has been officially set aside for a certain community and is expected to be available for services there. He is not an itinerant just serving whenever and wherever he pleases. It is expected that he be familiar with the scriptures and although no theological training is required, it is assumed that he will endeavor to learn more and more about the faith.

What are the responsibilities of sub-deacons in the church?

In our present day, Orthodox parishes around the world have altar boys serving in the altar for vespers and liturgy. In point of fact, these boys are fulfilling the subdiaconal function without benefit of ordination. Each time they serve, their vestments are blessed and they receive the blessing to function like a subdeacon. For those who are set aside and ordained to this rank they still serve as any altar boy would, but more responsibility is added. They should have knowledge of the various services and liturgies plus be able to function during the intricacies of the hierarchal liturgy. As with all ranks, reader, deacon and priest, they are ordained for a certain place. A subdeacon should be at the call of his pastor and not be wandering about serving wherever he wills. His pastor may approve him to go on occasion to different parishes for events, but this should be done at the pastor’s behest. Unlike an altar boy, he has been officially set aside for a certain community and is expected to be available for services there. He is not an itinerant just serving whenever and wherever he pleases. It is expected that he be familiar with the scriptures and although no theological training is required, it is assumed that he will endeavor to learn more and more about the faith.

At one ecumenical council it was mandated that candidates for subdiaconate not be married after their ordination. In current practice, the hierarchy has an understanding with the individual before ordination takes place that the person desires to marry later and so an exemption is given. In the history of the church, it was the West that continually wanted to restrict any married clergy and this added restriction for the subdiaconate created real problems. As most altar servers are mere boys, if ordained at that age a celibate clergy would soon be the result.

Serving within the altar, whether as an altar server or in the ordained rank of a subdeacon, is very important for the various services to be performed in a proper solemn manner.

Interested in learning more about your faith?

Get inspired by Fr. John Harvey. Attend the Western PA-Ohio Retreat March 28, 2015 Retreat will focus on Holy Week Villa Maria Retreat Center 2067 Evergreen Road, Villa Maria, PA For more information contact Fr. John Harvey 330-799-3830
The Lord God stands in the midst of the Divine Council and judges among the gods. “How long will you rule unjustly, and show partiality to the wicked? Defend the poor and fatherless, maintain the rights of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”

Make a Donation to help Saint Andrew’s Society
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Please Contact the Christian Caregiving and Missions’ Chairs with any questions:
Senior UOL Chair PM Olenka Sendeha olenkas5@yahoo.com
Junior UOL Chair Katherine Anderson kitty2882@gmail.com

A Meditation on MLK Jr., the Sanctity of Life, and Our Own Cowardice
Submitted by Fr. Anthony Perkins

The Lord God stands in the midst of the Divine Council and judges among the gods. “How long will you rule unjustly, and show partiality to the wicked? Defend the poor and fatherless, maintain the rights of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”

(Psalm 81:1-4; this is the first Psalm we sing to proclaim the Resurrection on Holy Saturday)

One of the things that we often forget is how incredibly offensive the civil rights protests were to many Americans (not just to Southerners – there was plenty of outrage elsewhere!). But it was right and just to cause offense because the status quo was wicked. What truths are we afraid to proclaim not out of fear of arrest, lynching, or assassination, but out of fear of offending someone’s feelings or going against the politics of our community? Just how deep does our cowardice go? Which side are we on, exactly?

We are like the gods the Lord condemned in the midst of His council. We have failed to defend even the most vulnerable among us. Who is more vulnerable than our children? And what do we – the citizen-rulers of this country – do to protect them? One out of every five is intentionally put to death before birth (more than a million a year). Of the children we allow to see the light of day, one out of every three lives in a home without a father (24 million), and one out of five lives in poverty/“food insecurity” (16 million). [And don’t even get me started on unnecessary wars, capital punishment, creeping totalitarianism, and atheistic fervor.] All of these do injustice to the sanctity of life and the dignity of persons we are supposed to love.

These are not political issues; they are moral ones. Our apathetic indulgence of such a demonic system shows just how little we have done to become perfect as God is perfect through Jesus Christ. We are not just called to do good when it is convenient or when it matches our political convictions or personal opinions – but every second of every day. We are called to live and suffer for what is holy, right and true; even to die for it if need be. Instead, we excuse injustice with clever words (e.g. “choice,” “freedom,” “necessity,” and “economics” – both liberals and conservatives have them). Even if we have not participated in this wicked system, what have we done to oppose it? To ameliorate its terrible consequences? Have we cared for the fatherless? Supported the single mother? Healed the mother who has aborted her child? Have we taught the youth of our country (and the children in our families) the truth about chastity, marriage, and the value of human life? If not, how are we going to break this cycle?

We must repent, we must pray, and most of all, we must serve.

To quote an article by Andrew Estocin; “Martin Luther King Jr. and Archbishop Iakovos [who marched with him] both knew that the human person as the image and likeness of God was a truth worth breaking the law, fighting and (in Rev. King’s case) ultimately dying for. Orthodoxy in America needs this type of courage today more than ever.”

We may need that, but my fear is that we have become a nation of self-indulgent cowards. I would love to be proven wrong.

Interested in learning more about your faith?
Come to the UOL Retreat on March 28, 2015 to learn more about prayer and discuss issues related to prayer and meditation. Listen to inspiring words of Fr. Anthony Perkins.

Be social! Be active! Live Our Faith!
How are you giving your time and talents to your parish and community?
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Contact us!! ULOfUSA@gmail.com

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A donation to the Tribute Fund is an acknowledgment of a Milestone, Memorial, or Accomplishment, or is a Special Recognition of an individual or group. Your much-appreciated contribution is used to support and further the Mission of the Ukrainian Orthodox League. All donations are published in the UOL Bulletin.

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Martha Sawarynski | In honor of the elevation of Protodeacon and children Maria, Matthew, Christina and Paul, as well as his eleven grandchildren.
Lesky Family | In memory of John Lesky on the 10th Anniversary of his repose. Memory Eternal!
Mom and Uncle John | Wedding Congratulations to Denise (Spoganetz) and Christopher Strashinsky.
Rose Boykas | In memory of my friends from Holy Ascension Church in Clifton, NJ. Memory eternal: Fr. Peter Hotrovich, Marion Jendras, Olga Karpiluk, Adam Piasecki and William Kuzbyt.
The Swans and Jennie Karbiwnyk | To Olga and Jim Sawchuk - Wishing you a blessed holiday season!

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Natalie Bilynsky   703 Pine Ridge Road  Media, PA 19063.
Please make check payable to Ukrainian Orthodox League.

13th Annual UOL Lenten Retreat
Saturday March 28, 2015
Retreat will focus on prayer
St. Francis Center For Renewal
395 Bridle Path Road
Bethlehem, PA

Let my prayer arise!
13th Annual UOL Lenten Retreat

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