

SUNDAY OF THE FOREFATHERS
ELEVENTH SUNDAY OF LUKE



Icon of the Great Banquet

Reflections on the Scripture Readings for this Weekend



This weekend is one of two that prepare us for the feast of the Nativity of Christ - the incarnation of God in the Person of Jesus. It is called the weekend of the Forefathers of Christ according to the flesh. The Patriarch Abraham is commemorated since it was to him that God's promise was first given - given some two thousand years before Christ and when Abraham was seventy-five years of age, according to Tradition. We pray today:

Through faith, O Christ, You justified the Patriarchs, for through them You made a commitment to a church with gentiles. These Saints are glorified because from them

descends the Virgin who gave You birth. Through their prayers, O Christ our God, have mercy on us.

Our first reading is taken from Paul's letter to the Colossians. In this letter he urges the Colossians and us to "put on a new man, one who grows in knowledge as he is formed anew in the image of his Creator". This is the same call that Christ gives us. Let us, as we prepare to celebrate these feasts, grow in our knowledge of the revelation God has given us through His incarnation as a human being. If we do, we will strive to grow in our "likeness" of Jesus, God's revelation of how human beings should live in order to achieve the purpose and meaning of their lives.

Our second reading, taken from Luke's Gospel, retells the parable of the dinner party that all invited guests refused to attend. It is meant to remind us that, like Abraham, we have been invited to embrace a certain way of living.

For us Christians, the way of living that we are called to embrace is that modeled by the Person of Jesus. God doesn't force us to embrace the Jesus-way-of-living, but has shown us that this particular way of living will help us to spiritually grow. That is the primary purpose of this present earthly life - to spiritually grow so that we will be more like Jesus - be a child of our Heavenly Father.

We can accept the invitation given to us to become like Jesus and fulfill the purpose and meaning of our lives, or we can reject it. If we do refuse, we are the ones who loose what God has promised awaits us in the next life. Its our choice.

Understanding Our Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church

I would continue sharing information about the establishment of the major feasts of our Church. The feasts of the Presentation and the Transfiguration also originated in Jerusalem during Cyril's episcopate. I shall deal with them later since the reasons why they were established in Jerusalem differ from the reasons that I have already presented for the previous feasts.

The historical situation does not substantiate the assertion of some liturgical scholars that Cyril's liturgical innovations in the 350s and 60s were not adopted elsewhere until the 380s and 90s because they were ahead of their time or because of events surrounding Cyril's consecration. Cyril was an isolated anti-Arian bishop in a staunchly Arian territory. Both to attack the Arian conception of the nature of Christ and to assert administrative independence from the Arian metropolitanate of Caesarea at a time when Jerusalem's claim to importance was just beginning to be recognized, Cyril instituted a series of liturgical celebrations which publicly put forth the orthodox conception of the nature of Christ. They did so, moreover, in a manner which filled the vacuum of traditional cyclical festivals and communal demonstrations of unity left by the official demise of paganism under Theodosius I.

The real reason for the gap between the Cyrillian Group's inception and reception was political. Arianism was in



the ascendancy in the time of Constantine II and Valens. At one time or another Arian bishops held the sees of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem, among others. There is no evidence of the general acceptance of a single feast outside of the Core Group before Theodosius I. It was only after the Arianizing emperors died and Theodosius I came to power - after he began removing Arian bishops from their sees, after he required profession of the Nicene Creed (*which is believed to have been based on the baptismal creed of Jerusalem*), after he called the Council of Constantinople which condemned Arianism and asserted the divine and human natures of Christ in one person - that these feasts spread beyond Jerusalem to be kept throughout the East. This was neither an effort to catch up with Jerusalem's liturgical practices, nor the Council's vindication of Cyril's past actions. Rather, the acceptance of the Cyrillian Feasts throughout the major cities of the East implied an acceptance of the underlying theological concepts. It was at the same time that these bishops gave approval to those concepts at the Council of Constantinople.

The Divine Liturgy and Our Worship of God

My commentary on the Divine Liturgy has reached the point where we have completed the sequence of praying to the Father, remembering the words and actions of the Son and invoking the Holy Spirit to transform the gifts we bring, the symbols of life. In the process we become aware of Christ's presence in our midst and we also ask God to transform us into persons who embrace the same attitudes and behaviors of Jesus - who realize that God became incarnate in order to help us learn how to live this earthly existence and achieve the true meaning and purpose of our lives. After these prayers and actions, we include our commemorations of those who have believed in this way (saints) and the Mother of God. It is important to note that the commemoration of the Mother of God was not initially in the Divine Liturgy at this juncture. It was inserted at this point to confirm what the Councils declared, namely that she is the MOTHER OF GOD, the Theotokos.

In the same way that the Hymn of the Incarnation was inserted into the Divine Liturgy to affirm the belief of Jesus as both God and Man, so this prayer was inserted to affirm that we believe that Mary is the Mother of God. The congregational prayer that follows these commemorations is a direct statement of our belief about Mary. She is "more honorable than the Cherubim and beyond compare



more glorious than the Seraphim" and she "gave birth to God the Word" and she is the Mother of God.

While this hymn to the Mother of God is being sung, the priest has a series of *silent prayers* which, at one time, were said aloud. Again these prayers are a continuation of the commemorations - those who we remember during our communal prayer. Among those are John the Baptist and the saint(s) of the day and the entire episcopate and clergy.

The priest then indicates that we offer this "spiritual sacrifice" for the "whole world", our "civil authorities", and "those in the service of our country." He then adds this: "Grant them, O Lord, a peaceful rule, that we also, sharing their tranquility, may lead a tranquil and calm life in all piety and dignity".

It must be remembered that the early Church was ruled by the emperor - the civil authority - who was the head not only of the State but also the Church. That is a whole history which is important to understand.



St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan

PREPARING FOR CHRISTMAS

LITURGY SCHEDULE

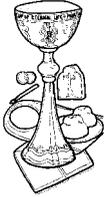
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Christmas Eve Liturgy

Saturday December 24th - 10 PM

Christmas Day Liturgy

Sunday December 25th - 10 AM



CHRISTMAS FLOWERS

Floral Memorials will be available again this year. Suggested donation is \$25. Form available next week.

CHRISTMAS OUTREACH

First Step & Andrew's Pence

First Step is a local program that supports abused spouses and families. *Andrew's Pence* is a special collection to support the missionary activities of our Patriarch and Our Church, especially in Ukraine.

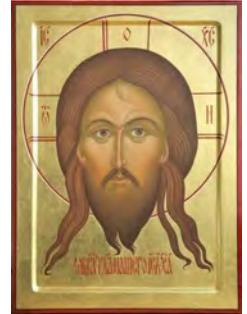
CHRISTMAS FLOWERS

If you would like to offer a FLORAL MEMORIAL, use the envelope within your packet and please include the names. If not, there will be a form in next week's Bulletin.

**Love is never supposed to hurt.
Love is supposed to heal, to be
your haven from misery,
to make living worthwhile.**

CALLED TO HOLINESS

All of the Fathers of the Church who wrote about developing a prayer life, tell us that it is important to develop a "habit" of prayer. In order to develop this habit, we must think about making our time for prayer "regular", that is at the same time each day. In addition to this, the Fathers tell us that we must always "start small", that is not overwhelming ourselves with the amount of time spent at prayer. Start small and build up the time that you spend in prayer, that is the approach.



So, for example, start with spending five minutes each day, at a particular time, in prayer until you automatically do it in a very consistent manner - you don't let anything distract you from spending that five minutes with God. Once you see that you have developed a habit doing that, spend eight minutes in prayer. If you have to use a timer, then use a timer. Remember, the purpose of this is to develop the habit of prayer - something that you always do.

After than you can again increase the time you spend in prayer, always realizing that it is not the amount of time you spend, it is the fact that you consistently spend some of your time in prayer.

It seems that the foundation or basis of any spiritual growth is the establishment of a prayer life.

(Continued on page 8)

A PRAYER A DAY FOR THE ST. PHILIP'S FAST

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11th

Today, Heavenly Father, the Church celebrates the Holy Forefathers of Your Son in the flesh, Jesus. As I reflect upon this remembrance, I realize in a real way that You have kept Your Promise to be with humankind if we open our hearts and minds to Your presence. I beg You, help me to open my mind and heart to Your presence in my life. Help me to never doubt Your loving kindness or fail to see Your Life-giving Spirit at work in my life. Help me to grow in Your Likeness as seen in the Person of Jesus, the Christ. I make this prayer to You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

MONDAY, DECEMBER 12th

Heavenly Father, today the Church remembers our Father Among the Saints, Spyridon the Wonderworker who was a champion of the First Council of the Church, the Council which began the process of our coming to a clearer understanding of Jesus as being truly God and truly Man. It is important for me to believe what the Church has declared about Jesus, especially as I prepare to celebrate these feasts. Help me to believe that, because He is truly human, my life's task is to imitate Him. Help me, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to desire to be like Him and believe that, with Your help, I can achieve being more like Him. AMEN

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13th

Today, Heavenly Father, the Church remembers a host of martyrs: Eustratius, Auxentius, Eugene, Mardarius and Orestes of Greater Armenia as well as the Holy Virgin Martyr Lucia of Sicily. Your martyrs, O God, shone as most brilliant lights in our world and modeled for all a deep commitment to the faith. I beg You to help me to bring light to my world as I commit myself to celebrating these great Winter Feasts in a spiritual manner. Help me not to become absorbed in the materialism of my world but, rather, focus on making Christmas, especially, a time a deep faith. I make this prayer to You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14th

Today, O Heavenly Father, the Church again remembers another host of martyrs: Thyrsus, Leucius and Callinicus of Asia Minor and Philemon, Apollonius and Arian of Alexandria. As I join myself with the Church in remembering these martyrs, I beg You, Father, to give me the courage to live like they did, with belief in You. Help me to spiritually celebrate Christmas, which commemorates Your incarnation, in a manner that makes me aware that You became a human being in order to show me how to live. Help me to grow in my likeness of Jesus and to do Your will. I ask this of You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

A PRAYER A DAY FOR THE ST. PHILIP'S FAST

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 15th

Today the Church remembers the Holy Bishop-martyr Eleutherius. By reason of his surpassing virtue, he bore witness to You, Almighty God, by bringing many to the faith and also by enduring many torments. He is a true model of a life dedicated to witnessing to Your Goodness, O Heavenly Father. As I remember him, I ask You, Father, to give me the strength and courage to witness to You by the way that I celebrate these winter feasts, especially the Feast of Your Nativity as a Human Person. Help me to prepare myself to celebrate this great mystery with genuine faith. I humbly ask this of You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 16th

The Church remembers today, Heavenly Father, the Prophet Aggaeus and the Wonderworker, the Holy Empress Theophano. They were people who truly were focused on making You, our Loving God, a part of their lives. I ask you to help me, like them, to make You the focus of my life, desirous of growing in the likeness of Jesus, Who is You incarnate. I especially ask Your help at this time of the year when the Church celebrates Your birth and also Your revelation to the world as our Triune God. I make this prayer to You, Who I know to be Father, son and Holy Spirit and truly God. I offer You my praise. AMEN

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17th

Today, Heavenly Father, The Church remembers a host of saints: the Holy Prophet Daniel; the Holy Three Children Ananias, Azarias and Misael; and Our Father Among the Saints Dionysius. It was the Holy Daniel who prophesized Your incarnation in the Person of Jesus, seedlessly born of a Holy Virgin. The Church celebrates the Three Children and Daniel in conjunction with the Church's celebration of the Holy Forefathers. They remind me that I must prepare to celebrate Your incarnation as man with faith. I ask you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to help me celebrate Your incarnation in a spiritual way and render glory, praise and honor to You both now and forever. AMEN

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18th

Today, Holy Father, the Church celebrates the Holy Ancestors of Jesus Christ in the flesh – She celebrates all those who, from ages past, have been well-pleasing to God, Adam even unto Joseph the Betrothed of the Virgin Mary. Great were their achievements in the faith. I join now with the Church and declare: O Bethlehem, rejoice! Ephratha, make ready! For in her womb the Ewe-lamb, Mary, bears the Great Shepherd Jesus and urgently makes haste to give birth to Him. On beholding Him, the righteous God-bearing Fathers all rejoice and the shepherds sing hymns of praise to the Virgin and I join with them, Father, Son and Holy Spirit in offering You praise. AMEN

Schedule of Services

St. Michael the Archangel
Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church
6340 Chase Road
Dearborn, MI 48126

Rev. Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.
Pastor

Rectory: (313) 582-1424
Cell: (313) 580-4412
WRuchgy@gmail.com

LITURGY SCHEDULE

Sundays @ 10:00 AM
Ukrainian & English

Weekdays @ 8:00 AM
English

SACRAMENTS

Penance
By Appointment

Baptism & Matrimony
In most instances membership
required for six months

Funerals
Membership of an immediate
family member required

Parish Life Council

Bob & Corinne Boyko
734.451.1893

John & Janet Dicky
313.563.5509

Daria Drobny
313.791-0292

Robert Krokosky
248.431.9554

Leo & Mary LaDouceur
313.278.7378

Gordon Malaniak
734.564.9817

Leonard Mier
313.584-6795

Greg & Esther Petrovich
734.453-4354

Rafic Vawter
313.624.9867

Sunday, December 11 - 30th Weekend after Pentecost - Tone 5
Sunday of the Forefathers of Christ
10:00 AM + Stephen Mihalko; Kotlinski Family

WEEK OF THE HOLY ANCESTORS - TONE 6

Monday, December 12 - Spyridon the Wonderworker
8:00 AM - Special Intention

Tuesday, December 13 - Eustratius & Others, Martyrs
No Liturgy Scheduled

Wednesday, December 14 - Thrysus & Others, Martyrs
8:00 AM - Special Intention

Thursday, December 15 - Eleutherius, Bishop-Maertyr
No Liturgy Scheduled

Friday, December 16 - Haggai, Prophet
8:00 AM - Special Intention

Saturday, December 17 - Daniel, Great-Prophet
No Liturgy Scheduled

Sunday, December 18 - Weekend of the Holy Ancestors - Tone 6
10:00 AM + Lydia Soja; Greg & Esther Petrovich

(Continued from page 5 - Called to Holiness)

Again it doesn't matter what you use as prayer. It can be a combination of formula prayers together with your reflection. Eventually, personal prayer means that we just think about God and His presence in our life. Prayer becomes that time that we spend just thinking about ourselves as creatures created in His image and given the power to grow in His likeness. Prayer eventually becomes this quiet time wherein we wait for God's enlightenment (*i.e., ideas, insights and even inspirations*). If we open ourselves to God, He will eventually begin speaking with us, not in words but in thoughts and ideas. He will never push His way into our lives. We have to open the door to our hearts and minds and invite Him in. This will eventually happen if we pursue the "habit of prayer."



<http://www.stmichaelarchangel.org> - and - [Facebook.com/stmichaelugccdbn](https://www.facebook.com/stmichaelugccdbn)

Gaining a Deeper Understanding of the New Testament

As I suggested in the last issue of this article, it is important in considering the power of the New Testament (NT) to consider three things: the Word OF Jesus, the Word ABOUT Jesus, and Jesus AS THE WORD. I then briefly presented some ideas about the Word OF Jesus. I would now consider the Word ABOUT Jesus.

Throughout the NT we encounter the expression "Word of truth" as a synonym for the Gospel proclamation. "Truth" signifies both the message of revelation and the divine reality that is revealed. Christ Himself IS the truth in that He both announces and embodies that truth. The "Word of truth" is a creative word that engenders "children of God" by introducing them into the new life of the Kingdom, implicitly or explicitly through the sacrament of baptism. Thus St. Paul can declare that "the Gospel is the power of God for the salvation of all who believe", precisely because "the Word of God operates in you who believe." The amended passage of I Peter 1:22-25 also makes clear the fact that in apostolic times the saving power of the word - like that of the sacraments - was known to be contingent upon faith and repentance: "Having purified their souls by obeying the truth through the Spirit, to exercise

unfeigned fraternal love... having been regenerated not by corruptible seed, but by incorruptible, through the living and abiding Word of God," the faithful are joined to Christ through a constant renewal of their baptismal commitment. Because of the truly indispensable role of faith and repentance in the work of salvation, the sacrament can only be conceived by cooperation between man and God.



It should be remembered that our Eastern spirituality stresses the fact that our salvation is accomplished when we cooperate with God's graces (help) and more deeply actualize the potential within us to be like Jesus, the Christ. This is the true understanding of an idea that all my readers should be very familiar with,

Theosis. Of course *Theosis* cannot be real in our lives without *faith* and *repentance* which is more clearly understood as *metanoia*.

Metanoia, as I am sure my readers will recall, is a transliteration of the Greek **μετάνοια**, and can be defined as "a transformative change of heart; especially: a spiritual conversion." The term suggests repudiation, change of mind, repentance, and atonement; but "conversion" and "reformation" may best approximate its connotation. Prayer and penance, of course, helps!

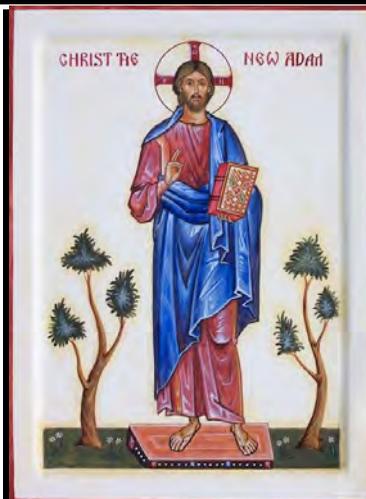
Learning Our Faith From the Greek Fathers of the Church

Some of the questions the early Church had to answer were: How was Jesus a human being and how can we make sense of His humanity in light of His divinity? Can genuine divinity and humanity be joined together? What kind of union was this? Was such a union even possible? Perhaps Jesus possessed a human body controlled by a divine mind. Or maybe his body was not real after all. Then again, perhaps Jesus possessed a real body and a genuinely human mind but a divine will. To what extent was Jesus human after all? Perhaps he was more like an angel, a third type of personal, created being - part human, part divine.

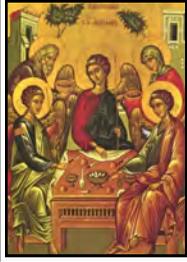
And what did Jesus come to accomplish? Apostles such as Paul, Peter and John were absolutely insistent that Jesus' life, death and resurrection had overcome sin and its destructive effects on humanity and God's creation at large. In what way had God conquered sin in the lives of those people who believed in Jesus? Apostolic teaching indicated that Christ's crucifixion and subsequent resurrection had broken the spine of sin. How? How did human faith and belief tap into the benefits of Christ's death and resurrection? In what way was the exercise of faith related to God's power? To human freedom? How were the glorious realities of Christ's work and person communicated to those who believed in him?

Perhaps the greatest surprise of all was the ascension of Christ back to heaven, just when all seemed to have been accomplished and fulfilled. Jesus left his small band of brothers and sisters behind at the very moment when they appeared to need his guidance the most. Why would he do such a thing? Clearly Christ's departure surprised his early followers. If He truly wanted to influence humanity, why didn't He just stay and build the group of His followers?

Luke records that, after the disciples had received



extended postresurrection instruction from Jesus, they asked, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom of Israel? Jesus' response no doubt caught them off guard: "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth". Think about this. God reveals and then leaves it up to humankind to either embrace or reject His revelation. **FREE WILL!**



THE EASTERN HERALD

СХІДНИЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.
Vol. 62 No 50 Weekend of the Holy Forefathers December 10-11, 2016

The Spirituality of the Christian East

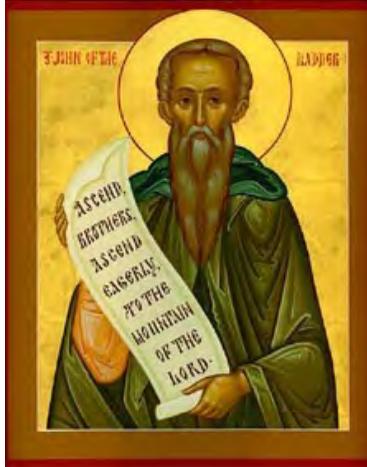
Step 28 on John's *Ladder* is **PRAYER**. Prayer is by nature, according to St. John, a dialog and a union of man with God. Its effect is to hold the world together. It achieves a reconciliation with God. It is a bridge across temptation, a bulwark against affliction. Prayer is future gladness, action without

end, wellspring of virtues, source of grace, hidden progress, food for the soul, enlightenment of the mind, an axe against despair, sorrow done away with and hope demonstrated.

For most Christians, prayer is something we do at certain times of day, and it is an important part of Christian life. But for the saints, prayer is not merely a part of life, it IS their life: it imbues their very being and is present in every action.

Many think of prayer as "speaking to God," but as St. John points out, prayer is not a monologue, but a dialogue.

So how can we learn to converse



with God? In other words, how can we learn to pray? This is not a strange question to ask. When Christ's disciples asked Him to "teach us to pray," as John also taught his disciples, He responded with the prayer, Our Father.

Ever since then, the Lord's Prayer has held a central place in Christian

worship. This prayer teaches us to pray not only by giving us words to say, but by showing us how we should approach the act of prayer and how and what we should pray for:

Praise and Adoration

"Hallowed be Thy Name"

Hope and Expectation

"Your Kingdom come"

The Acceptance of God's Will

"Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Praying Only for Our Common Needs

"Give us this day our daily bread"

Praying for forgiveness

"And forgive us our sins as we forgive others"

Praying for Help

"Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil."

Invited to the Banquet

It is written in the Gospel: The Master sent out his servants to call them who wish to come, inviting them: "My banquet is ready." But those who were called began to excuse themselves, one saying: "I bought some yoke of oxen." Another: "I have married" (Luke 14:16ff). You see, he was ready who called, but the invited refused. They themselves were alone responsible in the way they answered.

Thus, so great is the dignity of Christians. Consider, the Lord has prepared for them the Kingdom and has called them to enter, but they have refused. Concerning the gift that Christians will receive by way

of their inheritance, one could rightly say that if anyone, from the time of Adam's creation to the end of the world, should battle against Satan and put up with afflictions, it would be nothing in comparison to the glory which he is to obtain. For he will reign forever together with Christ. Glory to Him who so loved such a person that He gave himself and His grace and entrusted himself to Him. Glory to His greatness!

Pseudo-Macarius

**For more information on Eastern spirituality, visit
www.ecpubs.com**