

THIRTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
TWELFTH SUNDAY OF LUKE



Icon of Saint Anthony the Great -- January 17th

Reflections on the Scripture Readings for this Weekend

Our readings for this week are taken from Paul's letter to the Colossians and Luke's Gospel. Our Epistle reading tells us that, because we are God's chosen ones, we should clothe ourselves in virtue. Paul then articulates a number of virtues that we should embrace, ending with this exhortation: "Let the word of Christ, dwell in you." He tells us indirectly that Christ taught us that it is a virtuous life that allows us to grow in our likeness of God. The virtues that Paul writes about are mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forgiveness, thankfulness and love. He also clearly indicates that if we attempt to make these virtues a real part of our lives, we will achieve true, interior peace.

Our Gospel story is about Christ's encounter with one of the "ruling class" who wants to know what he must do in order to "share in everlasting life." Jesus' response to the man is that first he must keep the basic commandments that involve true love of neighbor. Jesus does not indicate the ten commandments of Moses but highlights those which guide us in our relationships with others (*i.e., adultery, murder, stealing, lying and lack of respect for others*).

After the man declares that he has kept these basic commandments, Jesus tells him that if he really wants to spiritually grow, he must "sell all you have and give to the poor and then follow me." The Gospel then tells us that when Jesus said this the man grew "melancholy" because he was rich. Jesus ends the encounter with the man by responding to the questions of others who had heard this and then asked: "Who, then, can be saved?" To which Jesus replies, "Things that are impossible for men are possible for God."

So what message can we derive from these two readings? When you think about the story of



Jesus and One of the Ruling Class

the man from the ruling class, you realize that Jesus is telling us that if we become concerned about the things we have, spiritual growth is impossible. But, if we enlist the help of God and attempt to make virtue a part of your life, you can achieve the fullness of life. Things of this world can distract us from the primary task of life, namely to learn how to love our neighbors as ourselves and not to think about worldly things but, rather, about spiritual things. All things are truly temporary. We must learn what is important in life, things or others. We have a choice! How do we live our lives? That's the question!

Understanding Our Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church

As many will remember, before the Winter feasts I was sharing information about the development of the major feasts of our Church. As I shared, the Nativity was introduced into the East from Rome around 385 CE. Around this same time in the East, the meaning of the Epiphany began to shift from Christ's birth to His baptism, thereby emphasizing the divine or theophanic character of this feast over its earlier more human aspect. The Nativity, which falls only twelve days previous, formed a fitting Eastern complement to the Epiphany by emphasizing the human nature of Christ through the celebration of His birth.

Like the Ascension, the Epiphany was observed locally in some churches before the introduction of the Nativity. The Epiphany's connotations as a birth feast lingered, as Jerome's homilies indicate, so this probably accounts for the later adoption of the Nativity at Alexandria (*circa* 430) and at Jerusalem slightly later than at Alexandria. It is also probable that the Council of Ephesus (431) and the Formulary of 433 - an attempted compromise between the true Church and Nestorian views on the nature of Christ - encouraged the acceptance of the Nativity in these cities.

So, these first feasts of Our Lord took years - centuries - to develop and their introduction seems to have been deeply connected to the Church's growing understanding of Who Jesus Is.



As Councils anathematized various persons for presenting incorrect ideas about Who Jesus Is, these feasts also came into existence. As I have shared, originally those events in the life of Jesus that the Church came to see as revealing the very nature of God - "theophanic" events - feasts began to emerge. They came into existence to proclaim the Church's ideas about Jesus that were formulated by various Councils.

As the Church formulated what She believes about Jesus, She also thought about who Mary the Virgin was and is. Again, feasts began to emerge in honor of Mary because the Church began to solidify Her ideas about Mary. It was at the Council of Ephesus (431) that Mary was declared to be the *Theotokos*, the Mother of God, because Jesus was/is the God-Man.

Each of the next three feasts to be universally established was to a greater or lesser degree concerned with the Virgin Mary. It is interesting that the first feast makes a very mild statement on the Virgin's role in the history of salvation, the second a somewhat stronger one, and the third stronger still.

(More to come about the Marian feasts)

The Divine Liturgy and Our Worship of God

Although I already referenced the *Hymn to the Mother of God* that appears in the Anaphora of St. John's Liturgy, it was only introduced in the seventh century by St. Sophronius, the Patriarch of Jerusalem. This was after the Council of Ephesus that declared her the Mother of God. You will recall that St. John had edited and shortened the Liturgy of St. Basil the Great sometime before this. It is and has been an integral part of the Liturgy since the seventh century.

We remember the Mother of God as we do all those who have gone before us and then we remember the hierarchy of our Church and those who we desire to pray for or who have asked us to pray for them.

I love the way that the Anaphora ends. The priest intones this prayer:

And grant that we, with ONE VOICE and ONE HEART, may glorify and praise Your most honored and sublime name, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever.

All present declare their agreement with this statement by saying AMEN. This truly urges us to be united in mind and heart. Although we may not often think about this, but our worship as a community is a way that we support one another in growing in the likeness of Jesus Christ, Our God Incarnate.

After this the priest prays:
And may the mercies of our Great God and Savior Jesus Christ be with all.



To this priestly prayer those present respond: *And with your spirit.* I wonder whether anyone has thought about what this means? It truly doesn't simply mean "and also with you." We must remember that the priest, who is simply a stand-in for Jesus Christ our high-priest, is also just a stand-in for a bishop. So there is much more in this response than meets the eye. The response is an acknowledgement by the congregation of the grace and presence of Christ, who is present and operative in the spirit or soul of the celebrant. It is through the priesthood that Christ's Spirit is bestowed on us. So in the first instance, this response is an acknowledgement of the grace which Christ is bestowing on us through the priesthood. Second, the congregation expresses its wish that God's Spirit also be bestowed on the priest since when he prays that God's Spirit be with *all present*, he does not include himself. So in love, the congregation asks God to also bless the celebrant. Each of us plays an important role in the Liturgy.



St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan



OUR NEXT MAJOR FEAST

On February 2nd we will celebrate the feast which has several different names. On our calendars it is called the Encounter of Our Lord with Simeon. It concludes the winter feasts which are called "Theophanies" or manifestations of God in human form to the world. It is the fortieth day after the Nativity of Jesus, and therefore is a part of the Christmas cycle of feast days. It originated in Jerusalem in the second half of the fourth century. From Jerusalem it spread throughout the entire East, but only in the sixth century under the Emperor Justinian did it assume special significance. Two events had encouraged Justinian to establish it: a plague in Constantinople and an earthquake in Antioch.

Just when I think I have learned the way to live, life changes.

CALLED TO HOLINESS

In the last issue of this article, I suggested that there are several very important questions that we, in my estimation, must attempt to answer if we wish to respond to the call that God is giving to us to become holy. I wonder if any of my readers took the time to think about how they might answer those questions. They are truly questions which, I believe, we must go back to repeatedly during our life's journey, expecting that we might change our answers as we continue to spiritually grow. As we grow in our understanding that we are "called to holiness," we will also begin to understand in a much more realistic way what "salvation" means and what "being saved" truly means. I think we will also discover that "being saved" doesn't mean that we will be spared the possibility of "hell" when we die.

It is my humble belief that God did not become *incarnate* in the Person of Jesus to save us from hell. I do think that He became incarnate to eliminate the human attitude which suggests that salvation is something that we can leave until later, after we take care of more pressing matters. (Continued on page 8)



Acquiring the Mind of Christ

How does God speak to us? I suggested, in the last issue of this article, that He might speak to us in the new “insights” we get when we are praying or meditating. Sometimes it may be a verse from Scripture, a verse from the Fathers, a sense in our own heart, or intuition or conscience or just the peace of God. We must be open and ready for any way God chooses to reveal Himself, always willing to confirm the word with those who have a good witness in the Church. Although He can and might, we should not expect to “hear” Him speak to us in our predominant language.

Monologistic Prayer, or literally “the prayer of one thought” (*the Jesus Prayer*), helps us learn how to speak with and listen to God. What is most important is that we understand from the beginning that prayer is a matter of constancy and consistency, incrementally building our time with the Lord in a measured and regulated way. We do not want to pray merely so as to fulfill some sense of religious obligation. We do not want to pray so that we feel better about ourselves. God forbid! We want a living, life-giving relationship with our Creator and Lord Jesus Christ, to be sensitized to His voice and to true spiritual reality. This can only be achieved by humble, committed and patient prayer. We must always remember that it is the content of the humble and contrite prayer of the publican that justifies us: “God be merciful to me a sinner”. Prayer is not just a matter of the actual words said, but more so of the right and contrite disposition of the heart when speaking with God.

St. Theoleptos of Philadelphia (*not in Pennsylvania*) reminds us that we must never neglect *prostrations* if we are able to do them.



The body must be included in this dialogue with the Lord. Our prayer needs to come from our heart, both the spiritual and the bodily. Through prayer, we journey deeper into the body, concerned with its true and real transfiguration, rather than escaping from it. Because the body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit, we must transform it into a true and respectful Temple. It is through profound prayer of tearful contrition to the Lord that both the soul and the body are sanctified. Therefore we must never neglect prostrations as they help to bring the mind and body together before the Lord, creating a prayerful dialogue from our whole person.

Involve your whole person in prayer!

Gaining a Deeper Understanding of Our Faith

In the last issue of this article, I shared with my readers that the Council of Chalcedon (451) clarified much of the language that several Fathers of the Church, especially Cyril, used to set forth the true faith about Jesus Christ. For the sake of increasing the understanding of my readers about Chalcedon, I'd like to actually quote a text from the Council, underlining the Cyrillian passages and italicizing the sentences inspired either by the Antiochenes or Pope Leo. It shows the "compromise" of thought. This is the resulting Chalcedonian text:

Following the holy Fathers, we all with one voice confess our Lord Jesus Christ one and the same Son, the same perfect in Godhead, the same perfect in humanity, truly God and truly man, the same consisting of a reasonable soul and a body, of one substance with the Father as touching the Godhead, the same of one substance with us as touching humanity, like us in all things apart from sin; begotten of the father before the ages as touching the Godhead, the same in the last days, for us and for our salvation, born from the Virgin Mary, the Theotokos, as touching humanity, one and the same Christ, Son, Lord Only-begotten, to be acknowledged *in two natures without confusion, without change, without division without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way abolished because of the union, but rather the characteristic property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one person, or hypostasis*, not as if Christ were parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten God, Word, Lord, Jesus Christ; even as the prophets from the beginning spoke concerning him, and our Lord Jesus Christ instructed us, and the Creed of the Fathers [i.e., of Nicaea] was handed down to us.

So, as you can see, our true faith was forged by Fathers of the Church compromising on language which brought about our true and complete understanding, as far as one can really understand a miraculous mystery, of Who Jesus Is. The dogma of Jesus took the entire Church to formulate. It was not just one of the schools of theology, but all the existing schools



of theology to formulate. All the schools agreed that what Arius and Nestorius, two of the most pronounced, taught about Jesus was untrue. The Fathers knew that somehow Jesus had to be truly God and truly Man for our faith to make any reasonable sense. And so they hammered out a statement which they felt safeguarded this idea: Jesus is God incarnate as a God-Man and that His divinity and humanity were joined through the Person of the Son and that His two natures were kept totally separate and complete. With this understanding of Who Jesus Is, it is possible that we can, therefore, voluntarily imitate Him, growing in His likeness, and therefore becoming more like God in whose image we have been created.

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, January 15 - 35th Weekend after Pentecost - Tone 2
10:00 AM - Walter Kizel; John & Janet Dicky

31st Week - Tone 3

Monday, January 16 - Veneration of the Chains of Peter
No Liturgy Scheduled

Tuesday, January 17 - Anthony the Great, Venerable
No Liturgy Scheduled

Wednesday, January 18 - Athanasius & Cyril, Archbishops
No Liturgy Scheduled

Thursday, January 19 - Macarius, Venerable
No Liturgy Scheduled

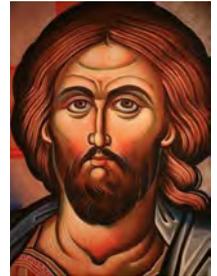
Friday, January 20 - Euthymius the Great, Venerable
No Liturgy Scheduled

Saturday, January 21 - Maximus the Confessor, Venerable
No Liturgy Scheduled

Sunday, January 22 - 36th Weekend after Pentecost - Tone 3
10:00 AM - Olga Halushka; Greg & Esther Petrovich

(Continued from page 5 - Called to Holiness)

Attaining salvation should be and must be the most important task in our life. It is connected with the very meaning and purpose of human life. According to the Fathers of the Church, salvation is not so prosaic a matter as saving ourselves, upon death, from damnation but, rather, the deification or divinization of our whole human person in Christ. Salvation involves becoming like unto Christ to the point of identity with Him. It involves acquiring the mind of Christ and indeed it signifies the sharing in His very life. It is the true work of this life. We cannot put anything ahead of this. We may think that focusing our lives on our children or the achievement of success is more important. They are not. The most important thing we can do for our children is to help them discover the meaning and purpose of their lives. *Eternity depends on what you teach them!*



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

Gaining a Deeper Understanding of the New Testament

In the last issue, I shared with you that the true understanding of the Sacred Scriptures can only be understood within the context of our worship. Therefore, the proclamation and celebration of the Word must resolve into silence. This characteristically Eastern intuition is rooted in the apostolic witness and elaborated most fully in the interior pilgrimage charted by the spiritual tradition of the Philocalia, it is called “hesychasm.” Yet this pilgrimage is largely and mainly misunderstood and little appreciated even by Eastern Christians. At the heart of this “way that leads to silence” is the voluntary self-abasement known among the Fathers as “kenotic obedience.” In Christian existence it reflects the attitude of John the Baptizer before the mystery of the incarnate Word: “He must increase, but I must decrease.” This attitude of humble self-effacement, however, is itself the reflection of Christ’s own “kenosis,” the self-emptying obedient self-renunciation that He willingly assumes as the sacrificial Lamb of God. (*Its not about you, its about God*)

In more practical terms for us as followers of Christ, it means becoming humble and selfless individuals for the sake of becoming more like Jesus. The self-emptying (i.e., kenosis) required of

us is the giving up of selfishness and false pride - giving up of the thought of thinking about ourselves before we think about others.

The Word of God Himself, the Paschal Lamb slain before the foundation of the world, is the true and ultimate Sacrament of our salvation. As such, He offers the most compelling and eloquent expression of His power, authority and love, by concluding His earthly ministry in silence: silence before His accusers, before Pilate, and before the Cross.

God reveals Himself by speaking out of silence. But for silence itself to become the matrix of revelation, it must assume its own objective reality. Far from being a mere absence of noise, or a momentary suppression of ambient

sounds, silence is an attitude or state of both mind and heart (*Think about what St. John Climacus said about prayer and silence*). Like solitude, its purpose is essentially spiritual: it creates a sacred space within the life of a person, enabling one to sense an invisible presence and to hear inaudible speech. At the same time, silence permits the person to articulate thoughts, feelings and longings to which ordinary human speech can give no shape or expression.

Think about this!



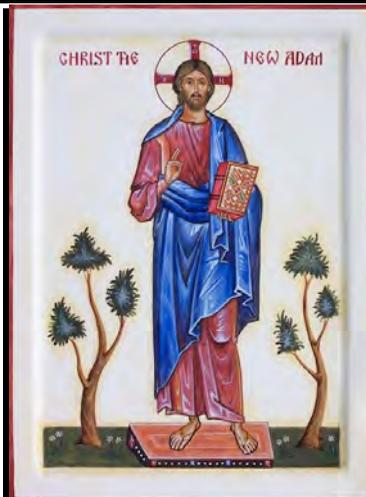
Learning Our Faith From the Greek Fathers of the Church

After spending a great deal of time presenting the ideas of our Greek Church Fathers, I realized that I have to answer this question for my readers: *Why should we spend the time and effort to learn theology with the Church Fathers?* Truly indeed, many of our modern Christian religions disregard the writings of the Fathers as unimportant and “out of date.”

For one thing, the Fathers can help us to understand what it means to be a Christian and how the early stages and models of Christian worship, practice and reflection have shaped Christian perspectives and practices throughout the Church’s history. The Fathers were formative figures in the formulation and modeling of Christian faith and practice and can be a healthy antidote for the theological and ethical faddism and foolishness that marks too much of the modern Christian world. The Fathers will consistently remind us that the content of Christian belief and its lived practice in worship, prayer and the many relationships of life must always remain one piece. They can help us understand what it means to be a true Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ and not the follower of charismatic, modern-day preachers.

Further, the Fathers can help us to understand what the writers of the New Testament (NT) really meant since they lived closer to the source. I have found that frequently modern-day interpretations of the NT are skewed by what is happening in our non-Christian society.

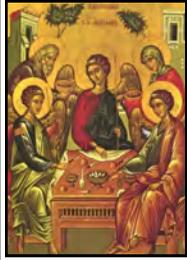
In fact, the Fathers insist that it is in the womb of worship and the experience of God’s redemptive act in Christ that theology is born, nourished and developed. Athanasius’ response to his Arian opponents was largely based on the Arians’ inability to make sense of Christian worship. How, Athanasius asks, can the Arians deny the full divinity of Christ and yet still worship Christ? To do so is to worship a



creature, however highly elevated in status, as God. Surely, Athanasius will argue, something is wrong here.

Not only were the Fathers key figures in the formulation of Christian faith, but they were much nearer, as I said, to the apostolic writers than we are. Their ability to interpret what the writers of the NT meant is much more accurate than all of our present-day biblical scholars. They, because they wrote in the same language, were much more aware of various nuances in the language the NT writers used.

More to follow.



THE EASTERN HERALD

СХІДНИЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.
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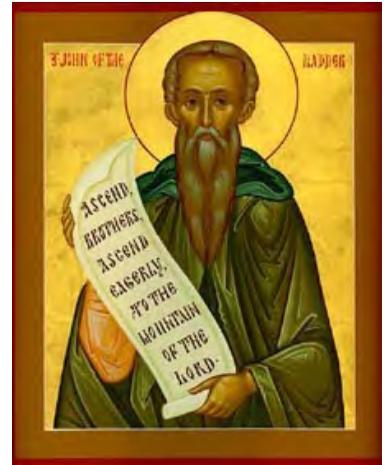
The Spirituality of the Christian East

I am, in this article, still considering the 28th Step on St. John's *Ladder*, which is PRAYER. In the last issue I touched on the issue of being *distracted* during prayer.

Being distracted during prayer does not mean taking time to pause and meditate on certain words of the prayers we are saying. If we are moved to tears or deeper contrition by a penitential prayer, or if we are overwhelmed by a sense of deep gratitude and wonder, we should not ignore this and just push on, even if it means we will not have time to complete our set prayers. St. John tells us: "If it happens that, as you pray, some word evokes delight or remorse within you, linger over it; for at that moment our guardian angel is praying with us."

It can be helpful, especially when we struggle to concentrate, to involve more than the mind in prayer. Rather than read our prayers silently, we can utter them aloud. This helps keep the mind focused. In addition to hearing the words of our prayer, we can involve the sense of smell by offering incense with our prayer. We can also involve sight by praying before an icon and a candle or vigil lamp. Thus prayer becomes not just something we say, but something we do. It becomes a physical action, a ritual of sorts.

I have found, however, that it is important not to fight to stay attentive to our prayer. If our minds remain distracted after attempting to use strategies to focus our attention, then it is better to just stop



and come back to our prayer at a later time. I have found that when the struggle to maintain our focus, prayer becomes too overwhelming and we begin to dislike prayer. It is better to stop and allow ourselves to regroup and come back to prayer a little later. Don't make prayer a chore. Discover what is distracting you and resolve it. By the way, there is no one proper way to pray. Each of us must develop our own way.

Wisdom from St. Anthony the Great

“A time is coming when men will go mad, and when they see someone who is not mad, they will attack him, saying, ‘You are mad; you are not like us.’”

“Our life and our death are with our neighbor. If we gain our brother we have gained God; but if we scandalize our brother, we have sinned against Christ.”

“I no longer fear God, I love Him.”

“Do not be afraid to hear about virtue and do not be a stranger to the term. For it is not distant from us nor is it external to us; its realization lies within us and the work is easy if only we want it. The Greeks leave home and cross the seas in order to gain an education, but there is no need for

us to go away on account of the Kingdom of God nor need we cross the sea in search of virtue. For the Lord has told us, ‘The Kingdom of God is within you.’ All that is needed for goodness is that which is within, the human heart.”

“I saw all the snares that the enemy spreads over the whole world and I said, groaning, ‘What can get through such snares?’ Then I heard a voice saying to me, “Humility.”

St. Anthony the Great

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