

THIRTY-SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
FIFTEENTH SUNDAY OF LUKE



Icon of Saints Anastasius and Timothy -- January 22nd

Reflections on the Scripture Readings for this Weekend

On this fourth weekend of the new year, our first reading are taken from the first letter of St. Paul to Timothy which sets forth Paul's belief that Christ, Who came into the world to save sinners, dealt with Paul mercifully so that we might know that He will deal mercifully with us.

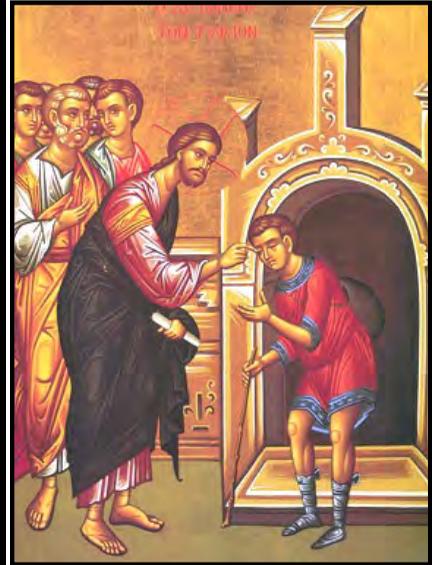
Our reading from Luke's Gospel retells the story of how Jesus cured a blind man near Jericho because the man loudly called to Jesus even though those around Jesus tried to quiet him. Jesus simply asked the man: "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man replied: "I want to see!" Jesus restored the man's sight saying: "Receive your sight. Your faith has healed you."

What message can we derive from these two readings? As I reflected upon them, these thoughts came to me.

So often we humans are *blind* to the workings of God in our lives. We frequently lack the faith to see that the challenges that life presents to us are uniquely designed to allow us the opportunity to grow in our faith. We fail to see God as a merciful and loving God and think that the difficult challenges in life are either punishments or tests of our faith. In truth the difficulties which all of us must face in life are not punishments or tests. They are opportunities to place our hope and trust in God.

Faith in God is the only thing that can help us understand the true meaning of life and come to see the love extended to us in these challenges. The truth of the matter is that we would never spiritually grow if we weren't challenged by life. We humans seem to quickly "forget" about our loving God when everything in life is turning out exactly as we want.

Further, the story of the blind man tells us that we have to reach out to God to God for help.



The help we must seek, however, is to understand what life's challenges are attempting to teach us. For some reason when we ask God for help, we desire that He give us what we want and not, necessarily, what we need to grow in our faith and belief in Him.

We get distracted, I think, by the Gospel stories since Jesus usually grants to the people who seek His help, what they want. There are no stories where He refuses to grant what others request. So we grow to think that if we ask He will grant us what we want. He only grants us what is good for us and what we need.

Understanding Our Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church

Our Church has a number of feasts which are dedicated to remembering events in the life of Mary, the Mother of God. They fall within what is called the Marian Group. The first, the Feast of the Presentation occurs forty days after the Nativity and, although it falls within the Marian Group, celebrates the presentation of Christ in the Temple and ritual purification of Mary according to Jewish custom. It first appeared in Jerusalem under Cyril where, like the other Cyrillian Feasts, it had a theological objective. The feast carries theophanic overtones. A line from Cyril's own homily on this feast, "I see the infant and I recognize God," is enough to clarify the Eastern Church's view of the Presentation. By now Cyril's anti-Arian bias is well known. However, when the feast was finally taken up two centuries later it was for purposes other than Cyril's. Theophanes' text, *Chronographia*, is practically our only direct historical evidence that Justinian instituted the Feast at Constantinople in the fifteenth year of his reign (542). Justinian had taken a commanding position in Church affairs, basing his ecclesiastical policy on the Council of Chalcedon. The Council condemned both Nestorianism and Monophysitism (*belief that Jesus had only one single nature which was either divine or a synthesis of Divine and human*), fixing the Church's position between the two. The schismatic doctrine of Monophysitism arose in opposition to



Nestorianism, claiming that Christ's two natures became a single divine nature at the Incarnation. The Council of Chalcedon magnified the tension which already existed between Dyophysite Constantinople (i.e., *two natures*) and the Monophysite East to such a degree that espousing Monophysitism became a means of defying the Imperial government. For its part, the government, especially under Justinian, alternately persecuted and tried to win over the Monophysites.

At the same time that Justinian instituted the Feast of the Presentation he began a new offensive to reconcile the Monophysites, hoping to gain their favor by contriving the condemnation of three Nestorianizing theologians. The new Feast may have been another of Justinian's efforts to aggravate the Nestorians and thereby ingratiate himself with the Monophysites. Since it honored both Christ and the Theotokos it represents a somewhat diluted attempt to establish a major Marian feast in the Church calendar. However, as a truly Marian feast it was only a prelude to those that would follow.

The history of how our Church Feasts came about is fascinating to me.

The Divine Liturgy and Our Worship of God

The section of the Divine Liturgy that transpires immediately after the completion of the Anaphora, is the Communion Service. When a deacon celebrates the Liturgy with a priest, a litany traditionally serves as an introduction to this section of the Liturgy. If there is no deacon, the priest introduces the Communion Service by calling the community to offer the prayer that Jesus gave us, the Our Father. As an indication of the importance of this prayer, we pray it as we begin the Communion Service. Before we pray the Our Father, the priest proclaims, "And grant, O Lord, that we may with confidence and without condemnation, dare call upon You, Father, the God of heaven and say." It is indeed most daring to address God as "Our Father". It recognizes Him above all else as our Creator and most loved Lord Who will provide for us and protect us. To say it requires a deep faith in God - a faith which is filled with "awe" and "love" and not fear.

In the Our Father, we also ask that He, our Father, "give us our daily bread". When we recite this during the Divine Liturgy, our daily bread becomes none other than the Body and Blood of Christ and so we are asking Almighty God to truly make Jesus Christ a part of our lives so that we might, from His presence within our lives, become God's children. This prayer is powerful for several reasons.



It should not be prayed, by the way, unless we are willing to live by what we pray. The pray says to God that we are willing to "forgive" those who trespass (*i.e., offend*) against us and we say to God that we are willing to forgive them just as we know that He forgives us. If we are not willing to forgive others, regardless of how they have offended us, then we should be careful when we say this prayer for we are telling God that we are willing not to be forgiven by Him for our offenses.

It is important, I believe, that we understand what we pray and mean what we pray. The words, especially of the Our Father, are not idle words with no meaning. It is important that we think about what we pray.

The celebrant ends the prayer with the words: "For thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. The AMEN agrees with this statement. The western world has added the priestly ending to the prayer, which was miscopied to the prayer in an ancient manuscript.



St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan



NEXT WEEK

Next week our Church begins its pre-Great Fast sequence of five weeks that deal with various aspects of *Metanoia* or Repentance. These five weeks are meant to prepare us for the rigors of the Great Fast.

I believe that the icon of the Great Fast is really the icon known as the ***Acheiropoietos*** (*Medieval Greek*): **ἀχειροποίητα**, that is made without hands. There are several Christian icons which are said to have come into existence in a miraculous manner, not created by a human hands. Invariably these are images of Jesus or the Virgin Mary. The most notable example that is credited by tradition among the faithful is, in the Eastern Church, the *Mandylion* (icon above), also known as the Image of Edessa or Veronica's Veil. Supposedly during the Lord's journey to Golgotha, the woman Veronica wiped His face and His image was left behind. This icon reminds us that we are called to grow in His likeness.

Our way of thinking creates good or bad outcomes

CALLED TO HOLINESS

The call to holiness is a call to personal salvation! The problem is that, while we have all heard these words, we are not really sure what they mean. They appear to be two words that are intimately connected.



When most people, I believe, think about holiness they think about some of the saints they have heard about and who have achieved perfection, that is no longer prone to mistakes or sins. This understanding, fortunately, cannot be the meaning for this word. Why? Because the Gospels tell us that no one is without sin except God alone and Jesus, the Christ. Perfection is beyond human ability. While it seems that we humans can, during this earthly life, lessen the mistakes we make, being perfect is not possible. So holiness must have a different meaning since we are called to holiness.

Holiness, in the highest sense, belongs to God and to Christians who are conformed in all things to the will of God. Personal holiness is a work of gradual development. It is carried on under many hindrances, hence the frequent admonitions to watchfulness, prayer and perseverance. (Continued on page 8)

Acquiring the Mind of Christ

In this article I have been reflecting on the fact that in order to **acquire the mind of Christ** we must become fully engaged in prayer. The Gospels repeatedly tell us that Jesus went off by Himself to pray. Communication with God through prayer is essential if we are to acquire the mind of Christ.

In addition to engaging our who selves - mind and body - in prayer, we are encouraged to add reading the Gospel and spiritual books. It is during this time that the heart can become still, lucid, and open to the grace and life which are hidden within the words themselves. Christ tells us that the words He gives to us “are spirit, and they are life.” If we are open and receptive, the Spirit of the Gospel can enter into us, profoundly altering our heart and mind, sanctifying us. Further, not only will we change; through this prayerful encounter we have frequent opportunity for God to speak directly to us in a profound and real way.

Prayer is truly the only bridge over the despondency of the world with its death, sins and passions. It gives light to the mind, helping us to slowly see ourselves as we are, and God as He is. It enables us to overcome temptation and weaknesses. It has the potential to heal our spiritual infirmities. Persistent and patient prayer is the answer to almost all the real questions we have; this is so because it grants us God’s grace and peace. It also brings us to a saving knowledge of the true God, going above and beyond rational thought.

It cannot be stated enough that it is essential to begin again today. Prayer generates prayer. The Fathers tell us that prayer will teach us and be our guide if we are devoted to it. It is the quintessential practice



for all Christians. If we say we love God, we pray; if we say that we love each other, we pray for each other. Our life of prayer fulfills the commandment on which hang all the Law and the Prophets: to love God and to love our neighbor. Prayer is simple, but it can be arduous. Prayer is fought against on all sides. It can be our guide and light in all things. Prayer in its highest form, St. Gregory of Sinai says, is God Himself. Let us begin again our conversation with God this very moment, thereby moving forward to our union and salvation in Christ our God.

To acquire the mind of Christ, we must be focused on a relationship with God. The two are inseparable.

Gaining a Deeper Understanding of Our Faith

In the last issue of this article I actually shared the text from the Council of Chalcedon which finalized an actual dogmatic statement about Who the Church believes Jesus Christ to be. On the Cyrillian side, particularly noteworthy is the repetition of the pronoun “the same” eight times (excluding the Nestorian “duality” between the Son of God and the son of Mary) and the use of the title *Theotokos*. On the Antiochene-Latin side is the insistence on the integrity of *each* nature, each keeping its respective properties within the union. The formula is clearly a “committee document,” lacking the straightforward, kerygmatic and soteriological fire of earlier Cyrillian statements. But it reflects a “catholic,” charitable - we would say today “ecumenical” - concern for possible objections from either side of the debate. (*If you kept last week’s Bulletin, go back over the statement*).

Can it be said that the Council of Chalcedon solved the Christological problem? Certainly not. Like all balanced, conceptual formulas, it solved certain problems but created new ones. Actually the Fathers of Chalcedon were conscious of this limited character of all doctrinal definitions, including their own. Not only did they deny any novelty on their part and insist that their only intention was to follow the fathers and the prophets and further clarify the statements that began at Nicaea. They also formally declared their inability to exhaust the meaning of the mystery in a verbal form. This is the significance of the famous four negative adverbs included in the definition: “without confusion, without change, without division, without separation.”

In spite of this declared humility of the Chalcedonian fathers, objections to their terminology were voice immediately. Indeed, on



the one hand, by declaring that Christ was to be seen “in two natures,” they were using the word “nature” in a more abstract sense than Cyril did, for whom *nature* designated a concrete reality and was synonymous with *hypostasis*. On the other hand, by designating the union as a *concurrence* into one person, or *hypostasis*, they were not making it quite plain that this *hypostasis* was the *preexisting hypostasis* of the Son of God (although their Cyrillian expressions hinted in that direction). Finally, Chalcedonian theologians would always be at pains to try to explain how, according to the Cappadocian fathers, God was still one God, although in Him there were *three Hypostases* and one nature.

Schedule of Services

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

32nd Week - Tone 4

Monday, January 23 - Clement of Ancyra, Martyr
No Liturgy Scheduled

Tuesday, January 24 - Xenia, Venerable
No Liturgy Scheduled

Wednesday, January 25 - Gregory the Theologian, Bishop
No Liturgy Scheduled

Thursday, January 26 - Xenophon & Mary, Venerables
No Liturgy Scheduled

Friday, January 27 - Translation of John Chrysostom's Relics
8:00 AM - Special Intention

Saturday, January 28 - Ephrem the Syrian, Venerable
No Liturgy Scheduled

Sunday, January 29 - Weekend of Zacchaeus - Tone 4
10:00 AM - Eva Sikora; Lesia Florchuk

St. Michael the Archangel
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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

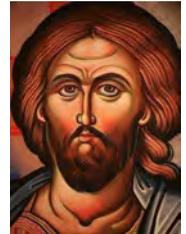
(Continued from page 5 - Called to Holiness)

Holiness, then, becomes real when we focus our efforts on developing a genuine relationship with God and attempting to do His will to the best of our ability.

When most humans think of salvation it is my guess that they think that it is something that happens after death, that it means meriting heaven and escaping hell. Salvation, it would seem therefore, is a reward for trying to live a good life.

Salvation for Eastern Christians is the process of attempting to achieve greater union with God by growing in the likeness of Jesus. It is an ongoing, voluntary act by which we seek an entrance to life in Christ here and now. Salvation is something that transpires right now, not after we die.

I am sure that my readers can immediately sense how holiness and salvation are intimately connected.



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Gaining a Deeper Understanding of the New Testament

Despite a renewed emphasis today upon biblical studies in our seminaries and parishes, critical exegesis of the Bible remains an enterprise little understood and still less appreciated by most Christians. The Holy Gospel, most feel, should be heard and venerated in the Church as the divine Word. Some ask, by what pretension do we presume the right to criticize God's self-revelation. Also, some believe they know exactly what God is revealing through His word by just listening to it. In fact, one of the main tenants of the Protestant Reformation is that each person can interpret the true meaning of the Holy Scriptures.

Our Church, it must be added, does not share with fundamentalists a notion of biblical literalism and inerrancy. Even those who are theologically less sophisticated appreciate the divine-human character of Scripture; they are fully aware that God discloses His Person and will through human experience interpreted by human language. The problem, however, is that in most instances people tend to say they know exactly what God means in Holy Scriptures even though they are using *translations* on which to base their interpretations. We often find that languages like Hebrew, Greek and

Latin - the first languages that conveyed the Scriptures to us - have nuances that cannot be accurately expressed in English. To assert that one has the true meaning of a biblical passage based on an English text, is truly foolish. You can assert what the passage may mean to you but you cannot truly say that the meaning you derive is the meaning that the author intended when he wrote it.



The aim of exegesis is to understand and to interpret the meaning of written documents, particularly the Bible, by applying to the text pertinent insights of the historical, philological, archaeological and also philosophical sciences. Exegesis itself is a scientific discipline insofar as it uses historical-critical methods to answer questions pertaining

to the origin of the text (who wrote it, when and where), its purpose (why it was written, its aim (to whom and to what situation it was written), and its function within the life of the particular community that accepted it. At the level of "lower criticism," exegetical research attempts to establish the original text of a biblical document as the author or "school" of authors composed it, and to lay the groundwork for "higher criticism" that seeks to determine the meaning or message of a given passage.

Learning Our Faith From the Greek Fathers of the Church

I have been sharing ideas about why we should be aware of the Fathers of the Church and what they taught and wrote. They are the foundation for our understanding not only of the New Testament (NT) but also our worship as a Church. We also realize from their example, that we have to wrestle with the dogmas of the Church so that we can come to a real understanding of them and internalize their meaning. This process makes our faith real.

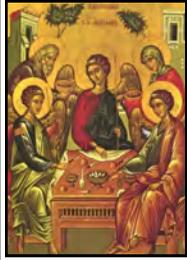
No Christian's ideas or practices have been shaped in a familial, cultural, ecclesiological or theological vacuum. Theological knowledge, awareness, practice and, occasionally, prejudice are formed within a number of contexts. Purposefully and systematically moving out of these familiar boundaries, that is, taking a theological voyage to other times, places and personalities, rebukes the tendency of us all to think that we are the only people who genuinely comprehend the truth and who practice it faithfully. It is the height of arrogance to believe that we, and only we, have a corner on the whole truth. Exposure to foreign theological terrain can surprisingly highlight the fissures in our own theological understanding and remind us of the continuing need to listen to other voices carefully and respectfully. This doesn't mean, however, that we immediately abandon those things that we believe when we hear different opinions. We study the thoughts of others, just as the Fathers of the Church did, in order to refine our own thoughts. It is critical, I believe, that we get to a point where we formulate our own set of beliefs and then not become insecure when others express a difference of opinion.

However, a broadening and deepening of theological perspective, insight and sympathy is not the only happy fruit of working outside of one's home theological turf. A thorough immersion in patristic theology will continually put us toward the center of



the Gospel and help to guard against the danger of transforming peripheral issues into the heart of the matter.

As I have attempted to present, the Fathers wrestled with their understanding of God, Christ and creation and came, through their study and debate with other Father, to the understanding of our faith that we now profess. What this tells me is that they were deeply concerned about the faith and gave time to coming to a true and deep understanding of that faith. We do well to imitate them. What do you really believe?



THE EASTERN HERALD

СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

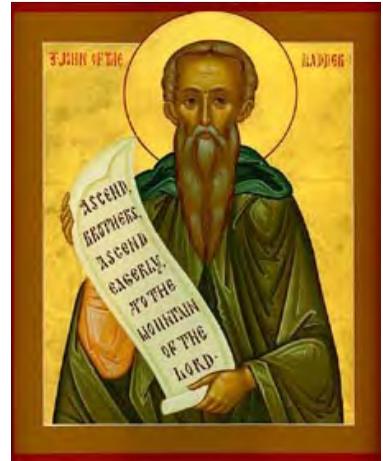
The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.
Vol. 63 No 4 36th Weekend after Pentecost January 21-22, 2017

The Spirituality of the Christian East

I would continue sharing thoughts on the 28th Step of John's *Ladder*, PRAYER. In the last several issues I have suggested that one way to curb distraction in prayer is to make it more physical. Do things that can engage your body in prayer: Make the sign of the Cross, make prostrations, raise your hands, kiss icons or other actions that make your prayer more physical, engage your body and your mind.

Thus our prayer is not passive but active, and it involves our whole being - body and soul. All of this can help us create a sense of purpose at our time of prayer, instead of it feeling like an obligation that we hastily squeeze into a free slot of time. In other words, it helps to have a particular place in the home that is set aside for prayer: a small table on which lies a prayer book, a Bible, an incense burner, a candle or vigil lamp; and on the wall above the table icons of Christ, the Mother of God, and our patron saint. For families, it is helpful for parents and children to say a few simple prayers together at this prayer corner. The parents could continue with their own prayers together after putting the children to bed.

What about when we are not at home? When traveling, some find it helpful to have some small, portable icons with them. When we are staying in hotels, we can set the icons up, thus providing ourselves a place of prayer. Of course, prayer is no less prayer without icons. They are only meant to be a reminder of what we do when we pray - that is to



lift-up our hearts and minds to God.

What I have been writing about in these last weeks is called "spoken prayer." There are two other types of prayer that St. John speaks about: Mental Prayer and Prayer of the Heart. In the coming weeks I will share some thoughts about these two other types of prayer. Most people need to begin their prayer life with Spoken Prayer. It's the first step.

St. Paul to St. Timothy

“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God for the promise of life in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, my dear child: grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

I am grateful to God, whom I worship with a clear conscience as my ancestors did, as I remember you constantly in my prayers, night and day. I yearn to see you again, recalling your tears, so that I may be filled with joy, as I recall your sincere faith that first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and that I am confident lives also in you.

For this reason, I remind you to stir into flame the gift of God that you have through the imposition of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control. So do not be ashamed of your testimony to our Lord, nor of me, a prisoner for his sake; but bear your share of hardship for the gospel with the

strength that comes from God. He saved us and called us to a holy life, not according to our works but according to his own design and the grace bestowed on us in Christ Jesus before time began, but now made manifest through the appearance of our savior Christ Jesus, who destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, for which I was appointed preacher and apostle and teacher. On this account I am suffering these things; but I am not ashamed, for I know him in whom I have believed and am confident that he is able to guard what has been entrusted to me until that day. Take as your norm the sound words that you heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Guard this rich trust with the help of the holy Spirit that dwells within us.”

2 Timothy 1:1-14

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