

FORGIVENESS SUNDAY



Icon of Christ the Teacher

Reflections on the Scripture Readings for this Weekend



In our Epistle reading this weekend we hear these words of Paul: “It is now the hour for you to wake from sleep, for our salvation is closer than when we first accepted the faith.” This words are very poignant as we begin the Great Fast - our preparation for Pascha.

Now is the time when we should think about our salvation! We should not put off for tomorrow what we can spiritually do today. God again gives us, through the Church, an opportunity to increase the actualization of our potential to become more like Jesus Christ. This, of course, is the major task of this earthly life! Let us wisely use this time of the Great Fast!

In our Gospel reading we hear this exhortation:

Make it your practice... to store up heavenly treasure.... Remember, where your treasure is, there your heart is also.

On this last weekend before the Great Fast, we are reminded that the task of life is to seek **forgiveness** by

extending **forgiveness** to others. This is one of the reasons, I believe, that we recall the Biblical story of Adam and Eve’s expulsion from Paradise. The story highlights how *self-centered* we humans and how such behavior is destructive to our relationship with God and others. They only thought of themselves and not their relationship with God.

The one temptation common to all humans, it seems, is the temptation of self-aggrandizement and desire for power. We see it rampant in our modern society. Narcissism is strong and prevalent. What people fail to realize, however, is that when we give into this temptation, we typically hurt others as well as ourselves since it lessens us as children of God. This is why, I believe, our Eastern Church would have us begin the Great Fast with asking for forgiveness from God and from one another (*this weekend is also called Forgiveness Weekend*). If we allow narcissism to rule our lives, we can never actualize the potential to become like Jesus. Why? Because we already think we are great and don’t think we must change. One author has written this: *One should love oneself enough not to love oneself too much.* What good advice! So our work during the Great Fast is to work on bringing balance into our lives.

To achieve this, we must first *desire* to change, admit that we need to change and then work to change.

Understanding Our Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church

As I shared in the laws issue of this particular article, the Great Fast can be a time of great spiritual growth if it is embraced in an intelligent, prayerful and voluntary manner. I shared with you some traditional ways to approach its observance.

Again, one way does not fit all. I think that there are many other ways to observe the Great Fast. I have been mulling over a number of ways in my own mind. Here are some thoughts.

- Don't be a slave to your cell phone. Turn it off and let people leave voice-mail messages and, whatever you do, don't answer it when you are with others.
- Turn off your radio or television for certain time periods. Cut down the noise in your life - Give up your favorite television or radio program.
- Integrate a special time for prayer into your schedule if you don't already have one. You can always just increase your time at prayer.
- Integrate a silent period of reading into your life - it doesn't have to be just spiritual reading.
- Go to be earlier than you usually do if you are a late-night person - that is get more sleep (*its healthy too*).
- Send cards or letter to those you have not been in touch with for a while or who are shut-in.
- Phone persons you know are alone and perhaps could be made happier if you contacted them.
- Integrate acts of kindness into your life.



- Give something up and save the money you would spend and donate it to a good cause.
- Integrate going to Lenten Services into your schedule.
- Read a few paragraphs of the New Testament each day or use the parish calendar to read passages from the New Testament each day
- Do something that will make your life a little more peaceful.
- Spend some time thinking about your life and assessing what you can do to become more like Jesus.
- Spend some time creating a personal journal.

Again it is not so important *what* you do as that you do something to observe the Great Fast. **AND**, of course, don't do something because you feel obliged to do it or that if you do something God will love you more. Remember, God cannot love us anymore than He already does. All we can do is to become aware of how much He truly loves us. Our efforts during the Great Fast should lead us to a deeper awareness of God's love otherwise it is not doing what it is really meant to accomplish. The Great Fast is all about spiritually growth.

The Divine Liturgy and Our Worship of God

As you already probably know, this is the last weekend until Willow Sunday that we will be using the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom. The Church calls us to use the Liturgy of St. Basil the Great during the Great Fast. This Liturgy is known for its longer prayers which are unrivaled in our entire Tradition for their beauty of expression and the depth of their theological/spiritual content. Even though we are hearing them in translation, that beauty and depth remain intact and shine through.

Saint Basil did not sit down and “compose” the entire Liturgy “from scratch.” The basic structure of the Liturgy was already an essential element of the Church’s Tradition. There is every reason to believe, however, that he is responsible for the magnificent Anaphora prayers.

These prayers reflect Saint Basil’s intense preoccupation with the Church’s Trinitarian faith - that we worship the One God as the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit; the Son and the Holy Spirit being *consubstantial* with the Father as to their divine nature, and thus co-enthroned and co-glorified with the Father from all eternity. That belief, though present “in the beginning” of the Church’s proclamation of the

Gospel, was under attack during the turbulent fourth century with the Arian heresy and its various offshoots stirring up seemingly interminable debate and dissension. Saint Basil was one of the premier exponents of the Church’s faith that the one God is the Holy Trinity. He helped establish the classical terminology of the Church in expressing that Faith: God is one in essence (*ousia* in Greek), yet three Distinct Divine Persons (in Greek *hypostaseis*). This very terminology still remains intact to this day.

The opening Anaphora Prayer expresses this belief. The celebrant prays:

“O Master, You are Lord, God the Father, almighty, adorable. It is truly proper and just and befitting the greatness of our holiness to praise You, to sing to You, to bless You, to worship You, to give You thanks, to glorify You, the only true God and to offer to You with a contrite heart and a humble spirit this, our bloodless sacrifice.”

The prayer continues with expressing all of our beliefs about God. Although this portion of the beginning pray of the Anaphora is typically said silently by the celebrant, you are encouraged to read the prayer. It is a profound expression of what our Church believes about God.





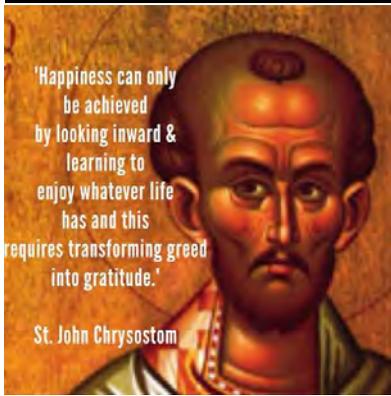
St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan

churchWIDE
RUMMAGE
SALE

COMING THIS FALL

Start cleaning out your cupboards and storage spaces for a major fall fund-raiser. Remember We will not be including (1) clothing or shoes in our sale, (2) items that are not clean and in working order, and (3) books. Thank You!



I found this on the Internet and thought it was so great that I just had to share it with my readers. Think about John's words

WEEKLY LENTEN SERVICES Every Friday @ 7:00 PM

The Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts will be served each week during the Great Fast. If you have never attended this very special service, you are encouraged to come and pray with us. It is the Eastern Church's third Liturgy - a very important part of our tradition.



You cannot see the beautiful in life if you always focus on the ugliness in others!

CALLED TO HOLINESS

The "call to holiness" is a call from God to make His Kingdom real in the here and now. If we listen closely to the Good News that Jesus taught - *change your hearts and minds for the Kingdom of God is at hand* - it is obvious that He was not suggesting that God's Kingdom only exists in the hereafter. We are called, as was He, to make God's Kingdom real RIGHT NOW right where we are at, RIGHT NOW.



Some may ask how this is possible. Each of us lives in a small portion of God's creation. We are called to make every effort to transform that portion given to us by the way we live and interact with others. It really matters not if we accomplish the transformation of our portion of the Kingdom. It only matters that this is our intention. Further, we never know how we impact the lives of others. That we leave up to God. We are called only to make every attempt to be *Christ*, the anointed one, to the portion of our world. (An aside: truly we can only "change" ourselves). We are called to continue *(Continued on page 8)*

A PRAYER A DAY FOR THE GREAT FAST

This year the prayers are based, in part, on the Matins Services of the Great Fast

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 27th

O Lord, my Creator and God, You took me as dust from the earth and formed me into a living creature, breathing into me the breath of life and giving me a soul. You have honored me by setting me as ruler upon earth over all visible things, making me a companion of the angels. Yet, I have not always recognized You in my life. For this I am deeply sorry and truly ask Your forgiveness. I know, however, that if I desire Your forgiveness, I must be willing to forgive others. I truly desire to learn how to unconditionally forgive others! Help me to diligently work, during this Great Fast, to become Your child and forgive others as I desire to be forgiven. I ask this of You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 28th

O precious Paradise, tabernacle built by God, unending gladness and delight, glory of the righteous, joy of the prophets and dwelling of the saints, pray to the Master that He may open unto me the gates which may be closed to me by my transgressions. May He count me worthy to partake of the Tree of Life and of the joy which can be mine if I only listen to the call of Jesus to change my heart and mind and become the child God created me to be! I know that I have been given this time of the Great Fast to change my heart and mind, so that I can embrace the way of living revealed to me by Jesus. I ask this of You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 1st

The season for growing in virtue has come. Let me not hold back, but let me keep the Fast, offering tears, contrition and almsgiving. Let me cry: my sins are more in number than the sands of the sea. O Redeemer and Lord, forgive me that I may receive and incorruptible crown. I know that You do not desire the death of a sinner but, rather, that he be given an opportunity to change and repent. Therefore help me to use this time of the Great Fast I accomplish my personal transformation. I believe and trust that You, O Loving Lord, will, if I voluntarily engage in the work of this Great Fast, give me the help to change my attitudes and behaviors. I ask this of You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN.

THURSDAY, MARCH 2nd

O You Who rule over all the ages and who created me, help me not to be beguiled by the things of this world and forget the most important task of my life, namely my voluntary change into a person who is like Jesus, Your first-born Son. Help me to do all in my power to truly imitate Him, for I know that if I become like Him, I will truly become Your child. Help me to desire to be Your child, knowing that this is the primary meaning and purpose of my life. Help me not to be seduced by the falsehoods and things of this world. Help me to believe that this present life is not the end of my existence. I ask this of You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN.

A PRAYER A DAY FOR THE GREAT FAST

This year the prayers are based, in part, on the Matins Services of the Great Fast

FRIDAY, MARCH 3rd

Woe is me, O Lord, for in place of a robe of light I continuously allow myself to again be clothed in shameful garments – garments woven out of my self-centeredness. I weep, O Savior, and cry to You with faith: Despise me not, O God of love, but call me back and help me to be determined to do everything in my power to truly become Your child, living like Jesus. Help me to stay focused on the transformation of my personal life so that everything that I think and do will be in the likeness of Jesus, Your only-begotten Son. It is so easy, O Master, to become distracted by the events of life and forget to focus on becoming Your child. I ask this of You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN.

SATURDAY, MARCH 4th

O Mary, full of divine grace, tabernacle of the Light and dwelling place of God incarnate, I sing your praises. I am darkened at times by my passions. Shine upon me with the light of Mercy, O Hope of the hopeless. O pure and blameless Lady, in your loving compassion accept my entreaty. Ask Almighty God to grant me the forgiveness of my offenses, for fervently I cry aloud with tears: Despise me not, O good Virgin, but call me back. No human is able to see God, upon whom the ranks of angels dare not gaze. Yet through you, all-pure Virgin, the Word took flesh and showed Himself to humankind. With all the hosts of heaven I magnify Him and I call you blessed. O mother most holy, help me to imitate your son, Jesus. AMEN.

SUNDAY, MARCH 5th

O Lord, give light to my soul. Help me to understand that now is the accepted season of repentance – the time of personal change. Let me cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Help me sail across the sea of the Fast so that I may reach Your third-day Resurrection. Let me, during this time of the Great Fast, purify my soul and cleanse my mind. As I fast from food, let me abstain also from every passion. Let me Rejoice in the virtues of the Spirit so that I may persevere and be counted worthy to celebrate the mystery that You have revealed to me through the solemn Passion and Resurrection of Your Son, Jesus. I ask this of You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN.

SPIRITUAL ACTS



If you desire to make the Great Fast even more real to you, then add to your prayers and fasting *Spiritual Acts of Mercy*. This week, try

sending a card or letter to someone you know is having a difficult time in life. Their difficulty may be because they are ill, lonely, involved in a very difficult relationship or addicted to some substance. Your support could make all the difference to them. They should not know, by the way, that you are doing this as a Lenten spiritual act. Just share with them the joy of life and the love of God.

May someone's life be better because you care!

Schedule of Services

Sunday, February 26 - Weekend of Cheese Fare - Tone 8
10:00 AM - Walter Kizel; Julia Stoiko & Subdeacon Andrew

First Week of the Great Fast - Tone 7

Monday, February 27 - Prophy of Gaza, Bishop
No Liturgy Scheduled

Tuesday, February 28 - Basil, Venerable Confessor
No Liturgy Scheduled

Wednesday, March 1 - Eudoxia, Venerable Martyr
No Liturgy Scheduled

Thursday, March 2 - Theodotus, Bishop-Martyr
No Liturgy Scheduled

Friday, March 3 - Eutropius & Others, Martyrs
7:00 PM - Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

Saturday, March 4 - Miracle of Great-Martyr Theodore
No Liturgy Scheduled

Sunday, March 5 - First Weekend of the Great Fast - Tone 1
10:00 AM - Eva Sikora; Susan Kotlinski

St. Michael the Archangel
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Rev. Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.
Pastor

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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

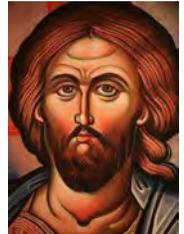
Greg & Esther Petrovich
734.453-4354

Rafic Vawter
313.624.9867

(Continued from page 5 - Called to Holiness)

the work of Jesus Christ. This is what it means to be "church" - that is a group of followers of Jesus who have the intention to make God's Kingdom real here and now - to be the force that attempts to make God's love real. This does not mean, however, that we beat our brothers and sisters over the head with our message. It means that we model for others a way of living that is in the likeness of Jesus. It truly means accepting all others as they are and not having the attitude that we are right and they are wrong. It means being authentic in the way that we live.

If we listen to the Gospels, we find that Jesus tried to convince others not to be pharisaical or hypocritical in the way that they lived their faith. He embrace all, even those who were rejected by His society as less worthy. We need to think about this.



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

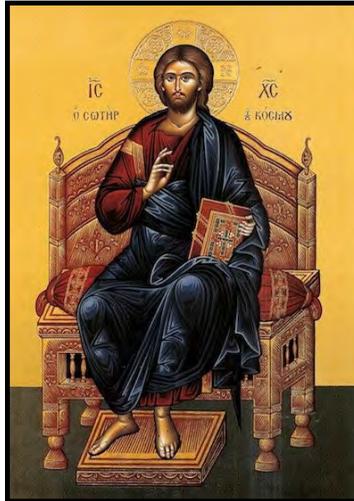
Gaining a Deeper Understanding of the New Testament

In the last issue I began to consider the issue of why the Pharisees seems to be vilified in the New Testament (NT). Modern Judaism and Christianity may have developed along clearly different paths, but readers of the Gospels need to understand that Jesus and His disciples, as well as the evangelists Mark, Matthew, and John (Luke was Gentile), saw themselves as faithful Jews. Matthew's diatribes against "the scribes and the Pharisees" and John's scornful use of "the Jews" must be understood in the context of their own times, not that of Jesus.

The way each Gospel expresses its attitude toward Jews and Judaism is one criterion for dating it. John's denunciation of "the Jews" is one reason for placing his Gospel at the end of the century. Luke's way of distancing Christianity from Judaism (especially in Acts) suggests that he is not writing in its earliest moments. The Gospels of Mark and Matthew, on the other hand, are clearly composed in the context of a deep regard for Judaism itself. So, while all the Gospels are steeped in the Jewish Scriptures, Mark and Matthew especially present Jesus in the light of them.

It is helpful to know that in the first century all Jewish thought about God

was centered in Scripture. Jews believed that the Bible contained all of God's revelation but that no one person or one faith community could grasp all of that revelation at any single time. It was a pious habit of mind to seek to understand every new and significant person, teaching and event in Judaism through the lens of Scripture. At the same time, it was a



religious task to consider how these new persons, teachings, and events brought to the surface new depths in Scripture hitherto unseen. It was, in fact, considered important for each new generation to reopen the Scriptures and search for new meanings in the light of its own time. The new meanings that surfaced were not considered

replacements of older interpretations but enrichments of them.

It is important to realize that the older branches of Christianity have this very same approach to the Scriptures. The Church believes that, guided by the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures are continuously revealing truth that can be applied to modern times. Christians reading the NT today will miss much of its meaning and most of its richness if they are unfamiliar with the references to the OT that form its framework and substructure.

Learning Our Faith From the Greek Fathers of the Church



In this article I have tried to express the thoughts of the Greek Fathers of the Church and, in doing so, I have, of course, mentioned the struggles that the Church encountered during the first seven/eight centuries. The struggles were namely about Who Jesus Is. I've mentioned in passing several *heresies*, and thought that I would now look at them in a little more depth. The first, of course, being the **ARIAN CONTROVERSY**.

While for years the Church had reflected fruitfully on the person and work of Christ, it took a specific individual to prod the Church to formalize or crystallize its teaching regarding the divinity of Jesus. How sod? At Alexandria

in the early fourth century, a priest by the name of **Arius** began to question seriously the possibility that Jesus could be divine, at least in the same sense that God or the Father was divine.

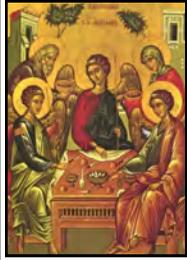
We can best understand Arius' position by sneaking a peek at his own mail. In a letter written to his friend Eusebius of Nicomedia, Arius complains of the trouble that has engulfed him in Alexandria. Arius relates that "the bishop greatly injures and persecutes us and does all he can against us, trying to drive us out of the city as godless men." Why was Arius encountering such opposition?

Arius writes that

we do not agree with him [Alexander, the bishop of Alexandria] when he says publically, "Always Father, always Son," "Father and Son together," "The Son exists unbegottenly with God," "The eternal begotten", "Unbegotten-only-one", "Neither in thought nor by a single instant is God before the Son," Always God, always son," "The son is of God Himself."

Arius is displeased with Bishop Alexander's description of the Son, largely because Alexander is leaning over backwards in his insistence that the son has always been with the Father. There is "no instant," as Alexander phrases it, when the Father was without the Son. Indeed, to be Father is to have a Son: "always God always Son." If so the son must be divine in essence, just as the Father is. Or so it would seem.

Arius refused to accept Alexander's formulations. Alexander's position raises a number of problems that appear insurmountable to Arius. Thus the beginning of the heresy of Arius. ***More to follow***



THE EASTERN HERALD

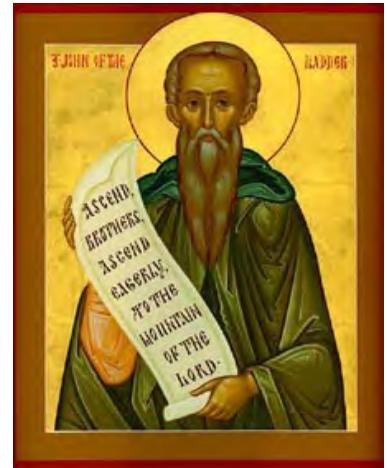
СХІДНИЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.
Vol. 63 No 9 Weekend of Cheese Fare February 25-26, 2017

The Spirituality of the Christian East

In the last issue I was dealing with the 29th Step on John's *Ladder*, namely *DISPASSION*. One of the aspects of *Dispassion* is, of course, *Theosis*. As my readers may know, if they have been following this article, *Theosis* is the Eastern Church's spiritual development process by which personal change or transformation is supported. This process has also been called *deification*. *Deification* is to become "holy for I *am* holy" (*Leviticus 11:44*). So the idea of *deification* was already represented in the Old Testament (OT) but, since God had not yet become incarnate in the Person of Jesus, the people of the OT had no model that they could imitate. Matthew (5:48) describes it in this manner: the purpose of life is to become "perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect". This has been made possible by the only human being who is God by nature: Jesus Christ. Because the second Person of the Holy Trinity became what we are and shared in our humanity, we can become what He is and share in His divine glory.

But if no created being can become God - for He is "beyond all being" - how do we explain this contradiction? The Eastern Church explains it by a distinction between God's *essence* (what God is by nature) and His *energies* (what we can experience of God by His *grace* and *condescension*). God is by nature love, and by His *grace* we become love; He is by nature holy, and by His *grace* we are made holy; God is by nature eternal, and by His *grace* we have



everlasting life. Maximus the Confessor explained it in the following way:

A sure warrant for looking forward with hope to *deification* of human nature is provided by the incarnation of God, which makes man god to the same degree as God himself became man.

Theosis, or *dispassion*, cannot be acquired with the intellect, but only by experience, meaning by synergy. We cannot be saved by faith alone, by grace alone, or by works alone. **More the follow**

A Sacrifice to God is a Contrite Spirit

I acknowledge my transgression, says David. If I admit my fault, then you will pardon it. Let us never assume that if we live good lives we will be without sin; our lives should be praised only when we continue to beg for pardon. But men are hopeless creatures, and the less they concentrate on their own sins, the more interested they become in the sins of others. They seek to criticize, not to correct. Unable to excuse themselves, they are ready to accuse others. This was not the way that David showed us how to pray and make amends to God, when he said: I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me. He did not concentrate on others' sins; he turned his thoughts on himself. He did not merely stroke the surface, but he plunged inside and went deep down within himself. He did not spare himself, and therefore was not impudent in asking to be spared.

Do you want God to be appeased? Learn what you are to do that God may be pleased with you. Consider the psalm again: If you wanted sacrifice,

I would indeed have given it; in burnt offerings you will take no delight. Are you then to be without sacrifice? Are you to offer nothing? Will you please God without an offering? Consider what you read in the same psalm: If you wanted sacrifice, I would indeed have given it; in burnt offerings you will take no delight. But continue to listen, and say with David: A sacrifice to God is a contrite spirit; God does not despise a contrite and humble heart. Cast aside your former offerings, for now you have found out what you are to offer. In the days of your fathers you would have made offerings of cattle – these were the sacrifices. If you wanted sacrifice, I would indeed have given it. These then, Lord, you do not want, and yet you do want sacrifice.

A sacrifice to God is a contrite spirit; God does not despise a contrite and humble heart. You now have the offering you are to make.

St. Augustine of Hippo

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